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# Other Americas

Contemporary Architecture and Issues in Latin America

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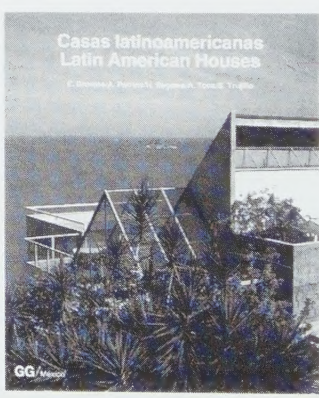


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FRONT COVER IMAGE: Hotel Nacional, Havana, Cuba; McKim, Mead and White, 1930. Photograph by José Ho.

BACK COVER IMAGE: Residence, Golden Beach, Florida; Carlos Zapata Design Studio and Una Idea, Architects, 1993. Photograph by Peter Aaron/Esto.

## FROM THE EDITOR: *Other Americas, Other Architecture*

*La única manera de conocernos a nosotros mismos es reconocer a los otros en su alteridad.*

The only way to know ourselves is to recognize the otherness of others.

—Octavio Paz, "La Conquista de México," *Claves*, 1992

The cupola of the Hotel Nacional by McKim, Mead and White in Havana, heavily laden with its ornamental balustrade, glides like a baroque barge toward the horizon, toward the United States, which is invisible in the distance. However, invisibility is more profound in the opposite direction, to the south. The architectural culture of Latin America remains largely invisible north of the Gulf of Mexico and the Rio Grande. It is noticeably absent from both architectural publications and the curricula of most North American architecture schools. This issue of *Design Book Review* aims to broaden the horizon for North Americans by rendering visible some of the contemporary issues and cultural debates about architecture in the "other Americas."

In the past, brief episodes of visibility have exposed Latin American architecture to the curiosity of a North American audience. In 1937 Esther Born presented an enthusiastic survey of modern Mexican architecture in *Architectural Record*. In 1942 the Museum of Modern Art in New York produced an exhibit and catalog entitled *Brazil Builds*, directed by Philip Goodwin, which documented and celebrated the lyrical variant of the modern movement that had taken root in that country. The MoMA opened its doors again, in 1955, this time to Latin America as a whole, with the exhibit *Latin American Architecture Since 1945*, curated by Henry-Russell Hitchcock, who also wrote the text for the catalog. These publications speak with an optimism, now clearly misplaced, for "modern" economic and material advancement that did not occur as envisioned. Little has been published in the United States on Latin American architecture since then, except for the 1969 survey *New Directions in Latin American Architecture* by Argentine writer Francisco Bullrich. In recent years, two publications have appeared (both from Italy) that together provide a broad view of this much-overlooked subject: *America Latina, Architettura: Gli ultimi vent'anni*, by Jorge Francisco Liernur and *Zodiac 8*, edited by Guido Canella. Unfortunately, both are not widely available in the United States. We hope this issue of *DBR* will not be merely another fleeting moment of visibility,

but will instead serve to open an accessible, ongoing dialogue on the architecture and the theoretical debates surrounding the architectural culture of Latin America, and their potential impact on North America.

For many, Latin American architecture is still largely framed by the era of the "heroic generation," of Oscar Niemeyer, Affonso Eduardo Reidy, Luis Barragán, and Carlos Raúl Villanueva. But the conditions that led to their ascendancy and the unswerving faith in modernity at that time have changed. In many cases, the changes were brought on by weakened economies and military dictatorships. The "thirty years war," as Jorge Castañeda has aptly termed the volatile period that engulfed much of Latin America since 1960, has taken its toll on the architectural profession too. Prior to it, the heroic generation was able to achieve a position in history that seems unattainable for architects working today.

Discussions about Latin American architecture and culture are often framed in terms of center and periphery. However, the question must be raised as to whether this opposition is indeed relevant. Is it characteristic of a periphery to have more speakers of the mother tongue and to produce more literature than the mother country itself? Is it characteristic of a periphery to have produced the first modern social revolution, as was the case with Mexico, whose revolution preceded Russia's by seven years? Is it characteristic of a periphery to have some of the largest and fastest-growing cities in the world? Is it characteristic of a periphery for the ideas of a foreign figure, such as Le Corbusier, to be embraced more passionately than in his own country, and then for those ideas to be exported back—in the case of Corbusier, via the work of architects Borja Huidobro (Chile) and Enrique Ciriani (Peru)? What meaning do center and periphery possess in a world of flexible capital, telecommunications, and globalization? Regardless of these continually blurring boundaries, Latin America still struggles to come to terms with its colonial legacy and neocolonial economic dependency. The stunning success of the Zapatista revolt in Chiapas reflects enduring economic and social contradictions, which underlie the new changes sweeping the world.

The Iberian languages and common cultural foundations of the continent provide a broad sense of unity, yet Latin America has many identities. Many layers of European, African, and Asian humanity mingle and coexist with those of indigenous peoples, creating a multiethnic society. Cultural identity has been an issue in

Latin American art, literature, and architecture since the 19th century. In the 1920s, Mexican Minister of Education José Vasconcelos challenged the dominant, Eurocentric vision of the world with his proposition of *la raza cósmica*, the cosmic *mestizo* race doubly gifted with the spirituality of Native Americans and the rationalism of the Europeans, destined to assume an important global role. At one time, Mexico and Brazil were particularly successful in developing a critical mass of work defining an “other” modernity, while Argentina has recently played a significant role in developing a substantial body of theoretical work. The debate over cultural identity in architecture has reached an unprecedented level of intensity in recent years.

When Gabriel García Márquez was asked to comment on the cultural encroachment of the United States on Latin America within the broader context of economic imperialism, he responded that it did not concern him because, in fact, he saw the opposite occurring—Latin America’s encroachment upon the United States. There has, of course, been a Hispanic presence in North America since the 16th century. The people of Puerto Rico and Mexico have also had a special historic presence in the United States because of geographic proximity and perceived economic opportunities, not to mention the U.S. occupations of these territories. Today, an estimated twenty-five million Latinos—from all parts of South America and the Caribbean—reside in the United States, up from twenty million in the 1990 census, a figure that itself represented a 53 percent increase from 1980. The scope of immigration is illustrated by the fact that 40 percent of the current Latino population was born outside the United States. These statistics are expected to double over the next thirty years. Population-wise, New York is the largest Puerto Rican city after San Juan. Miami is the largest Cuban city after Havana. Los Angeles is the largest Mexican city after Mexico City. The cultural impact of this reoccupation of North America by Latin America is nowhere more profoundly felt than in language. While Spanish has been a common language in San Antonio, Texas, for over a hundred and fifty years, its prominence now grows elsewhere as well: in Miami, business is as likely to be conducted in Spanish as in English, and Los Angeles is clearly a bilingual, if not a multilingual, city. As the writer Carlos Fuentes recently observed, “The California state law decreeing that English is the official language of the state proves only one thing: that English is no longer the official language of California.” Rudolfo Anaya, Rubén Blades, Ana Castillo, Sandra Cisneros, Luis Valdez, Louis Pérez, David Hidalgo, Ray González, Gary Soto, Oscar Hijuelos, and Bernice Zamora are only some of the cultural figures who make

use of both languages to communicate the uniqueness and universality of their cultural experience.

In the built environment of North America, a contemporary Latin American presence is maintained on two levels: on the popular plane, Latin American culture and taste are reflected in a wide range of settings, from the front lawns of the well-to-do suburbs of Miami to the *casitas* in the urban barrios of New York. One example of efforts made to bridge the vernacular of the barrios with professional practice is Gustavo Leclerc’s ADOBE LA, a group of architects who aim to integrate issues of local Chicano culture into their work. On the purely professional plane, Latin America’s presence is felt both in academia and practice, with much crossover. The Latin American diasporas produced an enclave of Argentines in the northeast and of Cubans in Miami. Immigration, voluntary or not, involves making choices. César Pelli has fashioned an enviable North American-style corporate practice, while his brother, Victor Saúl Pelli, also an architect, organizes self-help housing in the barrios of Resistencia, Argentina.

The extent to which “Latin Americanness” is exhibited in the work of expatriates varies. Much of Miami’s recent domestic architecture reveals a tendency toward Spanish colonial revival as well as regional vernacular. On the other end of the spectrum, Uruguayan Rafael Viñoly’s Nara Convention Center in Japan embodies the spirit, confidence, and bold scale associated with the heroic period of Latin American modernism. The work of Costa Rican-born Carlos Jiménez is located somewhere in between, with his quiet, abstract elaboration of courtyard typology, mass, and light, as exhibited in his addition to the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston. Then there is Ricardo Legorreta, who has successfully extended his Mexico City-based practice and his syntax of *mexicanidad* into California and the Southwest. Meanwhile, the skillful formal and material manipulations of Ecuadorian architect Carlos Zapata place his work at the forefront of an avant-garde concerned with issues other than cultural specificity.

While the image of McKim, Mead and White’s northward-looking hotel in Cuba reflects one kind of cultural exchange, the view from the other direction, through the framework of Zapata’s beachfront *casita*, may be considered a fitting complement: this frame provides a metaphor that speaks of more evolving, more inclusive cultural exchange. The Americas share a common destiny that will only be successfully realized when the “otherness” of each is respected and reflected in our common yet diverse cultural existence.

John A. Loomis

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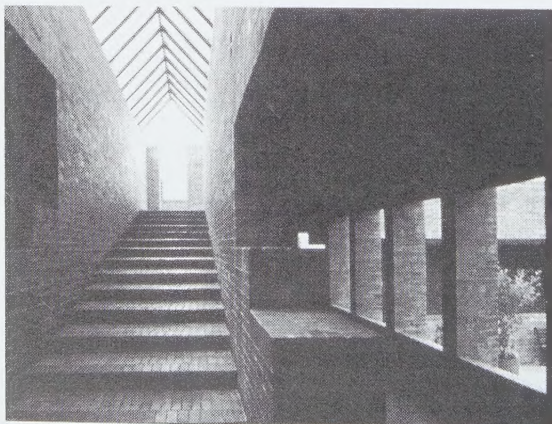
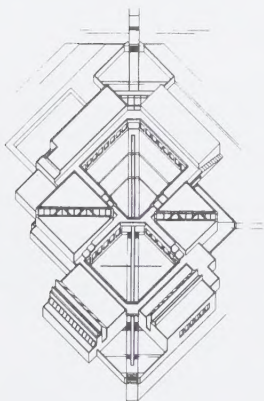
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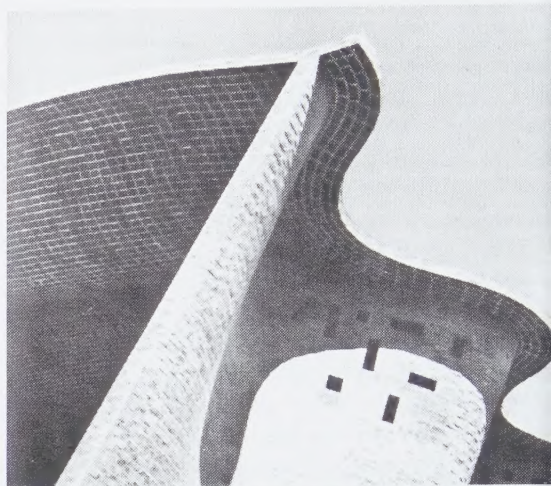
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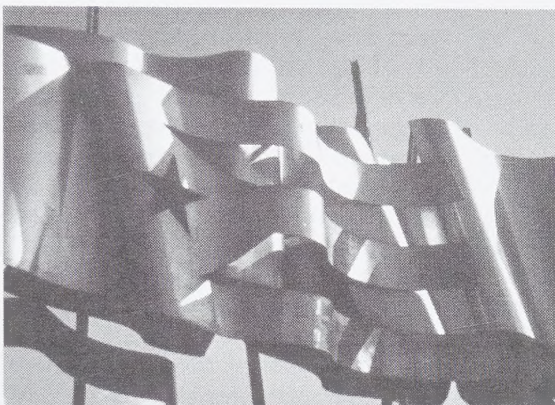
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GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ

*The Solitude of Latin America* (Nobel Lecture, 1982)

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Antonio Pigafetta, a Florentine navigator who went with Magellan on the first voyage around the world, wrote, upon his passage through our southern lands of America, a strictly accurate account that nonetheless resembles a venture into fantasy. In it he recorded that he had seen hogs with navels on their haunches, clawless birds whose hens laid eggs on the backs of their mates, and others still, resembling tongueless pelicans, with beaks like spoons. He wrote of having seen a misbegotten creature with the head and ears of a mule, a camel's body, the legs of a deer, and the whinny of a horse. He described how the first native encountered in Patagonia was confronted with a mirror, whereupon that impassioned giant lost his senses to the terror of his own image.

This short and fascinating book, which even then contained the seeds of our present-day novels, is by no means the most staggering account of our reality in that age. The *Chronicles of the Indies* left us countless others. *El Dorado*, our so avidly sought-after and illusory land, appeared on numerous maps for many a long year, shifting its place and form to suit the fantasy of cartographers. In his search for the fountain of eternal youth, the mythical Alvar Núñez de Vaca explored the north of Mexico for eight years, in a deluded expedition whose members devoured each other and only five of whom returned of the six hundred who had undertaken it. One of the many unfathomed mysteries of that age is that, of the eleven thousand mules, each loaded with one hundred pounds of gold, that left Cuzco one day to pay the ransom of Atahualpa, none reached their destination. Subsequently, in colonial times, hens were sold in Cartagena de Indies, which had been raised on alluvial land and whose gizzards contained tiny lumps of gold. The founders' lust for gold beset us until recently. As late as the last century, a German mission appointed to study the construction of an interoceanic railroad across the Isthmus of Panama concluded that the project was feasible on one condition: that the rails be made not of iron, which was scarce in the region, but of gold.

Our independence from Spanish domination did not put us beyond the reach of madness. General Antonio López de Santa Anna, three times dictator of Mexico, held a magnificent funeral for the right leg he had lost in the so-called Pastry War. General Gabriel García Moreno ruled Ecuador for sixteen years as an absolute monarch; at his wake, the corpse was seated on the presidential chair,

decked out in full-dress uniform and a protective layer of medals. General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez, the theosophical despot of El Salvador who had thirty thousand peasants slaughtered in a savage massacre, invented a pendulum to detect poison in his food, and had street lamps draped in red paper to defeat an epidemic of scarlet fever. The statue to General Francisco Morazán erected in the main square of Tegucigalpa is actually one of Marshal Ney, purchased at a Paris warehouse of second-hand sculptures.

Eleven years ago, the Chilean Pablo Neruda, one of the outstanding poets of our time, enlightened this [Nobel] audience with his word. Since then, the Europeans of good will—and sometimes those of bad, as well—have been struck, with ever greater force, by the unearthly tidings of Latin America, that boundless realm of haunted men and historic women whose unending obstinacy blurs into legend. We have not had a moment's rest. A Promethean president, entrenched in his burning palace, died fighting an entire army alone; and two suspicious airplane accidents, yet to be explained, cut short the life of another great-hearted president and that of a democratic soldier who had revived the dignity of his people. There have been five wars and seventeen military coups; there emerged a diabolic dictator who is carrying out, in God's name, the first Latin American ethnocide of our time. In the meantime, twenty million Latin American children died before the age of one—more than have been born in Europe since 1970. Those missing because of repression number nearly one hundred and twenty thousand, which is as if no one could account for all the inhabitants of Upsala. Numerous women arrested while pregnant have given birth in Argentine prisons, yet nobody knows the whereabouts and identities of their children, who were furtively adopted or sent to orphanages by order of the military authorities. Because they tried to change this state of things, nearly two hundred thousand men and women have died throughout the continent, and over one hundred thousand have lost their lives in three small and ill-fated countries of Central America: Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala. If this had happened in the United States, the corresponding figure would be that of one million six hundred thousand violent deaths in four years.

One million people have fled Chile, a country with a tradition of hospitality—that is, ten percent of its population. Uruguay, a tiny nation of two and a half million inhabitants which considers itself the continent's most civilized country, has lost to exile one out of every five citizens. Since 1979, the civil war in El Salvador has produced one refugee almost every twenty minutes. The country that could be formed of all the exiles and forced emigrants of Latin America would have a population larger than that of Norway.

I dare to think that it is this outsized reality, and not just its literary expression, that has deserved the attention of the Swedish Academy of Letters. A reality not of paper, but one that lives within us and determines each instant of our countless daily deaths, and that nourishes a source of insatiable creativity, full of sorrow and beauty, of which this roving and nostalgic Colombian is but one cipher more, singled out by fortune. Poets and beggars, musicians and prophets, warriors and courdrels, all creatures of that unbridled reality, we have had to ask but little of imagination, for our crucial problem has been a lack of conventional means to render our lives believable. This, my friends, is the crux of our solitude.

And if these difficulties, whose essence we share, hinder us, it is understandable that the national talents on this side of the world, exalted in the contemplation of their own cultures, should have found themselves without a valid means to interpret us. It is only natural that they insist on measuring us with the yardstick that they use for themselves, forgetting that the ravages of life are not the same for all, and that the quest of our own identity is just as arduous and bloody for us as it was for them. The interpretation of our reality through patterns not our own serves only to make us ever more unknown, ever less free, ever more solitary. Venerable Europe would perhaps be more perceptive if it tried to see us in its own past. If only it recalled that London took three hundred years to build its first city wall, and three hundred years more to acquire a bishop; that Rome labored in a gloom of uncertainty for twenty centuries until an Etruscan king anchored it in history; and that the peaceful Swiss of today, who feast us with their mild cheeses and apathetic watches, bloodied Europe as soldiers of fortune as late as the 16th century. Even at the height of the Renaissance, twelve thousand *lansquenets* in the pay of the imperial armies sacked and devastated Rome and put eight thousand of its inhabitants to the sword.

I do not mean to embody the illusions of Tonio Kröger, whose dreams of uniting a chaste north to a passionate south were exalted here fifty-three years ago by Thomas Mann. But I do believe that those clear-sighted Europeans who struggle here as well, for a more just and humane homeland, could help us far better if they reconsidered their way of seeing us. Solidarity with our dreams will not make us feel less alone as long as it is not translated into concrete acts of legitimate support for all the peoples that assume the illusion of having a life of their own in the distribution of the world.

Latin America neither wants nor has any reason to be a pawn, without a will of its own; nor is it merely wishful thinking that its quest for independence and originality should become a Western aspiration. However, the navigational advances that have narrowed such distances between our Americas and Europe seem, con-

versely, to have accentuated our cultural remoteness. Why is the originality so readily granted us in literature so mistrustfully denied us in our difficult attempts at social change? Why think that the social justice sought by progressive Europeans for their own countries cannot also be a goal for Latin America, with different methods for dissimilar conditions? No: the immeasurable violence and pain of our history are the results of age-old inequities and untold bitterness, and not of a conspiracy plotted three thousand leagues from our home. But many European leaders and thinkers have thought so, with the childishness of old-timers who have forgotten the fruitful excesses of their youth, as if it were impossible to find another destiny than to live at the mercy of the two great masters of the world. This, my friends, is the very scale of our solitude.

In spite of this, to oppression, plundering, and abandonment, we respond with life. Neither floods nor plagues, famines nor cataclysms, nor even the eternal wars of century upon century have been able to subdue the persistent advantage of life over death. An advantage that grows and quickens: every year, there are seventy-four million more births than deaths, a sufficient number of new lives to multiply, each year, the population of New York sevenfold. Most of these births occur in the countries with the least resources—including, of course, those of Latin America. Conversely, the most prosperous countries have succeeded in accumulating powers of destruction such as to annihilate, a hundred times over, not only all the human beings that have existed to this day, but also the totality of all living beings that have ever drawn breath on this planet of misfortune.

On a day like today, my master William Faulkner said, "I decline to accept the end of man." I would feel unworthy of standing in this place that was his if I were not fully aware that the colossal tragedy he refused to recognize thirty-two years ago is now, for the first time since the beginning of humanity, nothing more than a simple scientific possibility. Faced with this awesome reality that must have seemed a mere utopia through all of human time, we, the inventors of tales, who will believe anything, feel entitled to believe that it is not yet too late to engage in the creation of the opposite utopia. A new and sweeping utopia of life, where no one will be able to decide for others how they die, where love will prove true and happiness possible, and where the races condemned to one hundred years of solitude will have, at last and forever, a second opportunity on earth. ♣



Temple of the Jaguars, Chichén-Itzá, state of Yucatán; Mayan civilization of the New Empire period. (From *4000 Years of Mexican Architecture*.)

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RICARDO L. CASTRO

*Architectural Criticism in the Chimeric Realm*

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NUEVA ARQUITECTURA EN AMÉRICA LATINA: PRESENTE Y FUTURO, Antonio Toca, editor, Ediciones Gustavo Gili (Barcelona and Mexico City), 1990, 284 pp., illus.

OANIS: CRONICAS Y RELATOS DE LA ARQUITECTURA Y LA CIUDAD, Carlos Véjar Pérez-Rubio, Ediciones Gernika (Mexico City), 1992, 203 pp., illus.

AMBITO TRES: COMO UNA PIEDRA QUE RUE-DA, Eduardo Langagne Ortega, Carlos Véjar Pérez-Rubio, Carlos Ríos Garza, editors, Ediciones Gernika (Mexico City), 1990, 385 pp., illus.

Gallery interior at the Quimbaya Cultural Center and Museum, Armenia, Colombia; Rogelio Salmons, 1984. Photograph by Ricardo L. Castro.

Through its literature, Latin America has come to be known to the world as a chimeric realm of enchantment, a land of marvels. This notion of a chimeric world is directly associated with the monstrous or unusual—*lo insolito*, in Spanish—which is studied by the arcane discipline of teratology. Etymologically, the word teratology is rooted in the Greek *terasatos*, meaning both monstrous and marvelous. Both ideas are antithetical to reality.

The Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier, a pioneer of contemporary Latin American narrative and also an aspiring architect, coined the term *lo real-maravilloso* (the marvelous-real), which consolidates the real and the fantastic. Through this notion, he has explored in his novels and essays the “Americanness” of the Americas, particularly of those lands south of the Rio Grande.

Even for the 1920s, Carpentier’s syncretic vision of Spanish American reality was novel. This vision has always been distinctly associated with his discovery and diffusion of the shimmering and chimeric world—“the marvelousness of Spanish American reality,” to which Gabriel García Márquez later paid tribute in his 1982 Nobel Prize acceptance speech.<sup>1</sup> Carpentier’s ideas serve as a refracting prism, allowing us to look differently at fields such as architectural criticism.

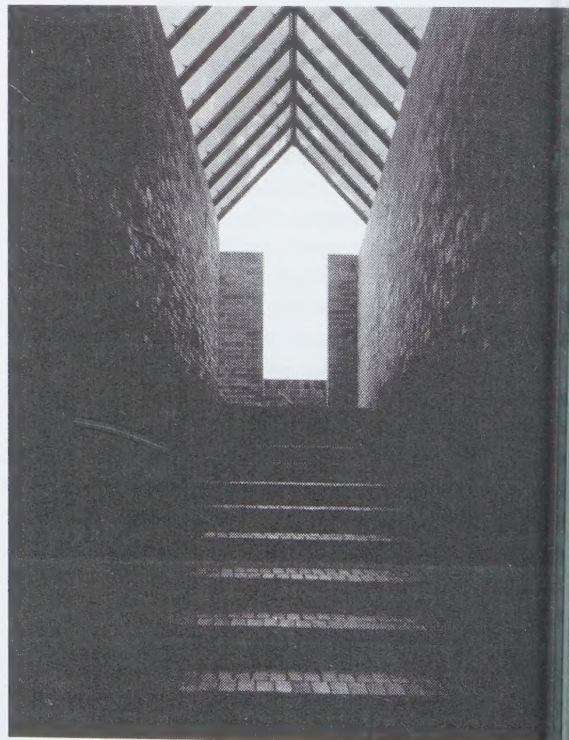
Carpentier’s understanding of Latin American reality is demonstrated throughout his extraordinary narrative. Rich in themes and with perceptive commentary on an extensive range of topics, such as music, art, architecture, politics, literature, folklore, and even cuisine, Carpentier’s writing provides one of the most profound and decisive discourses on the chimeric world of Latin America. The echo of his ideas still resonates today, in the works of distinguished writers such as Carlos Fuentes, Mario Vargas Llosa, and García Márquez, as well as that of such architectural masters as Luis Barragán, Eladio Dieste, and Rogelio Salmons. In this genre of literature, and by extension, of architecture, themes of nature, history, time, individuality—and intertwined with them, notions of the eternal baroque, the fantastic—reflect what García Márquez calls “outsized reality.”

In his Nobel Prize lecture, García Márquez pointed out that “outsized reality,” which first appeared in the early colonial period, is based on a weaving together of the most bizarre, unbelievable, and fantastic events described by the early travelers and chroniclers of the Indies. These occurrences could be perceived as evidence of a

certain madness which has hovered over the actions and thoughts of hundreds of millions of Latin Americans since their independence from Spanish domination. As the novelist has observed, despots, dictators, wars, innumerable military coups, ethnocide, exile, and the devaluation of life’s worth have become, in recent times, a virtual routine in Latin American reality. It is within this chimeric realm that three recent publications, composed of various articles and essays, engage with varying degrees of success the current critical architectural discourses now taking place in Latin America.

In *Nueva arquitectura en América Latina: Presente y futuro*, editor Antonio Toca has assembled seventeen essays written by twenty critics representing seven countries—Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay. In addition to Cuba and Venezuela, which are not represented in this publication, these countries are the loci of emerging critical discourses on architecture and its practice on the continent. The main purpose of this collective enterprise is to “de-monstrate” the possibilities of the multifaceted architecture emerging in Latin America, which until now has had only an isolated forum within the continent and minimal exposure beyond its borders. According to Toca, the essays are considered a critical revision of current practice, which may offer “useful and real alternatives to develop[ing] a future architecture more appropriate and authentic to Latin America in recognizing the lessons from the past and the will to generate its own future.”<sup>2</sup>

The book opens with Toca’s translation of an essay by Kenneth Frampton on critical regional



ism. This essay serves as the ideological umbrella for the subsequent writings in the book. Unfortunately, the Spanish translation lacks some of Frampton's original remarks about the tectonic aspects of architecture, an idea he first discussed in his 1983 essay "Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," and which he further developed in a paper he presented at the First Colloquium on Critical Regionalism in Pomona, California, in 1989.<sup>3</sup> Based on the concept of the real advanced by Michael Benedikt in his book *For an Architecture of the Real* (New York: Lumen Books, 1987), Frampton's Pomona essay expands on the notion of the tectonic, which, according to him, "serves to distinguish architecture from all the other arts."

The principle threads of the continent's conceptual quilt include significant themes, such as: time, or the continuous confrontation with historic realities, from colonialism to more recent "imperialistic" burdens; the incommensurate wilderness that predominates the continent; the impact of the natural surroundings on individuals' everyday experience; the immediate, ever-growing problems of millions of Latin Americans who desperately lack adequate shelter, health care, and nourishment; and the ever-present anxiety over influences on the development of identity. Having appeared first in the literary discourse of Carpentier and of other notable contemporary Latin American writers, these themes have now surfaced in the critical discourse of architecture.

The various essays in *Nueva arquitectura en América Latina* can be seen as attempts to search for an alternative passage to a shared vision of architecture—one that reacts against the traditionally unquestioned imposition of exhausted models that have been imported to Latin America. According to most Latin American critics, the most flagrant of these invasions has been the recent arrival of postmodern models, primarily from North America but also from beyond the oceans to the east and west. For many, this phenomenon has political connotations, representing the intrusion of foreign practices that are increasingly displacing the continent's intrinsic "sense of place."

Is the collection of seventeen essays in *Nueva arquitectura en América Latina* similar to the parable of the three blind men (although now multiplied by six) who, upon touching different parts of the elephant—the tail, the tusks, the trunk—interpret the animal in different ways? Despite the various writing styles, the wide-ranging quality of the visual information, and the diverse scope of the essays, the answer is no.

Colombian critic Silvia Arango's essay "La experiencia de la arquitectura Colombiana actual frente a la doble crisis del movimiento moderno" (The Experience of Colombian architecture vis-à-

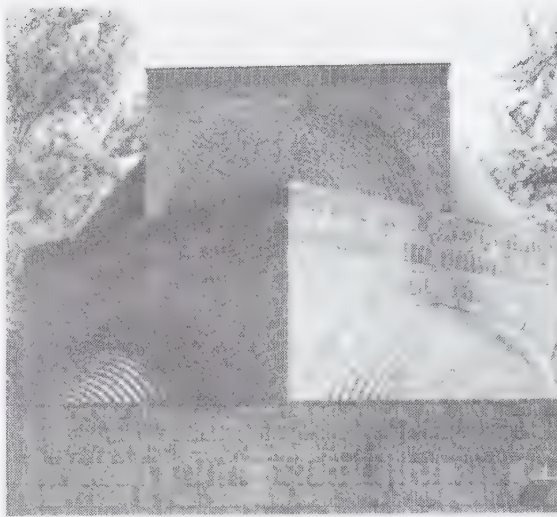


Torres del Parque, Park Towers, residential complex, Bogotá, Colombia; Rogelio Salmons, 1968–73. Photograph by Ricardo L. Castro.

vis the double crises of the modern movement) is provocative. According to Arango, the paradigms of modern architecture have become exhausted in two particular aspects: the social order and the aesthetic, formal level. Resolving the dilemma imposed by this depletion has generated some of the most interesting debates and responses of the century. For instance, face to face with this crisis, Colombian architecture, a hybrid from its colonial beginnings, has evolved into self-conscious production, or what Arango calls a "tradition of conscious assimilation." A corollary to this development is the current exploration of several Colombian architects whose work appears to be based on several principles: first, a return to the experiential qualities of architecture as a reaction to previous abstractions; second, an exploration of connotative traditional building craft as a reaction to the pervasive practices of standardization; third, the development of new spatial contextualization as a consequence of current spatial demands; and finally, the development of temporal contextualization through an architecture that reflects a historical conscience. Here, the work of Rogelio Salmons primarily, but also that of such Colombian architects as Simon Velez and the firms Rueda y Morales and L. y L. H. Forero, are representative. Arango's lucid conclusion projects into the future:

I wish that Colombian architecture would not have the need to feel Colombian. If our situation is that of living the actual world from Colombia, we must make an actual architec-

Capilla del Panteón,  
Jungeapeo, Michoacán,  
Mexico; Carlos G. Mijares  
Bracho, 1982–86. (From  
*Mexico: Nueva arquitectura* 2.)



ture that responds to the conditions in which we live—an architecture that, to a major degree, is the result of our living in the last decades of the 20th century (a condition that we share with the rest of the world), and, to a minor degree, is the result of our inhabiting the country where we were born (a condition we share with the rest of Latin America).

Arango's thesis is reiterated and complemented by Alberto Saldarriaga and Lorenzo Fonseca's essay "Arquitectura Colombiana: Desarrollos recientes" (Colombian architecture: Recent developments). This is a perceptive analysis of the crisscrossing (*meztizaje*) and "inter-culturation" that have determined the various modes of production of architecture in the country. According to the authors, this approach can serve as a platform for developing a future practice that expresses local, regional, or national concerns.

Cristián Fernández Cox of Chile and Roberto Fernández of Mexico discuss in their respective essays the problems of appropriation and propriety of Latin American architecture, while Argentine historian and critic Ramón Gutiérrez focuses incisively on questions of identity and cultural dependency. Describing the paradoxical situation in the southernmost part of the continent, Gutiérrez writes:

The books of any of our countries cannot be obtained in the neighboring country; let us not talk about the rest of the continent. This special isolation is the best contribution to ignorance and the lack of an ensemble vision. However, in any of our countries, specialized magazines from Europe, North America, and more recently from Japan, circulate freely.

Marina Waisman, the distinguished Argentine critic, reintroduces the notion of typological analysis as a bearing device to monitor continuously the ways in which space may be appropriated. This strategy is meant to be coupled with an anal-

ysis of technologies within a proper concept of modernity. She sees these approaches as possible means for reconciling the universal and the local in the making of a regional architecture. Furthermore, she proposes syncretism as a viable alternative in the production of architecture. Waisman's thesis corroborates the idea of the cross-fertilization of modes of action among disciplines. Syncretism is one of the pivotal operational concepts of Carpentier's literary enterprises.

Although *Nueva arquitectura en América Latina* may boast many good intentions, it also contains critical omissions. Conspicuously absent are the words of the architects behind the new emerging practice that—in unison with Latin American literature—is currently contributing to defining the image of the Latin American chimeric world. We miss the input of Dieste, Salmons, or Clorinda Testa, who are not only magicians of form but weavers of words. Also absent are the voices of pioneers of architectural criticism in Latin America—the lyrical and phenomenal discourse of German Téllez of Colombia, the descriptive and precise prose of Venezuelan Graziano Gasparini, and the lucid and critical voice of the Argentine critic Roberto Segre, who has spent a great part of his life in Cuba. Gasparini's and Segre's ideas have recently become accessible to a larger audience thanks to growing coverage by North American and European periodicals.<sup>4</sup>

In contrast to Toca's compilation, two recent publications, *OANIS (Objeto Arquitectónicas no Identificados): Crónicas y relatos de la arquitectura y la ciudad* (Unidentified Architectural Objects: Chronicles and stories of architecture and the city) by Carlos Véjar Pérez-Rubio, and *Ambito tres Como una piedra que rueda* (Environment three Like a rolling stone), edited by Véjar, Eduardo Langagne Ortega, and Carlos Ríos Garza, provide within an assumed Latin American context a more localized perspective of architectural issues in Mexico, as reflected in the recent architectural practice in the capital city.

Both books are collections of articles. While *OANIS* includes articles written by Véjar, an architect and historian, *Ambito tres* embraces more than fifty works by various authors. "Ambito tres" is the name of the architecture column that appears regularly in the Mexico City newspaper *Excelsior*, where most of the articles in both books originally appeared. Despite the uneven doses of journalistic criticism, often with a very local accent, both publications feature some shrewd explorations. Underlying both books is a critique of modern and postmodern conditions as they are manifested in current work, coupled with continuous reaffirmation of the idea of maintaining national identity.

Returning to the idea of monsters (chimeras included), architect, historian, and critic Marco

Frascari writes:

Like Proteus, the monster changes its form, assuming different aspects in response to diverse stimuli and within varying contexts. Outside of the proper fields of medical and genetic teratologies, the idea of monsters baffles any present conceptualization; nevertheless, monsters are recognizable as ensembles better left unsolved. Their enigmatic quintessence leads to a core of knowledge that is at once continuously available and infinitely obscure. They are prophetic signs based on hindsight. Monsters are then infinitely obscure concepts, an offspring of presage and essentially related to architectural divination and demonstration. As with all signs, they project a world of the future.<sup>5</sup>

These three ambitious publications are all chimeric in the full sense of the word. They are intellectual monsters made of various parts; some are complete, some unfinished, presenting nonetheless provocative possibilities for the evolution of Latin American architecture. For most North American readers, however, they will remain silent, untranslated chimeras. It is hoped that some of the issues covered in these publications will eventually infiltrate, through translation, the lands beyond the borders of Latin America. Only then will it be possible to bridge the wide cultural gap that divides the North and South. ♣

#### NOTES

1. Gabriel García Márquez, "The Solitude of Latin America" (acceptance lecture for Nobel Prize for Literature, 1982), in *Gabriel García Márquez and the Powers of Fiction*, Julio Ortega, ed., Marina Castañeda, trans., Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988), pp. 87–91.

2. Unless otherwise indicated, the author is responsible for all the translations from Spanish texts.

3. Kenneth Frampton's original essay appeared in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, Hal Foster, ed., (Port Townsend, Wash.: Bay Press, 1983), pp. 16–30. Alexander Tzonis, Liane Lefaivre, and Anthony Alofsin were the first to state publicly the thesis of critical regionalism in their paper "Die Frage des Regionalismus," in *Für eine andere Architektur*, vol. 1, M. Lindritzky, et al., eds. (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1981), pp. 21–34. Frampton's paper was published as "Critical Regionalism Revisited," in Spyros Amourgis, ed., *Critical Regionalism: The Pomona Meeting Proceedings* (Pomona: California Polytechnic Institute College of Environmental Design, 1991), pp. 34–39.

4. Worth mentioning are the 1991 issue of *The New City*, published by the University of Miami School of Architecture; volume 87 of *ARQ Architecture Québec*; and volume 8 of *Zodiac* (September 1992–February 1993), dedicated to Latin America.

5. Marco Frascari, *Monsters of Architecture: Anthropomorphism in Architectural Theory* (Savage, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1991), p. 13.

## CARLOS VÉJAR PÉREZ-RUBIO

### *Four Surveys of Contemporary Latin American Architecture*

Translated from the Spanish by Margarita Martínez Duarte

The four books under review here contain varied visions of contemporary Latin American architecture: two collective works published in Italy, *America Latina, Architettura: Gli ultimi vent'anni* (Latin American architecture: The Last twenty years) by Jorge Francisco Liernur and the eighth issue of the international semiannual architectural magazine *Zodiac*, a book in itself; *América Latina, Fim de milénio: Raízes e perspectivas de sua arquitetura* (Latin America, End of the millennium: Origins and perspectives of its architecture) by Roberto Segre, published in Brazil; and, from Chile, *Otra arquitectura en América Latina* (Other architecture in Latin America) by Enrique Browne. Even though the books' objectives are not entirely the same, they all aim to shed light on the history of Latin American architecture and, particularly, on the most meaningful works of recent years.

In all of the texts, one issue is presented from the outset, which Liernur sums up in his book's opening essay, "L'architettura dell'America Latina e dei Caraibi 1968–88": the necessity to define the limits and contents of Latin American architecture by adopting a regionally appropriate and contemporary approach—in other words, an approach whose vision comes from *within*. After quoting Fernando Chueca Goitia, the Spanish historian and critic who upholds the Eurocentric view that the Spanish territories in America became a unified body thanks to the three great legacies the vast continent received from Spain—Catholicism, a common language, and architecture—Liernur demonstrates with a variety of examples the difficulty of adhering to such an approach today. This difficulty stems from the fact that Latin America and its architecture have been synonymous with fragmentation and diversity for five hundred years. "Today," Liernur writes, "the subcontinent presents the characteristics of a territory rich in contrasts." However, he goes on to admit that Latin American culture has undergone a process of unified recomposition during this century, which swings from isotropy to entropy, from homogeneity to diversity. This phenomenon is visible in the architecture of the continent, whose comprehension has been fragmented until recently. Although Liernur complains about the lack of research and publications, the abundant bibliographies found in these books seem to prove him wrong. (And he does mention the work of historians Francisco Bullrich, Rafael López Rangel, Ramón Gutiérrez, Roberto Segre, and Manuel Castells, even though he disqualifies the last two because of their "socio-

AMERICA LATINA, ARCHITETTURA: GLI ULTIMI VENT'ANNI, by Jorge Francisco Liernur, Electa (Milan), 1990, 203 pp., illus.

ZODIAC 8, Guido Canel-la, editor, Editrice Abitare SpA (Milan), September 1992–February 1993, 292 pp., illus., about \$35.00.

AMÉRICA LATINA, FIM DE MILÉNIO: RAÍZES E PERSPECTIVAS DE SUA ARQUITECTURA, Roberto Segre, Studio Nobel (São Paulo), 1991, 326 pp., illus.

OTRA ARQUITECTURA EN AMÉRICA LATINA, Enrique Browne, Gustavo Gili (Mexico City), 1988, 170 pp., illus.



Interior of the Iglesia de Atlántida, Uruguay; Eladio Dieste, 1959. Enrique Browne, author of *Otra arquitectura*, places this church in the second period (1945–70) of “other architecture” in Latin America.

logical approach”). There can be no doubt that, in the last few years, the field of history and criticism of Latin American architecture has boomed, and that this has begun to influence the very practice of the profession. This heightening of constructive and theoretical activity transcends national and regional frontiers, and has awakened interest in the centers of the Western world itself. The two Italian publications, as well as this issue of *DBR*, are irrefutable pieces of evidence.

Liernur pauses to define Latin America, a term he uses throughout his book “because it offers the advantage of referring more comprehensively to the territory composed of the American nations south of the Rio Grande and Cayo Hueso than other terms such as Ibero-America, Hispanic America, or South America.”

The design and quality of the printing and illustrations (both color and black and white) of *America Latina, Architettura: Gli ultimi vent'anni* are outstanding. The book is part of Electa's *Tendenze dell'architettura contemporanea* series. Planned for a broad audience, the book's goal, as Liernur states, is to present the issues and debates that have been most common to Latin American architecture during the last twenty years, taking into consideration the examples, ideas, and proposals that have engaged architecture as a system of “critique and utopia.” In addition to the introductory essay, Liernur is responsible for an essay on Argentina, in which he uses Roger Caillois' concept of play (with its suggestive sense of the *jeu magnifique* of Le Corbusier) in order to structure his analysis.

The second section of the book assembles some of the most important protagonists in the field of the last twenty years. The author invokes the viewpoints of various critics—Enrique Xavier de Anda Alanís (Mexico), Lorenzo Garabilli (Uruguay), Beatriz García Moreno (Colombia), Fernando Pérez Oyarzun (Chile), Alberto Sato (Venezuela), Roberto Segre (Cuba), and Ruth Verdi Zein (Brazil). Liernur is aware that it is impossible for the book to present a complete picture of the architecture of a region made up of forty-five nations, so he restricts his analysis to only nine countries.

The book is a commendable effort, even though its discussion of urbanism is lacking. While Liernur raises the issue of the urban dilemma in his incisive introductory essay, the issue does not appear again in any of the subsequent essays, which focus primarily on individual architects and their works, without any discussion of

context. The volume assembles wide-ranging examples of diverging trends, including the suggestive brick buildings of Eladio Dieste in Uruguay and of Rogelio Salmons in Colombia; Carlos Bratke and Eolo Maia's search for form in Brazil; the Barraganean remembrances of Ricardo Legorreta in a monumental First World hotel in Cancún, Mexico; the rustic sobriety of the regional effort by Christian de Groote and Fernando Castillo in Chile; the desire to be “more like they are” in the International Style of Aflalo, Croce, and Gasperini in Brazil, Carlos Gómez de Lerena in Venezuela and Pedro Ramírez Vázquez, Augusto H. Alvarez and Juan José Díaz Infante in Mexico; the continuation of this desire in the postmodern mimesis of the Caribbean (Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic) and South America; the playful work of Clorindo Testa in Argentina, of Severiano Porto in the midst of the Amazon jungle, and of Fruto Vivas in Venezuela. Despite the breadth of examples, however, there is no attempt to explicate the urban or rural context in which these buildings exist. We find even less about the societies that engendered these works (which is not merely a “sociological” consideration).

*Arrêtez-vous encore un peu à considérer ce chaos.*  
—René Descartes

With this epigraph, taken from Alejo Carpentier's *El recurso del método* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1974), Guido Canella begins the introductory essay to *Zodiaco 8*, entitled “Laboratorio Latinoamericana.” Canella, who edited the special theme issue, describes the different causes of the collapse of rationalism and the International Style in the architecture of industrialized societies, as well as the variables that have nurtured the development of Latin American architecture in recent times such as identity, regionalism, “metropolis,” hybridization, and fantasy, among others. Next, Canella ventures a daring hypothesis that places Latin American architecture at the core of the revitalization process of architecture in the Western hemisphere. “Its heterogeneity,” he writes, “no longer spells its own disintegration; it has become instead a principle that generates typological relationality, the starting point for a reinterpretation of living environments, based on the real, contradictory, varying needs of communities, which will gradually bring the physical allegories of architecture closer to the actual realities of the modern world.” Such a statement recalls the position of Mexican philosopher José Vasconcelos, a key figure in Latin American thought of this century. In his 1925 essay “La Raza cósmica” (The Cosmic Race), he wrote:

Nature will not repeat itself in another partial rehearsal, not here in Spanish America; the

race that now emerges from the forgotten Atlántide shall not be made up of just one color nor of any particular traits; the future race shall not be a fifth or sixth race destined to prevail over its predecessors; what will result from this land shall be the definitive race, the race of synthesis, the integrated race, made from the genius and the blood of all peoples; and because of this, it shall be the most fraternal race, the one that shall bear a truly universal vision.

Canella explains that *Zodiac 8* was created to commemorate the “discovery” of America from the standpoint of architecture. With this in mind, a group of Latin American experts was asked to provide a view of their architecture from within—an attempt to compensate for what had been impossible to view from without, from the developed West. Among those invited to offer their viewpoints are: Mario Sartor (“The Latin American City: Pre-Columbian Ancestry, the Founding Laws, and Tradition”); Pedro Posani and Alberto Sato (“Thoughts from the Tropics”); Jorge Francisco Ciernur (“A New World for the New Spirit: Twentieth-Century Architecture’s Discovery of Latin America”); Roberto Fernández (“Desert and Jungle, from Abstraction to Desire: Notes on the Regionalist Dilemma in Latin American Architecture”); and Sergio Baroni (“Havana Report”). Like Canella, the various essayists, too, selected architectural examples from Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Mexico, and Venezuela, which the volume presents in an appendix of works. Again, we find the works of Christian de Groote (Chile), Salmona (Colombia), Aureano Forero (Brazil), Testa (Argentina), Linao Bardi and Severiano Porto (Brazil), Fruto Vivas, Jimmy Alcock, Jesús Tenreiro-Degwitz, and Domingo Alvarez (Venezuela), Alberto Cruz (Chile), the firms Aslan y Ezcurra, and Gramática, Guerrero, Morini, Pisani, Urtubey, Pisani (Argentina), Luiz Paulo Conde (Brazil), and Abraham Bludovsky (Mexico). The works are well chosen in general, illustrating a diversity that is characteristic of the architecture in Latin America today, which offers fertile soil for experimentation. The most valuable aspect of *Zodiac 8*, however, is the group of essays that acutely deals with important topics such as origins, evolution, identity, hybridization, urbanism, rehabilitation, and regionalism. The superb editorial standard of this publication contributes greatly to its legibility.

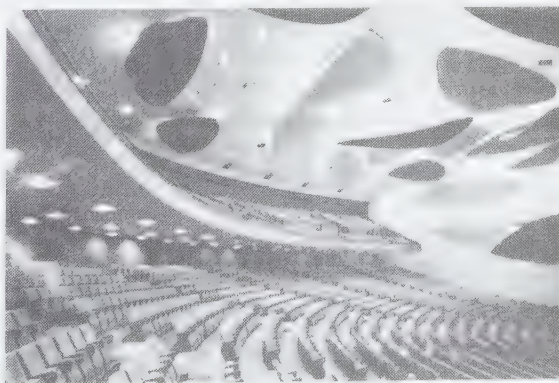
There is a clear difference between books that have many contributors and those by individual authors. Although the former generally derives its strength from its multiplicity of voices, the relative brevity of the texts sometimes makes it impossible for the authors to fully develop their arguments. In contrast, books by individual authors—usually the fruit of several years of research—benefit from lengthier texts devoted to a single thesis. Both

types are directed at scholarly and specialized audiences. Take, for example, Roberto Segre’s book, *América Latina, Fim de milênio: Raízes e perspectivas de sua arquitetura*, which sums up the author’s thirty years as a professor of the history of architecture at the José Antonio Echeverría Polytechnical Institute in Havana, as well as his many years of travel throughout the world, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean. Of the four books under review, Segre’s describes the development of Latin American architecture in the most complete and insightful fashion. The book’s predecessor, among the numerous works by this prolific author, is *América Latina en su arquitectura* (Mexico: UNESCO–Siglo XXI, 1975), which initiated his participation in the theoretical debate on Latin American architecture in 1969. This fundamental text, which has been reprinted seven times, was the first to take an interdisciplinary approach, incorporating the views of thirteen well-known Latin American researchers on issues related to the built environment.

Segre’s more recent book is structured after a course he taught in American and European academic institutions, and represents a summary of his experiences and of the theses he has advanced in his long and notable career. For this reason, it has much didactic value. The book offers ten chapters/lessons, which are well illustrated with black-and-white photographs (the lack of color images is regrettable, however). They examine subjects such as the historical background of 20th-century architecture, the productive context of economic dependency, the configuration of the classical environmental system, the beginning of the modern era (with art nouveau and art deco), the development of regionalism (from neocolonialism to popular culture), the continuation of the modern movement, issues in urbanism (from symbolic form to user participation), the structures of social habitats, and, finally, the rescue and revitalization of historic urban centers which are so deteriorated in these countries.

Segre’s approach is quite different from that of other historians and in no way can be considered derisively as “sociological.” On the contrary, his book uses important concepts—such as “environ-

Internal view and ceiling plan of Aula Magna, the great hall, at Ciudad Universitaria, Caracas, Venezuela; Carlos Raúl Villanueva, 1952–53. (From *New Directions in Latin American Architecture*.)



SESC Leisure Center near the Fábrica da Pompéia, São Paulo, Brazil; Lina Bo Bardi, 1981–89. View of the footbridges linking the gymnasium and services towers. (From *Zodiac* 8.)



mental culture,” conceived by Fernando Salinas and Segre in Havana more than twenty years ago—which extend beyond narrow and one-sided visions of architecture. As Segre puts it:

The factors cited above [historic, cultural, and ecological contexts, et cetera], aside from the ups and downs of economic development and the existence of multiple cultural levels, establish an open concept of the architectural phenomenon, which is very different from a traditional, stylistically oriented approach that focuses solely upon formal and spatial qualities defined by dominant and outside parameters. That is why a dialectic interpretation of architecture is necessary in order to rise above traditional categorical oppositions, such as classicism vs. baroque, rationalism vs. regionalism, center vs. periphery. It is even more important to define both the general and specific circumstances of the processes that characterize environmental structures, and to evaluate their cultural significance in relation to the social groups with which they interact, according to symbolic codes and how they transform and integrate themselves within all levels of the society.

Many of the Latin American buildings and architects mentioned in the other publications also appear in *América Latina, Fin de milenio*. But Segre immerses them in their social, physical, and conceptual contexts, allowing a more objective and integral understanding of them—which does not mean that they escape criticism. Segre writes, for example, that “when a sophisticated vocabulary is used—due to formal complexity, technical virtuosity, or the presence of new images—this vocabulary must be accompanied by an educational process in order for it to be understood. If this does not happen, then the works become abstract sculptures . . . answers to astounding frivolities, and uncontrollable ambitions. Two perfect examples of this are the Malabrigo house by Jacques Bedel (1986), situated in the province of Entre Ríos, Argentina, and the ‘house in the crevice’ in

Bosque de las Lomas, Mexico City (1989), by Agustín Hernández.” Segre proceeds to make another vital point about the task of architecture: “A project proposal that is made for ‘the poor’ shows just how much distance lies between the mental images of architects and the reality of life in a society that, in most cases, does not know its own system of values, its own aesthetic structures, its own codes of behavior. This distance implies an antagonism that exists between architecture and life, between the object we call ‘house’ and what will later occur inside it.” Segre, unlike the other authors, penetrates all the corners of the issue related to Latin American architecture, without limiting himself to specific countries, regions, or social classes—an approach that is fundamental.

Enrique Browne, author of *Otra arquitectura en América Latina*, is an architect and writer from Chile who, like Segre, is a former recipient of a Guggenheim fellowship. While his book is not as up-to-date or as nicely produced as the others, its best asset is its search for a new thesis. (It also has abundant illustrations, some in color.) The book is a result of a field investigation that the author conducted between 1983 and 1984. This survey ranges from the beginning of modern architecture in Latin America to the work of the 1980s, concentrating on seven countries: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Mexico, Uruguay, and Venezuela. There is also an appendix of urban projects, which even includes the *falansterios*, or hippie communes, built in Chile and Argentina in the 1960s.

In the first chapter, entitled “Espíritu de época y espíritu del lugar” (Spirit of the times and spirit of region), Browne establishes the fundamental concepts of his thesis, making use of the thoughts of many notable figures (in a slightly disordered fashion, I might note), including Octavio Paz, Friedrich Hegel, Alfred Weber, Arturo Escobar, Pietri, Martin Heidegger, Nikolaus Pevsner, Henry Miller, and Richard Morse, among others. Browne sums up his argument: “The [architectural] phenomena, both physical and cultural, are given

the content is our existence. This does not mean that the character of every particular region must remain the same. On the contrary, it changes. But this does not imply that its 'spirit' will become diluted, since its experience is necessary for human life. It ought to be able to receive new meanings without losing its essence. It ought to be able to nurture them. The new content answers to the 'spirit of the times,' which permanently intersects with the 'spirit of the region.'" Browne believes that the evolution of contemporary Latin American architecture is suspended between these two axes, which are constantly in tension. This evolution can be plotted on a timeline, beginning with traditional societies and ending with World War II. During this time, the International and Neopopular" styles were dominant. The second part of the graph commences with the so-called "development decades" (the late 1940s and early 1950s) and ends with the regional and international crisis of 1965–75. Here, we find both "development architecture," then at its highest point, and "other," marginal architecture, each fed by the international modernist and neopopular trends. Finally, in the last part of the graph, which reflects the present, we find "other architecture" at its strongest, and the other types at their weakest.

*Otra arquitectura en América Latina* is based on this framework. Each style is analyzed and illustrated according to its most significant examples. Once again, we encounter works that are included in the other three books, but *Otra arquitectura* presents them within a unique method of classification.

And just what is the "other architecture" that is so important that it gives the book its name? Browne explains,

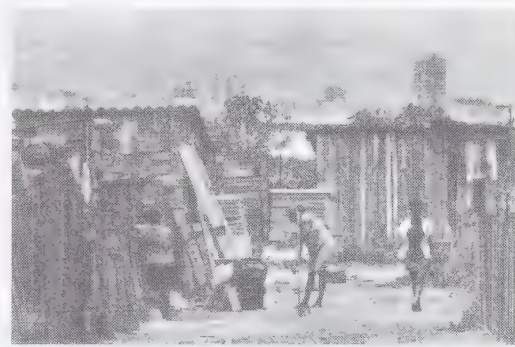
The "architecture of development" and the "other architecture" share the intention of re-elaborating the modern movement according to context. However, they profoundly differ in the interpretation of the traits and possibilities of such context. The [former] is an architectural song about the aspirations of socio-economical progress in Latin America, conducted mainly by the state. The "other architecture" consists of the more realistic and humble architectural proposals that have the bettering of the citizen's life in mind. This architecture takes into account the qualitative as well as quantitative aspects of development; it does not build for the state, or for the private sector, as the only possible engines for progress. It values above everything the efforts of the people themselves.

Browne mentions the following authors as the founders of this architecture, which integrates the "spirit of the times" with the "spirit of the region": José Barragán of Mexico heads the list, followed by Esteve of Uruguay (who, interestingly, was a career

engineer like Barragán); Rogelio Salmona of Colombia; Alberto Cruz Covarrubias of Chile; and Claudio Caveri of Argentina. Browne cites Alvar Aalto as a predecessor of this movement, pointing out that his creations in Finland, a country on the outskirts of Europe, successfully fused modernity with local context. (Nevertheless, we suspect that the intensive use of brick and the formal freedom that characterizes the Finnish master's oeuvre—which reminds us much of Dieste and Salmona—also have something to do with the matter.) Browne seems to forget, however, that Aalto did not build exclusively in his home country.

The "other architecture" thesis, which is shared today (with some minor differences) by a well-defined group of Latin American critics, derives value from its attempts to find an identity for the architecture of the region, at all costs. The weakness of this search lies in the extreme importance given to the formal aspects, the appearance, the aesthetics of buildings, and consequently, their existence out of context. This intense search for models is accompanied by extreme tendencies such as the "mythification" of figures like Barragán, who is sometimes perceived as a sort of "ascetic missionary" of architecture, although he himself recognized that he was a "businessman and a man of the world"—in other words, a real estate developer of aristocratic and provincial origins who, more than anything, wanted to raise the value of the land he urbanized. (And this is true for many of his works, including the Pedregal de San Ángel in Mexico City.)

These four books all fulfill the intentions with which they were conceived. The two books that were published in Europe and meant for broad audiences, Liernur's *América Latina* and Canella's *Zodiac 8*, are better designed and produced—and more expensive—than the two that were published in Latin America. Segre's *América Latina*, *Fim de milénio* and Browne's *Otra arquitectura en América Latina* speak to a more specialized audience (architecture students and professionals), and sport more modest appearances and price-tags. However, their valuable content is in no way compromised by their modesty. Still, none of these books adequately cover the so-called "architecture without architects," the humble, modest, rural, and urban architecture that houses most of the population of this subcontinent. Interestingly enough, it is this tradition that truly characterizes contemporary architecture in Latin America, more so than the well-publicized palaces of modernity and postmodernity. 🏠



Shanties in an urban environment; São Paulo, Brazil. Photograph by P. Gasparini. (From *Zodiac 8*.)

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SUSANA TORRE

## *Cultural Identity and Modernity in Latin American Architecture*

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*La interpretación de nuestra realidad conesque-  
mas ajenos sólo contribuye a hacernos cada vez  
más desconocidos, cada vez menos libres, cada  
vez más solitarios.*

The interpretation of our reality through pat-  
terns not our own serves only to make us  
ever more unknown, ever less free, ever more  
solitary.

—Gabriel García Márquez,  
Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech, 1982

During the past five years, there has been a  
flurry of Spanish-language publications on  
Latin American architecture.<sup>1</sup> This may seem  
surprising at first. The region has experienced  
uneven economic and urban development, with  
most building activities related to tourism, shop-  
ping, tax-free manufacturing zones, and interna-  
tional banking. Several Latin America countries  
have only recently emerged from civil wars, mili-  
tary repression, and economic stagnation or  
stagflation, while others (Colombia, Guatemala,  
Peru, and even Mexico) remain torn by violence.  
Dominican Joaquín Balaguer is the only Latin  
American president in recent years to personally  
embrace architecture as part of his political per-  
sona, seeking to build his political support by  
building housing for the poor, not to mention  
the most grandiose monument anywhere in the  
Americas: the Columbus Lighthouse, a huge  
cross-shaped memorial that consumes enough  
electrical power to illuminate Santo Domingo's  
still-darkened slums.

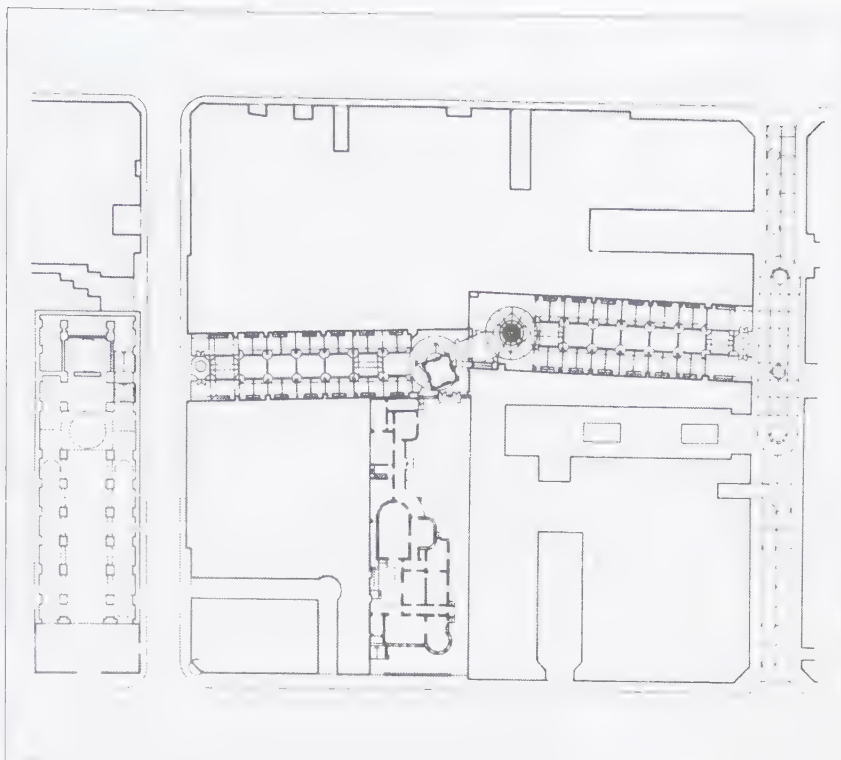
These publications—which include mono-  
graphs, historical documents, and several new  
student- or faculty-sponsored magazines—reflect  
the current vigorous debate over regional and  
cultural identity, and represent efforts to docu-  
ment and preserve Latin America's architectural  
heritage. The debate has been spurred by major  
tears in the urban fabric that have been occur-  
ring to make room for offices and highly visible  
spaces of consumption for the global economy.  
Imported typologies for huge shopping centers,  
resorts, and highrise hotels are often the only  
new construction of any importance in Latin  
America, and are usually rendered in banal mod-  
ern and postmodern styles. Thus, Latin American  
architects and critics rightly feel that local and  
foreign developers view their societies as inca-  
pable of their own cultural production.

Indeed, little of Latin America's recently real-

ized architectural and urban designs are known  
internationally. One exception is the work of  
Luis Barragán, which has been recognized in the  
United States since the early 1980s, and has  
opened the way for the work of other Mexican  
architects to be favorably received. Ricardo  
Legorreta is a notable example. His recent  
designs for office parks and resort hotels in the  
southwestern United States and Mexico have  
spatial sensibility and sense of light and color  
that derive from local traditions. This type of  
cross-fertilization, however, is rare. In most Latin  
American countries, local design and institu-  
tional traditions have little impact on the design lan-  
guage and building types of new construction.

The renewed debate on Latin American archi-  
tecture began with several key conferences and  
symposia held in the early 1980s. Among the  
initiators and those who remain the most active  
participants in the debate today are Marina  
Waisman and Ramón Gutiérrez of Argentina,  
Cristián Fernández Cox and Enrique Browne of  
Chile, Silvia Arango of Colombia, Mariano Arana  
of Uruguay, and Antonio Toca of Mexico.  
Through their exchanges, these critics and prac-  
titioners have sought to create the basis for  
regionalist architecture in their own countries  
and throughout Latin America.

In 1985 an international event gave the  
emerging regionalist discourse a symbolic reason  
to turn militant. That year, a biennial architec-  
tural exhibition and conference was sponsored  
in Buenos Aires by several architectural individ-  
uals and entities, including critic and cultural  
entrepreneur Jorge Glusberg, the long-estab-  
lished Argentine architectural magazine *SUMMA*,  
the national Society of Architects, and the gov-  
ernment-sponsored school of architecture. While  
the featured international personalities were  
staged in a major, centrally located theater, pre-  
sentations by Latin American architects occurred  
in a remote, marginally located university  
precinct. Several critics seized upon the sym-  
bolism of the disparity between the two locations  
and the resulting lack of dialogue as reason  
to summon the Biennial's audience to boycott the  
centrally located proceedings and to join instead  
the round-the-clock discussion on the margina-  
lity of Latin American culture. This confrontation  
has since been formalized in mutually exclusi-  
ve biennial gatherings—one focusing on the inter-  
national scene, the other on Latin America.  
Since in 1986, the Seminars on Latin American  
Architecture, known by their Spanish acronym  
*SAL*, have been rotated among various sites  
throughout the continent, without Glusberg's  
participation. The early discussions focused on  
questions of representation, as participants  
sought to define the distinguishing characteris-  
tics of Latin American architecture. In the

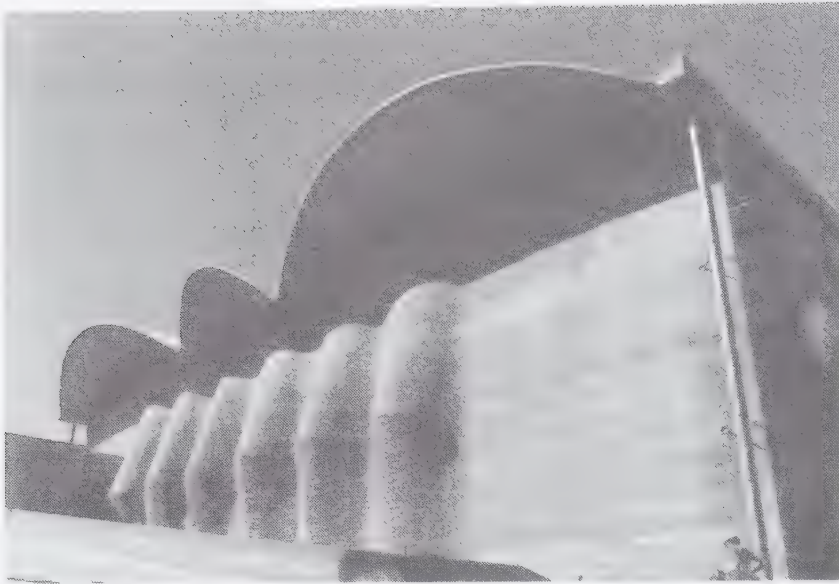


attempt to deduce a distinctive profile from an already existing body of historic and contemporary architectural works, two positions have gradually emerged: one advocates the defense of the historical past from destruction by greedy developers; the other supports the creation of a "new" design language, expressive of the local poverty of technological and material resources but capable of transcending these conditions. Mutual admonitions against "folklorism" and "cultural colonialism" reinforce the current essentialist turn of the debate.

The discussion of identity is closely associated with the belief that Latin American countries, burdened since the turn of the century by external debt and relegated in the international economy to the role of providing raw materials for foreign industrial production, never experienced modernization on their own terms, and only to the extent that was required of them to fulfill their role. Hence, whatever aesthetics of modernity were adopted by local intellectual and artistic elites could not be rooted in the facts of local social and cultural conditions. Because the experience of modernity is now perceived as vicarious and as a form of simulation, there is an intellectual drive for a redefinition of the experience and of the forms and images that create its enduring cultural presence. Fernández Cox coined the slogan that served to rally around regionalism, calling for both an "appropriate" and an "appropriated" modernity.<sup>2</sup> In Spanish, both meanings reside in a single word, *apropiada*. Examples of this approach make creative use of

local resources and means of production, while contributing fresh ideas, solutions, and forms through the critical appropriation—and transformation—of relevant foreign proposals, especially in relation to social housing, a major issue in Latin America. Fernández Cox, Waisman, and other critics in their camp reject the notion that "appropriateness" can be best—or even only—fulfilled by adhering to historical models. Instead, they seek to vindicate Latin America's right to its own modernity. This means creating imaginative, even original, responses to regional programs, local urban conditions, and artisan-based building technologies. The proliferation of shopping centers based on American suburban templates, plunking parking acreage in the middle of dense, tightly built urban fabrics, gives moral urgency to their stance. Such interventions, modeled on very different cultural and physical conditions, are destructive to Latin American cities, akin to the gutting of American urban centers by the construction of highways during the early 1960s. One example of critical appropriation, which occurs only rarely in Latin America, is a recently completed shopping center in Córdoba, Argentina. Faithful to the pedestrian quality of their city, architects Rosina Gramatica, Juan Carlos Guerrero, Jorge Morini, José Pisani, Eduardo Urtubey, and Juan Pisani located most of the parking on the roof and attached the building to an active commercial street through stores with both street and interior mall frontage. The mall has a window several stories high, an unusual feature that provides views of

Shopping mall in Córdoba, Argentina; Gramatica, Guerrero, Morini, Pisani, Urtubey, and Pisani, with José Ignacio Díaz; 1981–83. (From *Nueva arquitectura Argentina*.)



Brick-walled supermarket, Uruguay; Eladio Dieste, ca. 1959. (From *Eladio Dieste: La Estructura cerámica.*)

the city beyond. The exemplary insertion of this project into the urban fabric represents a major change in the typology of the shopping mall, yet this project remains an isolated example. If its innovations were validated internationally, it could influence the siting and design of the scores of shopping malls now being plunked down in urban centers throughout Latin America, which tend to have such disruptive social, urban, and aesthetic consequences.

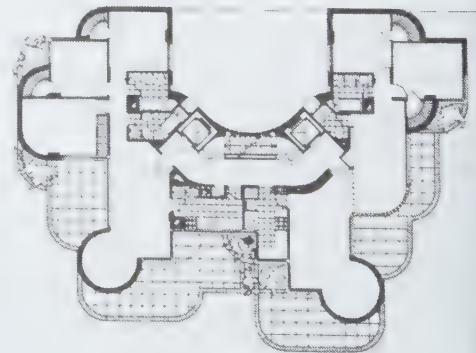
Earlier attempts to appropriate the language of architectural modernity in local terms include the work of Barragán, Cristián de Groote of Chile, Clorindo Testa of Argentina, and the architects of the so-called "white houses" near Buenos Aires, such as the ONDA group (Rafael Iglesia, Miguel Asencio, Carlos Fracchia, Jorge Garat, Lorenzo Gigli), Osvaldo Bidinost, Jorge Chute, Eduardo Ellis, and Claudio Caveri. The church Our Lady of Fátima in Martínez, designed by Caveri in 1956, inspired formal research that began to question the design orthodoxy of modern architecture concurrently with Le Corbusier's completion of *Nôtre Dame de Ronchamp*.<sup>3</sup>

During the last decade, the work of Rogelio Salmona of Colombia, Eladio Dieste of Uruguay, and Togo Díaz of Argentina has been praised as exemplary of the formal, cultural, and environmental concerns implicit in an "appropriated modernity." Salmona and Díaz are both in their sixties, and Dieste is seventy-five. All three architects acknowledge the influence of Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier, and Alvar Aalto, as well as the technology of local masonry construction. Their choice of plain brick as the primary cladding or, as in Dieste's case, as a structural material, is justified on rational and economic rather than aesthetic grounds: it is a cheap material that ages well and is impervious to urban pollution; moreover, brick construction is a

regional craft and a traditional, reliable source of labor for semi-skilled workers. The work of these three architects also shares a frugality of material means and possess a sensuous rather than reductive minimalism, with their curving and rotated geometries and use of light and shadow.

Dieste, who was trained as a structural engineer, is known for his designs of long-span brick vaults and water and telecommunications towers. His original, self-supporting vault designs built without tympana, were commissioned in order to serve as elemental shelter, market sheds, and bus stations in provincial Uruguayan towns and as open storage for agricultural products in the frontier zone between Brazil and Uruguay. Impressive as these structures are (despite the modesty of their materials), Dieste's reputation for his inspired designs was first established with his designs for two small brick churches in working-class districts. He considers the church he built in Atlántida in the late 1950s his "first work of architecture."<sup>4</sup> A pro bono project completed at the cost of \$3.50 per square foot, the building is a shell that is shaped by the doubly curved walls and roof. Dieste arrived at its structural dimensions with experimental rather than mathematical methods; calculations for the self-supporting roof vaults could not be approached analytically given the complexity of their surface. Although Dieste has extended the structural originality of this early work to his more recent and more ambitious structures, the Iglesia de Atlántida continues to be regarded as a potent example of the ability of the imagination to bypass the restrictions imposed by available knowledge and resources.

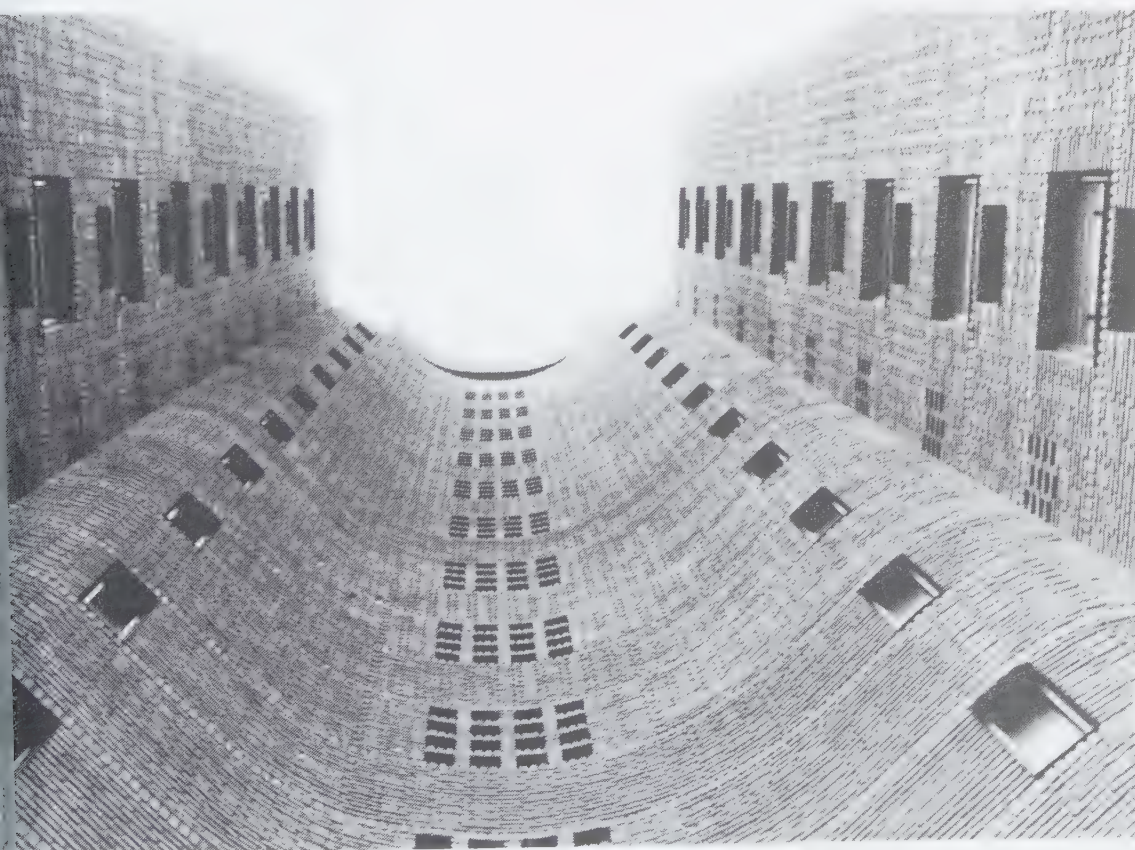
Díaz practices in Córdoba, Argentina's second largest city and the home of America's fourth oldest university, which was founded in 1621. Just beyond the colonial city center, Díaz has built more than one hundred and twenty residential buildings, all of them thirteen stories high (in accordance with the zoning limit) and clad with unfinished common brick. So significant



ent is their presence—for example, there are eighteen of them within four blocks of each other, located on choice city corners—that they have promoted a new urban vernacular. They have even influenced the zoning code, which now demands that corner buildings comply with the urban pattern established by Díaz. He is the co-owner of a development, construction, and financing corporation that produces apartment buildings for a middle-income clientele, and has 10 to ten buildings in construction simultaneously. Díaz has managed to turn the apparent limitations of working repeatedly with the same building type, lot dimensions, program, and materials into a challenge, developing a rich, transformative visual and tectonic language. His structures were among the first in the city to jump the scale from two and three stories to thirteen. Although they are infill buildings, their exposed sides are designed as a continuous skin. They act as towers, creating a counterpoint to the urban fabric below. Together, they form a new urban order that is respectful of urban continuity. One day, when the entire city reaches its maximum height, the sensuous, curved backs of some of Díaz's buildings will no longer be visible from the street. But at that point, if their tectonic and urbanistic qualities continue to influence other architects and builders, the civic mission he has invested in this typically speculative building type would be accomplished.

Salmona's professional career began under

the spell of an architectural discourse quite distant from Latin America, and reached maturity under the influence of local technologies and regionalist ideologies. Salmona interrupted his architectural studies in 1949 to follow Le Corbusier to Paris after his presentation in Bogotá of a master plan for the city. Salmona spent the next eight years working for Le Corbusier and attending Pierre Francastel's celebrated courses on the history of art at the Sorbonne. Marina Waisman and César Naselli have remarked that, after his return to Colombia in 1959, "Salmona could have become a European on American soil, a culturally displaced person, as happened to so many others under similar circumstances." That he instead came to be regarded as "a paradigm for Latin American architects" was due to his active role in proposing an architectural alternative to both neocolonial styles and international modernism as practiced by Brazilians Oscar Niemeyer and Affonso Eduardo Reidy.<sup>5</sup> Closer to the essentialist investigations of Hans Scharoun and Louis Kahn than to Le Corbusier's rationalism, Salmona's public, high-end residential buildings helped reestablish the presence of red brick (a material and color that had been associated with unfinished buildings in poor areas of the city) in Bogotá's modern skyline. Colombia has undertaken more preservation projects in the last decade than any other South American country, but it has also had the highest incidence of demolition of historic landmarks and



Floor plan (far left) and upward view of a residential building in Córdoba; José Ignacio Díaz, 1986. (From *Nueva arquitectura Argentina*.)

the most radical changes in the physiognomy of its major cities. Salmona's activist role as cofounder of the Foundation Pro-City and his civic crusade to promote the idea of architecture and urban space as "public property" have been celebrated in regional conferences and in a major exhibition at the Centre Georges Pompidou, but the impact of his legacy on younger architects is difficult to assess.

In spite of the current critical debate, most Latin American architects and students mimic the dominant international styles in their work, as is evident from the 1992 Latin American Architectural Biennial in Quito and the 1993 International Biennial in Buenos Aires. This demonstrates the reach of the international cultural centers, which is often strengthened by the architects' postgraduate experiences in the United States. These architects typically pursue their higher education when they are in their early-to-mid-30s, and usually return to their home countries to join the faculties of their local universities. Their own identities expanded by these new experiences, they regard the regionalists' insistence on local culture as folkloric and marginal to current discourse. Furthermore, the generation of architects that would have followed that of Díaz and Salmona—professionals in their mid-40s and early 50s—was decimated in both Chile and Argentina by the loss of talent due to military, political, and economic exile. Nevertheless, members of this "lost generation" have designed some of the most imaginative projects of the past decade. Two projects whose ad hoc solutions suggest larger possibilities and contexts are the Open City, an ongoing project begun in 1969, built in the dunes near Viña del Mar, Chile, and the Center for Biblical Studies in Olivos, Argentina, by Mederico Faivre and Norma Román (1988).<sup>6</sup>

The Open City—the work of a cooperative of architects and poets which includes Carlos Covarrubias, Fabio Cruz, Boris Ivelic, and Juan

Mastrantoni—is an experiment in collective creativity and in building outside "the context of power," without institutional or financial support. Initiated as a summer project by a group of faculty members from the architecture department at the Catholic University of Valparaíso, the evolving program and configuration of the Open City are decided upon in public meetings and originate in poetic acts. The sand floor of the square at the entrance of the complex is constantly moistened by sprinklers, in order to record the changing imprint of feet and tires. The typologies include so-called *agoras*, or open spaces where decisions are made; *palaces*, or buildings for public rituals such as sharing meals, watching movies, or having parties; and *hostels*, or domestic lodgings for residents and visitors. Construction of the structures proceeds bit by bit, as cooperative members are able to contribute time and resources. The forms have evolved from the light, wind, and sand, and are rendered in inexpensive sun-dried brick, wood, and particle board.

Faivre and Román's School for Biblical Studies was commissioned by an evangelical priest who had set up a mission in a long-established shantytown outside Buenos Aires. Evangelical missions with their emphasis on unmediated religious experiences and community development, are gaining on the Catholic church in Latin America and are particularly attractive to the poor. The project involved the expansion and complete transformation of a former manufacturing shed and its multiple accretions over a forty-year period. Severe financial restraints require the reuse of existing conditions to a degree that would be unimaginable in the United States because of the labor-intensive procedures, such as using ground-up, demolished materials in the new construction. A project of this nature, even in so-called underdeveloped countries, would be considered too hopeless to embody architectural aspirations. Instead, the architects sought to create an aesthetic for what they call "an architecture of adversity," relying on the members of the congregation and other shantytown dwellers to accomplish with hard labor what could not be bought with money. This building's brick-laged aesthetic is a hybrid of grittiness and restraint, of vernacular accumulation and cultured discipline. Because of their insistence on making forms and spaces out of adverse conditions, these projects may help redirect the discourse on regional identity toward questions about social empowerment and ecological responsiveness.

In some respects, the debate on cultural identity resembles the search for regional identity in California architects a hundred years ago. There, too, "identity" was defined as a form of res-

Entrance to the Open City, a *hospederia* designed and built by a collective of architects and poets, near Viña del Mar, Valparaíso, Chile; 1981–present. (From ARS: *Revista Latinoamericana de Arquitectura/Chile* 11.)





ance to the controlling cultural centers—which, at the time for Californians meant New York and Boston, which themselves took their cultural cues from London and Paris.<sup>7</sup> And in California men, as in Latin America now, the hegemonic centers' dominant styles—Beaux Arts then, modernism and postmodernism now—dictated the standard to be appropriated and transformed. In the contemporary Latin American debate, the insistence on a Latin American framework is itself indicative of its *reactive* character. The more the region's architects seek to define what is common to all their countries, the more they are forced to focus on their economic and cultural dependence on a "First World" led by the United States. Also, when they attempt to promote a generic "Latin Americanness" with an excessive emphasis on representation, they obscure the ecological and historical conditions specific to each country and region. Such approaches thus miss the opportunity to develop culturally independent proposals for all scales of the environment, whether creating original forms and finding the means to preserve natural ecosystems and provide social housing, or developing an infrastructure with up-to-date technologies and establishing service and educational centers for destitute populations.

In recent times, a handful of younger, well-established participants in the debate have attempted to leave essentialist arguments behind and to engage such issues as the fragmentation of Western cultural discourses, the growing acceptance of difference, the polymorphousness of postmodern identity, and the status of the object in the context of electronic imaging.<sup>8</sup> In the time, these efforts may succeed in expanding the exclusive definition of Latin American architectural culture that still structures the debate. As of yet, the definition excludes many voices, most notably those of women and of the

vast *mestizo* populations, whose private and public experiences and their corresponding spatial manifestations remain unrecorded and untheorized. ■

"Los Olivos" Center for Biblical Studies, Buenos Aires, Argentina; Mederico Faivre and Norma Román, 1988. (From *ARS: Revista Latinoamericana de Arquitectura/Chile* 11.)

#### NOTES

1. A notable exception in English is the excellent book by architect Jorge Rigau, *Puerto Rico 1900: Turn-of-the-Century Architecture in the Hispanic Caribbean 1890–1930* (New York: Rizzoli, 1992).
2. Cristián Fernández Cox, "Modernidad apropiada en América Latina," *ARS: Revista Latinoamericana de Arquitectura/Chile* 11 (July 1989). See also Marina Waisman's essay in the same issue of *ARS*, as well as *SUMMARIO* 134, "Identidad y modernidad" (Buenos Aires: Ediciones SUMMA, 1990), which contains essays on this topic by Waisman, Silvia Arango, and Hugo Segawa (who provides a Brazilian perspective of the debate).
3. For a recent assessment of the "white houses" near Buenos Aires, see "Las Casas blancas: El Tiempo reencontrado," *SUMMA* 231 (November 1986), and especially the essay by Rafael Iglesias, "Nuestra Señora de Fátima: Lo Propio y lo ajeno y, de yapa, algo sobre las casas blancas."
4. Eladio Dieste: *La Estructura cerámica* (Bogotá: Colección SomoSur, 1987).
5. Marina Waisman and César Naselli, *10 Arquitectos latinoamericanos* (Seville: Consejería de Obras Públicas y Transportes, 1989). The introduction by Waisman and Naselli provides an excellent overview of the debate.
6. Both projects are discussed in *ARS: Revista Latinoamericana de Arquitectura/Chile* 11 (July 1989).
7. Susana Torre, "En Busca de una identidad regional: Evolución de los estilos misioneros y neocolonial hispano en California entre 1880 y 1930," in Amaral Aracy, ed., *Arquitectura neocolonial* (São Paulo: Fondo de Cultura Económica/Fundación Memorial, 1994).
8. *Modernidad y posmodernidad en América Latina*, Silvia Arango, ed. (Bogotá: Escala, 1991). This collection includes essays by Fernández Cox, Browne, and Waisman, among others. Waisman's essay is of particular interest, as is the Working Paper of the Second Iberian-American Congress on Regional Architecture, held in Santa Fe, Argentina, in September 1993.

RAMÓN GUTIÉRREZ

## Architectural Journals and the Means for Discourse in Latin America

Translated from the Spanish by Richard Ingersoll

To obtain a history of contemporary architecture in Latin America requires an examination of the contents of architectural magazines published since the beginning of this century. This does not imply that periodicals could replace the unimpeachable testament of the works themselves, but these sources offer the best access to the theoretical outline that guides the works, the major ideas of their creators, and quite often the basic materials used for study or preparation (plans, original photos, and earlier projects). Periodicals are also useful for their mixture of theoretical texts, criticism, records of competitions, unbuilt projects, debates, and manifestos. They constitute a substantial portion of architectural culture at any given historical moment. There are also many books that could at least partially duplicate this documentary function, and in recent decades there have been forays into other types of media as well, such as television programs, videos, and regular newspaper columns devoted to architecture.

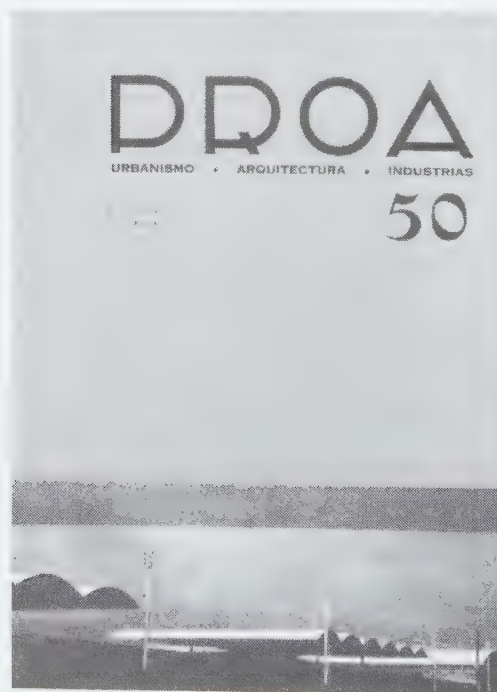
The widening universe of architectural magazines presents distinct points of origin that show varying points of view over time. There are four types of architectural magazines published in Latin America. Those that have survived the longest are typically sponsored by the profession-

al associations of their respective countries. The oldest continuing magazine in Latin America is *La Revista de Arquitectura* of the Sociedad de Arquitectos del Uruguay, founded in 1914, followed by *Arquitectura Cuba* of the Unión de Arquitectos e Ingenieros, in print since 1917. *La Revista de Arquitectura* of the Sociedad Central de Arquitectos de Buenos Aires was published from 1911 until 1962, and recently resumed publication under the same name. Another type of magazine which forms the biggest group, emerges from the architecture schools of universities. In general these publications have a more ephemeral life due to the instability of their editorial staffs, who graduate or move on new positions. A third type of magazine is funded through private organizations and study centers. The lives of these publications tend to be fairly tenuous, as they are tied to uncertain financing. And finally there are commercial magazines sustained by corporate publishers, which are characterized by their large print runs and wide circulation. The continuity and frequency of these publications are connected to the market and their ability to adapt to it.

The above summary is derived from a study recently completed on eighty-five architectural magazines in Latin America and helps to distinguish the various modalities of magazines.<sup>1</sup> The study reveals the way in which these magazines influence and reflect the architectural thought of this century. Institutional magazines with captive audiences (i.e., the members of their organizations) generally follow architectural fashion eclectically, unless the organizations' leaders have strong ideological positions, in which case the magazine may assume combative positions and include avant-garde contradictions to the professional status quo. But such magazines may also, in the other extreme, represent only the prevailing positions or trends.

These magazines reveal important processes of change: for example, the student initiative's imposition of neocolonial tastes on *Revista de Arquitectura* (Buenos Aires, 1915) early this century; or the transformation in 1960 of *Arquitectura Cuba* after the Cuban Revolution. Commercial publications probably best reflect the cultural initiatives of contemporary architecture. The first theoretical movement for *el colonial* to confront the academicism of Beaux Arts was expressed in *El Arquitecto* (Buenos Aires) in 1920–25. This movement was subsequently redirected into the "mission style" or "Californianism" through the direct influence of North American magazines and *Casas y Jardines* (Buenos Aires, 1937).

Rationalist thought was diffused through short-lived publications such as *Tecné* (Buenos Aires, 1942–44) and other, more enduring publications such as *Nuestra Arquitectura* (Buenos Aires, 1929–83), which also initiated discussion on ma-



Issue 50 of *Proa* (August 1951), a Bogotá-based magazine launched in 1946, announcing the arrival of modernism. (Courtesy: UC Berkeley Environmental Design Library.)

housing. Around this latter theme emerged *El Arquitecto Peruano* (Lima, 1938–64), founded by Fernando Belaundé Terry, who was twice elected the president of his country, underlining the importance that the magazine had played in approaching the problem of housing and in defining the collective work and “popular action” of the country’s poor inhabitants.

The definitive presence of the modern movement in Latin America was captured in *Integral* (Caracas, 1955–57), *Acropole* (San Pablo, 1950–80), *Habitat* (Sao Paulo, 1950–80), *Proa* (Bogotá, 1946), *Arquitectura* (Mexico, 1938–72), *A* (Caracas, 1954–55), *Nueva Vision* (Buenos Aires, 1955–58), *Arquitectura y Planificación* (La Paz, 1947–48), *Espacios* (Mexico, 1952–56), *Arquitectura y Construcción* (Santiago de Chile, 1945–50), and *Arquitectura de Hoy*, the Spanish edition of *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui* (Buenos Aires–Paris, 1947–49). These periodicals expressed the ideas of the Latin American pioneers of modernism, including Carlos Raúl Villanueva and Jorge Romero Gutiérrez of Venezuela, Mario Pani of Mexico, Tomás Maldonado of Argentina, Emilio Villanueva of Bolivia, Lina Bo Bardi of Brazil, and Carlos Martínez of Colombia. *Módulo* (Rio de Janeiro, 1955), founded by Oscar Niemeyer, represents a special case, as it served to disseminate information on his work at Brasília and promote the career of its founder.

During the 1960s, commercial publications opened new thematic areas. Some were solid enterprises such as *Punto* (Caracas, 1961) and *SUMMA* (Buenos Aires, 1963–93), which combined information with criticism. Under the direction of Marina Waisman, *SUMMA* issued several thematic monographs and a series of supplements on theory and criticism, entitled *Cuadernos SUMMA–Nueva Vision*, and, the highest expression of this genre, *Summarios*. In 1962 the Bogotá-based book publisher Escala launched a line of thematic monographic magazines with inserted portfolios that have become magazines in themselves. The theoretical debate has been further enhanced by *Cuadernos de Escala*, published by *Proa* in Colombia. *AUCA* (Santiago de Chile, 1965), a private commercial enterprise, and the university-affiliate *Arquitectura Autogobierno* (Mexico, 1976). Both are involved with universities, and are of ideological importance.

Other, related professional fields have been integrated into the architectural discourse through a dynamic process. With regards to the historic plan, there is *Anales* of the Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, UNAM (Mexico, 1938), and the research of the Instituto de Arte Americano (Buenos Aires, 1948). To this tradition could be added *Boletín* by the Centro de Investigaciones Históricas (Caracas, 1964–86), *Apuntes* (Bogotá, 1975), and *Documentos de Arquitectura Nacional y Americana*, or *DANA* (Resistencia, 1973), which

covers issues related to urban history and the preservation of the historic patrimony. (*DANA* is noteworthy for its “Atila” prize, bestowed annually to the project that has done the most damage to Latin American architectural culture.)

Regarding the debate on ecology and the environment, the magazines *A-Ambiente* (La Plata, 1977), *Boletín de Medio Ambiente y Urbanización* (Buenos Aires, 1982), and *Arquitectura del Paisaje* (Bogotá, 1990) signal an important turn toward interdisciplinary thought. The pioneering *Urbanismo y Arquitectura* (Santiago de Chile, 1939–48) was among the first publications to approach urbanism and planning, topics that were expanded upon by university magazines such as *Urbana* (Caracas, 1982), *Rua* (Salvador-Bahía, 1988), and *EURE* (Santiago de Chile, 1974). Moreover, many publications devoted to graphic, textile, or industrial design began to annex the topic of architecture, as in the case of *Diseño UAM* (Mexico, 1983) and *Diseño* (Santiago de Chile, 1987).

The magazines with the largest circulation, such as *Projeto* (São Paulo, 1977) and *CA* of the Colegio de Arquitectos de Chile (Santiago, 1968) are sufficiently broad in scope to include theoretical texts, presentation of works, institutional news, and architectural criticism. They generally do not endorse trends; rather, they eclectically express the image of current architectural production. Some commercial and university publications also cover a wide range of work and ideas. Some examples are *Trama* (Quito, 1982), *ARQ* (Santiago de Chile, 1980), *Arquitecturas del Sur* (Concepción, 1983), *AU* (Sao Paulo, 1985), *A-U* (Havana, 1990), *SVA-CAV* (Caracas, 1961), *El Arqa* (Montevideo, 1991), *ARS* (Santiago de Chile, 1977), *Hito* (Bogotá, 1984), *Tra-*

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**PUNTO**



*Punto*, which commenced publication in 1961, was both a commercial and critical enterprise, published by the Facultad de Arquitectura y Urbanismo at the Universidad Central de Venezuela. (Courtesy: UC Berkeley Environmental Design Library.)

AUCA (*Arquitectura Urbanismo Construcción Arte*), from Santiago de Chile, enhanced the theoretical debate with its appearance in 1965. (Courtesy: UC Berkeley Environmental Design Library.)



zo (Montevideo, 1979), and *Arquitectura Boliviana* (Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 1988). Now-defunct magazines that fulfilled similar roles include *Trama* (Buenos Aires, 1983–90), *Arquitectura* (Rio de Janeiro, 1961–69), *Calli* (Mexico, 1959–70), *Arquitectos Mexicanos* (Mexico, 1960–68), *Cota Cero* (Asunción, 1978–83), and *Habitar* (San José de Costa Rica, 1976–92).

Architectural publishing today is substantially different than it was in the past insofar as there now exists a certain *esprit de corps* among Latin American magazines that allows them to collaborate and to collectively emphasize Latin American architecture. Many magazines collaborate (like *CA* and *Trama*) or participate in common events and meetings, such as the *Seminarios de Arquitectura Latinoamericana* (SAL) and the biennial exhibitions of Quito and Santiago. All of this has contributed to widening communication and forging solidarity among architectural magazines, which establishes a unique condition: the capacity to work from a common base and the coincidence of themes in the dissemination of architectural culture.

The notorious vacuum that grew around Latin American culture in the 1970s was reversed by a frankly “Latin Americanist” interest in the decade that followed. The recuperation of ecological themes and the search for appropriate technologies, the question of cultural identity and the preoccupation with historic patrimony were consolidated into debates occurring at the heart of the profession and of architectural education. As a result, architectural magazines broadened their coverage of urban matters, which had previously been confined to specialized publications. More editorial attention was given to urban and envi-

ronmental issues, where the impact of design on urban developments is evident. Magazine columns were filled with criticism of large-scale real estate developments, the passive role of municipalities in the construction of cities, the deterioration of public space, the lack of concern for the common good. It is probable that this publishing activity subtly discouraged, either by omission or discontinuity, the debate surrounding postmodernism and deconstructivism, which the publications recognized to be frivolous and ephemeral.

In constructing an architectural culture that is both autonomous and universalist, there has been a tendency on the part of publications to privilege a precise understanding of Latin American reality and the spirit of place. But rather than universalize and abstract modernity, the idea of an “appropriate modernity” resonates with many in this phase of critical reflection. The idea of regionalism was then dragged into the debate, and persists to this day. This interjection of social consciousness into professional reality is no doubt conditioned by the region’s urgent structural problems, such as notoriously unresolved housing issues and other social, educational, and cultural concerns.

The appetite for lush images, the power of graphic illustrations, and the sensibility toward an architecture that pretends to represent local variations of First World buildings have undermined, to a certain extent, the coverage of social themes central to Latin American reality. This contradiction between a heightened preoccupation with the continental reality of Latin America and the omission of the ideology of its social aspects clearly signals that it is impossible to nurture a cultural consciousness when confronted with the alienating banalities of the architectural jet set. The architectural magazines, with their diverse origins and goals, continue to present the diverse facets of the field, standing as a witness to the debate of our times.

Architectural magazines continue to be the central source for disseminating architectural discourse in Latin America, but unfortunately, they still fail to carry the discussion to a wide public, even if the quantity of books on Latin American architecture grows each year, exceeding one hundred titles annually from Latin American publishers alone. In any case, it is clear that architectural magazines are essential to our understanding of the architecture of this century. ■

#### NOTES

1. Ramón Gutiérrez and Marcelo Martín, “Bibliografía Iberoamericana de revistas de arquitectura y urbanismo,” Instituto Español de Arquitectura, Alcalá de Henares, 1993.

A mirror effect prevails in the European view of Latin American architecture. The image that appears in the mirror is mimetic at first, and hence weak in comparison to its model. Spain's colonial rule resulted in the direct transmission of formal archetypes, both urban and architectural, which were modified according to regional conditions and the practical experiences of the colonists. This combination of elite theory, imported from Spain, with popular, local practice made it impossible for the prescribed canons to remain fixed in the stylistic sequence familiar to the history of art. Hence, the initial mimetic impression gives way to another image: the omnipresence of local cultural traditions—the handicrafts and creativity of the indigenous peoples of America, for example—progressively distanced the new reality from that of its metropolitan prototypes.

For some time, and even in recent texts such as Graziano Gasparini's *América: Barroco y arquitectura* (Caracas: Armitano, 1972), these discrepancies were interpreted in terms of variations on themes, provincialism, or the unworthiness of the established representational orthodoxy. In the search for the purification of the image, there has been little interest in discovering an architecture based on the liberal interaction between formal codes and indigenous decorative traditions. There emerged, however, generation of historians—including Diego Angulo Iniguez, Joaquin Weiss, George Kubler, Marco Dorta, Salvador Toscano, Mario J. Buschiazzo, Germain Bazin, Manuel Tussaint—who recognized the value of the Aztec, Maya, and Inca heritage, and thus interpreted the unique direction of Hispanic-American monuments, with their own virtues and deficiencies, as an expression of a regional identity within a universal culture.<sup>1</sup>

With the independence from Spain in the 19th century came the development of a new level of mimetism. The new paradigms were borrowed from the industrialized nations: England, France, Germany, and the United States. The coherence that had been established during the slow period of colonialism became fragmented by the acceleration of the historic process, which included the balkanization of the continent, the formation of separate liberal states, the tides of immigration, the growth of cities, and the rise of cultural avant-gardes. As a consequence, the environmental unity of the previous three centuries was disrupted, and the dialectical articulation between the high culture of the profession and vernacular knowledge disappeared. Cities in Latin America became polarized, with two opposing levels: either professional designers attempted to represent the symbolic universe of the bourgeoisie, or anonymous popular impulses defined urban form in direct response to users' needs.

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ROBERTO SEGRE

## *The Sinuous Path of Modernity in Latin America*

Translated from the Spanish by Richard Ingersoll

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Architects and urbanists, both local and foreign, looked into the mirror of modern progress and saw multiple reflections of forms and spaces. In little more than a century there was a rapid succession of movements—art nouveau, art deco, modernism and its various alternatives, postmodernism, and deconstructivism. The image of architecture is now clearly framed: the reproduction is itself the model. A work that is diluted in the metropolis reappears resplendently in the suburbs. It is akin to the spread of advanced 19th-century building technologies, such as the prefabricated metal structures that originated at world's fair exhibitions in England and France and reappeared in the form of such buildings as the Biblioteca Schroeder in Fort de France, Martinique, by Henri Picq (1889), and Colegio Metálico in San José de Costa Rica (1890s).

Within the modern movement, different locales developed their own personalities, converting modernism into an alternative to the hegemonic model of the First World; today they are *primus inter pares*. Luis Barragán and Oscar Niemeyer were awarded Pritzker Prizes. Nikolaus Pevsner bestowed major recognition upon Clorindo Testa for his Bank of London in Buenos Aires in the 1960s by including it in his otherwise Eurocentric history of modern architecture. But while historians Bruno Zevi, Leonardo Benevolo, Manfredo Tafuri, Michel Ragon, and Gillo Dorfles treat Latin America marginally in their texts, they still do not clarify its presence in their global visions of architecture, hence multiplying the reflections in the cultural mirror.

The canonical interpretation of the course of contemporary architecture in Latin America has been reduced to a few personalities and works that embody the rationalist language and its later ramifications. Le Corbusier's presence in Buenos Aires, Montevideo, and Rio de Janeiro in 1929 provided one point of departure for a flowering of creative ideas attributable to a group of faithful collaborators at Le Corbusier's office at rue de Sevres. They include Roberto Dávila, Emilio Duhart, Germán Samper, Justino Serralta, Rogelio Salmona, Jorge Ferrari Hardoy, and Teodoro González de León. And there were many talented sympathizers as well, such as Niemeyer, Barragán, Lúcio Costa, Antonio Bonet, Carlos Raúl Villanueva, João Vilanova Artigas, Juan O'Gorman, Gregory Warchavchik, and Wladimiro Acosta.

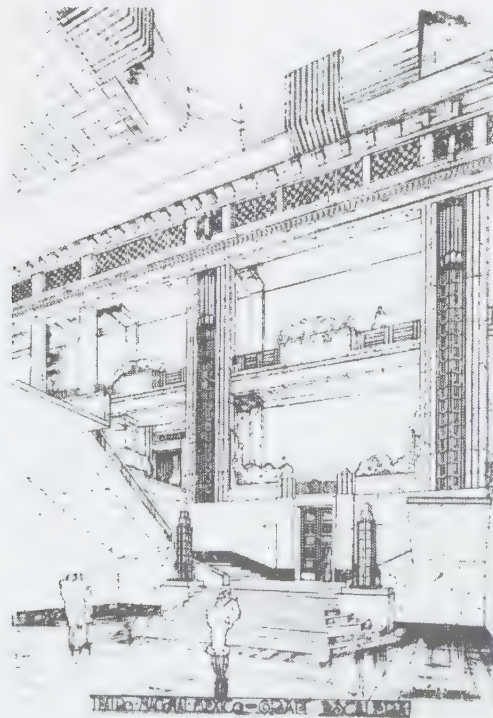
The paradigm that reduced the modern architecture of Latin America to a few, select projects

Etching of Plaza Mayor of La Paz, Bolivia, by P. Olivares, 1780. Based on the Spanish model, its gridded urban plan is representative of the homogenous look of colonial cities. (From *Nueva arquitectura en América Latina: Presente y futuro.*)



persists to this day. It includes: the Ministry of Education and Culture in Rio de Janeiro by Le Corbusier, Costa, Niemeyer, and others; the studio for Diego Rivera by O'Gorman in Mexico City; the bridge house on Mar del Plata (near Buenos Aires) by Amancio Williams; the Ciudad Universitaria in Caracas by Villanueva; Barragán's own home in Tacubaya; the United Nations building in Santiago by Duhart; the Torres del Parque (Park Tower) in Bogotá, Colombia, by Salmons; and, of course, the city of Brasília, by Costa and Niemeyer. This vision of the archetypes of modernity, initiated in Alberto Sartoris' *Encyclopédie de l'architecture nouvelle* (1954), remains strong: this static rationalist canon was recently confirmed again, in *Functional Architecture: The International Style, 1925–40* (Cologne: Taschen, 1990), which recapitulates the contents of Henry-Russell Hitchcock's 1955 catalog for the New York Museum of Modern Art's exhibit, *Latin American Architecture Since 1945*, as well as the panoramic study by Francisco Bullrich entitled *Arquitectura latinoamericana 1930–1970* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1970).

The art deco–styled Palacio de Belles Artes, Mexico City; Federico Mariscal, 1934. Art deco was an instrument of transition, capable of representing modernity as well as indigenous iconography. (From *La Arquitectura de la revolución mexicana.*)



The closed structure of this sort of analysis was finally overcome by the monumental work of Ramón Gutiérrez, *Arquitectura y urbanismo en Ibero-américa* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1983). This book is the first study to discuss the modern movement within the course of historical events, covering both antecedents and consequences. Even if Gutiérrez overestimates the architecture of the present century and minimizes the significance of the intermediary movements—that is, those between the colonial period and the rehabilitation of tradition implied in current tendencies—he allows readers to see the repetition in the mirror, the game of refrac-

tion in which the unknown begins to usurp the position of the real image. The supposed mimetic act is transformed into local creativity, an adjustment to natural and social contexts, a reinterpretation of syncretic cultural values, a synthesis of the multiple interactions of ideas and concepts. He takes into account the importance of contemporary historians of Latin American architecture who have assumed the difficult task of broadening the experience of each country in order for a more mature, complete perception of the continent's built environment to evolve. A clear example of this new multifocal perspective is the collective, two-volume work directed by Jorge Francisco Liernur, entitled *Diccionario histórico de arquitectura: Hábitat y urbanismo en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Instituto de Arte Americano e Investigaciones Estéticas, FADU, 1992).

Architecture is part of a legible process in the urban structure, from the continuance of the orthogonal grid promoted by the Law of the Indies (which would be obsolete today in the face of the complex necessities of the city), to the adoption of Baron Haussmann's planning system of foci and axes, applied by French technicians who traveled to Latin America to design for the anticipated growth of its capitals. Among these technicians were Joseph Antoine Bouvard in Buenos Aires, Norbert Maillart in Montevideo, J.-C.-N. Forestier in Havana, Alfred Agache in Rio de Janeiro, and Maurice Rotival in Caracas. Their proposals were quite distinct from mechanical transpositions of preconceived schemes; rather they adapted to the historical personality of each city. For instance, it would be impossible to situate an urban image such as Buenos Aires' Avenida de Mayo in cities like Paris, London, or Madrid; the same is true of the Avenida Central in Rio de Janeiro or the Avenida Bolívar in Caracas and the Paseo del Prado in Havana. The subtle equilibrium between the past and the future achieved in the project by Pedro Bénioit for La Plata (1884), the splendid capital of the province of Buenos Aires affects a synthesis between the local Cartesian grid and the diagonal traces of European provinance.<sup>2</sup> These configurations foretell and condition successive "modern" initiatives: Le Corbusier maintains the system of axes and diagonals applied by Bouvard in the *plan directeur* for Buenos Aires and finds points of coincidence with Agache in his perspective vision for Rio. In his plan for Havana, José Luis Sert gives hierarchical significance to green spaces, a strategy imagined earlier by Forestier in 1930.<sup>3</sup>

In architecture, however, such interactions are more complex. Discourses of European avant-gardes were always filtered through historical introspection. In Latin America there was a triangular relationship between neocolonialism, art deco, and rationalism, which represented three

levels of the adaptation of a symbolic language to a new social and cultural reality. Neocolonialism conformed to the question of academic historicism, and coincided with the search for national roots among professionals. Art deco established a vocabulary of transition, assimilated by a wider range of society and capable of representing eclecticism and the avant-garde. The repertory of modernist white boxes was quickly adopted by the intellectual elite, such as the aristocratic Victoria Ocampo of Argentina, who commissioned a "modernist" house from Alejandro Bustillo.

The different levels of meaning in Latin American architecture weave a complex web of asymmetrical relations that disrupts the direct mirror image. To understand this new history it is necessary to submerge oneself in an unreal labyrinth, like the fun-house mirrors of Coney Island. Here, extremes are merged and antithetical positions united. Is it an accident that the revival of tradition proposed by Argentines Martin Noel and Angel Guido and the "vernacular" projects such as the Errásuriz House or Villa Mathes by Le Corbusier are considered antagonistic? Is it possible to understand the identity between the architectural avant-garde and the Mexican Revolution only through the coupling of the names Juan O'Gorman and Hannes Meyer, without accounting for the laborious transition brought to the local language by Barragán? Both Brazil and Mexico possess illuminating examples of the dialectical relationship between tradition and innovation, between the assimilation of metropolitan currents and the internal process of distilling the historical heritage.

In Brazil, the purism of the 1927 "modernist house" by Gregory Warchavchik in São Paulo contrasts greatly with the first neocolonial works of Costa, or the search for metaphorical roots in primitive societies by Flavio de Carvalho. A polemical attitude of "heterodoxy" flourishes in Brazilian culture, as is evident in the baroque references made in Niemeyer's works in Pampulha in Belo Horizonte. In Mexico, various protagonists were responsible for effecting the renunciation of symbolism in governmental social works, including Carlos Obregón Santacilia and Federico Mariscal, both of whom navigated a difficult search for national environmental identity. Compared to the cosmopolitanism of work that emerged during Porfirio Díaz's regime, the neocolonialism of the Benito Juárez school represented the synthesis between indigenous tradition and Hispanic culture.<sup>4</sup> Confronted with the need to address a monumental scale, as illustrated in Obregón's Monument to the Revolution (1933) and Mariscal's interior for the Palace of Fine Arts (1932), art deco became the appropriate instrument because it was close to the modern movement while capable of assimilating indigenous iconography.

With the modern movement, the new social



Remodel of the central office of the National Bank of Mexico (Banamex), Mexico City; Teodoro González de León, with Abraham Zabudovsky, 1986–88. (From *México: Nueva arquitectura*.)

content of architecture, now oriented to the needs of the lower classes, definitively established a language of the avant-garde that was based more on necessity, function, and economics than on aesthetic preconceptions. When Meyer arrived in Mexico in 1938, the terrain was already fertile for local professionals.<sup>5</sup> Already, the mirror could not reflect a repertory of imported forms without adding the bitter reality of the Third World. Contemporary theory of Latin American architectural history has progressively dismantled the vision of a linear trajectory—of imitating modernity—to show the clear existence and internal structure of the region's architectural production, apart from all the mirror images of European models. In the universal dimension, Latin American architecture possesses its own distinct personality, with diverse and infinite facets that still need to be discovered and revealed. ■

#### NOTES

1. This position is nicely summed up in *Historia del arte colonial sudamericano* by Damian Bayón and Murillo Marx (Barcelona: Ediciones Polígrafa, 1989).
2. See Julio A. Morosi and Fernando de Terán, *La Plata: Ciudad nueva, ciudad antigua* (Madrid: Instituto de Estudios de Administración Local, 1983).
3. See Roberto Segre, *Arquitectura antillana del siglo XX* (Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Xochimilco, 1993).
4. See Enrique X. de Anda Alanís, *La Arquitectura de la revolución mexicana* (Mexico: UNAM, 1990).
5. See Rafael López Rangel, *La Modernidad arquitectónica mexicana* (Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Azcapotzalco, 1989).

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MARINA WAISMAN

*An Architectural Theory for Latin America*

Translated from the Spanish by Richard Ingersoll

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ARQUITECTURA LATINO-AMERICANA: PENSAMIENTO Y PROPUESTA, various authors, Instituto Argentino de Investigaciones de Historia de la Arquitectura, *SUMMA*, and Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (Mexico City), 1991, 268 pp., illus.

IV ENCUENTRO DE ARQUITECTURA LATINO-AMERICANA, TLAXCALA, various authors, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (Mexico City), 1989, illus.

MODERNIDAD Y POSMODERNIDAD EN AMÉRICA LATINA, Silvia Arango, Escala (Bogotá), 1991, 110 pp.

At this stage of historiographic knowledge, we are aware that there is neither a history nor a criticism that is sufficiently objective to remain neutral with respect to architectural production. In fact, some theories, criticisms, and histories are frankly operative, aimed at promoting a specific type of architecture in order to reinforce a particular orientation in architectural production. The architectural theory that has been emerging from Latin America over the last seven or eight years could be described as having a decidedly militant character, intent on affirming and promoting "Latin Americanness." At the same time, this stance has created a fortunate situation for historic architecture, which is valued as a consequence. As Silvia Arango has written in "Siete antaciones para pensar la arquitectura latinoamericana," which appears in the collection of essays *Arquitectura latinoamericana: Pensamiento y propuesta*: "The role of theory in the United States and Europe is to elucidate and understand what is happening. But Latin American theory has another function, one that is more important and creative: to help create a reality that is about to begin."

For this reason the center of architectural theory in Latin America has shifted, adopting points of view and lines of judgment that correspond to the specific circumstances of the region. Such an approach is based on the conviction that only with specific tools of thought is it possible to adequately focus on—and, for that matter, understand and evaluate—local problems and proposed solutions.

One of the themes that has been the most frequently engaged by Latin American architectural theorists recently—and perhaps it is here that the originality of Latin American thought is most evident—is the apparent contradiction between modernity and tradition. Much discussion focuses on the question of what, precisely, modernity means in Latin America. At what point are our societies and cities considered modern? What are the characteristics of our architectural modernity? Are we starting to become postmodern? And so on.

"Appropriate modernity," the felicitous term coined by Cristián Fernández Cox in *Arquitectura latinoamericana: Pensamiento y propuesta*, seems to express adequately the resolution of the antinomy.<sup>1</sup> One doesn't renounce modernity, but makes it appropriate, which means making it suitable to the place and circumstance while making it one's own. Fernández Cox believes that the

current crisis of modernity refers to an "illustrated" modernity insofar that, while you have a modernity waiting to be realized, you also have a historical challenge attached to it. The idea of an appropriate modernity is contrary to that of postmodernism. It assumes the desire of Latin Americans for modernization, but does not necessarily imply a blind adherence to international currents or a rejection of local cultural and technological circumstances.

A similar orientation can be found in Enrique Browne's idea that "contemporary Latin American architecture has evolved within a permanent tension between the spirit of the times and the spirit of the place." His book, *Otra arquitectura en América Latina* (Mexico: Gustavo Gili, 1988) defines "other architecture" as oppositional to international influences and based on the reconciliation of these two spirits.<sup>2</sup> Its distinguishing characteristics are contextualism and the creation of urban places, the use of intermediate technologies, and an emphasis on a tactile rather than visual architecture. In any event, it seems clear that modernity was never fully achieved in Latin American societies, which makes any discussion of postmodernity a dubious endeavor.<sup>3</sup>

A discussion of these issues leads to the obligatory theme of regionalism. However, the Latin American version is quite different from that proposed by Kenneth Frampton, or Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre. Conceived as an affirmation of local culture, but at the same time inserted in the general movement of history, this unification of the spirit of times and the spirit of place is understood as a movement of *divergence* rather than resistance (the term which Frampton prefers). As I have written previously, in deference to Frampton: "Once the critical instance is overcome, it is possible to separate one's own architectural trends from those of postmodern society, using the interstices left [by postmodern society] for one's own building purposes."<sup>4</sup>

The position of Sergio Trujillo, whose essay "Características de la arquitectura Latinoamericana" appears in *IV Encuentro de arquitectura latinoamericana*, suitably summarizes Latin American thoughts on regionalism: "More than hermetic vernacularism or radical regionalism, it is important to unveil the complex dualities that saturate the life of our continent, an amalgam of tradition and of modernity that fortunately universalizes us, allowing a life that fluctuates between local time and the time of the world."

To this I would add the testimonies of two working architects (who are not critics), both of whom contributed essays to *Encuentro*. Viewing the circumstances of periphery and mixed culture as given, Edward Rojas proposes the formula of "regionally appropriate modernity," and, with his architecture, intends to change the tradition in

modernity. Rogelio Salmons, one of Latin America's most prominent architects, speaks of an architecture of reality which, he proposes, "offers very concrete solutions for the necessities of each region." He goes on to say that "architecture in Latin America, far from being an act of pure creation, is more than anything a work of adjustment that one encounters at the center of a great movement of remembrance and continuity."<sup>5</sup>

Such an affirmation coincides with the various analyses that refer to the modern movement. By studying the way transculturation was produced, beginning with the acceptance of the peripheral condition of the region, "the movement of ideas from the center to the edge transforms and modifies them by the fact that they are planted in circumstances that are different from the original," as Jorge Francisco Liernur observes in his essay, "Nacionalismo y universalidad en la arquitectura latinoamericana," in *Modernidad y posmodernidad en América Latina*, edited by Arango. This permits us to discover different facets of different Latin American environs. It is as much the case in Latin America as in countries on the edge of Europe that modernism—that is, the idea of it—arrived before modernization, and was one of the driving forces of the latter, which is quite different from the sequence that occurred in its countries of origin.

Having analyzed the dispersion and transformation of the elements of the so-called modern movement once removed from their place of origin, it is possible to characterize the historiographic construction of the movement and, additionally, the way in which compatible elements have been selected from history and from the specific conditions of each place.<sup>6</sup> In both cases, many historians have abandoned the traditional idea—that local versions were always mere reproductions of the model—and recognize instead that notable examples of modern architecture were produced through a mediating syncretism. Consequently, the architecture produced between 1920 and 1940 is increasingly the object of intense study in various countries of the continent.

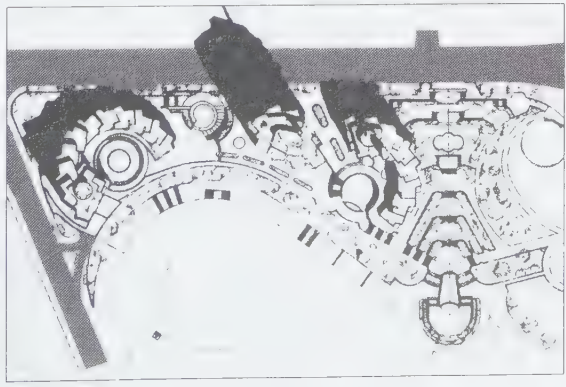
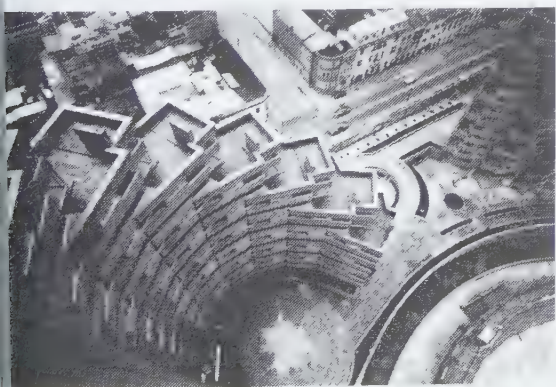
Another current preoccupation is the issue of Latin American identity, which is also connected to the relationship of center to periphery. It is

often stated that Europe invented America first, and then Latin America. This notion inscribes the importance of the view from abroad to the confirmation of local identity, and polemicalizes the legitimacy of thinking of the region as a unified whole because of its diverse composition.<sup>7</sup>

This complexity itself constitutes the identity of Latin America in that it joins a community with a similar destiny to the world system, creating an idiomatic unity with many common historical patterns but with profound ethnic, cultural, social, and economic differences. In any case, the sense of belonging to a common world is very strong in professional and intellectual circles, something that is quite obvious, particularly among historians and theoreticians of architecture. By contrast, the nostalgic concept of identity, based exclusively on the past, has been supplanted by an idea of identity that is constructed day by day.<sup>8</sup> It leads to the idea expressed by Arango, that "Latin American identity is encountered on the path moving forward but not on the way back."<sup>9</sup>

This reflection encompasses the city and the variety of questions related to it. One must use different parameters for reading the character of Latin American cities than those used for reading European cities. The city of masses, the city with a great marginal population, has been the special theme of Carlos González Lobo's work, which focuses on the role of urban masses, their social and economic behavior, and their forms of social organization. In his essay "La Construcción de la ciudad latinoamericana desde las necesidades de masas" in *IV Encuentro de arquitectura latinoamericana*, he concludes that the urban disorder that characterizes this type of city is a positive quality: "It is in the polymorphous disorder where one obtains the most acute perceptions . . . the multiplication of social, cultural, and corporal experience. It is the city of other spaces that permits its use as an 'open work.' . . . The disorderly city is the unique agent for the reproduction of the most attractive human culture."

The dimensions of the city, including its origins and its method of structuring itself over time, demand a specific type of perception wherein the meaning of urban monuments is different than



Aerial and planimetric view of Torre del Parque residential complex, Bogotá, Colombia; Rogelio Salmons, 1968–73. (From *Architettura e territorio nell'America Latina*.)



House in San Martín de los Andes; Eduardo Lacroze and José Ignacio Miguens, 1983. (From *Nueva arquitectura Argentina*.)

that in European cities: in Latin America, the reference to nature seems more important than the role of the monument. Similarly, historic centers have a different meaning in Latin America than they do in their European counterparts. In Latin America, they can be found in the middle of cities that have terrible housing problems and low

standards of living, so their meaning and "recuperation cannot shake themselves from social afflictions." From these historic centers, whose general utility is fundamental to a citizen's identity, one may distinguish areas of cultural value representative of belonging to *barrio* communities on the edge. This is how historical values attach themselves to sociocultural values.<sup>10</sup>

Arango states, "In the world of cities, there are none more modern than those of Latin America, where the weak traces of the past are nearly erased in comparison to those of Europe or North America, and where the modern is not inhibited by a more solid historical shell." Criticism of the modern movement arose in the 1950s, leveled at the first cities to suffer the consequences of the International Style. "Just as no other cities are quite as modern as ours, no other cities live its crisis quite so intensely," Arango comments. At the same time, currents of thought that vindicate the values of the traditional city have become accepted. It is also evident that the frailty of the ancient centers sometimes turns cities into veritable palimpsests, "collage cities" composed of unfinished bits and projects.

There has been a great unfurling of historical studies of Latin American architecture in the last few years, inspired by the necessity to affirm a valid identity. The most interesting aspect of these efforts is the search for guidelines to evaluate this history, not in the traditional way of understanding Latin American culture as an appendix to European culture and architecture, but as a reaction to it, which requires that history be revised to account for this new level of values.

There are numerous texts that I could cite to illustrate, but I will limit my comments to theoretical studies involving historiographic concepts, leaving out purely historical texts. In his contribution to *Encuentro*, "Tres categorías para el estudio de la arquitectura latinoamericana," Jorge Ramos studies the stylistic categories of both worlds and concludes that, while Europe is essentially classi-

cal, Latin America is anticlassical. Along these lines he distinguishes and analyzes various categories, for example: "American baroque," which is usually interpreted as European architecture combined with indigenous decoration, but which, in Ramos' view, transcends this formula as an integral conception of life, culture, and space; "marvelous realism," which refers to manifestations of the unusual within daily reality and is clearly anticlassical; and "minimalism and abstraction," which is characteristic of different parts of the continent, among them the Argentine pampa.

An analysis of the instruments of historiographic thought can also be found in my book *El Interior de la historia* 18 (Bogotá: Escala, 1990), in which themes such as historical periods, typology, language, discontinuity, and meaning are examined in the context of the historical reality of Latin America, in order to serve as guidelines for judgment and for historiographic organization. These analyses were undertaken with the conviction that the assumed formulas, imported from abroad, cannot penetrate the heart of the issues.

This body of theoretical work suggests that, despite the region's poverty and disequilibrium, a world of ideas is coming to a boil in this "other" America, whose people persist in imagining projects for a better future. ■

#### NOTES

1. See also *Modernidad y posmodernidad in America Latina*, Silvia Arango, ed. (Bogotá: Escala, 1991), pp. 11, 99.
2. See also "Algunas características de la nueva arquitectura latinoamericana," *Modernidad y posmodernidad en América Latina*, p. 23.
3. Pedro C. Sonderegger, "La Modernidad transgredida: de la arquitectura mexicana contemporánea," *IV Encuentro de arquitectura latinoamericana*.
4. Marina Waisman, "La Arquitectura en la era posmoderna," *Cuadernos* 17 (Bogotá: Escala, 1991): 3.
5. Edward Rojas' contribution to *IV Encuentro de arquitectura latinoamericana* is entitled "La Incidencia de la dialéctica tradición-modernidad en la arquitectura regional"; Rogelio Salmons's essay, "Una Arquitectura de la realidad," appears in *Arquitectura latinoamericana: Pensamiento y propuesta*.
6. Marina Waisman, "Adventuras del modernismo en las Américas," *Cuadernos* 21 (Bogotá: Escala, 1992): 13.
7. Rosalbo Campa, *América Latina: L'Identità e la maschera* (Rome: Riuniti, 1982).
8. Ramón Gutiérrez, "Seminario de Arquitectura Latinoamericana III," Manizales, Colombia, 1987, unpublished paper.
9. Arango, "Siete anotaciones para pensar la arquitectura Latinoamericana," *Arquitectura latinoamericana: Pensamiento y propuesta*.
10. Jorge Ramírez, "Los Monumentos y la ciudad latinoamericana," and Ramón Gutiérrez, "Los Centros históricos de América Latina," *IV Encuentro de arquitectura latinoamericana*.

In the past few years, the historiography of Latin American architecture has gained considerably in importance and, correspondingly, has become the frequent subject of theoretical inquiry. This has led to the examination of related issues, such as territory and urban space, and hence, the discovery of an unfamiliar, almost unknown body of work, opening a space for debate and reflection about "being" and "doing." This has been carried out mainly in a series of architectural seminars, the Seminarios de Arquitectura Latinoamericana, in Bogotá, SAL, in Buenos Aires, Manizales, Tlaxcala, Santiago de Chile, and Caracas. It was the animated discussions at these conferences that brought to light the existence and character of the work of certain architects who may be considered pioneers of Latin American modernity. These conferences also brought to public attention numerous experiments with alternative technologies, the rehabilitation of historic zones, and a large body of new work—all examples of attempts to find original, independent paths that are committed to the landscape, culture, and history of a region.

The Colección SomoSur, a series of books closely tied to this movement, was initiated in 1987 with the primary aim of assembling the theory and practice of this body of work. Published by Escala, with the support of the school of architecture at the University of the Andes (both in Colombia), the books have been issued under the general editorship of architect Carlos Morales. To date, there are thirteen carefully produced titles, most of them devoted to an individual architect, with extensive historical and critical analyses by specialists. Some of the publications received additional sponsorship from various academic and professional institutions in the Americas.

*Luis Barragán: Clásico del silencio* (Classic of Silence) studies the work of the well-known Latin American modern pioneer. Contributor Fernando González Gortázar analyzes the first stage (1928–36) of the work of this engineer who was so captivated by architecture. He recounts Barragán's beginnings in neocolonial and vernacular architecture, as well as the key sources that influenced him, such as the Moroccan *qasabah*, the work of Mexican expressionist painter José Clemente Orozco, and the architect/gardener/poet/musician Fernand Bac. Contributor Carlos González Lobo studies Barragán's white Bauhaus period—another interesting formative stage in which he joins the logic of functionalism with expressive minimalism and the resources of the site. Enrique X. de Anda Panís discusses the architect's mature stage, when he developed an aesthetic of Mexican modernity, while Ramón Vargas Salguero attempts to assemble the jigsaw puzzle of Barragán's poetics, exploring the unusual and conflicting elements that accompanied his journey.

*Sergio Larraín G.M.: La Vanguardia como propósi-*

JORGE RAMOS

## *Traditions of Modernism: Monographs and Surveys of Contemporary Latin American Architects*

Translated from the Spanish by Geoffrey Fox

to (The Avant-garde as the goal) discusses the work of this Chilean pioneer who, like Barragán, emerged in the late 1920s. For authors Cristián Boza and Humberto Eliash, Larraín personifies the spirit of Chilean modernity, which they attempt to demonstrate in an essay detailing his various stages, influences, and travels. Larraín's first period (1929–45) had an eclectic character; the authors describe the work of his second phase as "integral modernity" (1945–67); and his third period (ending in 1987), which held his least interesting and most commercial work, lacks the passionate investigation of the architect's early years. The book concludes with interesting observations by "don Sergio" himself, who reviews his life as an architect now distanced from the profession, as well as from his colleagues Vicente Huidobro, Le Corbusier, and André Gide, and from his own paradigms and phantoms.

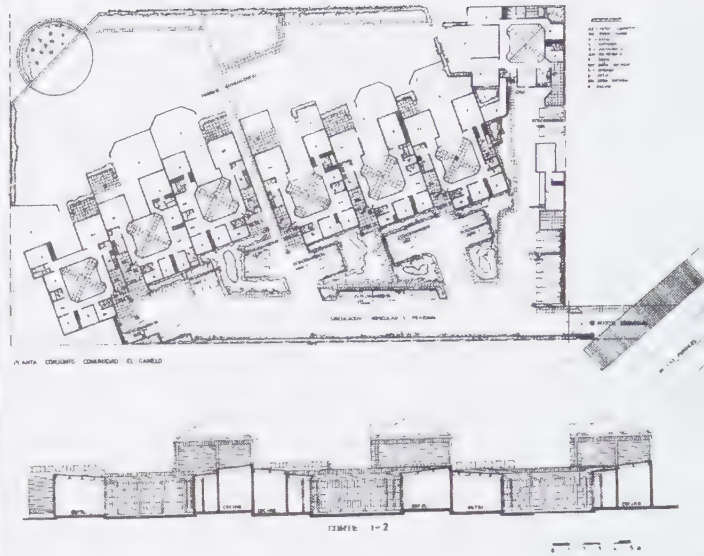
The tensions between local identity and universality, between tradition and modernity, appear to have reached a successful synthesis in the Colombian architecture of the past thirty years. In *Rogelio Salmona: Arquitectura y poética del lugar* (Architecture and poetics of place), Germán Téllez presents an interesting and polemical critical analysis of this paradigmatic case. The description of the early stages of Salmona's professional career is exhaustive, focusing on his ideological clash as a young man with the demiurge-figure Le Corbusier, and on his relationship with art historian/sociologist Pierre Francastel—background information that Téllez considers essential for understanding Salmona's urgent break with the International Style. Perhaps the polemical kernel of the book lies in what the author calls the "blind and abstract will to break [with inherited models]" by proposing an arbitrary appeal to certain European ideas—those of Scandinavian architecture, for example—to combat other European ideas, such as Corbusian functionalism. This dismissal of Latin American influences (whether historical or contemporary) pervades the essay. In a key chapter, Téllez examines Salmona's brick-building period which, after his return to Colombia in 1958, culminated in his Park Tower scheme, a major contribution toward efforts to develop an urban countenance for Bogotá. After an analysis of Salmona's projects for high-density, low-rise housing developments, the book concludes with a judicious presentation of the architect's most lyrical spaces, such as the VIP guesthouse in Cartagena de Indias

COLECCIÓN SOMOSUR, Carlos Morales, director, Escala (Bogotá), 13 volumes, each about 250 pp., illus., \$50.00.

\* For bibliographic information on individual titles, see page 34.



Comunidad El Canelo, La Reina, Santiago, Chile; Fernando Castillo, 1986–87. Individual housing units have private courtyards and share a large, common, park-like space. (From *Fernando Castillo: De lo moderno a lo real.*)



and the Quimbaya Cultural Center and Museum in Armenia.

The architectonic expression of the brick is the subject of another SomoSur title, this one devoted to the work of Togo Díaz, an architect committed to renewing the identity of his home city, Córdoba, Argentina, through the revitalization of brickwork technology. *Togo Díaz: El Arquitecto y su ciudad* (The Architect and his city) documents an austere, expressionist architecture that does not reject the logic of the real estate market. His is an appropriate architecture, implanted in a laboratory city and capable of generating theory with its own cultural parameters. In the book's prologue, Humberto Eliash refers to "how Díaz made a city from a brick," while Ramón Gutiérrez and Marcelo Martín highlight his most outstanding contributions, such as the shaping of an urban landscape with notable pediments generating a new skyline and the incorporation of public space via small plazas, terraces, internal streets, and wide sidewalks. They note that his contribution has more to do with initiating dialogue among various urban elements than with historicism or a break with history. The book closes with an extensive conversation between Díaz and Colombian architect Mauricio Pinilla, and documentation of twenty buildings and six houses which fairly represent his twenty years of architectural production.

Eliash returns to write about *Fernando Castillo: De lo moderno a lo real* (From the modern to the real), putting into historical context the experience of the Chilean architect whose work, as the title suggests, followed a path common to most Latin American architecture: it evolved from adapting to the precepts of rationalism to configuring a world committed to its own land and culture. Eliash attempts to show the consequence of Castillo's social ideas and his simultaneous activities in the professional, cultural, and political

spheres. These converge in his projects for small communities, or self-governing groups with clusters of residences that maximize on open spaces by sharing their use, exhibiting a great respect for the heritage of the landscape. The book closes with an essay by Enrique Browne on community architecture, which he analyzes as a sort of alternative suburb that opts for a "poor" (austere and minimalist) aesthetic and benefits from collective planning and construction.

In *Juvenal Baracco: Un Universo en casa* (A Universe at home), the Peruvian engineer-architect presents his own work in several stages, which from 1968 to 1986, passes through tradition, reason, and fantasy. In an unceasing quest for an original, independent modernity, his work attempts to recover—especially in recent projects such as his beach houses—traditional languages that have arisen from the surroundings, climate, or culture. This, in the architect's own words, "means confronting architecture and the city from another point of view."

As testimony to the *real-marvillosa* in the Americas, we may look to the astounding examples of brick masonry, undulating and leaping into the void, in the works of Carlos Mijares in Mexico and of Eladio Dieste in Uruguay. In *Carlos Mijares: Tiempo y otras construcciones* (Time and other constructions), Rodolfo Santa María and Sergio Palleroni propose a reading of his work as avant-garde: Mijares's capacity for invention, based on his mastery of construction techniques, is exhibited in his industrial buildings from the 1950s and 1960s which reflect a fondness for rationalism. But his inventiveness is even more evident in his Michoacán stage, starting with the chapel in Ciudad Hidalgo. For this project, which relies on a universe of geometry and brick, he proposes to arrive at being modern and return to the sources.

In *Eladio Dieste: La Estructura cerámica* (Ceram

structure), the Uruguayan engineer sums up his experience along similar lines of "faithfulness to the profound thread of true tradition as the source of what is revolutionary." The book presents his major works along with a series of his "on the road" meditations, as he calls them, "reflections of an engineer who found that, by constructing big sheds, he was making architecture even though he had not intended to." The monograph concludes with an extensive discussion of methods of calculation and a proposal for using these "poor" solutions, even in the developed world.

Another interesting attitude toward technology is discussed in *Alvaro Ortega: Prearquitectura del bienestar* (Prearchitecture of well-being). The book analyzes the extensive and complex work of this inventive Colombian who brings together elements and techniques that, in a sense, pre-exist architecture and are integral to its existence. Many of his projects, intended for poor communities in remote sites in the developing world and sponsored by the United Nations, demonstrate a new, fundamentally practical and profound version of the art of habitation. The book's pages are filled with a sense of fantasy and imagination rarely associated with practitioners concerned with issues of low-cost, popular housing. The book offers many illustrations of Ortega's inventive solutions, including a system of tile gutters, experimentation with sulphur and volcanic ash and with wind and solar energy, sanitation alternatives, and examples of self-help building, which he proposes as a means for reducing the housing deficit.

A new perspective on the role of technology in solving the architectural challenges of hot climates—leading to a kind of techno-poetics of shade—frames the ideas of Gorka Dorronsoro of Caracas, Venezuela. A disciple of Carlos Raúl Villanueva, he is the subject of four critical essays by Colombian historian Silvia Arango in *Gorka Dorronsoro: Una Obra en proceso* (A Work in progress). Dorronsoro's architecture is based on an almost obsessive experimentation with tropical habitation, and displays a magnificent handling of the "third space," the zone between the indoors and outdoors. Arango analyzes his designs for collective housing, "which recover the original sense of the house"; in these dwellings, he creates human-scaled patios, screens of intimacy that trap the sun. His public buildings, especially those in the Ciudad Universitaria, reflect both the "logic of the intensity" of Caracas life and a design system that joins the general to the particular.

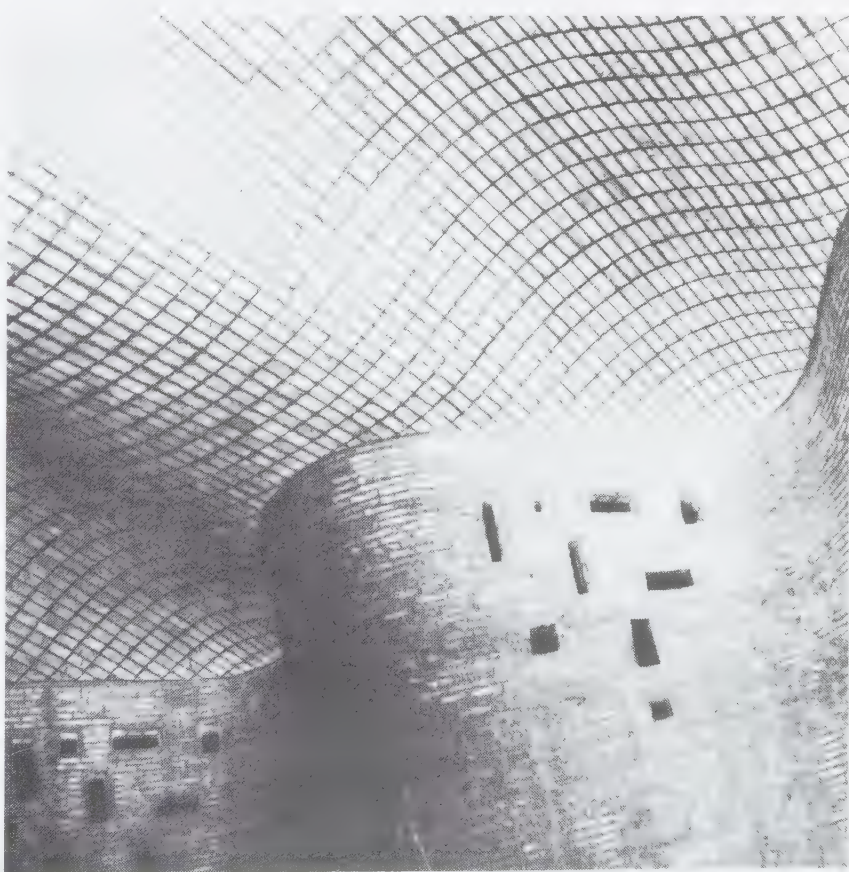
Arango characterizes Dorronsoro's work as having rotund forms, somewhat similar to those found in Louis Kahn's work. Like Kahn, Arango writes, Dorronsoro bases his thinking on structural systems without falling into constructivism. He creates forms with formless elements, as is seen in one of his most poetic projects: the Cathedral of

Ciudad Guayana, a new city constructed in the middle of the jungle. The building's expressive strength and basic geometry are literally created by water, light, wind, and sound.

Two SomoSur books are not architect monographs but surveys that seek to account for collective experiences. The first is *Otra arquitectura Argentina: Un Camino alternativo* (Other Argentine architecture: An Alternative path), which assembles recent work that addresses a national agenda, aimed at fostering an appropriate expression of Argentine character. The book's eleven studies are organized into three chapters. The first chapter includes a theoretical essay by Ramón Gutiérrez, and the work of architecture firms Lacroze and Miguens; Casiraghi, Cassina and Frangella; Moscato and Schere; and Gramática, Guerrero, Morini, Pisani, and Urtubey. The series of experiences presented in this volume center on the dialogue between modernity and regionalism. Exercises of typological and environmental re-creations, these works are connected to such diverse sources as the infinite expanse of the pampa, the mores of river-bank culture, and the rules found in the existing provincial urban block.

Marcelo Martín's reflections on appropriate technology begins the book's second chapter, which contains works by Giancarlo Puppò, Manuel Net, and Mederico Faivre and Norma Román. These examples testify to the virtues of an updated use of elementary materials and a structural inge-

Iglesia de Atlántide, Uruguay; Eladio Dieste, 1959. (From *Eladio Dieste: La Estructura cerámica.*)





Brick-surfaced apartment building, Córdoba, Argentina; José Ignacio Díaz, 1986. (From *Nueva arquitectura Argentina*.)

nity that, together, constitute a most remarkable resource for leaping from poverty to poetry.

The third chapter recounts neighborhood interventions in Buenos Aires in terms of contextual and cultural continuity, through the works of Rodolfo Sorondo and Hampton and Rivoira. The book concludes with a substantial essay by Alberto Petrina on an appropriate architecture, an architecture of one's own. Petrina cites as examples the work of two "tutelary presences," Eduardo Sacriste and Claudio Caveri, Jr.

The other compilation of works is *Nueva arquitectura Argentina: Pluralidad y coincidencia* (New Argentine architecture: Plurality and convergence), compiled by Gutiérrez and Adriana Irigoyen. This anthology documents thirty-four works from different regions of the country, all from the 1980s. Employing the techniques and materials peculiar to each site, these works converge at several points as they all maintain a certain independence from the meccas of international architecture. These projects choose to adapt rather than adopt. The diversity of the works is attributable not only to the variety of landscapes, climates, resources, and traditions in the country, but also to the dominant or subordinate role that each of these factors assumes in relation to the program and to each other. The survey contains an in-depth essay by Gutiérrez, in which he evaluates the 1980s in Argentine architecture with respect to both professional practice and the fields of history, theory, and criticism.

The SomoSur collection is made complete with an interesting volume entitled *Centros históricos: América Latina*, which contains analyses of seventeen cases by such noted specialists as Mariano Arana, Alfonso Ortíz Crespo, Jaime Salcedo Salcedo, Paulo Ormindo de Azevedo, and others.

These case studies cover a wide range of situations from the highly celebrated (renowned for both historic and aesthetic value) to the unknown and forgotten (such as dilapidated, abandoned buildings that are modest in character but are situated in areas of historic importance). In addition to supporting the need to restore and preserve the country's cultural patrimony and to ensure the recycling and reinsertion of the historic fabric into daily life, this book, as its editor, the late Galaor Carbonell, eloquently puts it, "presents a fundamental thesis, [promoting] an extremely strong cultural unity [across Latin America] and the opportunity to find common courses and horizons."

It is this admirable idea that inspires the entire Colección SomoSur. This important series fills an immense gap in the publishing field by assembling both actual work and critical discourses that, while embracing many diverse points of view, are indisputably Latin American architecture's own. ■

**VOL. 1: ELADIO DIESTE: LA ESTRUCTURA CERÁMICA**, Eladio Dieste; Universidad de los Andes, University of Miami, 1987.

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**VOL. 10: CENTROS HISTÓRICOS: AMÉRICA LATINA**, Galaor Carbonell, Ramón Gutiérrez, eds., essays by Mariano Arana, Juan Benito Artigas, Paulo Ormindo de Azevedo, Pedro Belaúnde, Eligia Calderón Trejco, Cristina Damm, Samuel Gutiérrez, Luis Lápidus, José María Magaña S., Andrés Mazzini, Alberto Nicolini, Alfonso Ortíz Crespo, Jaime Salcedo Salcedo, Angela Sánchez Negrete, Javier Villalobos, Graciela Viñuales, Myriam Waisberg; Junta de Andalucía and Universidad de los Andes, 1990.

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**VOL. 13: TOGO DIAZ: EL ARQUITECTURA Y SU CIUDAD**, Mauricio Pinilla Acevedo, ed., essays by Humberto Eliash, Ramón Gutiérrez, Marcelo Martín; Universidad de los Andes, 1993.

What are the impacts of economic globalization on cities and urban systems in Latin America and the Caribbean? Nations in both these regions have long been considered good examples of systems with high levels of primacy—that is, an ordinate concentration of a country's population and major economic activities in one city, typically the national capital. The most recent research signals some sharp changes in these patterns, due at least in part to the growth of direct foreign investment in these regions and to the sharper articulation of a few key cities with global markets in finance and commodities.

Primacy is, above all, a fact of relative concentration within a somewhat closed system. Primate cities account for a disproportionate share of population, employment, and GNP. Thus, greater São Paulo accounts for 36 percent of Brazil's national domestic product and 48 percent of its net industrial product. Santo Domingo accounts for 70 percent of the Dominican Republic's commercial and banking transactions and 56 percent of its industrial growth. And Lima accounts for 43 percent of Peru's gross domestic product.

Primacy is not simply a matter of size, nor is size a marker of primacy. Several of the primate cities in Latin America and the Caribbean are not necessarily among the largest in the world. Some of the largest urban agglomerations in the world are not necessarily primate: New York, for example, is among the top twenty largest cities in the world, but it is not primate given the multipolar nature of the urban system in the United States. Furthermore, primacy is not an exclusive trait of developing countries, even though that is where its most extreme forms are found (Tokyo and London are examples). Finally, the emergence of so-called megacities is not necessarily associated with primacy. The twenty largest urban agglomerations in the world today include some cities that are not primate (such as New York, Los Angeles, Tainan, Osaka, and Shanghai), and others that can be characterized as having low levels of primacy (Paris and Buenos Aires).

Primacy and megacity status are clearly fed by urban population growth, a process that is expected to continue.<sup>1</sup> Evidence worldwide points to the ongoing urbanization of the population, especially in developing countries, often with major political implications.<sup>2</sup> As in the developed countries, one component of urban growth in these countries is the suburbanization of growing sectors of the population. The higher the level of development, the higher the urbanization rate is likely to be. Thus, a country like Argentina had an urbanization rate of 66.6 percent in 1985, which is quite similar to that of highly developed countries. By contrast, Algeria's urbanization rate of 42.6 percent and Nigeria's 31 percent point to a rather different urbanization level from that of developed countries. A

SASKIA SASSEN

## *The Impacts of Economic Globalization on Cities in Latin America and the Caribbean*

country can actually have more than one vast urban agglomeration, despite a low urbanization rate. This is the case in some of the most populous countries in the world; for instance, India, a country with several large cities, had an urbanization rate of 26 percent in 1985. As a result, information conveyed by an indicator such as the urbanization rate differs from that given by the population of its major cities.

The literature on Latin America shows considerable convergence in the identification of major patterns, as well as multiple interpretations of these patterns.<sup>3</sup> Many studies note that, rather than the emergence of more balanced national urban systems, as would be expected with "modernization," countries are experiencing sharper primacy instead. The disintegration of rural economies, including the displacement of small landholders by large-scale commercial agriculture and the continuing inequalities in the distribution of institutional resources, are key factors reproducing primacy. Megacities, whether primate or not, are the ultimate outcome of these trends.

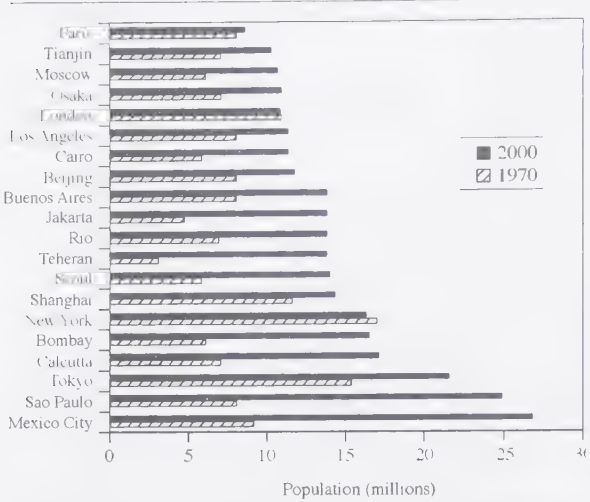
Less widely known and documented than the growth of megacities is the deceleration in primacy that occurred in several, though not all, countries in Latin America and the Caribbean in the 1980s. This trend will not eliminate the growth of megacities, but it is worth discussing in some detail because it partially represents an impact of economic globalization—that is, the concrete ways in which global processes implant themselves in particular localities.

The overall shift in growth strategies toward export-oriented development created growth poles which emerged as alternatives for immigrants to the primate cities. We can see this in such border cities as Tijuana, Mexico, which has boomed because of the internationalization of production in the Mexico-U.S. border region. Such places have become major destinations for migrants, a process well described in a recent book by Lawrence Herzog entitled *Where North Meets South: Cities, Space and Politics on the U.S.-Mexico Bor-*

Marginal habitat in San Juan, Puerto Rico. (From *Architettura e territorio nell'America Latina*.)



Population of 20 Largest Agglomerations, 1970-2000



Source: United Nations, *The Prospects of World Urbanization, 1987*.

Population of the twenty largest agglomerations in the world, 1970-2000.

Source: United Nations, *The Prospects of World Urbanization, 1987*.

(From *Cities in a World Economy*.)

multicity study of the Caribbean region directed by Alejandro Portes and M. Lungo, entitled *Urbanization en Centromerica and Urbanizacion en el Caribe* (1992).<sup>4</sup> The Caribbean has a long history of urban primacy. Portes and Lungo's team examined the urban systems of Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti, and Jamaica—countries that clearly reflect the immense variety of cultures and languages in the region. These countries also represent a wide range in terms of colonization patterns, ethnic composition, economic development, and political stability. In the 1980s, export-oriented development (a cornerstone of the Caribbean Basin Initiative launched by former President Reagan) and the intense promotion of tourism created new growth poles. Portes and Lungo's evidence suggests that these new growth poles emerged as alternatives to primate cities for migrating workers and firms, and thereby contributed to a deceleration in primacy. A growth in suburbanization has also meant the decentralization of some of the population in the primate cities of the Caribbean. The effect of these trends can be seen clearly in Jamaica, for instance, where the primacy index declined from 7.2 in 1960 to 2.2 in 1990, largely as a result of the development of the tourist industry in the northern coast of the island, the revival of bauxite production for export in the interior of the country, and the growth of satellite cities at the edges of the broader Kingston metropolitan area.

In some Caribbean countries, however, the new growth poles have had the opposite effect. In Costa Rica, a country with a far more balanced urban system than most, the promotion of export manufacturing and tourism has tended to concentrate activities in the metropolitan area of the primate city, San José, and its immediate surrounding cities, such as Cartago. In the case of Guatemala, export manufacturing and tourism are

der (Austin: University of Texas Center for Mexican America Studies, 1990). The shift in growth strategies was substantially fostered by the expansion of world markets for commodities and the direct foreign investment of multinational corporations.

One of the best sources of information on these developments is a large, collective,

far less developed, largely because of the country's extremely violent political situation.<sup>5</sup> Development of export-oriented growth still centers on agriculture. Guatemala has one of the highest levels of urban primacy in Latin America because, aside from the capital, hardly any of its cities have functioned as growth poles. Only recently have efforts to develop export agriculture promoted some growth in intermediate cities; thus, the nation's coffee and cotton centers have grown more rapidly than the capital.

The growth of direct foreign investment since 1991 has further strengthened the role of major Latin American business centers, particularly Mexico City, São Paulo, and Buenos Aires.<sup>6</sup> The rapid privatization of public sector firms over the last five years has attracted massive amounts of foreign investment. Total direct foreign investment in the newly opened economies of Latin America grew from \$6.1 billion in U.S. dollars in 1984-87, to \$10 billion in 1988-89, \$14 billion in 1991, and \$16 billion in 1992. This sharp growth has been associated with the deregulation of financial markets and other key economic institutions. The central role played by the stock market and other financial markets in these increasingly complex investment processes has raised the economic importance of the major cities where these institutions are concentrated.

Worldwide, the transnationalization of economic activity has raised the intensity and volume of cross-border transactions, particularly among cities in highly developed countries. Whether this has contributed to the formation of transnational global urban systems is subject to debate. The growth of global markets for financial and specialized services, the need for transnational servicing networks due to sharp increases in international investment, the reduced role of the government in the regulation of international economic activity and the corresponding ascendance of other institutional forms, notably global markets and corporate headquarters, all point to the existence of transnational economic arrangements that have multiple locations. We can see here the formation, at least incipient, of a transnational urban system.<sup>7</sup>

There are a few cities in Latin America that have sharply strengthened their articulation with global financial markets as a consequence of growing direct foreign investment, the deregulation of their stock markets, and the rapid privatization of public sector firms in their countries. Because the bulk of investment in privatized enterprises and other, related endeavors has been in Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil, the impact of vast capital inflows is particularly felt in the corporate and financial sectors in Mexico City, Buenos Aires, and São Paulo. We see in these cities the emergence of conditions that resemble, though at a much smaller

scale, patterns evident in major Western cities: highly dynamic financial markets and specialized service sectors; the overvalorization of the output, firms, and workers in these sectors; and the devalorization of the rest of the economic system.<sup>8</sup>

Three types of sites for the implantation of global processes are: industrial zones producing for export, centers for tourism, and major business and financial centers. Beyond these sites is a vast terrain containing cities, towns, and villages that are increasingly unhinged from this new international growth dynamic.<sup>9</sup> Again, this dissociation is not simply a question of city size, since there are long subcontracting chains connecting workers in small villages to the world markets, a process well described in the book *The Crossroads of Class and Gender* by Lourdes Beneria and Marta Roldam (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). Nor is it necessarily a dissociation that operates culturally given the growth of a global consumption culture, as George Ritzer portrays in his book, *The McDonaldization of Society* (Thousand Oaks, Ca.: Pine Forge Press, 1993). Rather, it is a question of how these emergent transnational economic systems are articulated, how they connect specific localities in less developed countries with markets and localities in highly developed countries.

The implantation of global processes seems to have contributed to a further separation between cities and between sectors that are articulated with the global economy and those that are not. This is a new type of inter- and intraurban inequality, different in many ways from the long-standing forms of inequality present in cities and national urban systems. It can be seen as new because of the extent to which it results from the implantation of a global dynamic—whether the internationalization of production and finance or of tourism. ♣

#### NOTES

1. In the developed world, and particularly in Western Europe, we see the renewed strength of major cities that appear to concentrate a significant, and often disproportionate, share of economic activity in leading sectors such as advanced services. But this growth is the result of processes quite different from those in developing countries. In the 1970s, many of the major cities in highly developed countries were losing population and economic activity to the rest of the country. Much was made at the time of these cities' supposed irreversible decline, but since then, they have enjoyed a revival—a result, in large part, of the intersection of two major trends: the shift to services, most particularly the ascendance of finance and specialized services in all advanced economies; and the increasing transnationalization of economic activity. This transnationalization can operate at the regional, continental, or global level. These two trends are interlinked and feed on each other. Spatially, there is a strong tendency toward the agglomeration of pertinent activities in major cities. This dynamic of urban

growth is largely based on the locational needs or preferences of firms, while urban growth in less developed countries results largely from population growth, especially in-migration; see Saskia Sassen, *Cities in a World Economy* (Thousand Oaks, Ca.: Pine Forge Press, 1994).

2. J. E. Hardoy and D. Satterthwaite, *Squatter Citizen: Life in the Urban Third World* (London: Earthscan Publications, 1989).

3. Lucio Kowarick, Ana Maria Gambier Campos, and Maria Cecilia de Mello, "Os Percursos de Desigualdade," in R. Rolnik, L. Kowarick, and N. Somekn, eds., *São Paulo: Crise e Mudança* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1991). PREALC, *Cambio y Polarizacion Ocupacional en Centroamerica* (Costa Rica: Editorial Universitaria Centroamericana, 1986); Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, *Statistical Yearbook of Latin America and the Caribbean* (New York: United Nations, 1989, 1991, 1992); Juan Pablo Perez-Sainz, *Informalidad urbana en America Latina: Enfoques, problematicas e interrogantes* (Caracas: Editorial Nueva Sociedad, 1992).

4. Alejandro Portes, and M. Lungo, *Urbanizacion en Centroamerica and Urbanizacion en el Caribe* (1992). The Caribbean region is defined here as consisting of the island nations between the Florida peninsula and the north coast of South America and the independent countries of the Central American isthmus; it excludes the large nations bordering the Caribbean sea.

5. S. Jonas *The Battle for Guatemala: Rebels, Death Squads, and U.S. Power* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992).

6. Sassen, *Cities in a World Economy*, ch. 3.

7. Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), ch. 7. A pronounced orientation of major cities to world markets raises questions about the articulation of their hinterlands and nation-states. Cities have typically been deeply embedded in the economies of their region, indeed often reflecting the characteristics of the latter. But cities that are strategic sites in the global economy also tend, in part, to disconnect from their region. This development conflicts with a key proposition in traditional scholarship about urban systems, namely, that these systems promote the integration of regional and national economies. With its own specific modalities, this orientation to world markets has a long history in Latin America where the major cities constituted the key links in vast colonial empires.

8. Sassen, *Cities in a World Economy*, chs. 6 and 7.

9. With its own specific forms and content, this new geography of inequality also occurs in highly developed countries. In Western Europe, for instance, we see at least two tendencies contributing to new forms of inequality among cities. On one hand, there is growing articulation at a transnational level among cities, which is evident at both a regional and a global level. In some cases there are what one could consider overlapping geographies of articulation or overlapping hierarchies that operate at more than one level—that is to say, there are cities like Paris or London that belong simultaneously to a national urban system or hierarchy, to a transnational European system, and to a global level system. On the other hand, cities and areas that are outside these hierarchies tend to become peripheralized, or become more so than they had been.

*Human Settlements: An Urban and Ecological Challenge*

The main issue in Latin American housing is certainly not its design, but the lack of it. The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has estimated that no more than 10 percent of structures currently being built in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) include the participation of professionals in their design. The rest are produced spontaneously, with little or no technical advice, and follow designs that adjust to cultural patterns, ingenuity, and the search for solutions with scarce resources.

At the core of this issue is the lack of access to healthy shelter. Forty percent of the population in LAC is poor and lacks the appropriate space and services in which family life may develop safely, and in which economic activities may flourish. About half of these poor cannot afford to have the minimum necessary calorie intake and are considered extremely poor. The current pace of housing construction in the region will never catch up with the rate of population increase, nor will it make up for the current deficit of adequate shelters. The persistence of the current economic model and the lack of public-sector involvement in social development leave the extremely poor with few alternatives.

National and international economic and political factors can be singled out as the main obstacles to sustainable development, and are the underlying causes of the unhealthy living conditions so pervasive in Latin America and the Caribbean. The issue is clearly not about technological constraints to development but about national and international inequity in the distribution of power and limited resources.

According to ECLAC, foreign debt service is one of the region's most serious structural problems. Debts in 1991 represented 300 percent of LAC exports. With a population of approximately 450 million, the region owes about \$450 billion: every Latin American is born owing U.S. \$1,000, although most of the population never had any input on whether the debt should have been acquired in the first place, and for what purposes; nor did they ever enjoy the fruits of the economic inflow. In the segregated LAC societies of the 1970s and 1980s—when the debt was accumulated—the responsibility for this accumulation lay with the minority elite, which defended foreign interests, supported military dictatorships, and participated in their reign of terror. Without the military dictatorship, structural adjustment could not have been

imposed so easily on the population as a response to the debt crisis.

With the intention of enhancing debt repayment capabilities, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank have pushed Latin American economies from an export-substitution model toward one that gives incentives to commodity exports at ever-decreasing world prices. This, at a time when the industrialized world demands free trade but, in fact, increases protectionism. In spite of heightened export activity, it was the volume of exports that increased—by 60 percent during the 1980s—rather than revenues generated by exports, which grew by only 20 percent. Moreover, the importance of the region's exports declined, constituting only 3 percent of the world's exports, down from 5 percent ten years earlier and 8 percent twenty years earlier. As the United Nations' 1990 Inter-American Dialogue Report states, as long as Latin America bases its competitiveness on cheap labor and on its supply of raw materials, poverty will prevail even if growth indicators improve.

Most of the countries currently facing growing numbers of urban poor are devoting their resources to debt servicing; IMF restrictions are being imposed on their social-sector budget allocations; subsidy policies are being drastically canceled or curtailed; and cost-recovery policies are being imposed widely. Thus, governments have neither the power, the will, nor the resources to provide their rapidly growing populations with the necessary support in terms of physical infrastructure, urban services, and facilities needed to ensure reasonable living conditions. According to IMF statistics, the share of government expenditure in this sector as compared to total government expenditure has decreased considerably.

Because income levels, income distribution, employment generation, and overall economic growth have pessimistic prospects, it will hardly be possible for the poor to generate the resources governments are failing to provide. Survival strategies rather than development strategies are being embraced at all levels, and the informal sector swells not only in infrastructure and service provision but in income-generation activities as well. The immediate consequences are a reduced quality of services, increased health risks in nonregulated productive sectors, loss of tax revenues that would enable governments to provide services, and loss of power for unions to protect salary levels and working conditions.

Among the most dramatic effects of structural adjustment programs in LAC has been the worsening of the distribution of income due to a drastic rise in unemployment, coupled with price increases and wage restrictions. In other words, it is the wealthy who are harvesting the benefits of modernity while the poor are having to pay the price

his means that recessive adjustment programs have actually increased the number of poor people and have exacerbated their levels of poverty.

It will be a short-lived bonanza for the privileged, however, not only because it may lead to social unrest but because it will have an undeniably heavy environmental cost. It is interesting to note that Chile, considered by supporters of the current economic model to be a showcase "economic miracle," was recently denounced by the Latin American Corporation for Economic Investigations (CIEPLAN) for being responsible for unforeseen negative impacts on the environment. The overharvesting of areas rich in valuable natural resources—brought about by trade liberalization, economic liberalization, and overall deregulation—has upset and damaged the country's ecosystem.

Moreover, it is now clear that, on the one hand, structural adjustment will not be able to solve the crisis in the short term, and on the other, social impacts will not be transitory. On the contrary, they are structural and cumulative. For example, the poor health of children, caused by poverty, repression, and reduced education opportunities will certainly have long-term effects on development.

Even though the region is currently supposedly undergoing a stage of "redemocratization"—after a decade and a half of repression—this new democracy is one in which governments no longer determine their own economic policies. State modernization policies, which call for a reduction of the government's role, are being imposed or promoted as a way of curbing government spending and inefficiency. Human resources, which have been mostly for governments to develop over the years, either remain idle or are being exported for lack of opportunities in their own countries.

Conversely, according to the 1991 World Bank World Development Report, in the industrialized world, in spite of the antigovernment rhetoric, the modernization process has systematically increased government spending to reach approximately one-half of the national product. To give just a few examples, the United States has increased government spending from 28 percent to 37 percent of its GNP between 1960 and 1985, and the United Kingdom from 32 percent to 48 percent during the same period. In Sweden, whose government is known for its modernity and ability to provide good, quality public services, government spending rose from 31 percent to 65 percent over the same period. The truth of the matter is, industrialized countries impose or encourage the reduction of government spending in the developing world (although they themselves do not abide by it) because it secures a greater possibility of debt payment, a pool of cheap labor, and the willingness of poorer countries to either deplete scarce



resources or receive the waste that the developed world cannot cope with.

Decentralization of government and privatization of state assets and functions are being sold as solutions in developing countries. Thus, local governments have had to undertake the responsibilities of local development and the management of future urban growth. Even though decentralization improves the possibilities for the population to participate in managing their own development—and local governments have more administrative flexibility than central governments—unfortunately, such a process requires not only the decentralization of functions but of human and financial resources, not to mention a gradual change of mentality in the administration.

According to Brazilian sociologist Ladislao Dowbor's 1992 unpublished report "Sistema Financiero para el Desarrollo Urbano Municipal," local governments in Latin America are still not prepared to undertake the functions shed by central governments, and central governments are not helping them enough. Figures indicate that countries such as Sweden decentralize 72 percent of their public expenditure, and other industrialized countries between 40 and 60 percent. By contrast, in Latin America, only 5 to 15 percent of public expenditures is spent at the local level.

Urbanization is a demographic process, triggered by economic, social, and political circumstances which are physically expressed in the pattern of human settlements. Therefore, the problems created by the concentration of populations in unprepared territories cannot be addressed at a physical level alone. They must be addressed at their roots. Rural populations have been displaced by centuries-old government neglect in rural service provision, by the lack of opportunities caused by the agricultural exporting economic models,

Housing design adjusts to cultural patterns, ingenuity, and the search for solutions with scarce resources; São Paulo, Brazil. (Photo: United Nations 155210/Claudio Edinger.)

The problems created by the concentration of populations in unprepared territories cannot be addressed at the physical level only. Slum in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. (Photo: United Nations 154994/ Claudio Edinger.)



and by the devastating effects of internal wars, especially in Central America.

The most alarming feature of population projections is that the poor areas of the world are experiencing the most intense population growth, with the populations of their large cities growing the fastest. What we are currently facing, especially in Latin America, is the concentration of urban population growth in the context of decapitalized and spontaneous urbanization. Latin America is the most urbanized region in the developing world, with 72 percent of its population living in urban areas, and urban growth rates four times higher than that of rural areas. By the year 2000, Mexico City and São Paulo will be the world's largest cities, with projected populations of 25.6 and 22.1 millions respectively. Roughly 90 percent of the poor households in Latin America will be living in urban areas.

The health and quality of life of marginal urban populations are affected not only by the shrinking urban support, but also by the intensity of the degradation of the urban environment, in terms of the pollution and exhaustion of productive agricultural land, clean air and water. In LAC, great population centers are disposing of solid waste and contaminated water, mainly untreated sewage, into the environment in dangerous volumes: only 5 to 10 percent of the sewage receives some degree of waste water treatment before flowing into natural streams in quantities that exceed

natural capacities of absorption, according to a 1991 ECLAC report. Additionally, some cities are growing more and more dependent on increasingly distant water sources. Therefore, situations such as the 1991 cholera epidemic in the region should come as no surprise. It is clear by now that cholera in Latin America will become endemic.

Urban sprawl will increase the costs of transportation in terms of infrastructure, time, and energy consumption. Urban land uses will compete with agricultural and forestry uses. Hydrological balances will be upset even further than they are today, with severe climatic consequences. It is within this sphere—the management of the interaction between society and the environment—that the role of governments is essential, whatever the constraints may be, because only governments are able to protect collective and future interests over short-term and individual interests.

#### HUMAN SETTLEMENTS POLICY EVOLUTION

Urbanization was initially seen as an insurmountable problem, as a proof of governments' ineffectuality. Currently, in an environment of economic growth, cities are being promoted as creators of wealth and instruments of this economic growth. The issue of whether cities could and should be instruments of wealth and service distribution is rarely addressed. As long as cities in the developing world create wealth that can be transferred to the industrialized world, the urbanization phenomenon will not be considered a problem at the level of global policy formulation. The process of wealth transfer that has existed since colonial times has been intensified. It is only when the costs of congestion hinder this wealth extraction process that urbanization will be considered a problem.

Solutions to the poverty issues that emerge in an environment of excessive urbanization amount to a merely illusory trickle-down of wealth and to some reactive measures that are always inadequate for the scope of the problems. Structural root causes of poverty are never acknowledged, much less addressed. Moreover, it is not the urbanization process per se that creates poverty, but poverty and the export-oriented model that exacerbate urbanization in the context of the unfair distribution of resources. The most serious problem, with undeniable consequences for future generations, is that megacities are already a reality and that there is neither the political will nor the knowledge of how to manage them. Even though social justice could be attained, the environmental stress of concentrated urbanization would persist.

There has also been a change in attitude toward the urban poor: whereas in the 1950s and 1960s migration, urbanization, and squatter settlements tended to be viewed negatively, today squatter

re regarded as adding to the cities' labor force, consuming some of its production, and housing themselves at little direct cost to society. They have demonstrated that they have the skills, motivation, and sometimes the resources to provide basic shelter for themselves and to employ self-help and mutual aid in building houses as well as community facilities, according to the Global Report on Human Settlements, from the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (UNCHS) held in Vancouver in 1976.

This conference may be regarded as a breakthrough in government attitudes toward slums and squatter settlements. For the first time, governments universally acknowledged that slum and squatter settlements could play a significant role in the urban development process; hence, they officially recognized the necessity of taking appropriate measures to improve them and to integrate their inhabitants into the development process. More importantly, this new perspective stopped the bulldozer that had until recently been the typical official response. There are, however, some well-documented exceptions to this achievement, where the bulldozer and the army tanks operated together. Augusto Pinochet's Chile and Jorge Rafael Videla's Argentina forcibly eradicated shantytowns from higher-income areas of their countries' capitals, effectively concentrating poverty and potential political conflict in well-guarded areas of lower land value.

Some governments have assumed an increasingly active role in shelter provision and formulated unrealistic shelter programs that, due to the scarcity of human and financial resources, wound up helping very few, and certainly not those most in need. Cuba is the sole country in the region that has managed to produce industrialized housing units, most of them outside Havana, complete with all the necessary urban services in great quantities. This capital is the only one in the region that, as a result of the dispersal of planned public investment, managed to escape regional urbanization trends. However, these efforts were still not enough to fulfill the city's demand for housing, and, due to increased North American pressure on the Cuban economy and the lack of support from the former socialist countries, Cubans are now reverting to traditional technologies and self-help shelter provision, but still with full support of the state.

After the U.N.'s Vancouver meeting, the most widely advocated strategy was to rely on squatter-settlement upgrading as an act of crisis containment, and on the provision of sites and services to meet current and future needs. The philosophy behind this is that it is better to provide minimal shelter solutions for the many than comprehensive solutions for the few. Unfortunately, settlement needs are growing many times faster than

they are being met by these programs. While more sensitive to the poor, these programs still do not respond to the poorest 20 percent of the population and have little or nothing to offer the urban poor of inner-city slums, according to the UNCHS' Global Report on Human Settlements.

#### THE ENABLING STRATEGY

Despite efforts made, the poor have done immeasurably more for themselves than governments have been able to do for them. In recognition of this fact and of the failures of governments to provide shelter, a new strategy for human settlements development has emerged. Rather than assign the state the role of the provider, as was the former approach, an enabling strategy seeks to make conditions for self-help and community development as favorable as possible. This new strategy is based on more realistic norms and standards, on the reduction of legal and bureaucratic constraints, increased sweat equity, and on the probability that if land tenure and basic infrastructure are consolidated, the poor will gradually invest in improving their living conditions. It also recognizes that greater active participation of beneficiaries reduces costs and improves design and maintenance.

This new strategy hands over a greater role not only to the beneficiaries themselves, but to the local governments, which are expected to assume the facilitating role. The decentralization of public-sector shelter responsibilities is seen by some as enhancing popular participation, and by others as a form of facilitating the privatization of urban service provision, and of decentralizing and diffusing the potential targets of popular discontent. Whatever the reasons behind the decentralization process, there remains a role for central government: to establish common standards of services

Self-help, squatter-settlement upgrading in San Antonio, Venezuela. (Photo: United Nations.)





Unrealistic governmental shelter programs only help the very few, and certainly not the most in need. Formal-sector housing in Panama. (Photo: United Nations/ Jerry Frank.)

and to ensure the redistribution of development benefits. If this role is not performed, the hope for the integration of society at local level will be threatened. Quality service provision would only be possible in rich communities, and the poor would not be able to escape their condition due to their lack of health and education opportunities.

During this current period of

economic structural adjustment, most countries are embracing the principles of the enabling shelter strategy and are dismantling their inefficient shelter provision institutions, but have neglected to secure the supporting role required of the state. Investment in shelter is still considered a mere social investment, incompatible with the economic model. Cost-recovery policies are confronting the inability of the poor to afford their mortgages or their service charges. Even countries such as Chile and Costa Rica, which, due to political reasons, were exempt from subsidy restraints in the housing sector, did not manage to help the very poor. Moreover, while Costa Rica's emphasis on providing housing has received international recognition, it has failed nevertheless to address housing issues comprehensively.

Gradually, shelter investment is starting to be considered both a social cost and a productive investment because of its multiplier effect in the economy and the fact that the poor use their housing units and their communities as productive centers in an informal economy. Housing is also viewed by the poor as an income-generating activity. The informal production of building materials and the rental of rooms to house even poorer families are examples.

Only recently have the negative impacts of structural adjustment on the population been recognized. Emergency "social investment funds" have been devised to compensate for these effects under the belief that they will be temporary. The goal has been to create short-term employment that will guarantee the population with some source of income and, at the same time, will prompt the building of much-needed infrastructure.

Given the magnitude of the social crisis and the scarcity of resources, this new solution is fail-

ing to cater to the majority, even though it is currently the most significant public action in the shelter sector. Moreover, it fails to address the very poor because it is a demand-driven action that only reaches the most organized community groups—those capable of formulating projects and of pressuring for them politically. Employees of these "social investment" programs receive very low salaries and no social benefits. Worse still, it is clear by now that the negative effects that these funds are meant to counteract are not temporary, and thus, a much more significant and well-programmed action is required.

There are major issues that the current enabling strategy leaves unresolved and which those who work on IAC human settlements development should target:

- a growing population unable to cope at any level without government support, which exacerbates existing conditions;
- health implications of the low quality of shelter infrastructure and services that the poor produce for themselves;
- the environmental consequences of uncontrolled land use, low densities, and poverty generated by the current economic model;
- the reduction of investment addressing basic needs.

There are a myriad of positive examples of how the poor have managed to cope with these adverse conditions, including community revolving funds, trickle-up schemes, land-sharing schemes, resource recycling, appropriating technologies, and so on. Most of these survival strategies have remained at the grass-roots level, where they emerged. No matter how successful these examples are, they are nowhere near covering existing needs.

In order to comprehensively address these issues, a drastic change of scale is necessary. Empowerment at the individual or community level does not guarantee anything beyond survival, at best. If the move from survival to development is to be made, there is a clear need to globally address the underlying causes of the current social conditions. Reversing the outflows of capital from the developing world is urgently needed. We must put an end to the mechanisms by which the poor in the developing world subsidize the living conditions of the elite and of the developed world. We must devise an alternative to the structural adjustment model. And we must find an alternative to the current economic forms of global governance—which condone the continuing exploitation of the poor and of the environment—if we are to defend the future interests of global society. ■

Attitudes toward historic preservation in Cuba and Latin America reflect differences in time and place that often express peculiar experiences and situations. These attitudes oppose both European elitist and nostalgic traditions and equally nostalgic indigenous and nationalistic visions. The 19th-century concept of a landmark as a singular, highly valuable artistic or historic artifact has broadened in the last twenty years to embrace a built heritage that includes whole urban areas, as well as natural and archaeological sites.

When recounting the disastrous effects of urban modernity—from uncontrolled growth to social segregation to environmental depredation—the question of architectural heritage, as it has evolved in subtle balance between the genius of place and its inhabitants, naturally evokes a certain didactic potential. Rather than being an excuse for a neotraditional solution, the historic built environment may aid in our search for a diverse, pluralistic, and sustainable model for producing an environment that would be economically feasible, socially accessible, politically participatory, and ecologically sound.

The celebrations and protests marking the 500th anniversary of American colonization prompted a rethinking of the role of the built heritage in Latin American identity: A crusade to civilize or a genocidal conquest? A mutual fertilization between two cultures or the annihilation of indigenous cultures? Racial mixing or racism? Empowerment or depredation? Unity or disintegration? Encounter or disencounter?

In regions with indigenous urban cultures, colonial cities generally rose on top of their predecessors (as in Mexico City and Cuzco), or were gradually integrated into the existing fabric. Superimposition caused the loss of valuable pre-Columbian landmarks, and often later provoked strong polemic when cities had to decide which archaeological strata to preserve. This was the case in Mexico City with its main square, the *zócalo*, where exposing its most ancient elements compromised the equally valuable newer elements and introduced a visual rupture in the urban landscape.

Arbitrary excavations alter ruins and, in many cases, may accelerate their destruction. Intervention is equally unjustified when it seeks the restoration of important monuments that are not truly endangered, as was the case with the reconstruction of the sea-wall foundations and Maesanza watchtower in Old Havana in the 1980s. In this instance, materials and effort were spent unnecessarily, while other valuable buildings were collapsing. Cases like this have recently prompted a more cautious attitude among Latin American experts toward excavation and restoration.

In spite of their strong social stratification,

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MARIO COYULA COWLEY AND LUIS LÁPIDUS

### *Historic Preservation in Cuba and Latin America*

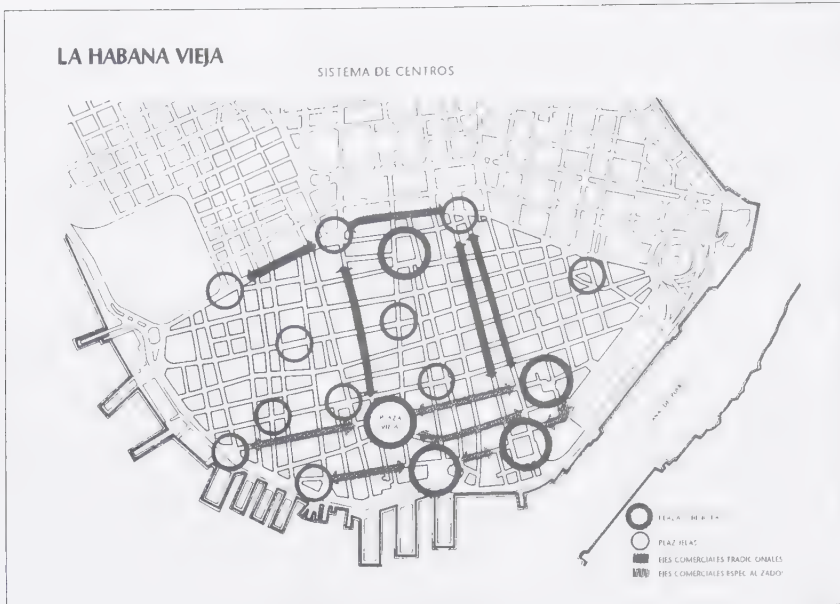
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colonial cities were morphologically homogeneous; their physical segregation did not appear until the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries, with urban and population growth. The independence of nearly all Latin American colonies initially introduced few changes to the territorial and urban structures. It was not until the second half of the 19th century that the influence of Western industrialized powers became felt. These changes first began along the Atlantic coast and in parts of the Caribbean. Many of the old colonial cities grew and transformed so quickly between 1870 and 1920 that they actually became new cities, with a European look, with grand axes and Beaux Arts buildings. Toward the end of World War I, Buenos Aires and Havana had attained a prestigious, monumental urban image, and were soon followed by Mexico City and Lima.

During this period, the dominant classes started to abandon the historic centers, which soon became slums. Their poor inhabitants developed an attitude that associated "historic" with "unlivable." They were also faced with the lack of resources and skilled artisans needed to properly maintain and preserve the built cultural heritage.

In some historic centers, such as Antigua, Guatemala, and San Juan, Puerto Rico, rehabilitation has accompanied the removal of the local population. It seems evident that the preservation of Latin American historic centers should not depend on the financial support of gentrifying yuppies or tourists, but neither can it be solely a state responsibility, accepted with resignation because of moral and cultural obligation. The solution may well rest on the economic empowerment of the local population, which would allow it to actively participate in finding gradual and feasible solutions to meet its needs, and lead to a natural and sustainable coincidence between cultural, social, environmental, and utilitarian values. The vast program of reconstructing more than one hundred buildings and inserting new dwellings in Mexico City's center after the 1985 earthquake is a good example, criticism aside, of the potential of combining these goals.

Historic preservation in Cuba is both similar to and different from the approaches taken in the rest of Latin America. The transculturization phenomenon in Cuba followed a pattern different than that of other American regions with developed indigenous cultures. Military architecture, as well as buildings representative of civil authority,



Graphic showing the network of main and minor squares with connecting axes in the historic core of old Havana; Centro Nacional de Conversación, Restauración, y Museología Ministerio de Cultura y Cuba (CENCREM).

stayed completely European. But religious architecture and most housing for middle and lower classes reflected more popular influences—first through a mixture with *mudéjar* (Spanish Moorish), and later, in a more subtle turn, with the cultural patterns and skills of the African slaves who built them. However, the principle factor shaping the architecture of the region was the necessary adaptation to climate and to new social and economic conditions.

Landmark restoration was defined as a discipline in Cuba in the 1930s, promoted by enlightened patrons and scholars. The state's responsibility for the preservation of cultural heritage was legally defined in Cuba's 1940 constitution. Restoration of outstanding buildings in Plaza de Armas and Plaza de la Catedral was executed with interventions meant to make them more "noble" according to European criteria.

The first serious state-sponsored program of historic preservation started in the 1960s. It addressed the restoration of isolated landmarks with high architectural, historic, or ideological value. The project of Trinidad, perhaps the most diligent and rigorous work of restoring the built Cuban heritage at that time, was oriented more toward preservation than restoration. The project resulted in an authenticity that is derived from the recovery of traditional building techniques and materials, and from the wise avoidance of arbitrary invention.

Some acts were controversial, however. The reconstruction of the alleged house of Conquistador Diego Velázquez in Santiago de Cuba unleashed overwhelming criticism of the otherwise respected historian Francisco Prat Puig. Among several undocumented decisions for which he was responsible was the arbitrary incorporation of a wooden balcony, apparently originally a part

of the house of the Marquis of Torre-Tagle in Lima. Taking an opposite approach on another project, Prat Puig proposed the demolition of the Spanish governor's house on top of La Fuerza Castle, the oldest existing building in Havana, claiming that the house was disruptive to the castle's presence. Both the house and the castle are equally essential to explaining the early history of the city, and fortunately, the proposed demolition was not carried out.

Old Havana is one of the largest historic centers in Latin America, with 142 hectares containing three thousand buildings, more than nine hundred of which are protected by the Havana Landmarks Commission. It is also one of the most deteriorated historic centers, with 80 percent of its building stock in bad structural condition. About 60 percent of the dwellings are *cuarterias*, old subdivided houses where whole families live in single rooms and share bathrooms with their neighbors. The 1975 master plan for rehabilitating the center was updated and perfected during the subsequent ten years. The plan integrates cultural concern with social, functional, and hygienic issues, in a strategy that gives priority to the network of plazas and connecting street axes.

A significant restoration project in Havana is the Santa Clara convent, the most important non-military 17th-century building in Cuba. It covers four blocks in the ancient, walled precinct. With its thick 300-year-old rammed-earth walls, rainwater cistern, wide galleries, and beautiful tree-shaded courts, this complex—almost completely rehabilitated by the Centro Nacional de Conversación, Restauración, y Museología Ministerio de Cultura y Cuba (CENCREM)—needs only to revive its primitive vegetable garden to present itself as an interesting option for a contemporary, sustainable urban development. It is a cool and peaceful oasis amidst a highly valuable but deteriorated built and social fabric.

The Plaza Vieja, also in Old Havana, differs from other Cuban colonial squares in its predominantly residential character, with baroque, neoclassical, and art nouveau buildings bound together by public colonnades. The plaza's rehabilitation gave priority to improving the local inhabitants' dwellings, but the project has maintained a rather slow pace, despite the campaign for international support launched by UNESCO in 1983.

In 1975, with the creation of the Ministry of Culture and the political/administrative division of the country into fifteen new provinces, the preservation of local landmarks was promoted in many additional cities. Preservation was reinforced in 1978 by Acts One and Two of the National Assembly, effecting the protection of cultural heritage, landmarks, and historic sites and creating the National and Provincial Landmarks Commissions. The 1980s witnessed

surge in the restoration of the built cultural heritage throughout the country, especially in Havana. In 1984 the definition of what constituted a landmark began to expand, and consideration was thus given to related urban and social issues. Unfortunately, these considerations have remained limited to theoretical work.

In 1986 the Colloquium of Las Tunas reappraised the vast, diverse architectural heritage so prevalent in Cuban cities. The meeting also examined the country's vernacular and contemporary structures, further breaking down the narrow definition of landmarks, which had been previously restricted to only the oldest, noblest, and most singular buildings. The landmark designation of Habana del Este (1959–61), the first major housing complex built after the Revolution, is an example of this new approach. Similarly, the 1992 Colloquium's recognition of the centennial of Richard Meutera stressed the cultural relevance of the modern movement in Cuba during the 1950s and its persistence into the 1960s.

Sometimes a lost battle can bring later gains through the critical understanding of a flawed process. The Husillo Dam was the major remnant of the first aqueduct of Havana, inaugurated in 1592 and probably the first hydraulic work built by Europeans in America. A new canal, poorly conceived to prevent flooding in the zone, resulted in the partial demolition of the dam in the late 1980s, despite the tenacious opposition of many organizations. What began as a purely cultural critique—preserving an important historic site—readily grew as the damage inflicted by the canal on the surrounding landscape and ecology became apparent, eventually calling into question the economic soundness of the canal altogether. This case made clear the close relationship between historic and environmental preservation. Moreover, it highlighted the technocratic rigidity of large government agencies which blindly prefer large-scale, poorly researched, known solutions to small-scale, well-researched, new ones.

In this sense, the work of the eight Integral Transformation Neighborhood Workshops in Havana—still experimental and facing numerous problems due to the almost total lack of resources—may become a valid alternative for a different type of development: decentralized, participatory, and self-sustainable, where the cultural concern for the preservation of local historic heritage may blend with environmental preservation and community empowerment. If identity is defined as what is left after change, this persistence reinforces the logic in management procedures, functional and morphological types, patterns of public and private space use, ways of life, and values layered over time.

Cuba is living through the most difficult moment of its recent history, perhaps of its whole

history. The accumulated know-how in landmark preservation has led to a profound questioning of the model that dominated construction in Cuba for nearly thirty years—which, over time, has proven to have been imposing, wasteful, dependent, and, in the end, vulnerable. To change will demand not only new economic mechanisms, organizational methods, and technological answers, but, above all, a realistic, humble, mature, and respectful attitude—in other words, a broadened culture of coexistence.

Some encouraging signs are appearing in the panorama of historic preservation in Latin America. Several countries have established or improved legal instruments for preserving cultural heritage, though in many cases their application is still incomplete. Research and design preservation and restoration agencies have been created, and this field enjoys increased emphasis in university curricula. Nearly thirty Latin American cities and historic centers have been designated as international patrimony by UNESCO, which not only acknowledges on an international level the historic value of these sites, but makes them eligible for financial and technical support from the United Nations. Other forms of material support have also been received from various sources abroad.

This recovery of the built historic heritage in the region has not been free of mistakes, but some important theoretical contributions have been made. Mexico in particular has made great strides, with an extremely strong national committee; the International Council for Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) is an active participant in this arena; and Argentina, Brazil, and Cuba are also leaders.

Historic preservation has played an important role in the search for identity—both national and regional—reviving the dreams of Simón Bolívar and José Martí. Recovering lost history or memory is increasingly seen as more important than preserving artifacts, valuable though they may be. Many experiences confirm that to achieve a sense of cultural identity on a national or continental scale, it must first be gained on the smaller scale of neighborhoods and communities. ♣



The House of Obra Pia, an example of 18th-century Cuban baroque, painstakingly restored in the 1970s. Photograph by Mario Coyula Cowley.

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## A CONVERSATION WITH GRAZIANO GASPARINI

### *The Presence of the Past in the Latin American Built Environment*

Translated from the Spanish by John Loomis

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Graziano Gasparini is an architect specializing in conservation and restoration. He is also a professor of history of architecture at the Universidad Central de Venezuela in Caracas. As an author, he has published over forty books on the history of pre-Columbian and colonial architecture of Latin America, including *América: Barroco y arquitectura* (Caracas: Armitano, 1972).

Interview conducted by John Loomis; transcribed by Gretchan Trevisan and Eulogio Guzman Acevedo.

**DBR:** What are some of the milestones of historic preservation in Latin America?

**GRAZIANO GASPARINI:** In looking at all the conservation activities in Latin America, there have naturally been different interpretations among the various countries of this enormous region. There are many factors that influence these activities—economic, political, and cultural—as well as the level of awareness of the cultural patrimony. Some countries have dedicated much energy toward preserving their built heritage, often because they consider it linked to other interests. For example, in the case of Mexico, cultural patrimony, both pre-Columbian and colonial, attracts tourists. People go to Mexico not just for the sun and beach, but for its extraordinarily impressive and extensive architectural and urban heritage. The same is true for Peru, but on a smaller scale, affected in recent years by political factors, but there is no doubt that the restoration of Cuzco and Machú Pichú was linked more to tourism than to cultural interests. And then there are the countries that are motivated by political interest, which is founded on the importance of the monument to the meaning of *patria*.

The success of historic preservation rests on the availability of material and economic resources; this is evident when you look at interventions executed in countries that for many years had few resources, like Bolivia, for example. While the situation has improved greatly, for thirty years the attitude toward cultural patrimony was very narrow. Peru has lost many monuments and countless antiquities, such as furniture, paintings, and carvings from churches in the Peruvian highlands, from Unin to Lake Titicaca. For too long, hundreds upon hundreds of churches filled with paintings have been without care or protection, not to mention professional conservation. People could enter them freely and cut the paintings from their frames, sometimes only a part, the head of a Virgin or a saint, destroying their value.

In the countries of the southern cone, there is much preservation activity—intense even—but the architectural historic patrimony is limited. I refer here only to the colonial patrimony, for Argentina and Chile do not have the rich archaeological patrimony that Mexico and Peru do. The colonial period did not leave the quantity of monuments in Argentina or Chile that was left in Ecuador, Mexico, and Peru. Therefore, it is much easier for the two countries to care for the few historic build-

ings they have. This is also the case in Venezuela. To illustrate the difference in concentration, in the southern cone there are about two hundred and fifty colonial churches, whereas in Mexico there are over fifteen thousand. This gives an idea of exactly how quantity factors into the equation for caring for the built cultural heritage.

There are, however, some countries that have consistently had a conscientious policy regarding cultural patrimony. Colombia is one notable example. The cultural leadership of Colombia has always maintained a well-defined preservation policy, independent of political and economic issues. Colombia's accomplishments over the last forty years are indeed admirable. I would say the same of Brazil, whose architectural patrimony is unknown to many but whose scope one cannot begin to comprehend. In a city such as Salvador de Bahia and surrounding towns like El Reconhecimento de Bahia, there are more than three hundred churches. Brazil has accomplished one of the most impressive projects in creating an inventory of its patrimony. They have developed an index and an archive of excellent photographs, plans, and precise historical data. Their inventory methodology was developed with the assistance of the technical organizations of UNESCO and OAS. The same system is now the common methodology, used throughout Latin America. I remember when the assumption was that there were maybe three or four hundred monuments in well-known places such as Ouro Preto, Salvador de Bahia, and Minas Gerais. Today, thanks to this inventory, we know there are thousands upon thousands. Considering the country's great expanse, the quantity of works realized during the period of Portuguese domination is really impressive. Indeed, I would say that one of the most important successes we have achieved in historic preservation in Latin America has been this inventory of our built cultural patrimony, which has been achieved in practically all countries.

**DBR:** What are some of the disappointments or setbacks to historic preservation in Latin America?

**GG:** Well, naturally, the losses of Latin America's patrimony has depended on many factors. The oldest and most important, I would say, up until thirty years ago, has been simply a lack of interest. There has not been a well-developed consciousness about the importance of historic preservation. Monuments were seen merely as something old, not as a witness of a past period representing the culture of place. Fortunately, this misperception has been overcome.

Another great destructive factor to Latin America's built cultural heritage is nature. In the Andean countries, from Colombia to Chile, many buildings and even entire cities have been lost to earthquakes. One of the more recent earthquakes, from



Buildings in the Canary Islands are known for their unique balconies, which are derived from North African and Spanish types; Tenerife, Canary Islands. Photographs by Graziano Gasparini. (From *Armitano Arte* 18.)

...ample, has essentially destroyed Popoyan in Colombia. All along the Andean chain, you cannot imagine the enormous number of monuments that have been destroyed. I have been personally involved in many rescue campaigns, mostly in Peru for UNESCO, but also in Cuzco, Quito, and other places. In the case of Quito, teams worked for ten years to repair earthquake damage and when the work was finally completed, along came another earthquake, destroying what had just been restored. This is something that cannot be unseen. In historic structures, the defensive anti-seismic criteria is founded principally on mass, that is, the thickness of the walls and the making of a heavy construction. A city such as Arequipa, which is an eminently seismic city, experiences earthquakes every year. There was a big one in 1960 that destroyed the church of the Compañía, which had already been reconstructed four or five times. In the cloister of the Compañía it is clear that the arches around the patio are not like those of cloisters we know: they are extremely small, and in place of a column stands a pillar that is actually 1.5 meters square.

Another factor contributing to the deterioration of the built patrimony is the scarcity of funds reserved in the national budgets of these countries. All restoration work, all interventions in the built patrimony of Latin America are carried out by governments. There is little or no participation from the private sector. Another negative factor is inappropriate or poorly executed acts of restoration and intervention in the historic fabric. This is often a result of improper planning or training, or incompetence or improvisation. Or it is due to flawed criteria and methodology. I have seen many poorly executed interventions where the

monument would have been better off had it been left alone. In this respect it is important that the international conventions pertaining to restoration be made known and followed. We all know about the Athens Charter, but for historic preservation there is the Venice Charter, as well as other international resolutions. Naturally, their tenets are subject to interpretation. Article Nine of the Venice Charter states that every intervention made in the historic fabric must bear the mark of our era. In other words, we are to say no to imitation, no to scenography, no to historicism. But in my opinion, the mark of our era must also be a mark of the quality. Lamentably, many times it has been the mark of mediocrity instead that is left on the historic fabric. There are many examples of the kind of contrast-oriented interventions recommended by the Venice Charter that are now heavily criticized. Recent theories generally condemn the contrast approach and recommend an analogous type of intervention—not an imitation, but a creatively analogous intervention wherein the architect leaves his mark, but at the same time enters into a dialogue with the monument. One recent intervention, an infill addition to Havana's historic center, seems overly concerned with post-modern stylishness, and disinterested in creating a sensitive dialogue with its historic context. The project, a rather well-known polyclinic, does not follow an analogical criteria and is more a unique object than an integral part of historic fabric. It is illustrative of the problems surrounding today's debate over historic preservation. This debate is very active in Latin America. Thirty years after the Venice Charter, it is evident that many of the interventions in the built patrimony that have been realized in Latin America have been flawed.



Balconies identical in type to those in the Canary Islands are found throughout Venezuela, which the Canarios call "the eighth island"; La Guaira, Venezuela. Photograph by Graziano Gasparini. (From *Armitano Arte* 18.)

Twenty, twenty-five years have given us this critical perspective.

I believe that it is probably better that interventions do not bear the mark of our era too much. In fact, there are many acceptable types of restoration and intervention. One could make a restoration, that is to say a minimalist intervention, that restores in order to prevent further loss, so that the work does not continue to deteriorate and therefore maintains its antiquity. One can make interventions to reconstruct a work lost to a fire or a catastrophe of war, restoring it to its former state, with no marks at all of our era, though the restored work is virtually contemporary. Or one could add value to monuments through a modern analogical intervention. So you see that today we have given up a

certain rigidity that was recommended by the Venice Charter. No two conservation and restoration cases can be considered equal. Each case is unique and must be considered as such, but in all cases there must be a profound, thoughtful dialogue between the restored and the restorer—that is, the architect.

*DBR:* The theoretical debate concerning cultural identity has assumed a significant place in the architectural discourse of Latin America. Does this debate affect historic preservation?

*GG:* Yes, it does. However, we must clarify the question with respect to identity. I do not believe that a Venezuelan architecture exists, nor a Colombian architecture, nor a Mexican nor Chilean. You can have good architecture by a Venezuelan architect like Carlos Raúl Villanueva, or by a Colombian architect like Rogelio Salmons, or by an Argentine architect like Clorindo Testa, and so on. Identity that is confused with nationalism is simplistic, potentially dangerous, and reactionary from a cultural point of view. Above all, we in Latin America must not forget that nationality is a historical category that was defined during the struggle for independence in the last century, when there arose an Argentine republic, a Colombian republic, a Venezuelan republic. But before that, most of the Latin American continent had a single political head, in Madrid. Therefore, the issue of nationalism is a relatively recent historical phenomenon, dating only to the beginning of the 19th century. For this reason we cannot speak about a national architecture, although it has had its moments. For example, Brazil forty years ago produced a truly a Brazilian modern architecture,

guided by Oscar Niemeyer, Lúcio Costa, the Roberto brothers, among others. Mexico, too, had a national moment that was culturally significant in architecture and art, exemplified by the works of Juan O'Gorman and Diego Rivera. There is also another, less profound kind of national architecture, such as the pseudo-Mexican architecture of the many "barragancitos" who paint walls ochre or "Mexican pink." But there is only one Barragán. By the same token, there is only one Eladio Dieste in Uruguay. In this respect, identity should not be a question of nationality, but the cultural production of committed individuals.

We exist in the past as well as in the present. Today in Latin America, there is a growing awareness of the value of *all* that has been a part of our evolution, of all the historical strata of our environment. Caracas, for example, is a city that has grown too rapidly and without order. Today, the city center has only one example of colonial architecture, the house of Simón Bolívar, which has been conserved for obvious reasons. We must not think that something is of historic value just because it is old. Values do not have dates. An architectural work does not have value just because it was constructed in 1500 or 1700. An architectural work has value because of its conceptual integrity, the quality of its interior space, its exterior form. These are values apart from the epoch in which it was constructed. Therefore, a building such as the Aula Magna by Villanueva (with the collaboration of Alexander Calder) in the University City of Caracas is a monument that is part of our contemporary culture. It is time to see it as an architectural monument that is part of the culture of the university, which, incidentally, has not been very responsible in its maintenance. But I think that its significance is beginning to be understood, and for this reason we are convening the first convention for the conservation of modern architecture this July in Caracas.

Once upon a time, the concept of historic preservation ended with the colonial period. We must now acknowledge the value—and lament the loss—of the many works from the 19th century that have been demolished. We realize now that marvelous works from that period, eclectic, neo-Gothic, neoclassical, were demolished with great ease. Today, when we look at photographs from that period, we realize how ignorant we were to have torn down those monuments. They were torn down in the name of progress, of nationalistic progress. So to me, the idea of identity in the nationalist sense has a negative aspect. I believe that we must recognize the projects for conservation based on their own value, in every nation.

*DBR:* Could you comment on your recent research on the Canary Islands, which you have mentioned to be a bridge between the Old and New Worlds and a bridge between Europe and Latin America?

G: I have occupied much of my life studying the pre-Columbian and colonial architecture of the Americas. My book *América: Barroco y arquitectura* embraces the whole South American continent. One of the issues in architecture that has always interested me is the transmission of culture and the transmission of forms. Whenever one regards a colonial monument in Iberoamerica, one always encounters something that was not born in America but something that was transformed by America. After the 18th century, things changed slightly, but in the 16th and 17th centuries there was a great preponderance of European architectural culture that was transferred to America. In America it was transformed because the environment is different, the climate is different, the dimensions of the continent are different. And, of course, often the materials are different. But there is always this transmission from Europe, by way of the builders, by way of the forms, by way of the masters trained abroad and in America. We can see the fabulous offspring of the architectural treatises of Sebastiano Serlio, for example, in Colombia, Peru, Mexico, and many other places. Yet these examples have been subject to changes, to local contributions. For example, the Sanctuary of Ocotlán near Tlaxcala in Mexico is a work that never could have occurred in Europe. It is Mexican in the sense that it has a Mexican spirit, a Mexican color. It is something that definitely rose from this American earth.

The Canary Islands are an important phenomenon from the point of view of geography. Since Columbus' first voyage to the American continent, mariners took the route from Spain to the Canary Islands, which were about eight to ten days of sailing to the south, along the African coast. From there, with the benefit of the winds which blow strongly year round and the ocean currents that prevailed in the same direction, they could continue on to America. The natural conditions were such that a small boat could easily arrive in the Caribbean. During the Franco era, especially the 1950s, many *isleños*, fleeing the fascist oppression, would take a little fishing boat and, after seventeen to eighteen days, arrive in Venezuela. The Canaries proper consist of seven islands, but the Canarios call Venezuela the eighth land. It was very easy to go, but one could not return. The same was true for the Spanish: during the three centuries of colonialism, they could arrive easily and safely, but to return they would have to go to Havana, and from Havana to the Bahamas in order to catch the winds and currents from the north.

The Canaries, which Spain conquered in 1492–1496, shortly before America, were considered the end of the earth. When Spain conquered the Canaries, they did not yet know that America existed. Therefore, the islands were the first Spanish possession to be taken from the Iberian penin-

sula. They incorporated it into the kingdom as a province and had the intention of constructing cathedrals and much more throughout the islands. But within twenty years, America was discovered. So all the initial interest declined because, in comparison to the riches of the New World, the Canaries had nothing—no gold, no silver, nothing. So the Canaries were transformed into what I have called a “culture of passage.” In a few words, it was a place where boats passed, one way, in transit, and this transient culture was absorbed. What the Canaries received was very different from what the final port of call received. The Canaries served only for replenishing water supply, repairing boats, taking on extra sailors. This phenomenon continued for three centuries, lasting into the 19th century. Works of Arab, Islamic, and *mudéjar* origin, which were prohibited in Spain from the 16th century onward, continued to be built in the Canaries until the beginning of the 20th century. Gothic architecture continued to be built until the 18th century. What is interesting is that only the first influences received were utilized and interpreted. Furthermore, it is interesting that in the Canary Islands there is no baroque architecture. However, Latin America has fabulous, fantastic, marvelous baroque—for instance, in the churches of Mexico, which are like golden caves. Baroque architecture passed by the Canary Islands and did not stop. There was a certain stagnation or delay, a lack of new cultural influences, but at the same time there was a recycling or repetition of the same forms, until the point of exhaustion. The Canarios, in turn, exported these forms to Venezuela, where today you can see buildings with the famous Canary balconies. Another example lies in the archaic nature of the three-nave, basilica-plan churches in the Canaries. Originating in the Islands in the 16th century, this type continued to be built in exactly the same manner into the 19th century. There was no baroque. The same is true for Venezuela, where the three-nave churches are exactly the same as those in the Canaries because of the influx of so many Canarios. Venezuela does not have baroque spaces and continued to make basilica plans completely ignorant of the great change that occurred with the introduction of this Jesuit space. This space was unknown in the Canaries and unknown in Venezuela because Venezuela was in a sense a cultural extension of the Canaries. Because of this I find the phenomenon interesting, and I am working a book on the architecture of the Canary Islands covering the period from the end of the 15th century to the end of 18th century. Eventually Spain lost its colonies in America, and once again it became interested in the Canaries and the Canaries began to participate more in the life of Europe, but that is another story. ■

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MARÍA FERNÁNDEZ

*In the Image of the Other: A Call for Rethinking National Identity*

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The 1990s is a decade of reevaluation. History, political philosophies, traditional ways of writing, ritual practices and celebrations (such as the arrival of Columbus in America), and a variety of "isms"—including modernism, postmodernism, and nationalism—are only a few of the areas being reexamined. This article is an invitation to architects of the Americas, particularly those living and working south of the U.S. border, to critically reevaluate two areas relevant to architectural practice, which, in our time, are inevitably linked: the representation of national identity and technological empowerment.

Identity and nation are socially, culturally, and historically determined constructs that are always shifting and never completed. Individual identity is constructed through a separation of the self from the other.<sup>1</sup> National identity replicates this dynamic for it, too, functions to achieve internal cohesion while separating the nation from the outside. The internal function of national identity is further rooted in the split between the "ideal," represented, objectified nation, and the lived, actual nation. In political theorist Anne Norton's opinion, "It is the ideal nation that people hold as legitimate and authoritative. This permits the nation to appear unchanging over time, but it alienates the people from the nation." Thus, national identity is always ambiguous.<sup>2</sup>

Historically, the concept of national identity has served as a powerful tool for social, political, and even economic ends, whether to validate a particular taxation plan or to mobilize citizens for warfare. As cultural theorist Benedict Anderson explains, most ordinary people perceive the nation as being interestless in its actions toward its members, like the family. Therefore, it can ask for sacrifices.<sup>3</sup>

The concentration of influential, image-conscious media on "First World" societies has allowed the self-image of underdeveloped regions to be knowingly or unknowingly imposed by technologically powerful others. In a recent interview, Edward Said commented that "dependent societies—the peripheral societies in the Third World and those just outside the metropolitan zones—are to an extraordinary degree reliant upon this system of information [electronic media] about themselves. We're talking now about self-knowledge, not only knowledge about other societies. . . . We have not yet devised the means to deal with a television or film or even a script image, and to criticize the framework in which this image is presented, because it is *given* as a reality, mediated so powerfully and accepted almost subliminally." Along the same lines, literary critic Timothy Bren-

nan recently wrote, "It has become increasingly clear that the effects of intellectual and cultural dependence are as serious as those of political subjection or economic dependence. There can be no genuine, effective independence without the communication resources needed to safeguard it. The argument has been made that a nation whose mass media are under foreign domination cannot claim to be a nation."<sup>4</sup> The connection between representations of national identity and technology is not new; nor is it limited to communication technology. In the case of modern Mexican art and architecture, pre-Columbian motifs and images of native peoples are often paired with high-tech materials or representations of sophisticated equipment, suggesting a utopian image of Mexico as a classless and technologically advanced nation.

The expression of national character in architecture has been a major concern of Latin American architects and critics since the turn of the century. In Mexico alone, the list is long: Luis Salazar at the end of the 19th century; Federico Mariscal, Carlos Obregón Santacilia, Manuel Amabilis during the 1920s and 1930s; Juan O'Gorman, Pedro Ramírez Vázquez, Diego Rivera, Enrique Yáñez, Luis Barragán in the subsequent four decades, and most recently, Agustín Hernández, Ricardo Legorreta, David Muñoz, Ernesto Velasco León, among others. In Argentina, there are the impassioned writings of Ricardo Rojas and Martín Noel during the 1920s and 1930s, and in Brazil the influential work of Gilberto Freyre, Lúcio Costa, and Oscar Niemeyer. There are additional examples for practically every other Latin American country.

Architects—particularly those from developing countries—are expected to create work that expresses some sense of identification with place and that is, at the same time, universal. The precise meaning of "universal" is questionable, however, for it often refers to styles that assume worldwide access to a set of specialized materials and technology. Like the "realities" portrayed by electronic media, the rhetoric of universality can be a rhetoric of domination, leading to the imposition of "First World" systems on "Third World" others. In developing countries, unquestioned attempts to achieve universality sometimes result in grandiose projects that only increase debt and dependence. Pressure to represent ethnic or national identity may coerce artists and intellectuals of developing countries to stage "authenticity." This often results in a no-win situation as the "difference" that marks such work may be perceived by foreign critics as merely superficial or pastiche, lacking aesthetic or formal innovation.<sup>5</sup> Before setting out to represent our national identity, it would be wise for architects to study their native political, ethnic, social, and class structures and try to determine precisely to whose identity they are referring.

The Pavilion of Mexico at the 1889 Universal Exposition in Paris provides an interesting case

ady, as a representation of Mexican national identity during the Porfiriato, the thirty-four year rule of President Porfirio Díaz (1876–1910). The pavilion has been included in numerous studies of Mexican national art and architecture. Several scholars perceive the use of pre-Columbian motifs in art and architecture during the Porfiriato to be the appropriation of national history as an instrument of social control and legitimation by a powerful group.<sup>6</sup> But representations of national identity are shaped as much by international politics as by domestic concerns—much the same way that they depend on both international and locally understood systems. The pavilion's design was a response to social and economic imperatives rooted in the dialectic between the nation and the outside.

This study concentrates on four areas: the building's commission, the cultural and economic contexts, foreign relations, and foreign input in evaluating the designs. Because the events related took place at the end of the 19th century, this narrative may seem out place here. Yet, in the words of Michel de Certeau, "Historians receive from current events the means for their research and the context for their interest."<sup>7</sup>

In February 1888, the Mexican Secretariat of Public Works, Colonization, and Commerce, Carlos Pacheco, organized a competition for the design of the Mexican pavilion for the 1889 Universal Exposition in Paris. Pacheco appointed two committees to design the building. Luis Salazar, Vicente Reyes, and José María Alva were on the first committee; Antonio María Anza and Antonio Peñafiel were on the second one. With the exception of Peñafiel, a physician and one of Mexico's leading scientists, all the committee members were practicing engineers and architects.

The competition rules specified that the pavilion should be a single building in a style that represented one or several ancient monuments. The brief also required that the building be constructed such that it could be transported back to Mexico when the exhibition ended, so that it could be used as a museum or a public building. Each committee submitted a written proposal and drawings that were judged by Pacheco, President Porfirio Díaz, and the exhibition board of directors.

Both committees designed buildings based on European models emphasizing regularity and symmetry. The decorative aspects, however, were derived from pre-Columbian motifs. Peñafiel and Anza modeled the main entrance of their building on post-classic temples of Central Mexico, particularly the temple of Xochicalco. Peñafiel described the pavilion's portico, which included symbols for the sun, the earth, and fire, as "a compendium of Mexican worship." Additionally, sculptural panels depicted mythological figures such as the gods and goddesses of agriculture, water, and hunting, as well as Aztec kings, which, according to Peñafiel, indicated the dawn and end of Aztec civilization. Salazar, Reyes, and Alva based their design

on Central Mexican and Mayan archaeological remains, as well as on pre-Hispanic architecture illustrated in contemporary painting. Windows were based on the Mayan corbeled arch; pilasters imitated supports at palaces at Teotihuacan; sun disks encircled the skylights. The sloping walls and the doors on one side of the building were copied from José Obregón's painting, *Discovery of Pulque* (1869).

Both committees chose an iron-structure for their building. Salazar, Reyes, and Alva proposed to cover the iron with wood, while Peñafiel and Anza chose a more high-tech construction, with sheet-iron frames, glass for the inner walls and skylights, marble for the staircases, corrugated-iron plates covered with cement for the floors, and zinc or iron plates for the exterior decorations. The materials were chosen to indicate that Mexico could compete with the developed countries. Peñafiel and Anza stated in their proposal that in the covering for each hall they tried to follow "a similar arrangement to that which Joseph Paxton employed in the Crystal Palace."<sup>8</sup> By late summer of 1888, the government chose Peñafiel and Anza's project as the winner. Although representations of a Mexican identity based on Aztec antiquity had appeared in the colonial period (1521–1821), the pavilion was the first officially sanctioned attempt to create a national style of architecture based on pre-Columbian forms.

The quest for a national style of architecture was only one aspect of defining a Mexican identity. In the 19th century there were efforts to represent Mexican identity in other media as well, such as painting and literature. After independence in 1821, the Mexican elite's previous identification with Spain took the form of a more general identification with Europe, and later with the United States. This resulted in the imitation of European and American cultural patterns. At the same time, urban and intellectual elites in Mexico (including those of European ancestry) continued to look at the most developed pre-Columbian cultures as episodes of their own past. During the thirty-four-year rule of Porfirio Díaz, upper-class Mexicans wore French and English clothes, danced the minuet, listened to French and Italian operas, and even preferred English and French to Mexican food. Exclusive neighborhoods with sumptuous neoclassical homes resembled quarters of Paris and



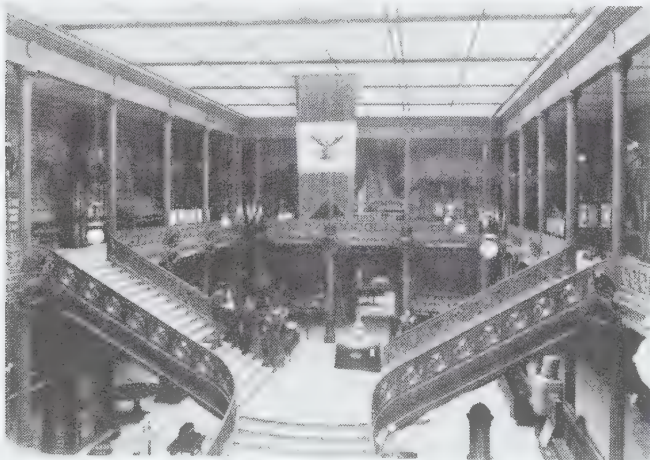
Mexico's pavilion at the 1889 Universal Exposition in Paris; designers Antonio Peñafiel and Antonio María Anza modeled their plan on Central Mexican temples—in particular the Temple of Xochicalco—and borrowed motifs of worship.

Brussels. The owners of these houses often purchased architectural designs in Europe and had them executed in Mexico.<sup>9</sup> Since its founding in 1785, Mexico's architecture school at the Escuela de Bellas Artes, formerly the Academia de San Carlos de Nueva España, hired mostly European or European-educated instructors. During the Porfiriato, the faculty included Maxime Roisin of France, Adamo Boari of Italy, and Antonio Rivas Mercado, a Mexican who studied at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. Díaz Mercado became director of the School of Fine Arts in 1903. The most important architectural commissions of the Porfiriato were given to foreigners. In 1905 Emile Benard and Maxime Roisin, both French, designed the Legislative Palace, which was never completed due to the outbreak of the revolution in 1910–11. Adamo Boari designed Mexico City's main post office in 1902, and the Palace of Fine Arts in 1904 (although it was not completed until 1934, under the direction of Mexican architect Federico Mariscal).

Because imported culture was dominant, particularly in architecture, the government's commission of an important building like the 1889 Paris pavilion to be built abroad in a pre-Columbian style is puzzling. In fact, the pavilion was violently criticized in Mexico. Architects found it lacking in style, function, and honesty. Archaeologists rejected it because it reproduced ancient architecture inaccurately. Francisco Alvarez, one of the most influential architects of his time, wrote: "I regarded [the pavilion] as totally bizarre and anti-artistic, and imagined a Mexican man properly dressed in a dress coat, white tie, and gloves and muffled up with a *zarape*, from Saltillo. In the first [Mexican man] I saw the products of our industry marking our development; in the *zarape* [I saw] the Indian facades of the edifice in question concealing iron columns, stairs, skylights, and especially the products of our industry." In his description of the building, Peñafiel had stated that his architectural and decorative sources were purely Central Mexican. In Batres view, the pavilion's caryatids and relief sculpture panels were nonexistent in Mexico's building heritage.<sup>10</sup>

The pavilion was returned to Mexico after the

Ground floor, interior view of the Pavilion of Mexico, Universal Exposition in Paris, 1889.



Paris exposition according to the government's original plans, but it was never reassembled. The building parts were stored, except for the bronze sculptural panels depicting the emperors, which were placed in the

patio walls of the Museo Nacional de Artillería. In 1940 some of the reliefs were incorporated into the Monumento a la Raza by Luis Lelo de Larré. In the 19th century, few Mexicans adopted pre-Columbian revival architecture. Two triumphal arches built in Mexico City in honor of Díaz are among only a handful of examples. At the turn of the century, Luis Salazar was one of the few enthusiasts for pre-Columbian revival architecture; in a lecture he delivered to the eleventh Congress of Americanists in 1895, he encouraged architects to create a national style of architecture based on the study of pre-Columbian ruins. Mexican architects would not consider Salazar's suggestions until twenty years later.<sup>11</sup>

When Díaz first took office in 1877, Mexico was primarily an agricultural country dependent on its sale of raw materials to Europe. Most of its population consisted of peasants working under serflike conditions for wealthy landowners. This situation remained more or less constant during the Porfiriato. In 1911, 84 percent of the population was illiterate, and only 1 percent of Mexico's four million Indians spoke Spanish. Transportation difficulties within the country aggravated their isolation. There were no inland waterways; few roads, and in the first years of the Porfiriato, railroads traversed only four hundred miles.<sup>12</sup>

Don Porfirio surrounded himself with a group of advisors who became known as the *científicos* (the scientists) because they based their political theories and practices on the positivistic philosophies of Auguste Comte and the social Darwinism of Herbert Spencer. For Spencer in particular, industrialization was synonymous with progress. Thus, the administration rapidly introduced Mexico to technological innovations such as electricity, lighting, telephones, automobiles, movies, and water utility systems. Between 1876 and 1910, railroad tracks grew from four hundred to fifteen thousand miles. In order to make these developments possible, the government encouraged foreign investments, confiscated thousands of acres of communal Indian land, and gave them to powerful landowners and industrial companies. Between 1876 and 1910 over 96 percent of the communal villages lost their land. This, combined with large-scale importation of industrial machinery, fostered Mexico's economic growth. Between 1877 and 1890 Mexico quadrupled its exports.<sup>13</sup>

Mexico's success was deceptive, however. In 1911 two-thirds of Mexico's industries were foreign-owned. American companies controlled both the domestic railroads and the steamship lines to New York, New Orleans, and Veracruz. By 1910 the United States supplied 55 percent of Mexico's imports, rivaling only the activities of Great Britain.<sup>14</sup> In the late 1880s Mexico's economic dependence on the U.S. led the Díaz administration to seek commercial and diplomatic relations with European countries, particularly with France. This was a delicate matter because, after the

rench intervention in Mexico (1861–67) and the execution of Emperor Maximilian of Habsburg by Mexicans in 1867, most European countries severed diplomatic relations with Mexico. Consequently, Mexicans did not participate in any of the major international expositions held in Europe between 1867 and 1888. Mexico attended the centennial exposition in Philadelphia in 1876, but, like the pavilions of other nations, its structure was a triumphal arch flanked by two wings.

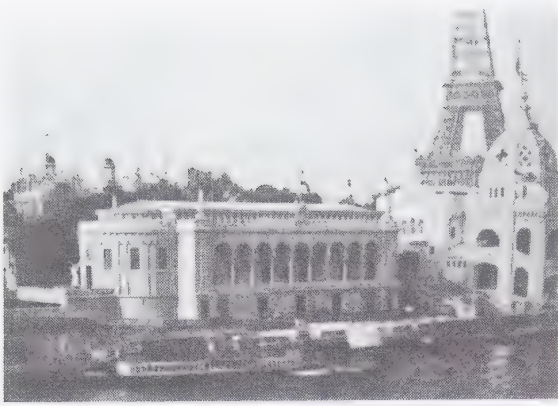
The centennial exposition may have prompted Mexico's urgency to renew diplomatic relations with European countries because it established the United States as the world's most powerful industrial country. Two years later, France invited Mexico to attend the Universal Exposition of 1878 in Paris, but due to diplomatic difficulties Mexico declined. Mexico reestablished diplomatic relations with Belgium, Portugal, and Bulgaria in 1879, in 1880 with France, and in 1884 with Great Britain. In 1888 Mexico approached France, England, and Germany requesting loans. A year later the French minister reported that the U.S. attempts to intervene in the negotiations had been politely rejected "because Mexico fears the United States"—a fear that was exacerbated by Mexico's territorial losses during the Mexican American War.<sup>15</sup> This is evident in a conversation between the French minister to Mexico and the president of Mexico's chamber of deputies, Jose López Portillo y Rojas, in April 1901. López Portillo spoke of the invasion of Mexico by American financial capital, railways, and industry that had occurred over the previous few years: "There can be no question that we cannot respond to this invasion in a radical fashion. . . . We must keep such a powerful neighbor in a good mood and we must do nothing to antagonize it. On the other hand, we have the right and also the duty to look elsewhere for a counterweight to the constantly growing influence of our powerful neighbor. We must turn to other circles, from which we can draw support under certain circumstances, in order to preserve our industrial and commercial independence. We can find such a counterweight in European, and particularly French capital." In the course of the Porfiriato, Mexico kept shifting patrons. The Germans were Mexico's main lenders in 1890, and the English were given top positions in the board of directors of a national company that broke U.S. control of the railroads in 1908.

The 1889 Paris exposition marked Mexico's formal reentry into the realm of international commerce and politics. The Mexican pavilion embodied two disparate images: a preindustrial imperial antiquity and a technologically sophisticated present. The pavilion's materials suggested that Mexico was as capable of building as the most powerful nations were, while the indigenous decorations lent to Mexico's distinctive identity, implying resistance to assimilation. The building's design

thus combined mimicry and differentiation. At the same time, the juxtaposition of technologically advanced materials with images of noble Indians presented an imaginary resolution of Mexico's socioeconomic contradictions. The government's hope of competing with developed countries is evident in a report by the Commissaire General of the Exhibition, Manuel Díaz Mimiaga, dated December 1887, informing the President that the original location given to Latin American nations for the exhibition was unacceptable because it was too small, and "if it was next to the pavilions of the European nations and the United States there would immediately be a point of comparison that would be unfavorable and would make them lose much of their interest." The Mexican pavilion ultimately occupied a prime lot at the exhibition, in front of the Palace of Liberal Arts.

Both Salazar's and Peñafiel's pavilion designs achieved the balance between modernity and individuality that the Porfirian regime was interested in projecting. The government's choice of Peñafiel's over Salazar's project was influenced by the opinions of French critics, solicited by the Mexicans. In June 1888, the Mexican government sent Salazar and Antonio Maria Anza to Paris to make arrangements for the exhibition. On August 12, Salazar wrote to Pacheco, recommending that Anza and Peñafiel's project be chosen: "The originality of Anza's project was well liked because it presents a form *sui generis* that is believed will cause interest and will be attractive to the visitors of the exposition, and consequently Mexico will look better. . . . These ideas were supported by the director of the Trocadero Museum who, at my initiative, we secured to assess the projects."

The French had been interested in Mexican archaeology since at least 1864, when Napoleon III sent a commission to study Mexican ruins. In 1867, the last year of French rule in Mexico, the French displayed a replica of the Temple of Xochicalco at its international exhibition. The French government customarily exhibited the architecture of French colonies in order to justify France's "civilizing missions." Peñafiel's choice of the Temple of Xochicalco as basis for his 1889 pavilion design must have been informed by the earlier French interest in the building. Thus, the pavilion, with its pre-Columbian details, reflects the complexity of colonial and postcolonial relations: the mimicry, resistance, and seduction inherent in appropriating an image of the exotic other were made paradoxical by the fact that the other had been already formulated by the French. The French contribution to elaborating an image of Mexico is evident in the disparity between Peñafiel and Anza's original drawings for the sculptural reliefs and the finished products. In the original proposal, the figures follow the restrained style of Sahagun's Codex; in the finished reliefs, however, they adopt dramatic positions and gestures characteristic of French academic sculpture. The reliefs



The neoclassically styled Pavilion of Mexico at the Universal Exposition of 1900 in Paris contrasts greatly with the pre-Columbian appearance of the 1889 pavilion, which emphasized the country's unique cultural heritage in order to attract foreign capital. In 1900, Mexico's aim was to convey the country's equality with the developed nations.

explained that the criteria for the Mexican pavilion had to be modified because the conditions of both Mexico and the exhibition changed. Mexico of 1889 was attempting to attract human and financial capital in order to develop its industrial base; it also hoped to promote its industrial products in the international marketplace. By 1900 the country had made unprecedented progress. In de Mier's words, "If the participation of Mexico in 1889 was [aimed at demonstrating Mexico's] latent potential, the exhibition of 1900 needed to be limited to showing all that we had already achieved in practice."<sup>16</sup> In other words, whereas Columbian revival architecture acted as part of a lure to attract European capital—the lure being the exotic, the unexplored—Mexico's neoclassical building advertised Mexico's equality with developed nations.

In summary, in 1889 Mexico faced serious international pressures for control of its resources. Mexican urban elites strove to transform the country into a modern nation, yet the country was economically and culturally dependent on the developed world. The government sanctioned a pavilion design for the 1889 Universal Exposition in Paris that would portray Mexico as an independent and wealthy nation, but at the same time, it took care to secure European approval. Thus, Mexico strategically employed pre-Columbian revival architecture in order to construct an image of national identity that differentiated itself from European countries. Meanwhile, the pavilion's plan and materials linked it to European architecture. Thus, by simultaneously expressing difference and similarity, the pavilion submitted to the demands of colonial discourse. In the opinion of literary critic Homi Bhabha, colonial discourse requires the "other" to be both alike and different from the colonist. This ambiguity results in a partial recognition of the "other."<sup>17</sup>

The Mexicans played their role in the theater of colonial discourse perhaps knowingly, as their invitation to the French to choose the final pavilion design might suggest. Mexico's representation of its national identity in the 1889 Universal Exposition depended as much on domestic factors as on its relations with economically dominant nations. ■

were executed by the Société Anonyme des Anciens Etablissements Cail in Paris.

In 1900 the Mexican government commissioned a neoclassical building for its presence at the universal exhibition in Paris. Sebastian B. de Mier, commissioner general of the Mexican delegation for the exhibition,

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17. Sebastian de Mier, *México en la Exposición Internacional de París, 1900* (Paris: Impr. de Dumoulin, 1901), pp. 21–26, 27.
18. Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," *October* 28 (Spring 1982): 126.

Tlatelolco is to Mexicans what Kent State is to Americans, for this splendid plaza will be forever tainted with the blood of students massacred by the national guard shortly before the start of the 1968 Olympics. Yet modern Tlatelolco was intended to be something quite different: a beautiful plaza, *plaza de las tres culturas*, landscaped to display the excavated remains of Aztec culture next to the restored 16th-century convent of a religious order, and flanked on one side by the modernist tower housing the ministry of Foreign Affairs and on the other by a massive housing project designed by Mario Pani. In 1968, shooting started from one of these housing blocks, allegedly by students although everyone knows that it was *agents provocateurs*. (Despite Mexico's own version of the Freedom of Information Act, it is still not known on whose behalf those *provocateurs* were acting.) Americans today are more likely to remember Tlatelolco as the housing project where Nancy Reagan visited Placido Domingo when he, with many others, was excavating day and night in search of relatives buried by the 1985 earthquake.

The government had hoped for Tlatelolco to have other associations. A year before the massacre, the Treaty of Tlatelolco had been signed by all the Latin American countries under Mexico's leadership. In it, they pledged not to expend further resources on the development of nuclear weapons. Even more significantly, the center of the plaza prominently displays a large stone plaque on which the following words are carved:

*El 13 de Agosto de 1521, heroicamente defendido por Cuauhtemoc, cayó Tlatelolco en posesión de Hernán Cortés. No fue triunfo ni derrota. Fue el doloroso nacimiento del pueblo mestizo que es el México de hoy.*

On August 13, 1521, heroically defended by Cuauhtemoc, Tlatelolco fell to Hernán Cortés. There was no victory and no defeat. There was instead the painful birth of the hybrid people that constitutes the Mexico of today.

These words were placed there in 1960 by Jaime Torres Bodet during his second term as Minister of Education. This preoccupation with identity, with redefining Mexican character in terms of its Indian roots, recurs throughout Mexican history. It is to those roots that architect Pedro Ramírez Vázquez reached in order to locate the origins of Mexican architecture in the seminal 1956 publication, *4000 Años de arquitectura mexicana*. The volume was aimed at nurturing the development of architectural culture in Mexico. Published when he was president of the Mexican Society of Architects, the book is presented in Spanish, English, French, and German, and begins: "Four thousand years ago in Cuicuilco . . . in the crystal-

ANGELA GIRAL

## *Mexican Exceptionalism: The Continuity of Culture in Mexican Architecture*

clear atmosphere of the Mexican plateau . . . at the geographical center of America, there arose the first higher culture of that continent"; and it concludes with a fifty-page spread on the Ciudad Universitaria, the University City, presented as the most ambitious architectural and pedagogical project of mid-20th-century Mexico.

Ramírez Vázquez is perhaps the most significant figure in the formation of a Mexican architectural culture. By the late 1960s, after Tlatelolco, it was clear that the concentration of tens of thousands of students and university workers in a central campus was not politically advantageous. A plan for the development of a new, semiautonomous university began to evolve in the highest echelons of the Mexican government, and its implementation was entrusted to Ramírez Vázquez. Appointed as the first president of the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (UAM), he used architectural and planning principles to design a deliberately decentralized campus, with self-contained units and built with limited capacities. (This was, after all, the 1970s, in the wake of the turbulent decade in which students had shown the world their potential power when they converged in large numbers). But he also gave pre-eminence to the teaching of architecture in the first two UAM campuses, at Azcapotzalco and Xochimilco (small towns just outside Mexico City). Moreover, he fostered the development of publications on architecture, as is evident by the many books with the UAM imprint. In contrast to the motto of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), "*Por mi raza hablará el espíritu*" (the spirit shall speak for my race), UAM's motto, chosen by Ramírez Vázquez, is "*Casa abierta al tiempo*" (a house open to time).

Ramírez Vázquez is also the man who demanded a prominent location for the Mexican pavilion in the 1992 Seville Exposition, and designed it in the form of an *x* as a gesture of reaffirmation of Mexico's Indian heritage: Spaniards have been writing *Méjico* with a *j* for five hundred years, for in Spanish, the *x* in *México* is indeed pronounced like a *j* (as in Oaxaca). Mexicans have always resented this spelling, viewing it as a manifestation of colonialism. The *x* is prevalent in the transcription of many words of Indian origin, pronounced sometimes as an *s* (as in Xochimilco), other times as *x* (Texcoco), or even *sh* (*mixiote*).

Ramírez Vázquez is one of the eighteen architects introduced or interviewed by younger members of the UAM faculty in three consecutive lecture

MODERNIDAD EN LA ARQUITECTURA MEXICANA: 18 PROTAGONISTAS, Pablo Quintero, editor UAM-Xochimilco (Mexico City), 1990, illus.

DEL FUNCIONALISMO AL POST-RACIONALISMO: ENSAYO SOBRE LA ARQUITECTURA CONTEMPORANEA EN MÉXICO, Enrique Yáñez, UAM-Azcapotzalco and Editorial Limusa (Mexico City), 1990, 325 pp., illus.

ARQUITECTURA POR-FIRISTA: COLONIA JUAREZ, Elena Segurajáuregui, UAM-Azcapotzalco and Tilde Editores (Mexico City), 1991, 127 pp., illus.

LA MODERNIDAD ARQUITECTÓNICA MEXICANA: ANTECEDENTES Y VANGUARDIAS, 1900-1990, Rafael López Rangel, *Cuadernos temporales 15*, UAM-Azcapotzalco (Mexico City), 1989, 236 pp., illus.

AMBITO TRES: COMO UNA PIEDRA QUE RUEDA, Eduardo Langagne Ortega, Carlos Véjar Pérez-Rubio, Carlos Ríos Garza, editors, UAM-Azcapotzalco and Ediciones Gernika (Mexico City), 1990, 385 pp., illus.

MEMORIA Y UTOPIA EN LA ARQUITECTURA MEXICANA, Pedro Conrado Sonderegger, UAM-Azcapotzalco and Tilde Editores (Mexico City), 1990, 101 pp., illus.

MÉXICO: NUEVA ARQUITECTURA, volumes 1 and 2, Antonio Toca (volume 1 with Aníbal Figueroa), Gustavo Gili (Mexico City), 1991, 191 pp., illus.

ARQUITECTURA CONTEMPORANEA EN MÉXICO, Antonio Toca, Gernika Ediciones and UAM (Mexico City), 1989, illus.

series, "Dialogues with Mexican Architects," held at the UAM-Unidad Xochimilco. The resultant book, *Modernidad en la arquitectura mexicana: 18 protagonistas*, edited by Pablo Quintero, is a hefty, poorly illustrated volume that at first appears to be an uneven hodgepodge of information. As one reads along, however, the image of 20th-century Mexican architecture slowly emerges as a mosaic composed of individual memories and experiences. These personal testimonies allow one to trace the history of architectural education in Mexico from the turn-of-the-century Academia de San Carlos, based on the École des Beaux Arts, through its complete curriculum revisions of 1910, 1915, 1922, and 1928, including the introduction of the first course on architectural theory in 1924 by José Villagrán García. A few years later this functionalist innovator was challenged by Carlos Leduc, who decided as early as 1929 that the school's travel money should be spent on becoming familiar with Mexico as opposed to Europe. Some of the same issues of the student strike of 1929 reemerged in the 1972 protests, which resulted in the establishment of a self-governing branch within UNAM's school of architecture. This took place some twenty years after the move to the centralized campus of Ciudad Universitaria. *Modernidad en la arquitectura mexicana* contains at least three different participant perspectives on the concept, development, and construction of the University City—to date the only Mexican architectural enterprise in which over seventy architects worked within a unified master plan. Ramírez Vázquez tells the inside story of how he came to be the first president of the new Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, and of his

plans for fostering synergy and interdisciplinary studies through architectural form and the deliberate limitation of the student populations at each of the UAM campuses to eight to ten thousand. (Three campuses have been built so far; more are planned.)

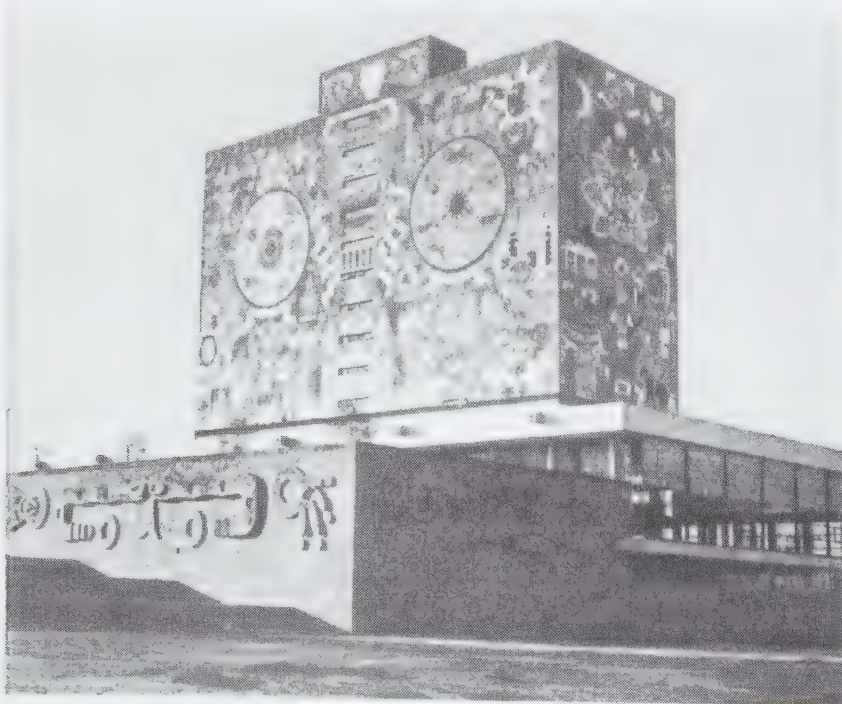
It isn't only because the architects included in this book are speaking to a student audience that they all display a profound interest in education. Several of them reminisce about their participation in the vast program for building rural schools that began in the mid-1940s, under the leadership of Secretary of Education Jaime Torres Bodet, and culminated with the surprising first prize award at the 1960 Milan Triennale to a proposal for a teacher's home and classroom, by none other than Ramírez Vázquez.

The last of these eighteen protagonists, Enrique Yáñez, has expanded his remarks into a full-length book, entitled *Del funcionalismo al post-racionalismo*. A highly personal reflection on contemporary Mexican architecture, the book is divided into three parts, the first of which is devoted to developing a conceptual framework or a theoretical starting point—a sort of personal credo in socialist tenets—from which the second part takes off. The second part is organized into five chapters, each dealing with a particular building type: hospitals, school buildings, housing, the University City, and the single-family house. Each chapter treats its theme in chronological order, starting in every case with the social reform and welfare impulse that emerged from the revolution of 1910–17 and ending in the 1980s. The real goal of the book, unsurprisingly, is the proper placing of Yáñez's own architectural work within the historic and socioeconomic fabric of modern Mexico.

The book's last part, comprising almost two-thirds of the book, is perhaps the most comprehensive graphic compilation of Mexican architecture of the 20th century. It is arranged chronologically and is of slightly better printing quality than most of the other books reviewed here, though in no way comparable to the standard of the two volumes of *México: Nueva arquitectura*, produced by Spanish publisher Gustavo Gili.

In the introduction to Yáñez's book, Manuel Rodríguez Viqueira celebrates the fifteenth anniversary of the UAM, listing the many prizes and honors of its graduates and describing the history of its publications. Started in 1984, the school's publications program had grown within two years to surpass the national average for architectural publications. Also, in 1986 the División de Ciencias y Artes del Diseño of the UAM–Unidad Azcapotzalco established a series of agreements with commercial publishers and created a variety of collections and series on design, with a clear emphasis on architecture. These collaborative efforts have generated over forty monographs

Library of the Ciudad Universitaria (University City), Mexico City; Juan O'Gorman, Gustavo Saavedra, and Juan Martínez de Velasco, 1953. (From *4000 Years of Mexican Architecture*.)

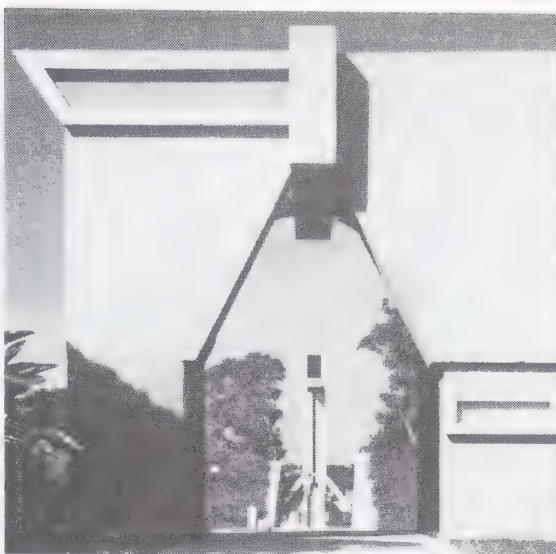


publications, two serials, and multiple lectures, conferences, and other events on architecture.

Not surprisingly, the history of Mexican architecture echoes the socioeconomic history of the country. "Conquered" by Spaniards under Hernán Cortés in 1528, Mexico produced an architecture during the 16th and 17th centuries that was predominantly Spanish colonial. Churches were built on mounds created by the obliteration of pre-Columbian pyramids. The 16th century is marked by the feverish activity pertaining to the creation of a new Mexican nationality: during this century, more than three hundred churches and convents were built, and the first university in the Americas was established, in Mexico City in 1553 (today's UNAM), as were many hospitals and polyglot schools. The first American printing press was established in Mexico in 1539 and more than three hundred books were printed in the course of half a century in this nascent country.

The architectural phase that is most distinctive from the traditions of the mother country is without a doubt Mexico's exuberant baroque, a combination of the Native American tendency toward complicated forms and the wealth and splendor of the colonial 18th century. In cities, towns, and even villages, Mexican baroque churches were erected in great numbers, and they ranged in style from the popular and intuitive, full of color and technical imperfections, to the finished and refined.

It was Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, a priest of Spanish descent, who spearheaded the first American movement for independence from Spain in 1810. The subsequent rejection of all things Spanish was eventually supplanted by a fascination with French models, which culminated in the ill-fated attempt to establish a Napoleonic "empire" under Maximilian in the 1860s. France continued to be the predominant influence in art and architecture during the benign dictatorship of Porfirio



View of the Roman/Mayan arch at the Parque Tomás Garrido de León, Villahermosa, Tabasco, Mexico; Teodoro de León, with J. Francisco Serrano and Aurelio Nuño, 1984–85. (From *México: Nueva arquitectura*.)

Díaz (1876–1911), a time of great material advancement and increasing social maladjustment. The seminal book *Arquitectura porfirista: Colonia Juárez*, by Elena Segurajáuregui, analyzes and describes the formation of Colonia Juárez, a residential sector of Mexico City designed to house the bourgeoisie that grew during this era of peace and prosperity. Drawing from archival documents and richly illustrated, this study helps create an understanding of the class culture against which the social revolution of 1910 and its corollary architectural revolution took place.

The Mexican Revolution was the first social revolution of the 20th century, preceding Russia's by seven years. At the end of the fierce struggle, a new social order was established that, in turn, gave rise to a new architecture, intended to give form to the social ideals born during the strife. José Vasconcelos, the minister of education during the revolutionary regime of Alvaro Obregón (1920–24), was responsible for launching a large school construction program and, more significantly, for giving government sponsorship to emerging muralist painters. But he did not have an equal affinity for architecture. There are differing opinions on the date when modern movement began in Mexico; Yáñez dates it to 1927, when he entered the University's school of architecture. It is also the year in which José Villegrán García began teaching architectural theory at the Academia de San Carlos, developing a Mexican alternative to Julien Guadet's *Elements et Théorie de l'Architecture*.

None of the books dealing with the period, however, disagree on the enormous significance of Lázaro Cárdenas' *sexenio*, the six-year unrenounceable presidential period established by the National Revolutionary Party, which was organized during the government of Plutarco Elías Calles, successor to Obregón. From 1934 to 1940, the vigorous and idealistic Cárdenas set about making long-needed reforms to improve the lot of the underprivileged

Pavilion of Mexico at the 1992 Seville Exposition; Pedro Ramírez Vázquez and Jaime Giovannini. (From *Expo '92 Seville: Architecture and Design*.)



and to make the Native American population an integrated part of the state. He nationalized railroads and expropriated foreign holdings, particularly oil and land. His emphasis on education and fight against illiteracy spurred the construction of schools, many in the rationalist manner established by Juan O’Gorman. The Mexican labor movement grew strong, and sponsored housing for workers. Various labor unions built impressive headquarters, such as the Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas by Yáñez and Ricardo Rivas (1936–40) and the Sindicato de Cinematografistas by O’Gorman (1934). Hospitals were also built during this period, although health concerns were most advanced during the subsequent *sexenio*, of Manuel Avila Camacho. His secretary and under-secretary of health and welfare, Dr. Gustavo Baz and Dr. Salvador Zubirán, created a national health plan that remains one of the most advanced in the world. This plan included a vast program for hospital construction throughout the country; general hospitals were built in San Luis Potosí (Enrique del Moral), Saltillo (Mario Pani), Puebla (Enrique de la Mora), Teziutlán (Alonso Mariscal), and Veracruz (Yáñez). Specialized hospitals were created to combat tuberculosis (Tlalpan, 1929), heart disease (Mexico City, 1937), and children’s diseases (Mexico City, 1941), all by Vilagrán García.

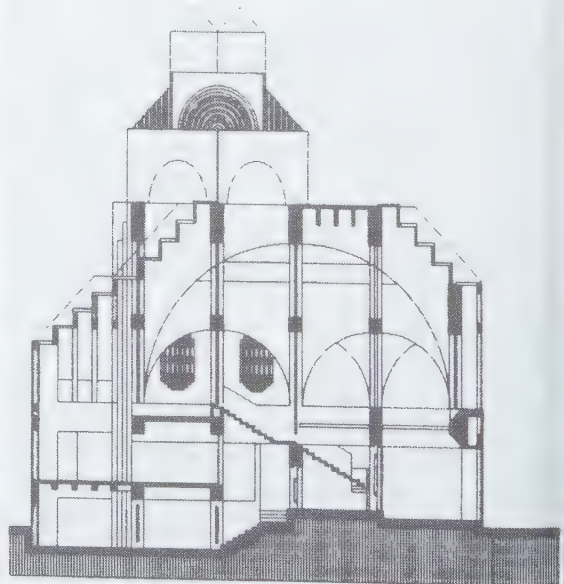
Rafael López Rangel’s *La Modernidad arquitectónica mexicana: Antecedents y vanguardias 1900–1990* is perhaps the most serious attempt to “construct the history of architecture and human settlements,” as he puts it in his epilogue. This excellent analysis of a plethora of documentary evidence and primary sources emphasizes the

development of the teaching of architecture and building in 20th-century Mexico. The author compares the curricula of various schools, and pays special attention to how socioeconomic and political forces in Mexico’s recent history have contributed to shaping the country’s modernist architectural culture. The book ends with an appendix containing part of a polemical 1933 discussion about functionalism, technology, and “spiritual needs” sponsored by the Mexican Society of Architects. López Rangel, at one time dean of the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, states that this publication is a culmination of his efforts to answer the vital challenge represented by the nation’s 1968 crisis—a crisis that for him manifested the failure of the architects and planners of the 1930s to achieve the perfect society they envisioned.

In her preface to *Ambito tres: Como una piedra que rueda* (Environment three: Like a rolling stone) Maria Teresa Ocejo tells of how this book came about, bemoaning the lack of information on architectural matters in the country—and subsequently (or because of) the lack of interest in an architectural culture on the part of the Mexican public. This book, as well as almost every other significant architectural publication in Mexico, was issued under her tenure as director of the División de Ciencias y Artes para el Diseño of the UAM–Unidad Azcapotzalco.

Edited by Eduardo Langagne Ortega, Carlos Véjar Pérez-Rubio, and Carlos Ríos Garza, *Ambito tres* is a collection of nineteen articles selected from among the first one hundred published in the column on architecture of the *Excelsior*, one of the oldest newspapers in Mexico City. The *Excel-*

Iglesia Episcopal, Sierra Madre y Montes Escandinavos, Lomos, Mexico City; Carlos G. Mijares Bracho, 1991–92. (From *México: Nueva arquitectura 2*.)

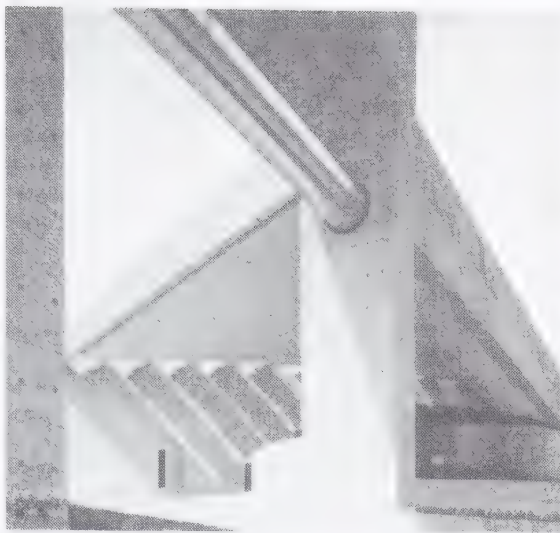


or began publishing the column at the instigation of the three editors this volume in May 1989, and it has appeared regularly, three times a week, ever since.

In the book's prologue, the editors state that their intention was to desacralize and democratize architectural culture and, consequently, architectural practice. Prior to the column "Ambito tres," the same newspaper carried a column sponsored by the Mexican Society of Architects (CAM-SAM), entitled "Los Arquitectos opinan" (The architects' view), which appeared only sporadically. This earlier column had rejected (censored?) articles submitted by all three of the book's editors at one time or another, alleging, among other things, that they were excessively aggressive toward the United States. In response Langagne, Véjar, and Méndez coauthored a piece that appeared in *Foro de Excelsior* (the equivalent of the *New York Times'* op-ed column) entitled "El Santo oficio de la arquitectura: Tres arquitectos cuestionan" (Three architects challenge the holy business of architecture), employing a play on words that strongly alludes to the Spanish Inquisition.

The goal of "Ambito tres" was to establish a dialogue among professionals and lay people that would chart a course "toward a new architecture"—an architecture that would reflect the national spirit without dogma or servile reflection of foreign values or fashions. The column invited the input of writers outside the architectural profession, and outside the country (though still within Latin America). The first hundred contributors include historians, industrial designers, musicologists, art historians, graphic designers, in addition to architects, whose voices predominate. They come from countries as near and far as Cuba (nine articles), Argentina (seven), Bolivia (one), and Chile (seven). The nineteen articles are grouped into six chapters: "Life in the City," "Diluted Identity," "Criticism Set Loose," "The Long and Windy Road," "And In this Corner . . . The Answer Is Blowing in the Wind." These titles reveal something of the character of these pieces, which are generally irreverent, audaciously revisionist, combative and supportive of issues surrounding national identity. Yet the choice of the selections in the last chapter, a "dictionary" that was a regular feature of the column, sadly reveals that, for all the refreshing virtues and the reasonably frequent appearance of articles by and about women, Mexican architectural culture has still not been able to shed its *machismo* when it comes to basic definitions.

In her introductory remarks to Pedro Conrado Sondereguer's *Memoria y utopía en la arquitectura mexicana*, Louise Noelle Mereles states, "Contemporary Mexican architecture still awaits the writing of a definitive history, one written with lucidity and reflection." Sondereguer's essay constitutes



Teatro de la Ciudad,  
Guanajuato, Guanajuato;  
Abraham Zabludovsky,  
1987. (From *México:  
Nueva arquitectura 2.*)

a fragmented yet lucid beginning. Noelle herself makes a significant contribution in the essay she wrote in 1983 for the Japanese journal *Process*, entitled "Modern Mexican Architecture" (issue 39). But it is Antonio Toca's generous compilations of 1991 and 1993, *México: Nueva arquitectura*, that offer the greatest promise for a yet-to-come definitive history and analysis of 20th-century Mexican architecture. Both volumes, the first with the collaboration of Aníbal Figueroa, follow the same format: a selection of buildings documented by splendid photographs and admirable plans and elevations, each accompanied by a brief commentary. Each book begins with a critical introduction and concludes with brief biographical notes on the architects covered, followed by a bibliography of the relatively scant number of publications devoted to Mexican architecture.

The two volumes of *México: Nueva arquitectura* document over seventy works by as many different architects, from a broad geographic area of the country. The beautiful photographic illustrations are well complemented by clearly drawn plans and elevations, prepared especially for these publications. *Arquitectura contemporánea en México* is a compilation of Toca's writings published between 1983 and 1988 in various periodicals in Mexico and elsewhere. The twenty-one articles, grouped loosely under the headings "Architecture," "The City," and "Education and Theory," together offer a panorama of Mexican architecture and demonstrate the breadth of Toca's intellectual resources and the depth of his perceptions. One hopes that Toca will soon produce a coherent synthesis of his thoughts and knowledge, which, if matched to the high graphic and printing standards set by the publisher of his previous books, Gustavo Gili, will provide a history of modern architecture in Mexico worthy of the social and stylistic impact of the architecture itself. ♣

JOHN A. LOOMIS

## *The Barragán Phenomenon*

THE ARCHITECTURE OF LUIS BARRAGÁN, Emilio Ambasz, Museum of Modern Art and New York Graphic Society, 1976, 128 pp., illus.

OBRA CONSTRUIDA: LUIS BARRAGÁN MORFIN 1902–1988, José Alvarez Checa, et al., Consejería de Obras Públicas y Transportes, Dirección General de Arquitectura y Vivienda (Seville), 1991, illus.

PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE ARCHITECTURE OF LUIS BARRAGÁN, Armando Salas Portugal, Rizzoli, 1992, 167 pp., illus., \$45.00.

LUIS BARRAGAN, Yutaka Saito, Kenneth Frampton, and Sheila Hicks, TOTO Shuppan (Tokyo), 1992, 257 pp., illus., \$125.00.

Luis Barragán Morfin (1902–1988) of Mexico is regarded by many outside of Latin America as the quintessential Latin American architect. His work, consisting almost exclusively of private projects inaccessible to the public, is generally better known in North America and Europe than the highly visible public works of other Latin American architects such as Clorindo Testa, Rogelio Salmons, Félix Candela, Carlos Raúl Villanueva, Miguel Ángel Roca, and Eladio Dieste. Yet Barragán's relatively modest output of private works has inspired a veritable cottage industry of publications outside of Latin America. Though Barragán is indisputably a powerful and sensitive craftsman of form, the question may be raised: to what extent did his stature as an international figure result from the myth-making tendencies of international architectural publications, and of the evocative power of the photographic image in particular?

Emilio Ambasz is to be commended for being the first to introduce the work of Barragán to the North American public in 1976 through an exhibit at the New York Museum of Modern Art and its accompanying catalog, *The Architecture of Luis Barragán*. Almost eighteen years later, this catalog continues to be one of MoMA's bestsellers and may be considered a classic, found on the shelves of architects and students alike. The success of the catalog can be attributed in large part to the extraordinary photographs by Armando Salas Portugal. They are works of art in their own right, and suggestively blur the line between architecture and image. The Ambasz text is minimal but succinct as it narrates the high points of Barragán's career. The main body of the catalog is a selection of works portrayed in photographs only. The chronology of works offers a handful of plans, along with some diminutive black-and-white illustrations. The bibliography is comprehensive until 1976.

It is curious and disappointing that books on Barragán published since the MoMA catalog (which itself leaves many questions unanswered) add little to what we know about the man and his work. In fact, there is much overlapping—if not outright duplication of—information in these books, and yet none of them are truly comprehensive. All are essentially tributes, replete with laudatory essays but lacking scholarly analysis and criticism. (The one exception is Kenneth Frampton's insightful essay which is rather unceremoniously tacked to the end of Yutaka Saito's *Luis Barragán*,

published by the Japanese publisher TOTO Shuppan.) Reviewing these books is a task that is at once seductive and frustrating, an exercise in bibliophilic *coitus interruptus*, for they never quite fully satisfy. While the books (and the photographs) have grown progressively larger, they have not necessarily gotten better, especially not for their inflated prices, which makes the Ambasz catalog still the best investment.

*Obra Construida: Luis Barragán Morfin 1902–1988* is also an exhibition catalog, from a 1991 exhibit in Seville that was one of the many cultural events celebrating Columbus' quintcentennial. The text includes a biographical sketch by José Alvarez Checa, a piece written by Octavio Paz on the occasion of Barragán's receipt of the Pritzker Prize in 1980, and Barragán's acceptance speech for the award. The book does contain information that broadens the study of Barragán somewhat, including documentation of nine houses from Barragán's pre-rationalist period with the Guadalajara school, a loose movement in the late 1920s that took its cues from Spanish colonial architecture. These works give insight into his interpretation of the Spanish colonial style that, ironically, had its roots in the United States. The book also presents illustrations of works by the painter Jesus "Chucho" Reyes Ferreira and the French landscape architect Ferdinand Bac, who are cited in all the books as significant influences on Barragán, although their works are not illustrated elsewhere.

Once again, Salas' canonical photographs of the canonical works appear (along with photographs taken by others). Unfortunately, the catalog does not convey information in a consistent fashion. While some projects are reasonably well documented photographically, other seemingly significant works, such as the Barragán family house in Guadalajara, are not. Plans are not provided for most of the projects, and a section drawing is shown for only one example, the Meyer House in Mexico City (1978–81). The documentation for the very important López Prieto House in El Pedregal, Mexico (1950) is plainly confusing. Two photographs from identical points of view illustrate changes that have occurred over time, but their chronological order and the reasons for the changes are not indicated. There are neither plans nor sections to aid in understanding the nature of the building's interpenetrating volumes, which are so beautifully portrayed in the photographs. Similarly, the representation of the Egerstrom House, also known as San Cristobal, in Los Clubes, Mexico City (1967–68), lacks information that is essential to its comprehension. While photographs may convey the poetry of this minimalist masterpiece and plans of the house are presented separately, there is no site plan to demonstrate the fundamental formal relationship between the two complexes—an aspect



that is central to Barragán's design concept. The catalog does, however, provide a useful, up-to-date bibliography.

Another book, *Photographs of the Architecture of Luis Barragán*, is just that—a compilation of exquisite photographs by Salas—and has little preface about being about architecture. In the introduction by Ernest H. Brooks, Barragán is mentioned only once; the focus is clearly on Salas' work. The essays that are about Barragán, by Ignacio Díaz Morales, Ricardo Legorreta (reprinted from *Progressive Architecture*), and Salas himself, are fairly typical of the laudatory essays found in all the books under review. It is Massimo Vignelli's essay about the collaboration between the two men that best engages the reader, with its struggle to evaluate the "symbiosis" between built form and photograph. Vignelli, who also designed the book, acknowledges that "the power of photography can create enduring architectural icons," and states that Salas' photographs have become "precious icons which have nourished our fascination with this great architect and have sustained our voracious passion for his work."

Ultimately, the question arises: is the photograph the vehicle for the architecture, or is it the other way around? Vignelli acknowledges, "In visiting Barragán's architecture, one tends to reconstruct Salas' images in order to recapture the icon of the sublime, the 'real' point of new, since all other views carry less weight, less poignancy." This statement raises some penetrating questions

regarding the true impact of Barragán's work. Would there have been a Luis Barragán had there not been an Armando Salas Portugal?

This book is a tribute to the fond, fraternal collaboration between Salas and Barragán that lasted forty years. Salas came to architectural photography as a landscape photographer, and brought with him a sensitivity toward scale, light, and the inherent monumentality of natural forms. The fusion of landscape and architectural form has been a Mexican preoccupation since pre-Columbian times. Barragán's interest in the symbiotic relationship between the built and natural environment forged a bond between the two men, who made many decisions about composition and light together. The photographs take on a life of their own—something especially clear in the black-and-white images, whose use of filters renders foliage a luminescent white, enhancing the surreal qualities inherent in the landscape. In examples such as the plaza at El Pedregal, which was ruined by later interventions, Salas' photograph is the only lasting artifact of Barragán's work.

Fond friendships do not, however, create an atmosphere for historical objectivity. Rather, they can contribute to the making of myth. Salas glosses over history in his essay, giving disproportionate credit to Barragán, Rafael Urzúa, and Ignacio Díaz Morales for the formation of modern architecture in Mexico. In fact, modern architecture in Mexico

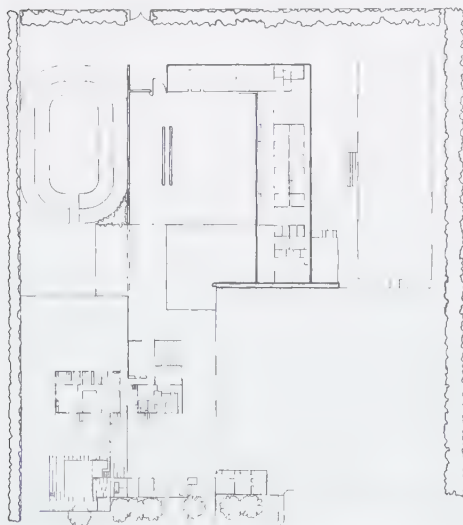
owes its origins to a convergence of political, cultural, and material factors which were rooted in the Mexican Revolution as well as the European avant-garde. The Mexican Revolution embodied a break with the past and a search for a new national cultural identity that was given an ideological framework in the 1920s by Minister of Education José Vasconcelos, whose mystical, culturally syncretic vision of *la raza cósmica*, of *méxicanidad*, established a theoretical basis for activities in the arts by Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, José Clemente Orozco, David Alfaro Siqueiros, among others. Popular culture, vernacular, and race were given prominence in the arts and also formed an important part of the political agenda of the left. In architecture, José Villagrán Gar-

Luis Barragán House, Tacubaya, Mexico City; 1947. Photograph by Armando Salas Portugal. (From *Photographs of the Architecture of Luis Barragán*.)

Five towers for Ciudad Satélite (Satellite City), a residential development on the outskirts of Mexico City; Barragán, with Mathias Goeritz, 1957. Photograph by Armando Salas Portugal. (From *Photographs of the Architecture of Luis Barragán*.)



Plan and view of the San Cristobal Stable, Pools, and House for the Egerstroms, Los Clubes, Mexico City; Barragán, with Andrés Casillas, 1967–68. The clients were thoroughbred-horse trainers, so the architects designed the site, landscaping, and building code around horses and riders. Photograph by Armando Salas Portugal. (From *Photographs of the Architecture of Luis Barragán*.)



cía, an important transitional figure, turned his back on his own Beaux Arts training and in 1926 introduced to the National Academy a modern, functionalist pedagogy, inspired by the European avant-garde. His students—Juan O’Gorman, Juan Legarreta, Enrique Yáñez, and Enrique de la Mora—put modern architecture at the service of the state in their designs of schools, health-care facilities, and public housing, projects that formed part of the new social program of the revolution. Rationalism came to be identified with social goals—a point that was further emphasized when the Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos, the left-dominated general trade union, defended modern architecture upon its attack by conservatives in the 1930s for its “foreign” origins. Modernism’s supporters included industrialists such as Federico Sánchez Fogarty of the Toltec Cement Company, who lobbied strongly in support of rationalist architecture, which relied on reinforced concrete. Barragán, Urzúa, and Díaz Morales were part of this larger spectrum of

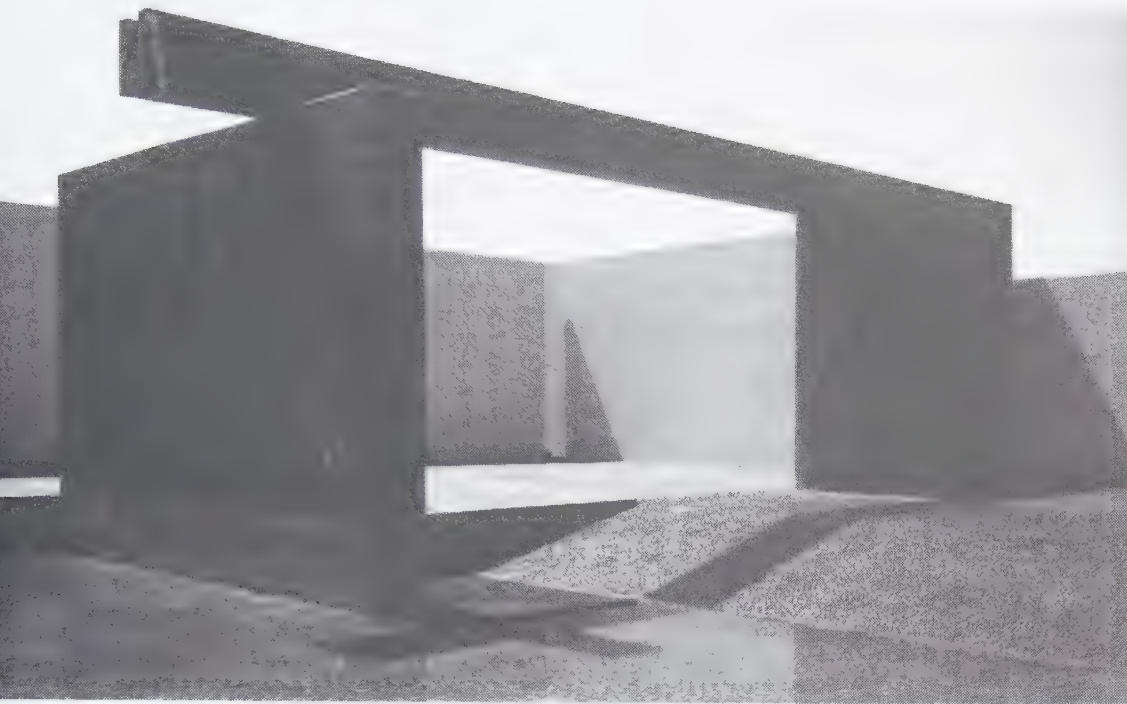
events and personalities. Barragán is particularly noteworthy for his evolution away from pure rationalism and toward a culturally specific interpretation of modernity. His modernity embraced the vernacular not only of Mexico but also of the Islamic-Iberian tradition, which originated in North Africa, resulting in a more pluralist interpretation of *méxicanidad*. But for Barragán, the vernacular did not have the political resonance that it did for Rivera and his colleagues. For Barragán, the influence of the vernacular

was an aesthetic and a spiritual choice.

History is not the only issue found wanting in Salas’ book, as well as in the others. *Photographs of the Architecture of Luis Barragán* is also spotty in its provision of graphic information, although, thankfully, it does offer a site plan of the Egerstrom House, which is missing in *Obra Construida*. But while Salas’ work may be insufficient as an architectural history, it is successful as a book that is meant primarily to be a portfolio of photographs by a master of photography.

Unfortunately for *Luis Barragán*, the most recent publication on the architect, by Yutaka Saito, it is impossible to distance oneself from the iconic photographs of Salas. In this oversized book (at thirty-by-thirty centimeters), Saito has rounded up the usual projects (though for some strange reason, arranged them in reverse chronological order), and has photographed them in many cases from the same familiar points of view established by Salas, but without the same level of craft. Like so many architectural books published in Japan, this one gives preference to the quantity of color photographs over the quality of scholarship and analysis. Saito’s essay, “Barragán is Barragán,” is as informative as the title would suggest. Interviews with Díaz Morales, Francisco Gilardi, and an essay by Sheila Hicks offer little new information. However, site and plan information is appreciably complete for all projects, though the graphics sometimes run across the pages, making their reading difficult.

Kenneth Frampton’s essay, “The Mexican Other,” is the saving grace of this book. Frampton insightfully examines the deeper meanings of Barragán’s work in relation to broader issues of culture and modern architecture, arguing that, like Adolf Loos, Barragán sought to investigate an “other” architecture that would provide a critical commentary on its contemporary context. In developing this argument, Frampton points out that Barragán, like Louis Kahn and Le Corbusier, was influenced by architecture of the Islamic world, “above all, the common Islamic structure linking both Kahn and Barragán to Le Corbusier to his lifelong feeling for the Orient that first found expression in Le Corbusier’s *Voyage d’Orient* of 1912. Through this common affinity for a non-Eurocentric culture, various lines of development cross over each other, mingling together both avant-gardist and anti-avant-gardist thought. Frampton goes on to examine the links and paradoxes between the traditional and the avant-gardist in Barragán’s work, concluding that “one may come to regard Barragán as a late-modern architect who passed through the high modernity of the European avant-garde in such a way as to emerge . . . an architect committed to an ‘other’ modernity, in which delusions about the manifold destiny of a necessarily liberative, technoaesthetic



Los Clubes, Mexico City; 1963–64. Barragán was the sole owner of this residential development so he had complete freedom with this creation. This is another instance where Barragán synthesizes residential work, landscape design, and planning oriented around horses. Photograph by Armando Salas Portugal. (From *Photographs of the Architecture of Luis Barragán*.)

gress come to be replaced by the idea of a critically regionalist, rooted architecture, committed as much to modernity as to tradition and, above all, unequivocally concerned for the creation of culture in its own time and place.”

The appeal of Barragán’s architecture outside Mexico and Latin America, as demonstrated by these publications, may have to do with another “other.” Interestingly, there has never been a monograph of his work published in Mexico.<sup>1</sup> While many in Mexico have a great respect for Barragán’s work, he also seems to have been the prophet without honor, unappreciated in his own land. In his contribution to *Obra Construida*, Octavio Paz lamented the lack of national response to Barragán’s receipt of the Pritzker Prize: “How can [one] explain the reserve, the annoying indifference with which this news has been received by the little cultural worlds of Mexico, not to mention the incredible silence of the National Institute of Fine Arts?” Barragán has not had a profound influence on Mexican architecture, except for the work of Ricardo Legorreta.<sup>2</sup> Young leading architects in Mexico today, such as Enrique Nelson, are not so interested in the *méxicanidad* of Barragán, which perhaps seems anachronistic in this post-NAFTA world. And yet it is Barragán’s work that continues to receive attention in North America, Europe, and Japan. Does its appeal lie in the dramatic spatial, architectonic qualities of his work, or in the powerful, iconographic images? Or do both these aspects combine their evocative and legible symbolism to appeal to the unconscious desire of a foreign audience to understand the Mexican “other”?

Since Barragán’s death, scholarship has been

hampered by the inaccessibility of his archives. His writings, project documents, and drawings (which are reputedly extremely refined though not one sketch has ever been available for publication) have remained in the hands of an overly protective conservator. But this is about to change. The state of Jalisco recently acquired part of his estate, including his house, which will harbor an archive containing these documents, for scholars, architects, and the general public to use. Ironically, Barragán’s most private work, his own home, will become his most public.

With the availability of these archives, one hopes the next book on Barragán will follow the critical and scholarly trail that Frampton has blazed. One also hopes that North American, European, and Japanese publishers will not continue to overlook the work of other Latin American architects, so that Barragán can assume his rightful place among his peers. 🏠

#### NOTES

1. There have been interesting articles published in Mexico, notably Carlos Véjar Pérez-Rubio’s “Entre Luis Barragán y Juan Rulfo: El Realismo mágico en la arquitectura y las letras mexicanas,” in *Plural* (February 1989). This article explores the architectonic and literary parallels in the works of the architect and the writer, who are both from Jalisco.

2. Kenneth Frampton points out that, outside of Mexico, Barragán’s influence can be seen in the work of such diverse architects as Tadao Ando, Christian de Groote, John Pawson, and Mark Mack. I would add to the list some of the landscape installations and buildings of Donald Judd in Marfa, Texas.

HUGO SEGAWA

## *The Essentials of Brazilian Modernism*

Translated from the Portuguese by Alzinete Platts and Geoffrey Fox

ARQUITETURA CONTEMPORÂNEA NO BRASIL, Yves Bruand, *Perspectiva* (São Paulo), 1981, 400 pp., illus.

MODERN BRAZILIAN ARCHITECTURE, Humberto Yamaki, editor, *Process Architecture* 17, 1980, 164 pp., illus.

ARQUITETURA MODERNA BRASILEIRA, Sylvia Ficher and Marlene Milan Acayaba, *Projeto* (São Paulo), 1982, 124 pp., illus.

ARQUITETURAS NO BRASIL/ANOS 80, Hugo Segawa, editor, *Projeto* (São Paulo), 1988, 192 pp., illus.

In 1939, on the eve of World War II—a dramatic moment on the international political scene—the United States was organizing two large world's fairs: one in San Francisco, the other in New York. In keeping with the 19th-century tradition of such fairs, these two events provided settings for different nations to gather and demonstrate the best they had to offer to culturally and materially enrich the world. In these temporary, multilingual villages, each national pavilion presented the essential spirit of its country. Their architecture, as ephemeral as the villages themselves, invited visitors to become acquainted with a different, perhaps exotic, world; in most cases, this meant the exaggeration of each country's regional character. At the 1939 New York World's Fair, one of the great sensations for the public and critics alike was the Brazilian pavilion. Journals such as *Architectural Review* and *Architectural Forum* were generous in their coverage, with no gratuitous paternalism except for the fact that they introduced the two young, as-yet-unknown authors of the project, Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer, as "disciples of Le Corbusier."

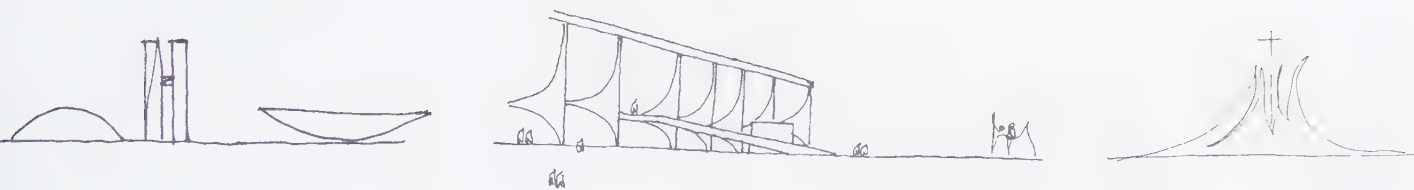
In January 1943, the Museum of Modern Art in New York opened the exhibition *Brazil Builds: Architecture New and Old*. A beautiful 200-page catalog reproduced images and drawings of Brazil's unusual modern architecture (suggesting links with work of its colonial past), accomplished in a country largely unknown to North America—and during the peak of the conflict that was tearing Europe apart. The context of this "generosity" cannot be separated from the "good-neighbor" policy that the United States adopted toward all of Latin America at the time, born out of a fear of a Nazi movement growing on the southern continent. This policy resulted in an exchange of cultural artifacts such as an Orson Welles' movie made in Brazil; Walt Disney's creation of the character Joe Carioca, a colorful parrot that personified a typical street character of Rio de Janeiro; the introduction of Coca-Cola to Brazil; the popularity of Carmen Miranda in the United States; and the exhibit *Brazil Builds*. All these episodes are inseparable from the United States' political overtures toward the country.

From 1945 to the 1960s, magazines such as *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, *Architectural Review*, *Architectural Design*, *Arkitektur*, *Domus*, *Casabella*, and *Architectural Record* regularly covered what was being built in Brazil, and this interest climaxed with Brasília (1957–60), the country's new capital.

In little more than fifteen years, architectural critics and historians such as Giulio Carlo Argan, Walter Gropius, Max Bill, Gillo Dorfles, Sigfried Giedion, Nikolaus Pevsner, Gio Ponti, Michel Ragon, Ernesto Rogers, Alberto Sartoris, Reynold Banham, Ada Louise Huxtable, Richard Neutra, Bernard Rudofsky, Bruno Zevi, Françoise Choay, György Gyomai, and Pier Luigi Nervi published critiques (favorable and unfavorable) of Brazilian architecture. The manuals of architectural history after 1960—by Leonardo Benevolo, Kenneth Frampton, Manfredo Tafuri, Francisco Dal Co, Charles Jencks, Renato De Fusco, Spiro Kostof, Josep Maria Montaner, among others—devote some mention or even a chapter to postwar Brazil and Brasília. "Brazilian school," "Carioca school," "first national style in modern architecture," "neobarroco," and "new sensualism," are a few of the labels that international architectural critics attributed to projects of Niemeyer, Costa, Roberto Burle Marx, Affonso Eduardo Reidy, the Roberto brothers, and others.

Nikolaus Pevsner was prophetic in one aspect that was little understood by European and North American critics at the time: Brazilian architecture made the functionalist establishment uncomfortable. In Pevsner's 1961 address to the RIBA (mentioned by Charles Jencks in *The Language of Postmodern Architecture* in his chapter about historicism in the origin of the postmodern), he described Niemeyer's buildings in the Pampulha district of Belo Horizonte—a casino, yacht club, dance hall, and chapel, all opened in 1942—having a provocative character with respect to the ruling values of postwar modernism.<sup>1</sup> Calling attention to architectural "regression" in the expressions considered regionalist at the time, such as the Italians' "neoliberty," this phenomenon, "the return of historicism . . . gathered tremendous vigor when young Oscar Niemeyer got going in Brazil in 1942–43. His are the earliest buildings that are emphatically no longer of the so-called International Style, and they are buildings that have force, that have power, that have a great deal of originality, but that are, emphatically, antirational." In the same address, Pevsner labeled the work of Hans Scharoun, Jørn Utzon, Felix Candela, and Niemeyer as products of "postmodern antirationalism."

Costa and Niemeyer's project for the national capital, Brasília—completed in only three years—was the high point of this architecture. It became so famous that it formed part of the international stereotype of Brazil as the country of coffee, soccer, and architecture. Domestically, it served as an example of artistic and intellectual modernism and as a point of departure for the newest generations of architects. The country's young professionals not only mentioned Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, or Frank Lloyd



right in their discussions, but also Costa, Niemeyer, Reidy, Burle Marx, and Sérgio Bernardes. These local heroes were routinely invoked in the heat of architectural debate and were considered on par with the great international masters. They were idols to the young professionals whose training coincided with an economic and political moment in Brazil that was permeated by a nationalist-developmental ideology—the effectiveness of which was best symbolized by the construction of Brasília. Motivated by the prospect of a promising future, the architects envisioned utopias for a socially sound, culturally emancipated country—a nation whose architecture, recognized by the world, had references of its own, and was prepared to construct a suitable space for its own citizens. In short, architects were driven to participate in the task of building a new nation. At the same time, modern Brazilian architecture did not renounce the broader and more redemptive cause of the European modern movement of the 1920s, to search for more fair and better space for urban life. The 1964 military coup that overthrew João Goulart, the constitutionally elected president, put an end to the dreams for a new Brazil ruled by socialist values according to the desires of leftist politicians, intellectuals, and socially committed architects. In the subsequent period of military government, the country experienced great economic growth (from 1967 to 1974, during the international petroleum crisis), as well as rigid political and cultural repression. It was the period of the so-called *milagre econômico*, or economic miracle: the country's gross national product grew as much as 10 percent a year. President Richard Nixon liked to say, "As Brazil goes, so goes Latin America." The policies of Brazil's complacent leadership deepened the population's social differences and led to the economic and institutional collapse of the 1980s, referred to by economic analysts as Latin America's "lost decade."

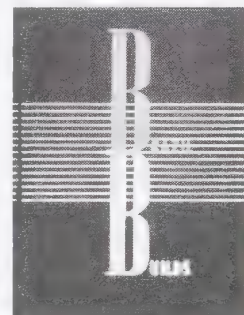
To join the club of the developed countries was the dream not only of the military but certainly of any citizen of an underdeveloped country. Brazilian architecture in the years of the "economic miracle" also fueled this ambition. Never in Brazil's history had so much been planned, proposed, and built in so little time. But this quantity does not translate into quality. Part of Brazil's modernist architectural legacy (from 1940 to 1960) did manage to remain viable during the years of the "economic miracle." Some of the

movement's guiding principles, which had initially represented such innovative knowledge, were adapted for use by government bureaucracies, although the freshness and appropriateness of the original ideas were clearly lost in the process. Certain thoughts and practices—which had local vitality and sensitivity, and were sufficiently universal to seduce international culture—were diluted and institutionalized as a definitive and immutable body of formal precepts. Filtered through an ideology that neutralized differences, concealed contradictions, and denied questioning (as was consistent with the authoritarian spirit of the time), there emerged an ideal of architectural culture that was derived from the golden moment of Brazilian architecture but was formulated as unitary, authoritarian, and hegemonic.

Brazilian architecture of the 1960s and 1970s was tectonically defined by exposed concrete in large structures. This was not unique to the Brazilian scene: in Latin America in general, the application of reinforced concrete as a language of construction and aesthetic principle reached unprecedented levels, to the point where this trait could be labeled as the identity of Latin American architecture of the period. It was derived from the brutalist aesthetic of Paul Rudolph and of Le Corbusier (although "brutalism" was a quality that the foremost Brazilian architect of the period, João Batista Vilanova Artigas, rejected). By analogy to the Latin American political context, it can be said that there was also a dictatorship of exposed concrete, of expansive concrete walls and surfaces, of sculptural pillars, of prestressed concrete structures, of structural exhibitionism, of competition for longer concrete spans, of glass curtain walls. These were the technical and formal signs symbolizing a particular strain of modernism that served to justify a sort of architecture without criticism or critics in a time of general distrust and police persecution, when criticism was repressed or interpreted as a political accusation.

The formulation of an architecture that continued the explorations of the 1940s and 1950s, which were notable for their developmentalist utopias, was best articulated by architects opposed to the military regime, such as Vilanova Artigas (considered the master of the generation), Paulo Mendes da Rocha, Fábio Penteadó, Lina Bo Bardi, and their followers. Their works reflected the structural virtuosity of concrete but, beyond merely displaying superficial features, these architects

Sketches of Brasília, by Oscar Niemeyer, 1957. From left to right: Praça dos Três Poderes, Palácio do Planalto, and Cathedral. (From Oscar Niemeyer.)



Cover of the catalog from the 1943 New York Museum of Modern Art exhibit, *Brazil Builds*.



Brazilian Pavilion at the New York World's Fair; Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer, 1938–39. (From *Pavilhão do Brasil 1939*.)

were able to use the material in ways that gave experimental dignity and ethics to their projects. Still, this did not prevent certain exaggerations of the use of concrete—and this applies to the work of most of the noteworthy, active architects of the period—whose true dimensions could be grasped only after the dust had settled.

In 1984 Brazil was frustrated by the defeat of a constitutional amendment that would have reestablished a direct vote for president of the republic. Nevertheless, it was the beginning of the return to democracy. The illusion of the *Brasil-grande*, which originated in the economic miracle, collapsed, dragging down with it the country's institutional structure. In other words, the failure of Brazil's development in the 1980s weakened the credibility of the country, leading to a period of social, economic, and political crisis.

At that moment, Brazilian architecture recognized but did not yet implement the needed changes in architectural discourse and practice. The postmodernist debate, which formally began with Jencks' writings in *Architectural Design* in 1976, did not emerge in Brazil with true seriousness until the second half of the 1980s. Cultural censorship and the restriction of debate under the military regime inhibited gatherings and critical publications on architecture, no matter how apolitical their intentions. At the time, architects were much more concerned with political rhetoric than in discussing architecture by itself.

Nevertheless, without any precedent, signs of architectural unrest had appeared in several parts of the country. Despite the disappearance of most of the country's architectural periodicals in the 1970s, the magazine *Projeto* of São Paulo managed to achieve a regular publication schedule and established itself throughout the decade of the 1980s as a pluralist vehicle. Architects from the state of Minas Gerais in southeastern Brazil

launched the magazine *Pampulha*, with a drawing by Niemeyer on its first cover, although its architectural content had almost nothing related to the master. In 1984 an exhibition of Brazilian architecture, organized by *Projeto* and the Centro de Arte y Comunicación (CAYC) of Buenos Aires, gathered a surprisingly vast body of architectural work. One year later, another architectural review began publication, *AU (Arquitectura e Urbanismo)*, further enriching the general architectural discourse.

With the assimilation of the debate over postmodernism, an antimodernist sentiment began to grow in Brazil. Due to obsolescence and lack of maintenance, some of the architectural masterpieces built between 1940 and 1960 have become the ruins of Brazilian modernism. Although Brasília was a creation of the country's democratic period, it matured during its military regime, so it became confused with the authoritarian character of that government. The accomplishments of the 1970s, a decade criticized for its sumptuousness and monumentalism, became symbols of state bureaucracy and waste.

Criticizing Niemeyer and Brasília and rejecting the validity of Vilanova Artigas' thesis—that architecture had the strength to reform and redeem society—are the current and dominant points of view. Previously, reference to them was a way to legitimize an attitude. Today, it seems that any connection with these masters is a sign of a shady past. Criticism has touched the myths of modernism—a reaction that originated in large part in postmodern sentiments which recognize the decline of the “grand narratives,” or essentially determinist interpretations, the end of utopias and the disillusionment with great models and systems of thought. International postmodern revisionism has discredited the modernist visionary utopias of the 1920s, and hence, the supposed ability of architecture to effect social change, as Vilanova Artigas' group believed. The pure geometries and curves of the past became viewed as old-fashioned, replaced by “contextualist” criteria and “quotations,” ruled by the demand for “diversity.” On the international scene, the merciless discarding of the canons of functionalism and rationalism also swept away Brazilian formalism, once labeled “irrational” by one of the main defenders of functionalism, Nikolaus Pevsner.

The British historian and critic Alan Colquhoun was a student and admirer of Brazilian architecture in the 1940s and 1950s, but only recently came into contact with his old subject again. He was perplexed when he returned to the country in 1992, now aware of all the criticisms that had emerged in the mid-1970s against the architecture created during his student years decades before. It was now considered mediocre in the European context. Unfortunately, the general mediocrity attributed to 1950s Brazilian archite-

re indiscriminately included the significant architectural achievements of the period, without any objective analyses of their individual relevance or quality.

However, in Brazil, a reevaluation in light of the postmodern condition did not mean implanting postmodern architecture. The postmodern discomfort with modernism was not necessarily shared by underdeveloped countries like Brazil. Contemporary critics touch on the myths of modern Brazilian architecture, not its principles. Such criticism may be well-founded and accurate in some respects, but it is primarily a reaction against modernism, and fail to offer real alternatives with consistent conceptual depth. Opinions that had been in conflict for more than twenty years were conciled in the name of a "strategic" and "consensual" unity of purely ideological character (nourished by anti-dictatorship sentiments); in other words, there has been a lack of systematic criticism, with passionate points of view. This rapprochement discouraged the possibility for the reevaluation, renovation, and maintenance of the brilliant concepts and work of the modernist legacy. Opportunities to verify the quality and nature of Brazilian architecture were wasted in the name of preserving a positive memory and recalling notable episodes of that architecture, which had been praised as a paradigm of creativity with insuperable qualities. For this reason, classic 20th-century Brazilian architecture has been relegated to the panegyrics of architectural history, permanent ghosts of the past that haunt present and future architectural production in Brazil.

In this so-called postmodern moment, how can practitioners and historians approach Brazil's modernist heritage? It does not seem that the modernist principles became unproductive, that modernism ceased sprouting branches. Young architects, aware of the international debate but zealous defenders of the Brazilian modern experience, are now facing this dilemma. If it is true that some of the branches of this tree with modern roots are dying, unable to bear fruit or reproduce, other branches seem to be reaching for symbioses and syncretisms. In a time of planned obsolescence, Brazilian architecture does not have to throw all its paradigms, with their pedigree, out the window. The aim is not to repeat an architectural statement, but to put forward an imaginative movement of renewal, while looking to an exuberant modern architectural heritage.

The bibliography for modern Brazilian architecture is limited to a few, not-very-recent titles. To gain an up-to-date, broad picture, it is necessary to consult Brazilian periodicals, but these, unfortunately, are beyond the scope of this article.

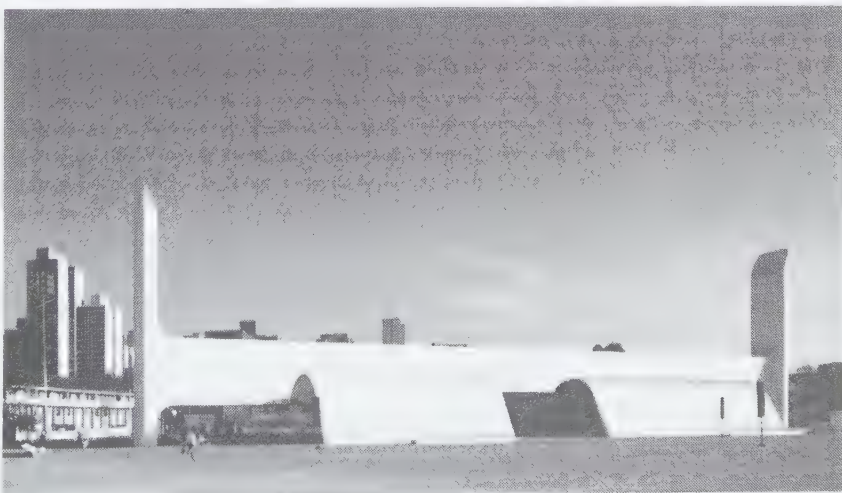
As already mentioned, *Brazil Builds* is a key book for understanding the international repercussions of Brazilian architecture beginning in

1943. Since the exhibition at the New York MoMA, Brazil's architectural production from 1940 to 1960 garnered attention in major architecture magazines on every continent—particularly in Latin America, where Brazilian architecture was a paradigm developed by and for underdeveloped nations.

At the peak of this international interest, Brazilian architect Henrique E. Mindlin's book, *Modern Architecture in Brazil*, published in 1956, summarized the splendor of the country's pre-Brasília epoch. Written to capitalize on the foreign curiosity about the country, Mindlin became the sought-after expert on Brazilian architecture for events and publications outside Brazil.

This interest created some unusual situations: Brazilian architecture became the subject of academic study outside the country's borders. The best-known example is the work of archivist and paleographer Yves Bruand, presented in 1971 at the Université de Paris IV. His thesis was not published in Portuguese until 1981, under the title *Arquitetura contemporânea no Brasil*, and is certainly the most complete dossier on 20th-century Brazilian architecture up to 1969. The work concentrates on Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Bahia, and Brasília, leaving out, however, other important regions with significant architecture of the period. Due to his professional background, Bruand's book was based mainly on the diverse Brazilian and international writings on the topic, and on the testimony of local scholars. In this respect, this valuable reference document provides a comprehensive picture of the perceptions of Brazil in the 1960s, including a carefully organized bibliography. The book's main drawback is that the author, not an architect, assimilated the modernist bias against the architecture of eclecticism. His evaluation suffers from both a triumphal and an apologetic reading of the modern movement in Brazil, which, if they do not compromise the intrinsic value of his excellent documentation, make it historically dated. In addition, the graphic reproduc-

Library of the Memorial da América Latina, a large cultural ensemble in São Paulo; Oscar Niemeyer. Photograph by Hugo Segawa.





Casa do Baile, or Dance Pavilion, Pampulha, Belo Horizonte, Brazil; Oscar Niemeyer, 1942. (From Oscar Niemeyer.)

tion in the Brazilian edition of the book is extremely poor, and the translation of French into Portuguese is deficient.

Brasília is the best-known achievement of Brazilian architecture, and is certainly the ultimate symbol of its wider fame. Admittedly, from the historiographic point of view, Brasília is a convenient reference point for classifying a body of work that is not given the same importance as the architecture predating the new capital. The period of the military dictatorship, fueled by economic growth, was capable of building great works, but there was little systematic evaluation of these projects in publications. In the international arena, the architectural trends of the 1970s left behind the modern and exuberant pioneering work of the Brazilians. The monographic edition of the Japanese magazine *Process Architecture*, issue number 17 (1980) provided the first panorama of Brazilian architecture after Brasília. Organized by the Brazilian architect Humberto Yamaki, this special issue, entitled "Modern Brazilian Architecture," assembles a few texts (the Japanese commentaries stand out for their ingenuousness) and the accomplishments of Brazil's "economic miracle." Some of these works are impressive for their scale alone. Unfortunately, the poor photography and inadequate original drawings make it difficult to comprehend and evaluate the qualities of the architecture—graphic problems that are unusual for a Japanese publication. The cover is significant in a melancholy way: it reproduces a (horrible) photo of the construction of a large hospital complex typical of the optimism of the "economic miracle," which was never completed.

It was not until 1982 that the first survey of modernism appeared in Portuguese, *Arquitetura moderna Brasileira*, written by two Brazilians, Sylvia Ficher and Marlene Milan Acayaba. Without proposing major revisions to the scant current historiography on the subject, and without the uncomfortable triumphalism of Bruand, this book

calls attention to certain regional expressions (especially from the north and northeast of the country) that have been previously neglected, bringing the work of the French author up to the early 1980s. Without the academic pretension found in Bruand's work, *Arquitetura moderna Brasileira* was intended for wide distribution, as a study guide for a Brazilian audience of students and architects.

The renewal of regular publishing on architecture in Brazil, signaled by the editorial consolidation of *Projeto* magazine in the 1980s, led to the first step toward mapping recent Brazilian architecture. The book *Arquiteturas no Brasil/Ano 80* (published in 1988) was inspired by the everyday comments about architecture found in the pages of *Projeto*. This assembled raw material resulted in an effort to identify regional manifestations of Brazilian architecture, free from earlier frameworks of analyses. The work is organized and presented according to geographic regions, and yields a unique collection of images. Essentially a project of data survey, the volume includes six essays on modern architecture and contemporary issues, and four chapters of illustrations of buildings. This project was to be followed by a sequel that would have provided an in-depth analysis based on the empirical research of the first volume. Unfortunately, it was not carried out because of the economic crisis that erupted in 1989, and the remnants of the original plan were recycled in regular issues of *Projeto*.

The bibliography of Brazilian architecture of the 20th century is not limited to these publications. It is necessary to emphasize that the 1980s was the period that produced the greatest number of publications on architecture in Brazil, and these contributions provided new perspectives for analytical evaluation. While this does not mean that the phenomenon is comparable to that in countries with extensive publishing traditions, it is significant considering what little international impact Brazilian architecture currently has, especially when compared to its highly celebrated period of the 1950s and 1960s. In this respect, the dissemination of information on Brazilian architecture outside of the country has declined (a local at RIBA's *Architectural Periodical Index* confirms this). Are Brazil and Latin America of interest to the international architectural establishment today? Apparently not. ■

#### NOTES

1. Nikolaus Pevsner, "Modern Architecture and the Historians or the Return of Historicism," *The Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects* 68, no. 6 (April 1961): 230–40.

In the first chapter of *Arquitectura antillana del siglo XX*, author Roberto Segre summarizes the Caribbean Basin: "More than fifty islands form the Caribbean Basin, covering 238,000 square kilometers. They are inhabited by thirty million people. They constitute twenty-nine political entities of which twelve remain as colonies. This constellation, born between the peninsulas of Florida and Yucatán, allows an arch that extends to the coast of Venezuela." The Caribbean Basin has been characterized by contradictions and misconceptions throughout its history. In 1756, when Admiral George Rodney claimed St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Grenada, and Jamaica as England's "Sugar Islands" and adopted the incorrect Columbian term "West Indies," a pattern of real and imagined exoticism was established.

The Caribbean received the final vestiges of colonialism in the Americas. The islands of Cuba and Puerto Rico were the last bastions of the Spanish empire, and were ultimately surrendered to the United States in 1898. Most of the remaining Caribbean colonies remained with France, England, and the Netherlands until after World War II. In a region whose history has been irrevocably tied to imperialism, colonialism, and, perhaps most importantly, migration, it is no wonder that analyses of Caribbean culture and architecture have generally alternated between the glossy and superficial, and the passionately partial and hopelessly narrow.

In the last few years, colonialism and its manifestations in culture as well as architectural and urban form have been reexamined in light of the profound and often controversial work of critics such as Edward W. Said, author of *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993; see *DBR* 9/30). The understanding of the many motivations of colonialism, from the self-serving to the liberal and beneficent (which presupposes that there is a need to dominate in order to assist),

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## Architecture of the Caribbean

have reshaped contemporary critical thought.

Recent publications on the built environment of the Caribbean by Roberto Segre, Carol F. Jopling, Emma Alvarez-Tabio, and Jorge Rigau consider the wreckage left by the region's turbulent history. Each approach reflects the particulars of each author's background: Segre draws on political and social history to explain the processes that affected the region, in particular the substitution of the United States for Europe as the dominant colonial power in the region. Jopling uses anthropology to establish a taxonomy of the Puerto Rican house, while Alvarez-Tabio introduces the literature of mores to explain the changes in plan and decoration in the urban palaces commissioned by the affluent class in turn-of-the-century Havana. Rigau relies on building typology to establish an analytical framework and on comparative literature to draw extensive parallels between the modernist movement in poetry and the simultaneous evolution of architectural form.

Segre, a prolific commentator on the architecture of Latin America, has attempted the first all-embracing catalog of the architecture of the Caribbean during the last one hundred years. *Arquitectura antillana del siglo XX* is a heroic work that succeeds in rescuing a great number of talented practitioners from imminent obscurity. Funded by a Guggenheim grant, Segre traveled throughout the islands, toured buildings, and spent a great deal of time with many of the architects. He avoids the obligatory revolutionary platitudes that mired some of his earlier writings and succeeds in giving fair treatment to several forgotten periods of Caribbean architectural history, notably the one brought on by the dramatic transformation of the functionalist aesthetic of the International Style, ushered in by Le Corbusier's epoch-making lectures in the 1920s and 1930s. Of particular interest is the author's discussion of his personal contact with masters such as Mies van der Rohe, José Luis Sert, and particularly Richard Neutra, who visited and designed projects for the region.

If Segre's net is too wide, Jopling's is often too narrow. The evolution of the individual house in Puerto Rico is a fascinating subject and, with the possible exception of the old core of San Juan, an uncharted one. In her book, *Puerto Rican Houses in Sociohistorical Context*, Jopling traces the house from colonial to modern times, quoting facts and developing an overly exhaustive (and often exhausting) taxonomy for her subject. In her zeal to catalog each and every type, the process

ARQUITECTURA ANTILLANA DEL SIGLO XX, Roberto Segre, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana—Unidad Xochimilco (Mexico City), 1993, 150 pp., illus.

PUERTO RICAN HOUSES IN SOCIOHISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE, Carol F. Jopling, University of Tennessee Press, 1988, 290 pp., \$34.95.

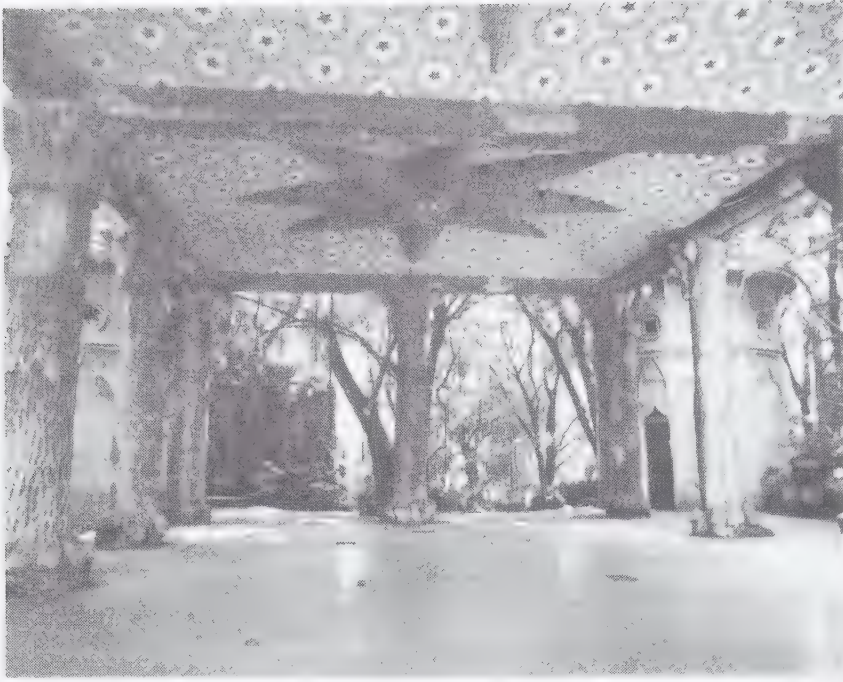
REALIDAD Y FICCIÓN EN LA VIVIENDA BURGESA (1900–1930), Emma Alvarez-Tabio, ISPIAE, Facultad de Arquitectura (Havana, Cuba), 1992, 103 pp., illus.

PUERTO RICO 1900: TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY ARCHITECTURE IN THE HISPANIC CARIBBEAN 1890–1930, Jorge Rigau, Rizzoli, 1992, 232 pp., illus., \$35.00.

HAVANA/LA HABANA, Nancy Stout and Jorge Rigau, photographs by Nancy Stout, Rizzoli, 1994, 224 pp., illus., \$45.00.

Turn-of-the-century housing type in the Hispanic Caribbean. (From *Puerto Rico 1900*.)





Pavilion in Cerveza's Gardens of the Tropical, Havana; c. 1910. Photograph by Nancy Stout. (From *Havana/La Habana*.)

excludes many of the historical and cultural forces that shaped those very houses, and focuses instead on superficial details, such as the use of color. As a trained social scientist, Jopling attempts, with great thoroughness, to understand Puerto Rican houses. However, one wishes there was more of the poet and less of the pathologist in her methodology.

The Cuban Revolution of 1959 has changed the sphere of influence and information regarding the island since that time. The embargo has affected the exchange of not only goods but of intellectual ideas. One of the tragedies of this situation has been the physical and historical maltreatment of the country's turn-of-the-century architecture. Cuba, as well as the rest of the hemisphere, enjoyed a freewheeling boom during the Roaring Twenties, "the dance of the millions," as it was called. Economic expansion was made possible by surging sugar prices and heavy mortgaging of the national debt to finance large-scale architectural and engineering projects. What in urban design

Prado, between Muralla and Tentiente Rey, Old Havana. Photograph by Nancy Stout. (From *Havana/La Habana*.)



terms was eventually summarized by Jean-Claude-Nicholas Forestier's extraordinary plan for Havana of 1926-30 was domestically characterized by an often brilliant parade of private mansions and country clubs in the new sectors of Vedado and Miramar.

Segre was the first to revive interest in this period, which had been

characteristically excoriated by the modernist generation of the 1940s and 1950s. Alvarez-Tabio, former student of Segre's, is the first to compile the many notable examples of the final sighs of Beaux Arts classicism. The author of *Realidad y ficción en la vivienda Burguesa 1900-1930*, Alvarez-Tabio, a direct descendant of one of the prominent families of that period, often sounds like an unwilling heir to its baggage. Indeed, the buildings were made possible by land speculation and often unholy allegiances between corrupt politicians and all-too-willing foreign (generally U.S.) interests. Alvarez-Tabio draws parallels between the pompous facades of both the buildings and owners. In time, these *palazzi* became embassies, houses of culture, and, in one particularly ironic case, a rental facility for wedding pictures.

Reviewing the fascinating array of urban palaces, such as Govantes and Cabarrocas' houses for Orestes Ferrara, the minister of finance for President Gerardo Machado, one cannot fail to see their indebtedness to many a Florentine *palazzo* or Parisian *hôtel*. If their designs served to fulfill perhaps unworthy delusions of grandeur, it seems shortsighted nevertheless to dismiss the skill with which they were achieved. (Was Julia Morgan a lesser architect for having had William Randolph Hearst as a client?)

Any analysis of the architecture of the Caribbean must necessarily deal with the concept of dominance and its role in sustaining urbanism and propagating national identity. The understanding of this dominance is critical to the framework of the critic, and to the labels assigned to this phenomenon. In *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991), Benedict Anderson quotes the great French historian Jules Michelet:

Yes, every dead man leaves a legacy, his memory, and demands that it be dreamt. For he who has no friends, the judge will supply them. Because of the law, justice is surer than all our forgetful tenderness, our tears so soon dry. This judge is history. And the dead are, according to Roman Law, these *miserabilis personae* for whom the judge must worry. Never during my career did I lose sight of this duty of the historian. I gave to many a forgotten dead man the assistance that I owed to parents, to friends. This is how we forge a family, a community between the living and the dead.

Jorge Rigau's *Puerto Rico 1900* is the result of ten years of recording, reading, photographing, and tirelessly recapturing the forgotten architectural legacy of the second wave of Spanish immigrants who arrived to the islands in the years preceding and immediately following the Spanish-American War. Although his text reveals a procedure of analysis ripe with the gestalt theories associated with Colin Rowe of Cornell University (who

gau was a student), he relies on a more profound process of discovery which drives his research into analyzing building codes, such as the Public Works Law of 1881 and the Project Proposals and Specifications Regarding Urban Management and Public Buildings of 1867.

With a sensibility more like that of someone imaging through birth certificates in attempts to map a family tree than that of an architectural historian, Rigau seeks to piece together the period by re-creating the times and concerns of the major and all-too-soon forgotten players in Puerto Rico at the turn of the century. Like Michelet, Rigau seems compelled to reclaim the dead and, in so doing, renew the past. The parallels with the first truly national literary movement in the region, *modernismo*, are revealing and often fascinating.

In carefully examining the sources behind the architecture—the training and the influences of individual architects—Rigau establishes the authors as complex individuals attempting to sort out their particular historical moment. As immigrants and children of immigrants, they looked to both motherland and frontier. Their education and craft were as sophisticated as their period was complex.

The pursuit of a literary model continues in Rigau's latest work, coauthored by Nancy Stout, *Havana/La Habana*. The four-part essay sketches a picture of the Cuban city, with references to history as well as literature; the authors acknowledge a debt to such figures as Alejo Carpentier, Jose Lezama Lima, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, and Reinaldo Arenas. Stout's photographs, which accompany the text, are the finest of any book on Havana since Paolo Gasparini's images illustrated Carpentier's *La Ciudad de las columnas* over twenty years ago. Whether rediscovering the "barrio Chino" or "La Tropical," the Tropical Gardens of Cerveza (the beer company), Stout's lens brings out an aging grandeur that seems to embody "*l'empire au déclin de la décadence*," as Charles Baudelaire put it.

All of these books attempt to evaluate the struggles of postcolonial society from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day. Is architecture a fitting representative of the nations for which or in which it is built? As Nezar AlSayyad has written in *Forms of Dominance* (Aldershot, Eng.: Avebury, 1992), "The questions of who is being represented and by whom and by what have all proven very elusive." Globalization has at once popularized and misinformed the world as to the true picture of the Caribbean. These authors address these questions, and it is an important first step. If Michelet was troubled about passive judgment on the dead, shouldn't we be concerned about the legacy of the living? ■

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JOHN A. LOOMIS

## "Architecture or Revolution?" *The Cuban Experiment*

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*Guillermo Tell no comprendió a su hijo  
que un día se aburrió de la manzana  
en la cabeza*

*Guillermo Tell, tu hijo creció,  
quiere tirar la flecha.*

*Le toca a él probar su valor,  
usando tu ballesta.*

William Tell did not understand his son  
who one day became bored with the apple  
on his head.

William Tell, your son has grown  
he wants to shoot the arrow.

It is now his turn to prove his courage,  
using your cross-bow.

—"Guillermo Tell," popular song  
by Carlos Varela, late 1980s

In 1989 a nascent organization of young Cuban architects, connected to the cultural association Hermanos Saíz, assembled an exhibit entitled "Arquitectura Joven" for the Third Havana Bienal. The show addressed the cultural and aesthetic dimension of Cuban architecture through the work of young, emerging practitioners. When the plans for the exhibit became known, the Union of Cuban Architects and Engineers, with the support of the Ministry of Construction and the Faculty of Architecture of the University, attempted to block its opening. Some of the young architects responsible for the exhibit were threatened with the loss of their jobs. However, thanks to the support of the Ministry of Culture, the Union of Cuban Writers and Artists, and the Centro Wifredo Lam, the controversial little exhibit opened as planned. The young architects, bolstered as they were by their critical success, organized another, larger exhibit for the Fourth Havana Bienal in 1991. To the casual foreign observer, this exhibit—a collection of student and competition projects which often displayed a naive indulgence in postmodernism—seemed little cause for controversy. But within the framework of architectural practice in Revolutionary Cuba, their underlying aesthetic, contextual, and historical concerns were in conflict with many of the institutions responsible for the country's built environment. The Ministry of Construction was directly challenged by one project in particular, by Rosendo Mesias: his photomontage showed the stark, Orwellian facade of the Ministry crumbling away like the Berlin Wall to reveal the National Art Schools, a poetic but officially maligned project from the early years of the Revolution. Above

this graphic manifesto was the official slogan, "*Revolución es Construir*"—to which was added the word "*Arquitectura*."

The 1959 Revolution precipitated a vibrant cultural flowering. The cultural avant-garde and the political avant-garde were one in the same. Alicia Alonso returned from the New York City Ballet to found the National Ballet of Cuba. Writer Alejo Carpentier, painter Wifredo Lam, and a host of other artists and intellectuals returned to their home country from exile, joining their colleagues in devoting their talents to the creation of a new society. The situation was somewhat different for architects, however. The economic interests that had employed architects prior to 1959 emigrated to Miami, and so did most professionals with established practices, for example Eugenio Batista, Frank Martínez, Mario Romañach, and Nicolás Quintana, who had developed during the 1950s a modernist syntax that was highly responsive to Cuba's tropical environment. Their departure and that of many other accomplished designers caused a break in professional continuity that would have serious consequences for the quality of Cuban architecture for years to come.

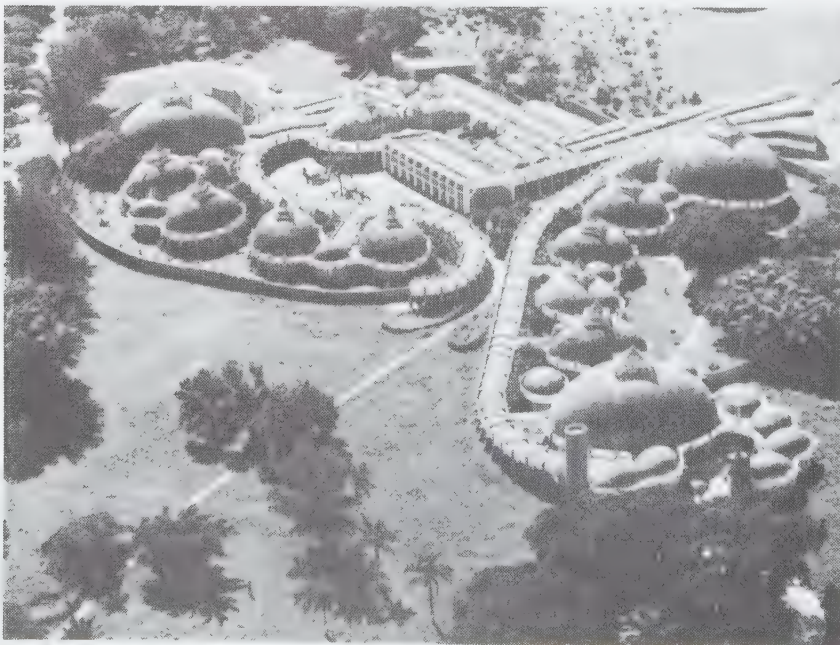
Ricardo Porro, an architect whose sympathies for the Revolution forced him into exile, was invited to return in 1960 by Osmany Cienfuegos, the new twenty-six-year-old head of the Ministry of Construction. Porro was commissioned to head the design of the new National Art Schools (1961–64), which were to be the standard-bearers for a policy aimed at making arts education more widely accessible to young people. Porro brought with him Vittorio Garatti and Roberto Gottardi, two young Italian architects with whom he had been working in Venezuela.<sup>1</sup> Together they

developed the master plan for the schools, which would be situated on the former site of an exclusive suburban country club, Cubanacan. Porro assumed responsibilities for the School of Modern Dance and the School of Plastic Arts; Garatti for the School of Music and the School of Ballet; and Gottardi for the School of Dramatic Arts. The architects developed a unique organic architectural language, rich in multicultural metaphors. Based on the common use of Catalan vaults, the schools weave their way through the lush, tropical vegetation that covers the grounds in a clear rejection of rationalism. The project expresses the utopian vision of the euphoric times immediately following the Revolution. The schools are unique to the historical moment and the place of their conception. They are perhaps the best-known examples of modern Cuban architecture.

Unfortunately, only the plastic arts and modern dance schools, both by Porro, were completely executed. The project was abandoned for economic as well as ideological reasons, with the three remaining campuses near completion. The economic blockade imposed by U.S. in 1962 caused a shortage of materials, while the country's other pressing construction needs resulted in a shortage of manpower. But economics alone do not provide a logical argument for abandoning a project that was 90 percent complete, as was the case for the School of Ballet, which today sadly stands in ruins. There were other reasons. Influenced by the most reductive functionalist tendencies of the modern movement, the new Ministry of Construction, which was assuming the responsibility for all of Cuba's building needs, felt threatened by the radical nature of the project and criticized it for "elitism, hedonism, and egocentric design criteria." But the ideological attacks were largely a charade that masked professional jealousies. As a result of the pressure Porro left the country voluntarily and Garatti several years later, involuntarily.<sup>2</sup> According to Sergio Baroni, an Italian architect and planner who has lived and worked in Cuba since the early 1960s, "The tangled web of arguments that would eventually be used to demonstrate the project's impracticability and justify abandoning it was gradually woven. This is now acknowledged to have been a grave mistake."<sup>3</sup>

Parallel to the development of the National Art Schools was another exceptional project devoted to higher education, the new polytechnic university, Ciudad Universitaria José Antonio Echeverría, or CUJAE (1961–64), by another group of young architects, including Humberto Alonso Salinas, and Josefina Montalvan. This project could be more philosophically opposite to the lyrical, organic approach of the National Art Schools. The design of the CUJAE, located far to the south of metropolitan Havana, was rooted

Aerial view of the School of Plastic Arts, Havana, Cuba; Ricardo Porro, 1962–65. Photograph by Paolo Gasparini. (From *New Directions in Latin American Architecture*.)



the tenets of the modern movement and influenced by Team X's approach to the flexible constructive systems of spatial hierarchies. The building's modular, poured-in-place, lift-slab construction and "kit of parts" wall system governs the university's expansion to this day. The open structure, with its three-dimensional modular grid, was intended as a metaphor for the new open society that was envisioned. However, this was not a modernist project that turned its back on history. The CUJAE's organization was inspired by the old University of Havana in the center of Vedado, a neoclassical urban complex of solid building volumes linked by colonnades and interspersed with courts filled with dense tropical vegetation. CUJAE, too, is a coherent complex with urban qualities that quotes and transforms traditional elements such as galleries, porticoes, and courtyards while creating edges and allowing for spatial continuity within a lush tropical landscape—all within a modern syntax of direct technocratic expression. It is unfortunate that such an urbane project is located so far from the city, and that its potential as a tool for adding definition to the city was not recognized. It is also unfortunate that the intelligent integration of technology, flexibility, and planning in the design was rarely demonstrated again in projects sponsored by the state.

While the early 1960s can be seen as a uniquely creative and spontaneous period for Cuban architecture, it was also a period that witnessed a sharp decline in the quality of design and the stature of the profession. Against the backdrop of economic isolation and material scarcity, Cuba sought to address the conditions that had precipitated the Revolution: poverty, lack of education, rural backwardness, and economic dependency—the general conditions of underdevelopment. Architecture, or rather construction, gradually subjected to a Soviet model of centralized planning, was one of the tools for resolving these inequities.<sup>4</sup>

The year 1963 signaled the beginning of the centralization of architecture. That year, the International Congress of the UIA was held in Havana. Issues concerning the socialist and developing worlds were emphasized. Two themes in particular—industrialized forms of construction and comprehensive territorial planning—received special attention at the convention and, ultimately, importance within Cuba's national policy. Territorial planning in socialist countries has ideological roots in the writings of Friedrich Engels, who proposed comprehensive scientific planning to correct the disparity in wealth between the city and the country. This disparity could not have been greater in Cuba, where the neocolonial economy had created a severe disequilibrium between the development of the capi-



tal and the rest of the country. To address new priorities, the government shifted development away from Havana and toward rural areas and other towns; this had the unfortunate side-effect of bringing about the steady deterioration of the capital. To coordinate such large-scale planning and implement projects on a national level, government officials and planners felt that a centralized structure was necessary.

Around the same time, the Cuban architect's association, the Colegio de Arquitectura, was abolished, along with most private practice.<sup>5</sup> In a short time, the new Ministry of Construction assumed almost all responsibility for planning, design, and construction in the country. With the slogan, "*Revolución es Construir*," the Ministry, though initially creative and innovative under the directorship of its founder, Cienfuegos, soon became highly dogmatic and technocratic, with a militancy that was Jesuit as well as Marxist in nature. Cienfuegos contributed to the eventual devaluation of the role of the architect and the elevation of that of the engineer. As a part of the process of centralization, this was the result not only of ideological will but of the struggle for power among individuals.

The scarcity of material and professional resources seemed to support the case for centralization. In this country of six million inhabitants, the population of architects dropped from six hundred to three hundred—a decline that further justified a centralized, rational, efficient organization. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Construction only met the first of these three criteria. Furthermore, the "one correct line" political culture contributed to a "one correct design" architectural approach, despite a diversity of needs. Quantity came to be valued over quality. This misguided approach dominated the country's architecture through the 1970s, and

School of Ballet, Havana, Cuba; Vittorio Garatti, 1963–64. Photograph by John Loomis.

remained unchallenged until the 1980s.

Mario Coyula Cowley, deputy director of the Grupo de Desarrollo Integral de la Capital, an urban advisory group formed in 1986 to promote a positive approach to architecture and urban design in Havana, commented on the decline of architecture over the last three decades:

While a self-serving *apparat* became more and more involved in its own maintenance, the social role of the architect was devalued in relation to other professions. The purpose of an architect's education was not to stimulate creativity and invite change, but to maintain an existing system, an establishment that endlessly promoted repetitive projects, based on rigid prefabricated systems. The people who could have been instrumental in changing things too often compromised themselves in order to maintain the establishment; or they felt helpless, unable to promote change, and shifted their efforts to planning, writing, teaching, or other activities instead. Critics of real substance were rare and often fell into a kind of self-censorship. For the architect it became convenient to sacrifice beauty in order to guarantee the quantity of production. Life has shown that when you sacrifice beauty, you lose everything: social value, quality of construction, and, in the end, quantity as well.<sup>6</sup>

The new faculty of architecture at the CUJAE, created after the Revolution, functioned more or less as an extension of the Ministry of Construction. In

the early 1960s, when most architecture faculty emigrated to Miami, older students were suddenly thrust into the position of teaching their younger colleagues; they were also given the responsibility, often beyond their experience, to address the real design needs of the country. This situation gradually solidified into an institutionalized structure that was pedagogically in accord with the Ministry's sociofunctionalist, technology-based ideology. The historical struggle between the Beaux Arts and the Polytechnique became embroiled in political rhetoric. As Marxists, the Cubans should have recognized a positive dialectical process that could have produced a synthesis between the two poles. Instead, it was a winner-take-all victory for the Polytechnique. For a few years the architecture school existed merely as a subdepartment of the school of construction (as is still the case in the university in Camagüey). The CUJAE pursued a narrow curriculum, focusing more on technical issues than on formal, cultural, and urban concerns. Joaquin Weiss, the faculty's foremost architectural historian, opposed this trend. In his final lecture, before his retirement in 1968, he warned prophetically:

The new architecture, for the mere fact of being in the service of the people, must not be a purely utilitarian art, without aesthetic or emotional purpose. . . . If architectonic constructions cannot be lifted above mere mechanical constructions, I would say it is worthless to think of studying architecture.<sup>7</sup>

Many talented designers who received their education before the Revolution were either marginalized by the new architecture school or chose to distance themselves from it. Advancement within the faculty depended all too often on political rather than professional skills, and, on many unfortunate occasions, talented teachers have been dismissed during campaigns for "ideological purity."<sup>8</sup> While the school of architecture has remained on the sidelines during the current debate on architecture in Cuba, it has actively promoted faculty and student exchanges with other countries, including the United States, thus contributing indirectly to the debate.

In 1963 the Soviet Union gave Cuba the *Grav Panel*, the country's first factory for prefabricated building construction. Systems also arrived from Poland, Yugoslavia, and Canada; the 1970s were dominated by the use of prefabricated systems favored by the centrally organized Ministry of Construction. The systems that originated in more northern latitudes were not always well-suited to the Caribbean. Cuba also attempted to develop its own flexible systems, such as the Multiflex by Fernando Salinas (implemented only as a prototype) and low-tech building materials such as reinforced mini-beams and concrete panels, which were



Ciudad Universitaria José Antonio Echevarría (CUJAE), Havana, Cuba; Humberto Alonso, Fernando Salinas, Josefina Montalvan, Manuel Rubio, José Fernandez, 1961–64. Photograph by John Loomis.

ever technically but were generally used in banal applications. Oddly enough, despite the ideological commitment to standardization, each prefabricated system (as well as the same system produced in different plants) was engineered to different modules, effectively barring any interchangeability. The only relatively successful prefabricated building system in Cuba is the Girón, developed by Cuban architect Josefina Rebellón. It was used predominantly in the country's school-building campaign, one of the most successful social programs of the Revolution. This flexible system could assume various configurations and, when in the hands of skilled designers, could achieve a rich spatial complexity. But despite its relative success, some architects today criticize the Girón for unresolved technical problems, such as lack of adequate waterproofing. In evaluating the architectural culture that embraced industrialized building systems in Cuba, architectural historian and critic Roberto Segre has written:

Even though the Girón system initially took a creative direction, the rest of construction fell into rigid repetitive schemes which had nothing to do with their original principles. Lacking a basis in reality, ideas languished. Debate became institutionalized. Publications from the Ministry of Construction became anonymous apologetic texts for the building systems being routinely applied to schools, hospitals, industries, and housing. The journals *Arquitectura Cuba* and *Arquitectura y urbanismo*, published by the [CUJAE's] faculty of architecture, were only of documentary, descriptive, and anecdotal value until 1980, having distanced themselves from the real human problems presented by the urban and rural environment.<sup>9</sup>

The standardization and industrialization of construction did not provide an easy solution to Cuba's complex building needs. The "one size fits all" solutions applied to diverse problems lowered standards in both design and workmanship. Furthermore, the country's quest to build as much as possible in as little time as possible, using limited resources, meant that projects were too often rushed to the construction phase, without proper design development. The preeminence of technological values over historical, cultural, and urban values was damaging to the quality of the architecture and of the urban environment. The romance with technology and "scientific" solutions to design problems has since waned, but only after a great expenditure of resources and human effort. The faith in industrialized construction and standardized systems was not solely a Cuban phenomenon. It had deep roots in the modern movement and reflected the general preoccupation with technology in both capitalist and socialist coun-



Casa del Obra Pia, Havana, Cuba; 18th-century Cuban baroque residence restored in the 1970s. Photograph by John Loomis.

tries during the 1960s and 1970s. But the heavy-handed manner in which these systems were developed and used was especially common in Cuba as well as in other socialist countries.

Industrialized building systems were most disappointing in the area of housing. The housing question in Cuba was addressed not as a state-sponsored public service but through the multiplication of private ownership initiated by the Revolution's housing reform laws. Ironically, there are more small property owners per capita in Cuba than in most capitalist countries. However, the country's highly centralized means of planning and producing new housing directly contradicted the decentralized nature of homeownership.<sup>10</sup> The first housing development completed after the Revolution, Habana del Este by Roberto Carranzana, Mario González, and others (1959–63) was to be a unique positive example, like the National Art Schools and the new campus for the CUJAE. This new development followed contemporary planning principles of the time, largely derived from British and Scandinavian models, and was organized around the superblock. Though not a street-oriented scheme, Habana del Este achieved urban quality through attention to various scales and the provision of definable exterior public spaces.

Cuba's housing needs were further compounded by a baby boom that occurred in the years immediately following the Revolution. To build as much housing as quickly and economically as possible, the kind of planning and care that had gone into Habana del Este was discarded in favor

of repetitive industrialized projects. But toward the end of the 1970s it was apparent that housing could not be adequately addressed along with all the other building needs of the country. To relieve construction workers for other projects, a system of "micro-brigades" was established, with twenty to twenty-five untrained volunteers who built housing with partially prefabricated as well as traditional building systems. Still, quantity took precedence over quality. And the work of micro-brigades tended to be of lower construction quality and higher cost than state construction. As for new housing developments, they were usually composed of row after row of *siedlung*-type housing slabs, forming monotonous districts that were derisively called *sopa de bloques*, block soup, by Cubans.

These housing projects failed to recognize the social and formal role that the street plays in Mediterranean and Latin American urban culture. And despite all the state's efforts to provide housing, private provision of housing (both legal and illegal) has performed twice as well as state production of housing.

So how can one evaluate Cuba's provision of housing for its population? Certainly the lack of both constructive and urban quality that characterizes most of its projects are serious criticisms. Nevertheless, Cuba has expended more effort toward resolving its housing problems than most developing countries. One-third to one-half of Latin America's population lives in substandard urban or rural conditions. Cuba has also managed, for the most part, to stave off the urban sprawl that engulfs the peripheries of most Latin American cities. Although the country has many anonymous housing projects, there are a few notable examples: Las Terrazas by Mario Girona (1968 and 1990), a model for rural cooperatives; and, more recently, Las Arboledas, on the periphery of Havana. A collaboration between American architect Huck Rorick, urban designer Peter Calthorpe, and Cuban architect Gilberto Seguí and others, the project is currently under construction. Exhibiting great environmental and urban sensitivity, Las Arboledas elegantly weaves the new units of housing with a wooded natural landscape and an existing housing complex.

Within the context of anonymous practice in the 1970s, where the role of the architect was subservient to the mechanism of the state, four architects were able to carve out uniquely individual, albeit marginal, careers: Antonio Quintana, Joaquín Galván, Fernando Salinas, and Walter Betancourt. If there was a court architect of the Cuban Revolution, it was Quintana, who passed away in 1993. The only prominent professional of his generation to remain in Cuba after 1959, Quintana was literally without peers, operating an office that produced the major public works

of the country. He had access to foreign materials, relatively generous budgets, and was not constrained as routinely others were. But despite his privileged position, his best work remains his projects of the 1950s. Though his work since the Revolution is technically competent, it is largely undistinguished, lacking both theoretical basis and formal clarity.

Joaquín Galván's works are largely unknown because they consist primarily of houses of protocol and other official facilities, used exclusively by Party members and governmental visitors from abroad. Galván was part of an informal circle of artists and intellectuals gathered by Célia Sánchez who was interested in exploring a synthesis between modernism and Cuban cultural identity, *cubanidad*. Galván's design for the restaurant La Ruinas (1972), which is open to the public, is rooted in the Cuban modernism of the 1950s, yet has a tectonic expression that reflects the technological positivism of the 1960s. Its three-dimensional framework integrates volume with vegetation in a study of tropical spatial continuity.

The late Fernando Salinas, who was educated in the United States and worked for Mies van der Rohe and Philip Johnson, brought a broad humanist perspective to Cuban architecture. He conducted important (though never implemented) research in building systems and designed the Cuban embassy in Mexico City. Because of differences with the Ministry of Construction, he chose to work with the Ministry of Culture instead, serving as its director of plastic arts. An educator, writer, and theoretician in a profession lacking in visionaries, Salinas more than anyone else articulated a vision of the principles that should guide Cuban architecture. His writings and lectures inspired a younger generation to appreciate the cultural and humanist value of architecture.<sup>11</sup>

Walter Betancourt, North American by birth but Cuban by choice, came to Cuba in 1961 as a young man who had just turned down a job offer from Frank Lloyd Wright. In search of his own cultural identity (his grandparents were Cuban) and inspired by the romance of the Cuban Revolution, he decided to devote his talents to his adopted country. Betancourt chose to work far from Havana, the locus of bureaucratic control, settling in the eastern provinces where he could pursue his own free-spirited, organic architecture, which was rooted in the work of Wright and Antoni Gaudí. The Forestry Laboratory near Guisa (1970) in the Sierra Maestra and the Cultural Center in Velasco (with Gilberto Seguí, 1964–91) are considered his major accomplishments. Betancourt's iconoclastic work was never officially recognized in his lifetime (he died in 1978), and his work is still ignored by the architectural establishment, but he is much admired by the younger generation of Cuban architects that, like him, seeks its own identity.<sup>12</sup>

The work and writings of these men demonstrated the possibility of alternatives to the anonymous architectural practice promulgated by the Ministry of Construction. But it was not until the 1980s that a climate favorable to criticism emerged, finally eroding institutional authority and making way for alternative thought. The 1980s in Cuba began as a period of relative prosperity, with apparent material gains for the population. It was not evident until the end of the decade that these material gains were the result of generous subsidies from the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries, whose economies were not yet worn out by the arms race and international mismanagement. During this period, a process of political decentralization began, encouraging participation and debate at lower and middle levels of political bureaucracies, although, in the end, all power remained where it had been since 1959. Building projects could now at least be initiated at the local level, which allowed for some measure of design freedom and a return to standard, rather than standardized, construction methods. This new openness was evident in all fields of the arts. Challenging the status quo through creativity came widespread.<sup>13</sup> Art critics such as Gerardo Mosquera, whose collection of essays, *El Diseño se fue en Octubre* (Havana: Editorial Arte y Literatura, 1989) is considered one of the major critical works of recent times, were influential in spreading the cultural ferment to architecture. Only a minority of the CUJAE architecture faculty engaged in the debate—which was nonexistent within the Ministry of Construction. Nonarchitectural journals such as *Mujeres*, *El Caimán Barbudo*, *Casa de Américas*, *Revolución y Cultura*, and *La Gaceta de Cuba* communicated the dissatisfaction of the general populace. People were increasingly dismayed with the disfigurement of the country's built environment, and were nostalgic for the qualities of traditional Cuban urban life.

As the spatial poverty of the new towns and districts became increasingly apparent and more openly criticized, some architects and urbanists began to rediscover the city—historic centers, in particular. Although there had always been a "fifth column" of historic preservationists (such as Eusebio Leal, Luis Lápido, Isabel Rigol, and Daniel Taboada) among the urban planners educated in the reductive modernist precepts of Eastern Europe, historic preservation projects gained priority in the 1980s. The establishment of the National Center for Restoration and Museology, supported internationally by ICOMOS, and the designation of old Havana as part of the international cultural patrimony by UNESCO gave international status to the historic preservation of Havana, as well as recognition to the urban values of the traditional city.<sup>14</sup>

At an important national meeting of archi-



Cultural Center of Velasco, Cuba; Walter Betancourt, with Gilberto Seguí, 1964–91. Photograph by John Loomis.

itects and planners in 1987 a minor bombshell was dropped when Fidel Castro himself criticized Cuban architecture for its lack of quality and aesthetic value. Surprisingly, this had little effect on the power structure of the Ministry of Construction, the architecture faculty at the CUJAE, or the Union Nacional de Arquitectos y Ingenieros de Construcción; still, the prestige and authority of the leaders of these organizations was diminished. In addition, the critical nature of the political culture was now being accelerated by the "rectification of errors campaign" and by the ripple effect of *glasnost* and *perestroika* from the Soviet Union.

Castro's overdue criticism lent a sense of urgency and authority to the Grupo de Desarrollo Integral de la Capital, a small institution founded just the year before by Gina Rey, Coyula Cowley, and Mario González. The Grupo was formed as an advisory agency to bridge the gap between planning and construction in Havana. In its effort to promote projects that address urban problems responsibly and ethically, it is the urban conscience and often a thorn in the side of the Ministry of Construction and other state organizations. The Grupo has been successful in blocking or modifying many insensitive, inappropriate projects. It has been an important advocate of historic preservation and has acted to expand the definition of "historic." The organization has also promoted neighborhood participation in planning and development. The Grupo's cautious but effective criticism has earned it professional respect within Cuba and abroad.

By contrast, the criticism from the country's younger generation of architects has been far from cautious. The aspirations of this generation are summed up in the popular song from the late 1980s, "Guillermo Tell" by Carlos Varela. The younger practitioners want very much their chance to "shoot the arrow," and are not above putting the apple on the head of their elders. This generation gap is worthy of comment. The younger generation grew up with the Revolution as a given fact and, not having participated in its creation, feels less committed to maintaining its myths and more willing to point out its contradictions. Some members of the older generation feel that the young do not appreciate the sacrifices made to ensure universal education, health care, and shelter. Whereas the Revolutionary generation tends to hold onto its idealism and optimism defensively, the young are more aggressively pessimistic.

The arts have been the most open forum for the young generation to exercise its voice, and anyone familiar with the socialist cultures of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union would be surprised at the high level of tolerance exhibited by the Cuban government. Only rarely have works been banned, such as the songs of Pedro Luis Ferrer or the film *Alicia en el Pueblo de las Maravillas*. Inspired by the high level and diversity of critical content found in the plastic arts, the Hermanos Saíz association formed an architectural section in 1988 to support architectural discourse that was discouraged elsewhere. They organized exhibits, conferences, competitions, and debate—activities that were not always without opposition. Hermanos Saíz rejected the "one correct line" philosophy of the previous generation, and supported a broad architectural agenda instead, encouraging diverse points of views. The young architects have been most successful in formulating provocative criticism and raising fundamental questions. They have been passionate and outspoken in their opposition to institutional mediocrity. In describing his generation, Eduardo Luis Rodríguez states: "The academic education that this generation has received is deficient and incompetent. Five years of struggling with scientific diagrams, minimal spaces, prefabricated elements, and explanations of why capitalist architecture is bad and socialist architecture is good have fostered a skepticism just short of nihilism that at least has prevented us from becoming obedient lambs." He goes on to list the conditions against which the young generation is reacting:

Centralized decision-making, an anonymity that allows the avoidance of fault and annuls success; the rise to positions of power in the architecture establishment of the politically talented but professionally mediocre; generalized inefficiency; the total absence of debate;

lack of opportunities to study abroad; the predominance of self-congratulatory slogans in place of criticism; and in the end, the loss of the prestige for the architect, converted into a decorative figure, manipulated by political leaders and construction bureaucrats.<sup>15</sup>

Emma Alvarez-Tabío is another young architect and critic who is incisive and at times sarcastically funny in her critique of Cuban architecture. In her article "Fast Food: All About Alchemy, Gluttony, and Improvisation," she defends the young generation, laments architecture's decline, and accuses those responsible for it: "The almost two decades that have passed since the early 1960s have demonstrated that the sacrifices made on the altars of the Revolutionary program for architecture have been in vain. However, no amount of disaster has been able to tarnish the innocence of those architects responsible, inebriated with their social stature."<sup>16</sup> The voice of this generation is very different from that of their elders, such as Baroni, Coyula, Salinas, and Segura, who soberly and carefully frame their critique within a larger context.

The younger generation has been less successful in developing any coherent theory or proposing answers in terms of built work. Deprived of rigorous academic education, they have been left to their own devices, formally autodidact. In reaction to their technically oriented education, many found "architecture for architecture's sake" appealing. Furthermore, as a gesture of defiance, many young architects reacted to the fragmentary reductive modernism upon which Cuban architecture had been based since the 1960s, and embraced instead an approach that was based on rediscovering premodern traditions, an approach that would warm Charles Jencks' heart. Their innocent, eager desire to create a critical response to Cuba's architectural needs often led to the uncritical adoption of postmodern syntax, gleaned from North American and European magazines. Style was all too often worn with naive pride, like an ill-fitting pair of Levi's. However, it is encouraging to see that some young architects are now looking to Cuban modernist developments of the 1950s (formerly a taboo subject) for inspiration, and are also striving for a nonstylistic typological understanding of Cuban urban form. Nevertheless, the real issue surrounding the development of an architecture appropriate to Cuba await exploration.

A mini-construction boom from 1986 to 1990 gave many young architects the chance to test their ideas. Although the resulting body of work is largely uneven, some projects stand out, such as two neighborhood medical clinics in old Havana, one by Mayda Pérez, the other by Eduardo Luis Rodríguez, as well as a charter plane terminal at Hotel Santiago by José Antonio Choy in Santiago. Other young architects who have produced inter-

ing though unbuilt work are Francisco Bedoya, Daniel Bejerano, and Juan Luis Morales. While tactically diverse, these projects share an apologetic concern for formal, aesthetic, and contextual issues.

When the interest in formal and aesthetic issues turns toward issues of style, however, many architects of the older generation who support the younger architects become uncomfortable. Coyula and Wiley is concerned that the idealization of the architect as artist could lead to aesthetic isolationism, endangering the true collaborative and participatory nature of the profession. Moreover, he warns that the inefficient socialist management could not negate the social responsibilities inherent in architecture.<sup>17</sup> According to Gina Rey, director of the Grupo de Desarrollo Integral de la Capital: "We must broaden the architectural debate in Cuba. Currently, the situation is polarized. On the one hand, there is the old school, with twenty to thirty years of vested interest in the technocratic approach, incapable of self-criticism. On the other, there is the young generation that wants to break with everything and start all over. We need to seek an equilibrium between these two positions, appropriate alternatives that acknowledge the unique cultural traditions and natural environment of Cuba."<sup>18</sup>

But today many individuals who would be important to the debate are no longer around. The majority of the young activist architects who participated in Hermanos Saíz have sought scholarships or work abroad, adding to the unfortunate cultural diaspora that currently deprives Cuba of most of its young intellectual leaders.<sup>19</sup> The talented, inquisitive, and ambitious are seeking or creating opportunities wherever they can. Other former Hermanos Saíz protagonists have refocused their energies toward research or have simply withdrawn into their personal lives. The country's overwhelming economic paralysis has halted almost all building activity, except for projects in the tourist sector. Completed public projects which are officially cited as exemplary, such as the Bellón de la Maqueta de la Ciudad by Orestes Castillo, Jr. (1992) and the Pan-American Village by Roberto Caballero (1991), both in Havana, are in comparison to the National Art Schools and the CUJAE of the 1960s. This enormous disparity serves as a reminder that, despite a few exceptional works, Cuba has not yet developed a coherent body of architecture that embodies the mythological aspirations of its Revolution.

It may be tempting to speculate that the Cuban experiment has come to an end, but this speculation has been repeated many times since 1959. This stubborn "little utopia that could" still "thinks it can," but its expectations have been drastically lowered. The social project in conflict with an economy that can barely



support it. The triumphal rhetoric of the country's leadership contradicts the reality of people's daily lives. While the architectural criticism of the past few years has helped to lay the foundations for renewal, the actual form of this renewal awaits the resolution of larger issues. ■

*El dilema de las esperanzas, desemboca en la realidad.*

—Fernando Salinas

Executive airport terminal in Santiago de Cuba; José Antonio Choy, 1987. Photograph by John Loomis.

#### NOTES

The title of this piece refers to the words of Le Corbusier, from his 1927 book *Toward a New Architecture*: "Society is filled with a violent desire for something which it may obtain or may not. Everything depends on the effort made and the attention paid to these alarming symptoms. Architecture or Revolution? Revolution can be avoided."

1. Besides Garatti and Gottardi, some of the other architects from abroad who came to commit their professional skills to the Revolution were Sergio Baroni (Italy), Rene Du Bois (France), Joaquin Rallo (Spain), Paul Jacobs (United States), and Walter Betancourt (United States).

2. Ricardo Porro went unacknowledged in Cuba for many years as the author of the Schools of Dance and Plastic Arts. He has resided in Paris since 1965 where his current architectural work is also not uncontroversial. Vittorio Garatti's departure in 1971 was precipitated by charges of espionage, later proved false. It now appears that these charges may have been instigated by the C.I.A. as part of its broad disinformation campaign in Cuba. For additional information, see David Corn, "Secrets from the C.I.A. Archives," *The Nation* (November 29, 1993): 658. Garatti lives and maintains a successful practice in Milan. Roberto Gottardi continues to live and work in Havana.

3. Sergio Baroni, "Report from Havana," *Zodiac* 8 (September 1992–February 1993): 171.

4. Lisandro Otero, Cuban novelist and former cultural attaché to the Soviet Union, comments on the transi-

tion that took place during the 1960s: "In the Revolution there was a whole aspect of freshness, spontaneity, and originality that faded as we began to adopt more and more Soviet patterns of behavior, from the red kerchiefs to centralized planning"; from an interview in Jorge G. Castañeda, *Utopia Unarmed: The Latin American Left After the Cold War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), p. 185.

5. An association for architects, which includes engineers, the Union Nacional de Arquitectos y Ingenieros de Construcción (UNAIIC), was established in 1983 under the auspices of the Ministry of Construction. Vestiges of private practice still actually exist in Cuba, though on a very small scale, and they are not officially sanctioned.

6. Interview with Mario Coyula Cowley, Havana, Cuba, 1993.

7. As quoted in Eduardo Luis Rodríguez, "Elogio de la divergencia: La Arquitectura Cubana de la década de los ochenta," unpublished paper, Havana, Cuba, 1992. See also *Arquitectura y urbanismo* 1 (1991): 14.

8. Precedent for these campaigns was set in the 1960s when instructors who were considered to be overly concerned with aesthetics and cultural issues were persecuted. One of them, Joaquín Rallo, a Spanish architect who had studied and worked with Louis Kahn, was dismissed from the school and sent to cut cane in the country. More recently, two young architecture faculty members were dismissed for failing to support the establishment of the Rapid Response Brigades, official vigilante groups whose task was to harass human-rights advocates. Three years ago, fifteen well-established professors from other faculties of the CUJAE were dismissed for petitioning to release the university from Party control and reestablish its autonomous status.

9. Roberto Segre, "Cuba: La Herencia histórica y el mito de lo nuevo," in *Arquitectura antillana del siglo XX* (Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Unidad Xochimilco, 1993), pp. 12-13. Since Joaquín Weiss' retirement in 1968, the literature on the architecture of the Cuban Revolution has been dominated by the writings of the architectural historian Roberto Segre, who has also written extensively on the architecture of Latin America. Segre's early writings analyzed architecture largely according to social and technological criteria, with an optimistic view of the achievements of the Revolution. He has since taken a more critical and culturally inclusive stance. As a teacher, along with Fernando Salinas, he has been highly influential in encouraging critical thought among the young generation.

10. For an in-depth account of housing policy in Cuba, see Jill Hamberg, *Under Construction: Housing Policy in Revolutionary Cuba* (New York: Center for Cuban Studies, 1986).

11. For a collection of Salinas' writings see Enrique Ayala Alonso, ed., *Fernando Salinas: El Compromiso de la arquitectura* (Mexico: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 1992).

12. For more on Walter Betancourt see John Loomis, "Walter Betancourt's Quiet Revolution," *Progressive Architecture* (September 1994).

13. A minor scandal occurred involving a controver-

sial art exhibit held in a Havana gallery in the spring of 1990. At the opening, a young artist appeared and publicly defaced an issue of *Granma*, the Party newspaper, claiming his actions to be performance art. The exhibit was closed and the director of the gallery removed. After a few weeks the exhibit reopened with a new director. One room that contained work that was considered to be excessively controversial was locked, but a guard would cheerfully produce a key and unlock it for whoever inquired. The work consisted largely of revolutionary and national icons (the national flag, hammer and sickle, slogans) appropriated and critically transformed, or presented as kitsch objects. The tone of the artwork ranged from moderate irony to biting sarcasm. In comparison, the exhibit later organized by the young architects at the Third Havana Bienal was tame.

14. Ironically, the Revolution saved the historic center of Havana by neglecting it. Most of Old Havana was slated for destruction in accordance with the new plan by José Luis Sert, which had been adopted by Fulgencio Batista. While the socialist modernist planners had no more respect for the historic center than capitalist modernist planners, they lacked the financial means to demolish it, and fortunately Havana was saved to be rediscovered. Had the Revolution not occurred, one wonders if Havana might have adopted the glitz of Miami, the gentrified veneer of San Juan, the squalor of Port-au-Prince, or the false monumentality of Santo Domingo. Nevertheless, its current state of deterioration is cause for great concern.

15. Rodríguez, "Elogio de la divergencia." This essay received an award from the Ministry of Culture.

16. Emma Álvarez-Tabío, "Cocina al minuto: Acerca de la alquimia, la gula, y la improvisación," *Arquitectura Cuba* 375 (1992): 17. This special issue was dedicated to the work and critique of young architects—something that would have been unthinkable a decade ago. Considering that *Arquitectura Cuba* is the official organ of the Union of Cuban Architects and Engineers, which is the frequent and thinly veiled object of much of the criticism printed in the journal, it is commendable that the issue was produced.

17. Mario Coyula Cowley, "¿Arte o Arquitectura?" unpublished manuscript, 1992.

18. Interview with Gina Rey, Havana, Cuba, 1993.

19. For an insightful discussion of the cultural diaspora among artists in particular, see Marira De Los Angeles Torres, "Dreaming in Cuban," *The Nation* (January 24, 1994): 95-97.

20. Baroni, "Report from Havana," *Zodiac* 8.

In the four decades between 1890 and 1930, the cities of the Hispanic Caribbean were in the process of defining their urban profiles. The *casas de vecindad* (low-rise multifamily housing) were a vital product and an instrument of this process. Despite evident discontinuities from island to island in the Hispanic Caribbean, the *casas de vecindad* represent a moment of regional affinity in terms of the organization of urban space. They constitute what can now be recognized as an identifiable and recurring building type, common to all these cities. Their basic characteristics include: a series of definable strategies for the occupation of different types of urban lots; a respect for the street as a continuous space; a propensity for volumetric and spatial complexity; an emphasis of expression on the collective identity of the building complex over the individual identity of the unit; a transition between the public and private realms via semipublic space, further reinforcing the sense of the collective whole. The *casas de vecindad* represent a type that has relevance today as architects seek appropriate urban housing solutions for the Caribbean region.

Today, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic still lack adequate housing in terms of both quality and quantity. While the challenge may be met by good intentions, good intentions have never been a guarantee for good design. As a result, many poor housing solutions abound. The sprawling Reparto Alamar north of Havana, and the abandoned Invivienda project in Santo Domingo, a 5,000-unit project that stands in ruins today, only nine years after its creation, are failures comparable to the Villa Pan-Americana in San Juan, Puerto Rico: all are large conglomerates that never succeeded as communities.

The housing question does not depend exclusively on urban design or architecture, but it is not removed from these fields as some might think. In the Caribbean, inconclusive efforts, imported models, and unrealized goals remain products of inappropriate urban visions. Such visions have had—and continue to have—negative effects on communal housing. Design criteria must be reformulated or redirected in order for cities with real communities to be viable. We must learn to conceive of feasible cities in order to build them. Confronted with the task of designing dwellings that constitute neighborhoods, research on housing in the Caribbean must take into account the regional context and traditions.

In proposing the *casas de vecindad* as a paradigmatic strategy for improving the quality of life in our cities and towns, we do not intend to reduce the complexities of history to only those values that are applicable today. Nor do we mean to imply that the significance of the types studied be regarded solely as design precedents. The *casas de vecindad* emulate the local urban efforts of the

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JORGE RIGAU AND JUAN PENABAD

## *Toward an Urban Alchemy: Accessible Alternatives for Puerto Rico and the Caribbean*

Translated from the Spanish by Elizabeth López and John A. Loomis

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Spanish-speaking Antilles, and transforms them into solutions that address contemporary urban problems from perspectives that are more attuned to our own reality and identity. This study of historic building typologies proposes a basis for evaluating what types of urban housing might actually be possible.

Whether located in alleys, left-over spaces, or *solares* (side lots), *casas de vecindad* embrace diverse strategies for occupying the urban terrain. They constitute an exhaustive catalog of alternatives for manipulating the volume of a building on its site. Interventions that are specific to a particular site, no matter how ad hoc, are examples of how to resolve the design of communal housing on remnant lots, which are typically irregular or poorly proportioned. In this sense, *casas de vecindad* illustrate examples of successful urban infill, knitting together the frayed urban fabric. This is one of the great challenges faced by many cities today.<sup>1</sup>

*Casas de vecindad* do not result in ideal forms, and perhaps it is for this reason that, they represent one of the Caribbean's most complex and versatile dwelling typologies. Their formal flexibility makes them a resource for urban transformation: with them, blocks may be completed, penetrated, crossed, or completely occupied. Such adaptability makes the *casas de vecindad* an eminently urban phenomenon and resource.

The strategies embodied within the *casas de vecindad* are superior to large-scale urban design strategies, which have so far resulted in oversized, inhumane conglomerates that do not promote social interaction. Nothing is more foreign to the concept of neighborhood than apartment towers and condominium slabs. In most of these, true communal space does not exist. However, an urban design strategy based on *casas de vecindad* would not necessarily endorse a neotraditional urbanism either. Such a model of traditional town planning, embodied by projects such as Seaside, Florida by Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk (DPZ), with the collaboration of Leon Krier, has been popularized since the 1980s. Even the scale of operations which DPZ sees as appropriate for the United States seems to lack relevance in the Caribbean context.<sup>2</sup> The construction of these so-called "new towns" in the Hispanic Caribbean lacks any basis in reality, for the redevelopment of whole areas of the city lacks tradition. Our urbanism has always been one of modest efforts and incremental action,

This article is adapted from the chapter "Ciudades por alquimia: La Alternativa de lo asequible," from the forthcoming book *Casas de vecindad y la posibilidad de ser nosotros en la ciudad: La Vivienda colectiva a fines de siglo en el Caribe Hispano 1890-1930*.

Elevation of *casa de vecindad* at Calle 23, Havana, Cuba; Jorge Rigau. These three closely spaced buildings give the street appearance of a single, continuous facade. Drawing by Ivón Marcial.



adjusted according to levels of effectiveness.

Havana's growth and density level have followed the model of the European metropolis; similarly, San Juan's scale is defined by that of the Andalusian town. They both represent extremes that today hold little relation to the economic or social reality of the Hispanic Caribbean. While it is impossible to limit the height of our cities to one- or two-story buildings, it is also ingenuous to believe that the development that overtook Havana at the turn of the century, when structures of six or more stories competed for territory in the city, will be repeated. It is urgently necessary to identify a model of urbanism for this region that is both reasonable in scale and possible to implement.<sup>3</sup>

The Hispanic Caribbean is not accustomed to urban redevelopment that transforms extensive segments of the city in a single stroke. Rather, the Caribbean's experience of urbanization is one of gradual growth, with development occurring lot by lot. This is the type of calibrated urbanism that is most appropriate to our culture and environment. A good public space, a grand avenue, or a noble structure can be the seed for a future integrated urban landscape—even if, initially, it is isolated or seems at odds with its immediate context. As multifamily one-to-four-story dwellings that comprise a fragment of the city, *casas de vecindad* open the possibility of incremental urbanization at a scale that is truly appropriate for cities in the Caribbean.

The existence of communal space is integral to all examples of *casas de vecindad*. It is this feature that reinforces the appropriate community scale of this type. The success of these common spaces is particularly relevant today, as much of the Puerto Rican urban population seeks to regroup itself. By closing streets and performing other small acts of intervention, neighborhoods are trying to redefine their social groups, establishing smaller nuclei—smaller than the town, the barrio, or the *vecindario*, which have constituted the island's urban quarters up until today.

The idea of a designated collective space is not unique to the Caribbean *casas de vecindad*, but this in no way diminishes the importance of this type as an architectural model that engages the public realm and provides buffers between it and private areas.<sup>4</sup> This semipublic space renders the social order visible and establishes limits that are both inclusive and exclusive.<sup>5</sup> Because they are not detached from the city and, in fact, are meant to play an integrating role, *casas de vecindad* guarantee the identity of the small community within the larger collective of the city. Such identity is almost always the product of a shared area, a patio or alleyway. These semipublic spaces bring together otherwise isolated individual dwellings, creating a whole urban complex. In articulating that transition from the public to the private (where the sense of community can be restored when streets are forced to perform as patios) there exists a possibility of bettering the quality of life in our cities. As a social project, *casas de vecindad* reaffirm the possibility for "making spaces that promote democratic participation at a local level, which can serve as an anteroom for the accomplishment of significant changes in the order of the social structure."<sup>6</sup>

As a social entity, *casas de vecindad* gain additional importance for their potential to respond to the changing composition of the family today, which demands alternative modes of spatial accommodation. From large extended families to single mothers, from the elderly or convalescent to the homeless, all are in need of shelter that is appropriate to their needs. The *casas de vecindad* typologies offer an extensive range of alternatives: a simple room with shared services; a dwelling with basic facilities; or apartments with space for one or more families. Such a variety, of course, implies different levels of privacy and comfort.

Another social consideration of the *casas de vecindad* is the incorporation of the automobile as a daily necessity. There are many successful examples of this situation in San Juan and Havana. In many cases, vehicular circulation forms part of the

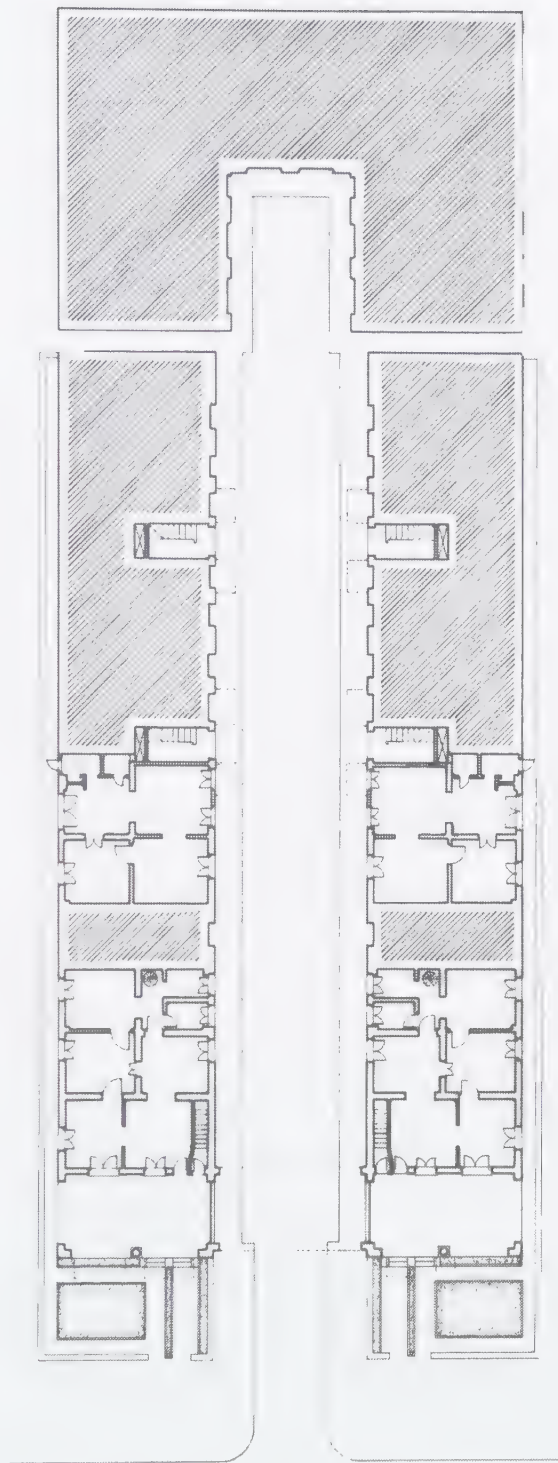
try sequence to the structures, in addition to providing parking for the tenants and visitors within the limits of the property, all within the volume of the structure. This accommodation of the automobile by more recent *casas de vecindad* can produce eloquent solutions to one of the unavoidable necessities of contemporary housing.

The continuous use of *casas de vecindad*—that their extended life as a housing alternative—has validated them over time as an effective expression of the Caribbean culture. Their inhabitants' appreciation and enjoyment of living in them is evident, and such positive human response attests to their enduring merits as a spatial form. While analyzing the *casas de vecindad* may be a worthy and useful pursuit, we do not propose that they be directly or uncritically imitated. They embody a range of criteria and reasons that may serve to inspire architects seeking responsible responses to urban social conditions. They can teach architects that they cannot ignore the region's cultural traditions, architectural and urban.

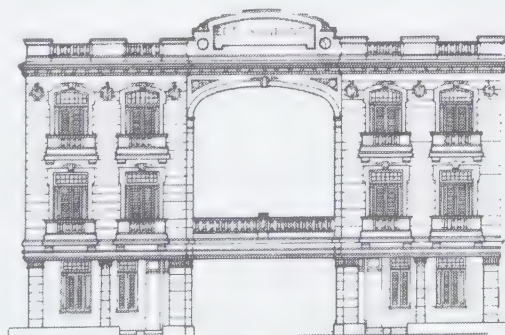
In designing with the type of criteria outlined in the *casas de vecindad*, architects must exercise a cautious attitude toward history. The weight of historical precedents must be carried forward, across time. In a sense, the design process requires more invention than critical reinterpretation. Historic precedents are most useful to design for illuminating a problem's essential characteristics, as opposed to providing detailed solutions.

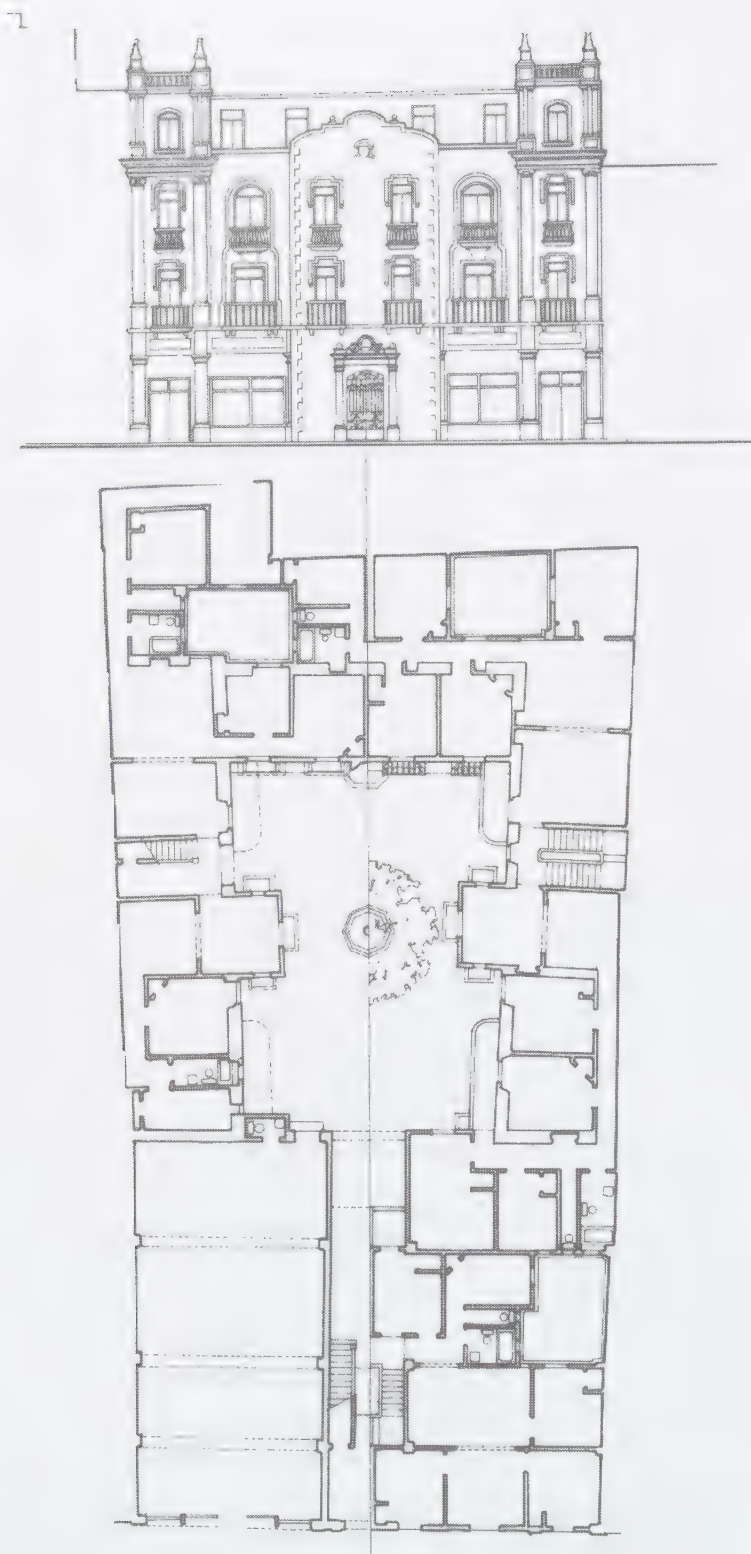
Unfortunately, due to the peripheral condition of the Hispanic Caribbean, its built legacy has not been recognized academically until recently, despite its noteworthy examples of urban space and multifamily housing. Instead, energy has been misspent, toward importing and promoting models that are foreign to the Caribbean region and culture. It is erroneous to say the Hispanic Caribbean lacks architectural precedents, or theories, too, for that matter. What *has* been lacking is the means to articulate them. *Casas de vecindad* present both precedents and means, and their significance lies beyond issues of academic meaning." They embody pertinent notions regarding lifestyle and values, and allow us to be ourselves in the city in such a way that we constitute a community.

This interpretation transcends the intentions behind the construction of the initial *casas de vecindad*. Not for a moment is it considered or even speculated that those who were responsible for their construction conceived of them with the same criteria by which they are now being considered. This does not make these criteria any less important. The reality of all original intentions could not limit the inherent potential of their equal interpretation. The view presented here of *casas de vecindad* does not support their indiscrimi-



Elevation and plan of Edificio Menendez, Havana, Cuba; Jorge Rigau. Individual units open onto a private "street" that cuts through the middle of the two-story *casa de vecindad*. Drawing by Ivón Marcial.





Elevation and plan of  
Patio Español, Old San  
Juan, Cuba; Jorge Rigau.  
The multiunit complex  
is oriented around a  
central, common court-  
yard. Drawing by Juan  
Penabad.

nate replication as an urban panacea, but rather seeks to reaffirm their value as a type that can provide a viable alternative for life in the city. The appropriateness of their application will depend on the physical and social context in which they will be built. Experimentation should be encouraged. The turn-of-the-century Caribbean city, after all, is a product of an alchemy of sorts: architects and designers at the time, emulating the grand European metropolitan centers of the era, created a particular urban expression for our region—an alchemical expression, which today we value as our own. The process they employed was not unlike that of those alchemists of the Middle Ages who, seeking to reproduce gold, contributed through the incremental nature of their experiments to other important discoveries. That these discoveries strayed from their original course of investigation in no way diminishes their value. Likewise, through new acts of urban alchemy—appropriating and transforming the lessons of our own built heritage, exemplified here by the *casas de vecindad*—we may move ourselves forward to resolve our urban problems in a manner that is appropriate to Puerto Rico and the Caribbean. ■

#### NOTES

1. Ghislaine Hermanuz, Marta Gutman, and Richard Plunz, *Reweaving the Urban Fabric: Approaches to Infill Housing* (New York: New York State Council on the Arts, 1988).
2. In 1990 Puerto Rico's Department of Housing gathered a group of architects to design a new community named Río Bayamon. Local and foreign professionals, including Andres Duany among them, developed a master plan akin to the ideas of a traditional city. As of yet, the project appears to have been added to the list of uncompleted government initiatives in housing.
3. Santo Domingo, the Dominican capital, is a positive, attainable model. The average scale of its buildings—two stories high—suggests the level of density to which the cities in the Caribbean may aspire and demonstrates how to accomplish this effectively. This will be the focus of our next course of research.
4. For comparable precedents in European cities, see Giorgio Grassi, *Arquitectura como oficio y otros escritos* (Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 1980), p. 32.
5. John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *The Necessity for Ruin and Other Topics* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1980), p. 115.
6. Edmundo Morel, "Mejoramiento urbano: Concepto, ventajas y dificultades," *Ciudad Alternativa* (1991): 9.

*Siempre ten presente que en esta pinche vida estamos de paso.*

Always remember that in this fucking life, we are just passing through.

—Popular Mexican saying

*El sol, los muertos, el pueblo, la frontera, la familia, los amigos, las mujeres, el ranchito, el carro, la droga, las flores, los angeles, la cárcel, los zapatos, los arboles, las frutas, el fuego, la tierra, las estrellas, el mar, los indios, los toros, los caballos, los perros, los pajaros, los gallos, las cucarachas, los cuchillos, las balas, las calaveras, la serpiente, Don Quixote, Benito Juarez, Che Guevara, La Virgen de Guadalupe, Jesucristo, San Lazaro, Santa Barbara, El Morro.*

Driving through the country roads of northeastern New Mexico in the summer of 1992, I heard on a local radio station a group of women singing the Via Crucis—a ritual at least three centuries old in the pueblos of the area. In monotone voices, women repeated Holy Marys, their prayers punctuated by a male narrator reciting descriptions of the passion of Christ. I found myself transported by my imagination to the small Mexican town of Rengo where I grew up, and I could not turn off the broadcast. The sounds of an ancient religious practice, transmitted to a lonely land I had never traveled before, told me that profound aspects of my culture were present here. I was surprised and moved.

The voices accompanying my travel epitomized the contradictory nature of the Latino expressions, their stability as presences in the culture and their fleeting quality as images. Individually, their ephemeral character is manifested in voices traveling through space, or in materials that don't last, paintings that peel or are painted over, or in cheap objects that break and are discarded. Collectively, however, these images endure because they are continually replaced by similar ones.

A substantial and growing population of new Spanish-speaking immigrants contributes to the dispersion, popularity, and permanence of these images. Many are from small towns or of rural origin, have little formal education, and among them, mythical beliefs are held strongest. Frequent trips to their countries of birth and a constant flow of visitors from home further strengthen their roots. In addition, a slow rate of upward mobility among most Spanish-speaking groups in the United States contributes to their concentration in ghettos, where their separate identity is reinforced. Surveying the breadth of the poor Latino communities of this huge nation, one encounters wide varieties of expressions. The images they create reflect their varied geographical origins, the struggle or fusion of Native American, Spanish, and

## CAMILO JOSÉ VERGARA

### *Fleeting Images, Permanent Presences: The Visual Language of the Latino Ghetto*

North American culture, the prevalence of the Spanish language and the influence of the Catholic religion.

There are, of course, the tragic images of Christ: kneeling alone, at night in Gethsemane, forsaken by his disciples; crowned with thorns, blood running down his pained face; crucified on a hill, between two thieves, with only the light of heaven illuminating the crosses. The image of the triumphant Christ, "Cristo Rey," is rare.

There is also the ubiquitous San Lazaro, depicted walking on crutches, dogs licking his bloody sores, a saint with a reputation for healing the sick. Another popular image is the defeated Native American, grimly preserving his dignity despite his loss, his head brightly decorated with feathers.

Why is so much suffering portrayed in these images? Why are the figures so meek and resigned? One would guess that they reflect the experiences of a poor population more accustomed to pain and *desengaño* (disillusion) than the more affluent North Americans. There is the influence, too, of Spanish Catholicism's view of the world as a Valley of Tears, a troubled, temporary stage on our journey to eternal salvation or damnation.

Yet, there are also many joyful manifestations of the Latino presence. As if to reassure people that they will find what they need inside, grocery stores fill their windows with stacks of colorful merchandise: packages of diapers, boxes of detergents, shaving cream, pots and pans and stuffed animals. The signs display a curious mixture of Spanish and English, establishing the shopkeeper's ability to serve clients in Spanish, to cater to Latino tastes, and to assist them in getting insurance, filing income tax returns, and securing a driver's license.

As Latinos become an important market for movies, Hollywood finds locations with the look of "Las Americas." On three occasions, crews have filmed the facade of Moreno's auto-parts store on Central Avenue in Los Angeles. The owner, Jorge Moreno, from Mexico City, decided to decorate his business by neatly painting on his walls the products he sells. He is constantly cleaning off graffiti and adding pictures of new products, such as motor oil and axles, as they are introduced in his store. Moreno's wife, an

Statue of San Lazaro in a window display, Botani-ca, South Bronx; 1993. Photograph by Camilo José Vergara.



Two memorials by Paco, Brooklyn, New York; 1993. Photograph by Camilo José Vergara.

interior decorator, convinced him that it was much more effective to use images than words, since so many Latinos in the area are illiterate. He is pleased with the popularity of his store and the free advertisement he receives.

Typically, the first Latino family on a block will announce its presence with loud, bright colors. People may not be able to afford to paint their entire house at one time, but the section painted first will often be bright red. Light blue, green, and pink are popular choices for interiors, and for the gardens, climate permitting, geraniums, lilies, prickly pears, and palm trees.

In city cemeteries, or in the less expensive sections of Catholic cemeteries, clusters of Latino graves are revealed by pictures, cards, and fresh flowers—signs that families still visit their dead. The same images of the Mother of God found in their homes decorate the tombstones: the Cuban Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre appearing to the three fishermen as their boat, rocked by huge waves, is about to sink; La Virgen de Guadalupe, indicating that Mexican-Americans are buried nearby; La Milagrosa standing on the globe, a sign of those of Puerto Rican descent. The many funeral parlors advertising the service of shipping the deceased back to their homeland is a telling reminder of national allegiances in Latino neighborhoods.

For Puerto Ricans, their flag has the character



Moreno Auto Parts and J&G Carpet Supplies, Central Avenue, South Central Los Angeles; 1992. Photograph by Camilo José Vergara.



of an obsession: it is waved in parades, displayed in stores and homes, used to decorate hats, affixed as decals on cars, or attached to car antennae. The urge to display this emblem was forcefully illustrated to me during a salsa concert by Dominican musician Hector La Voie at Madison Square Garden in New York City. Before a full house, a man carrying a huge Puerto Rican flag ran from the audience to the stage, eluding dozens of security guards, as if going through a battlefield. Representing a people, but not an independent nation, this ubiquitous symbol of identity is regarded as sacred.

Paradise is depicted as a traditional *ranchito* built on a clearing next to a river or lake, shown under the bright light of the sun or full moon. Perhaps a reaction to the crowded city, people are seldom included in such scenes. Instead, they might depict a rooster by a fence, a boat on a river bank, a tree heavy with ripe bananas shading a house, a suckling pig roasting on a spit.

In these depictions we are reminded of Don Quixote's El Dorado, a world made to please humankind, a paradise without cars, television antennae, computers, power boats, guns, or other signs of modernity. There, the abundant waters are crystalline and *sabrosas*. To eat, one needs only to reach up for sweet and spicy fruits, or to sample the delicious harvest that bees have deposited inside a hollow tree or in the crevices of a rock. To build a house, to protect oneself from inclement weather, a room may be made by laying the bark of a cypress tree atop simple posts. Here, women need only cover themselves with leaves and vines, and men would respect them. A land of peace, friendship, and concord, in El Dorado do the earth freely and willingly offer humankind its many gifts.

In a culture that lives in the present and

In the past, modern technology has found a place alongside rural references. Murals in Spanish-speaking neighborhoods in Camden, Los Angeles, and New York City commemorate young people of the neighborhood who have fallen victim to the violence that characterizes their surroundings. In these paintings we see imaginative yet almost legible lettering styles, and products of contemporary culture mixed with traditional symbols: automatic guns, sports cars, motorcycles, and razor-ribbon wire are juxtaposed with crosses and images of Christ and San Lazarus.

*La vida loca*, the brutal clash of U.S.-born Mexican-American youths (*cholos*) and a system that fails to accept them, is vividly depicted by West Coast artists. In their works, exemplified in the series "They Don't Want Me In My House" by Los Angeles artist Adan Hernandez, police brutality, drugs, and street crime create a chaotic vision of hellish violence.

Latino popular imagery is not politically correct. Women are shown as good mothers and as objects of pleasure. Male dominance is unquestioned, and magic often takes precedence over more established religious practices. The conquistadores dressed in armor and Columbus and his ships are viewed with pride. (Mexican-Americans, who make up half the United States' Spanish-speaking population, however, take pride in their native American heritage as well.) Still, light skin is preferred. In inner-city neighborhoods, where Spanish-speaking people have a choice of "The Last Supper" rendered in light- or dark-skin versions, they almost always buy the light one.

Perhaps nowhere else is the presence of Latinos in the United States felt as strongly as on a summer Sunday at Coney Island. Escaping from their hot dwellings, a youthful crowd of more than a million visitors, most of them Spanish-speaking, loudly enjoys the sun and sea. Here, pop music blends with salsa and Peruvian waltzes. In addition to the huge Latino crowd, Haitians, West Indians, a sprinkling of non-Hispanic whites, and a surprisingly small number of African-Americans share the miles of beach. In this southeastern corner of Brooklyn, the largest and most harmonious expression of the Rainbow Coalition basks in the sun.

The separation of Latinos from the dominant culture is manifested in their attachment to their roots and in their meager interest in mainstream symbols. They have asserted their presence through images that call attention to their diversity, yet are not of a type that defines an aggressive, imperial nation. In the barrios and ghettos of the different "giant of the north," a story of aspirations, poverty, endurance, violence, and exclusion is told in a visual language that, however ephemeral, endures. ♣

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## RUBÉN MARTINEZ

### *Meet the Future in the Past*

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I have visited the past in the South and have seen the future of the North.

Mexico City, *la capital*, with some twenty-six million inhabitants, is the largest city on earth. It is one of the poorest cities in the world; over half the population is un- or underemployed. Street vendors hawking black-market Levis and fake Rolexes, pirate videos and cassettes, baby clothes, underwear, and leather jackets crowd virtually every major thoroughfare. Mexico City is also one of the most polluted cities in the world. Traffic chronically clogs *el circuito interior*, a freeway that spans the entire length of the city, from north to south. During the winter months, a zinc-colored pall hangs over the city like the sky in a Hollywood rendition of a postnuclear world.

And yet, as crowded as it is, as frenetic as it is, as poor as it is, Mexico City works. It functions as a city in a way that Los Angeles never has—not since the days of the Red Car, that is. Nine separate subway lines weave together Mexico City's far-flung reaches, transporting millions of passengers daily without delay, and for only fifteen cents a ride. Augmenting the subway are the *camiones*, sleek electric or clean-fuel buses that run along major boulevards. And then there are the *peseros*, small vans that follow more particular routes, which are also dirt cheap. In a hurry? An army of inexpensive taxis are available day and night. By contrast, jaded Angelinos, informed of gatherings of friends on the other side of town, dread the prospect of spending an hour or longer traveling in the fast lanes of the freeway at a mere five miles an hour. Angelinos typically ride alone in their cars, listening to the traffic reports. The commuter "diamond lane" is more a symbol for what could be than what is. Let's face it: American individualism reaches its apotheosis in LA—a city split by freeways, a city of gated communities, a city that does everything it can to keep the rich from coming in contact with the working class.

It's the ultimate irony of this city, which was built on the premise of mobility: despite LA's millions of cars and hundreds of miles of freeways, Angelinos are stuck, immobile. Middle-class Angelinos go to and from work, logging twenty-five miles or more on the odometer every day. And they pass through dozens of neighborhoods along their daily route, but never get off the freeway to comingle in any meaningful way. There just isn't enough time, and besides, they'd be terrified to get off the concrete monster and

into the inner-city, lest the scenario in Lawrence Kasden's film *Grand Canyon* happens to them.

Middle-class Angelinos know only their own neighborhoods—actually, only their own homes, as most of them brood in their tract homes, walled off from their neighbors, when they are not at work. But oh, how Mexico City moves! While *Blade Runner* LA divides itself between the impoverished inner-city and the affluent suburbs, Mexico's *colonias*, neighborhoods, blend into one another economically, socially, culturally. Certainly, there are class and ethnic disparities in Mexico, too: descendants of those who came out on the losing end of the Conquest comprise Mex-

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For too long, Los Angeles has turned its back on the true nature of the city, which is to seek human warmth, to seek the other through the multiplicity of experiences that is only possible in the city.

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ico's army of the dispossessed. Still, come Sunday in Coyocán, the stately and affluent district that was once home to such ritzy Marxists as Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, and Leon Trotsky, the central plaza opens itself to *indigena* vendors, to working-class lovers looking for a place to stroll and neck, to tourists, to yuppies, to everyone.

At the center of Mexico's urban syncretism is the *colonia*. Every *colonia* has a park, every *colonia* has a *mercado*, every *colonia* has its own character. I think of LA's tract housing; can anyone really tell the difference between Agoura and Cheviot Hills? The distinctiveness of the Mexican *colonia* adds to the city's mobility. Running low on religious medallions and candles? You've got to go to *colonia* Merced. Need cheap furniture, or hunting for antiques? *Colonia* Guerrero is the ticket. Are you a young *rockero* looking for the best deals in used or pirate CDs, spiked bracelets, copies of *Rolling Stone* magazine? Only in *colonia* Buenavista will you find what you are looking for. The key to the city's character is history.

Most of Mexico's *colonias* date back to the Conquest itself. Their names tell a tale five centuries old: Santa Maria de la Rivera, Tacubaya, Chilpancingo, Nezahualcótyl. The architecture may be colonial, but street life is *indigena*. The tomatoes, avocados, mangos, and *artesanias* which the street vendors proffer are not so much a legacy of the Conquest as they are a reminder that the pre-Columbian past is present as well. The rich and the poor, the light-skinned and the dark are in constant contact by virtue of the *mes-*

*tizo* character of the city and a strong center (the Zócalo with its grand cathedral and government buildings overlooking a huge plaza) surrounded by satellite neighborhoods, each with its own central market culture.

Meanwhile, LA does everything it can to keep the working poor in its place. The barons of Universal Studio's City Walk delayed the opening of *Poetic Justice*, fearing that an inner-city hoard would disrupt their "family" (read: white, middle-class) atmosphere. The Los Angeles Police Department, racism, a lack of street life, and the shameful state of our public transportation combine to separate the city into enclaves that can only eye each other with suspicion. When the white suburban homeowner sees a car filled with black or Latino youths drive by, he immediately thinks, "What are they doing here?" They belong "down there." Not "up here," in "our" neighborhood. The few public meeting grounds where Angelinos of all walks of life could gather in the last decade, such as Westwood and Venice Beach, have fallen prey to LA's race and class contradictions. LA can't move.

Mexico City and Los Angeles are metropolitan opposites. LA is the city of light and space, an airy Protestant church bereft of blood and saints where the individual reigns supreme. Mexico City is Catholic baroque—angels and saints and sinners and bloody Christs and immaculate virgins in a dark, crowded cathedral heavy with the scent of votive candles and human sweat, where the family, the collective, is of utmost importance. Some LA urban theorists have envisioned a new City of Angels, a place that can count on its "centerless" status as a strength rather than weakness. Imagine a city of neighborhoods clustered around mass transit arteries, a city that *moves*. A European city, a tropical city, a *mestizo* city—a city LA could be. Many of the changes in

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Mexico City needs LA's technology, LA's space, LA's respect for the pursuit of the individual. Los Angeles needs Mexico City's history, its street life. Mexico City needs a future; LA needs a past.

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LA's urban landscape—the increasing population density, the appearance of street vending and other informal economic activities like neighborhood garage sales—are seen by elders, mostly Anglo, as symptoms of the erosion of our quality of life. But I think LA's streets should be teeming with activity, with life. Just what is it that

ers? The terror of mangos, papayas, neighborhoods gathering on doorsteps, actually conversing with one another on the street? For too long, has turned its back on the true nature of the city, which is to seek human warmth, to seek the center through the multiplicity of experiences that is only possible in the city. It is this human contact that creates character and history.

Poor pastless LA, the city that demolished its Art Deco buildings, its mission-style, Victorian, and craftsman homes, in a delirious effort to create a future far away from the East Coast, and from its Southern, Mexican heritage. But the distance between Mexico and Los Angeles is shrinking. The future is meeting its past. The past has been replenished by immigrants from Mexico and Central America, who bring with them a culture of closeness, of solidarity, of life. All this, of course, to the dread of the Pete Wilsons of the world, who say that the Southern invasion spells the end of the California dream.

The devastation of the Northridge earthquake revisits the possibility of reimagining the City of Angels. What could be a more graphic symbol for the need for true public and alternative transportation than the collapse of the Golden State and Santa Monica freeways? The temblor also toppled many walls between homes in suburbia—neighbors acted like neighbors for once. The earthquake was also a tragedy that didn't discriminate by race or class, but grabbed us all at once, shaking us to our senses, to the idea that LA is, or could be, one city after all.

In the span of a century, LA has lurched from the extreme to another, from Catholic colony to Protestant Wild West. It now has, as does Mexico City, the chance to become both. Mexico City needs LA's technology, LA's space, LA's respect for the pursuit of the individual. Los Angeles needs Mexico City's history, its street life. Mexico City needs a future; LA needs a past. The past and the future are at hand, here in this turbulent present when both cities question themselves. Rock and roll has seized Mexico City's pop imagination, while a radio station that plays *banda* is rated the most popular of any station, English or Spanish, in LA.

In this era of globalization, cities must be imagined with input from the traditions of all their member groups. LA has much to learn from Mexico City—as well as from Tokyo, Beijing, Hong Kong, Nairobi, and Lagos. It is time for the West to meet its future, for the future to meet its West, for LA to find itself by recognizing itself, not in its Hollywood reflection, but in the mirror of the faces of its streets. ■

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JAMES THOMAS ROJAS

## *Reading the Latino Suburban Landscape of East Los Angeles*

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Latino residents bring a unique and often overlooked perspective to the American suburban form. The Latin American *ciudades*, *pueblos*, and *rancheros*, from which many of East Los Angeles' Latino residents come, are physically designed and socially structured differently than their new communities in the United States. By adopting technology and adjusting their cultural behavior patterns, Latino residents appropriate and retrofit their neighborhoods to suit their needs; this is illustrated in their use of urban space.

Few signs or landmarks reveal the location of the barrios of East Los Angeles. Visitors know when they have arrived from the crowds of people in public spaces—the trademark of East LA. Latino residents seem to spring forth from the asphalt, communing on streets, corners, sidewalks, front yards as well as marginal places like parking lots and alleys. Street vendors flow in and out of commercial and residential areas, attracting crowds wherever they go.

A typical house in the barrio resembles any other house in Los Angeles, but what sets the barrio apart is the appearance of the overall community, which is distinguished by the residents' use of the space around their homes. By selling, working, playing, socializing, and relaxing in these outdoor spaces, residents create a spontaneous, dynamic, and animated urban landscape unlike any other in Los Angeles. Rather than isolating neighbors as in other LA communities, the streets, front yards, driveways, and other spaces around the homes bring neighbors together.

Moveable props, such as tables and chairs, allow Latinos to control outdoor space by giving them flexibility and freedom over their environment. Props can be moved from indoors to outdoors, as well as allow for permanent or temporary "personalization" in public space. These items create a sense of security in a place by acting as territorial markers. Like furniture in a room, props on the street connect the user to the open urban space. A pushcart selling ice cream captures a fleeting moment of social exchange between children. A sofa under a tree or on a porch provides some respite for residents from the afternoon sun, while a barbecue pit may generate both revenue and neighborhood gossip.

In the barrios of East LA, props are symbols of place. They can be smelled, tasted, seen, heard, and felt, particularly on the weekends: the aroma of roasting ears of corn, the taste of tangy, fresh-cut pineapple and chile powder, the sight of color-



In East Los Angeles, neighbors congregate wherever they may. Photograph by James T. Rojas.

ful displays of trinkets, and the sound of laughter and music which encourages people to sway to the rhythm of the barrio. Whether the costumed mariachis, who walk from bar to restaurant singing songs for a few dollars, or the car stereos blaring *banda* (Mexican country music) or disco, music adds a rich, intense ambi-

ence to the suburban landscape of East LA.

Entire function-specific buildings are transformed with the use of props alone, or with only minor changes made to the structures. For example, some gas stations have been converted into taco stands. Wrought-iron canopies are sometimes added to enclose some of the open space. Pumps are replaced by an arrangement of tables and chairs that is as formal as that of any European outdoor cafe. Patrons have direct visual access to the street, thus reinforcing street activity. The building's new function is expressed with minimal retrofitting; props and people create the atmosphere.

Like the abandoned gas station—a relic of the machine age—the automobile, too, has been integrated into the neighborhood's fabric to reflect Latino cultural values. Latinos use the automobile for social interaction by cruising the streets and other areas where young people congregate. In Latin America, this sort of social mingling occurs on walks through the plazas. The absence of plazas in LA forces Latinos to drive instead of making the traditional *paseo*, or walk.

Latino males—like their white counterparts—are fascinated with automobiles. They are passionate about their hobby, spending much money and time with their car-club buddies, either on the streets or in garages where they customize their cars. The classic “bombs” (cars from the 1940s and 1950s), and sedans and Chevy low-riders of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s have given way in recent years to smaller cars and mini-trucks and a new breed of low-rider.

The chrome rims and simple paraphernalia that character-

ized low-riders in the past have been replaced with elaborate details, such as hand-painted illustrations, gold-plated hydraulic scissor lifts, suicide doors, Porsche rims, and technological innovations. Drivers of low-riders are no longer just teenagers, as was formerly the case, but adult Latinos in their 20s, who have higher incomes. It can cost thousands of dollars to customize a car today. Cruising is still popular among teenagers, but many of today's embellished low-riders rarely meet the asphalt, or are driven only at night when there is no traffic because one pebble can ruin an expensive custom paint job.

Many of these low-riders are seen at monthly car shows held throughout the Southland, which cater primarily to a young Latino crowd. Customized cars of every color, make, and model are displayed in orderly rows. Each car reflects all the reverence and attention to detail one would find in a Latino church altar. Trophies, teddy bears, champagne glasses, Mexican flags, and other items enhance the low-riders. Chrome engines, pink velvet interiors, water-filled doors are just a few of the elaborate elements that illustrate the tactile genius and imagination of Latino car owners.

Like at a rodeo, crowds gather to watch low-riders hop, or “dance,” with hydraulic lifts to record-breaking heights. The latest craze, bed dancing, is created by hydraulic scissors that raise a truck bed more than ten feet off the ground, at varying angles. Latinos' cars are unique self-expressions and urban art. The low-rider represents the Latino ability to appropriate and redefine fine American standards.

#### NO BLANK WALLS

Very few walls are left untouched in East Los Angeles. From graffiti to store signs to murals, public walls are also a place for cultural expression for *cholos* (gang members), political groups, and shop owners. Garage doors, fences, sidewalk building walls, benches, buses, and, recently, freeway signs are all targets of personal expression which aim to violate the order of place and the purity of blankness.

Graffiti is the most abundant form of visual communication in East LA. Most residents do not like graffiti and are constantly painting over it, but it is a visual reality of the barrio. Graphics and symbols are also important communication tools, especially for shop owners who use both pictures and words to advertise their businesses. A large pig's head or jersey cow indicates a *carniceria* (butcher shop). Cornucopias indicate vegetable and fruit stands. The flamboyant graphics and words give store facades a kinetic look.

Murals are a form of political, religious, and whimsical advertisement in the barrio, expressing various values. Murals of Our Lady of Guadalupe

Few walls are left untouched in the barrio; shop owners use murals to advertise their businesses. Photograph by James T. Rojas.



popular because she is the patron saint of Mexico. Many of the murals from the 1970s express social ideologies, for example, "Chicano Power." However, the whimsical murals that shop owners commission to advertise their business are the most common type.

Murals, which offer residents an inexpensive and quick way to personalize space, make marginal urban spaces habitable, and can be appreciated by passers-by in cars and on foot. Most are painted on the large, expansive walls of the sides of buildings—the typical target for graffiti. The murals may not deter graffiti, but they prevent it from dominating the space. Moreover, mural youths are employed to create this form of public art. By livening up the area, they wrap commercial activity into otherwise forgotten spaces, transforming them into important areas where street vendors sell their wares, and lending cultural value to these otherwise nondescript buildings.

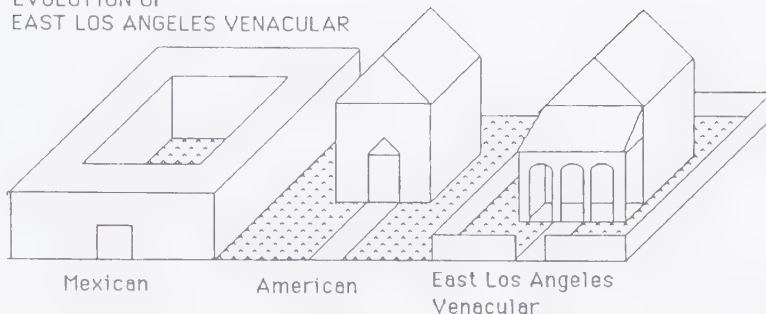
But perhaps nowhere else in the urban landscape of East LA is the Mexican use of space so evident and celebrated than in the enclosed front yard. As Mexican immigrants settle into their new homes, the front yard becomes a place of personal expression; hence, a new interpretation of the traditional American front yard emerges, one that is reflective of Mexican cultural values. Depending on the needs of the owners, the use and design of the front yard will vary from elaborate courtyards reminiscent of Mexico to essential junkyards.

Like most American suburban homes, East LA homes are sited at the middle of the lot. However, the personalization of the front yards and their enclosing fences make the expanse of land that surrounds each home distinctive. Enclosed front yards are so dominant that they have altered not only the general character of the neighborhood, but the residents' behavior patterns as well. The continuous, green park setting that symbolizes the typical American front lawn has been cut up into individual slices in the barrio, allowing for individual expression and social interaction.

Fences enclose many front yards across America, but while most Americans regard them as hospitable or exclusionary, as a barrier against the world, for Latinos, fences provide a catalyst for bringing neighbors and pedestrians together. Edges, borders, and boundaries are dynamic places where people converge. By creating an edge for residents to lean on and congregate, fences break down social and physical barriers. The psychological barrier that the front lawn creates in most American suburbs does not exist in barrios.

In Spanish, there is a saying, "Through respect there can be peace." Respect for the individuality of each resident is reinforced by the use of the fences, which clearly delineate property ownership. Therefore, residents can personalize their front yards without physically interfering with the

#### EVOLUTION OF EAST LOS ANGELES VERNACULAR



spaces and lives of their neighbors. The use of fences in the front yard modifies the approach to the home and moves the threshold from the front door to the front gate. The enclosed front yard defines an area that bridges the public and private spaces of the home, acting as a large foyer and becoming an active part of the household. When entering the front yard through the gate bordering the sidewalk, visitors feel as if they have entered the home. For residents and pedestrians it is perfectly acceptable to have conversations at the front gate and not be invited into the home.

The homes in East LA may have been built by non-Latinos, but they have evolved into a vernacular form because residents have altered them to suit their needs. Houses are personalized with every change, no matter how small, because each has meaning and purpose. East LA residential vernacular represents the struggles, triumphs, as well as the everyday habits and beliefs of working-class Latinos. The vernacular offers cultural, economic, and regional solutions to the residents' need for familiarity in their environment. The beauty of the vernacular cannot be measured by architectural standards, but by life experiences, which are ambiguous. The vernacular represents individuals' manipulation, adaptation, and appropriation of their environment.

One must understand the differences and similarities in Mexican and American values toward the home and the urban landscape in order to comprehend and appreciate the unique combination of the two approaches. A bastard of architectural vocabularies, Latino homes and barrios create a new language that borrows from both Mexican and American syntaxes.

Latinos bring a new perspective to the American suburb in California and the Southwest through their appropriation and redesign of the environment. Their original perspective fuses Latin American social values with American suburban form, and can offer solutions for rethinking the urban form. This fusion of culture and form illustrates the positive evolution of the suburb—which has historically been an agent of segregation and homogeneity, intolerant of ethnic and cultural differences—into a place that can support and even nurture minority cultures. ♣

Evolution of East Los Angeles vernacular; drawing by James T. Rojas.

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MIRIAM GUSEVICH

*The Text of Exile: Latin American Architects in the United States*

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This is the story of Latin American architects practicing in the United States. Who are they? The names of the most famous come readily to mind (surprisingly, many are part of couple-teams): Cesar Pelli and Diana Balmori, Mario Gandelsonas and Diana Agrest, Jorge Silvetti and Rodolfo Machado, Andres Duany (who was born in Cuba, but grew up in the United States; his wife and partner, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, is from the U.S.). The list also includes a few solo performers, most notably Susana Torre and Emilio Ambasz. There are, of course, many other architects who deserve to be included in this pantheon, and I mean no offense by limiting this discussion to these few exemplary figures.

How is their story to be told? As an epic tale of the vicissitudes and eventual successes of these heroes and heroines? As a *Bildung roman* of self-realization through architecture? As a picaresque tale, a contemporary "Lazarillo de Tormes," with Latin style outwitting Yanqui brawn?<sup>1</sup> Or as a tragedy, the stories of the unknown or forgotten, the tales of toil, of lost hope, of those who lost their chance or missed the boat?

Even a discussion limited to only the most successful architects would fill a book: the number of characters, the individual stories and accomplishments, the intersections of their diverse lives, whether in exile or at home, create a complex tapestry which lies beyond the scope of this article. There is also no need to duplicate the growing literature detailing the work of many of these architects, which is now published extensively.<sup>2</sup>

To tell their story, I will proceed obliquely. I will attempt a *gestalt*-switch and sketch the ground, the context that defines the terms of their success. Building from my personal experience as a Cuban immigrant, I will explore three themes—the experience as exiles, as architects, and as Latin Americans.

THE EXPERIENCE OF EXILE

Argentines of all stripes and colors, with conflicting ideologies, but intelligent and well prepared for exile; the tragic Uruguayans who fled in large numbers, emptying their country; the Brazilians and Central Americans, all of them running away . . . some of them persecuted, [but] most going into voluntary exile because back home it was impossible to live and go on being yourself with the ideas and feelings that made you who you were.

—José Donoso, *The Garden Next Door*<sup>3</sup>

Exile conjures the vastness of geography and history, a territory of shifting and amorphous boundaries. Exile is a territory that many inhabit sometimes by choice, often by necessity, either in fact or in the imagination. Longing for home from exile, longing for exile from home—for Latin Americans, this condition means a troubled relation to the colonial legacy. In keeping with the tragic history of Latin America, many of these people have left to escape a tradition of despotism and persecution. The continent has suffered a major brain drain with the migration of a very cosmopolitan, urbane intelligentsia in many areas of the arts and sciences. Besides political persecution, there is also, of course, the motivation of economic opportunity. Like most immigrants to the United States, Latin American architects are very bright, highly motivated, ambitious, and optimistic people who have come to the U.S. in search of larger horizons, of greater professional opportunity.

There is another incentive to migration, which is rarely acknowledged, an almost taboo subject. In various instances, an individual's minority status—as a woman, homosexual, Jew, intellectual and so on—reinforces the desire to leave more traditional, chauvinistic cultures in pursuit of more open societies. The individuals who are the focus of this discussion, however, are not underprivileged minorities; rather, they are of European descent from the middle-class or well-to-do strata of their home countries.

This group of successful Latin American immigrant architects currently practicing in the U.S. is different from the architects who arrived to the U.S. from Germany and central Europe prior to World War II. Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, Marcel Breuer, Richard Neutra, and others, arrived as "celebrity exiles." As William Gass has aptly observed in his essay "Exile," from the journal *Salgammundi*:

Celebrity exiles have often reported improved conditions: they got better jobs, were lionized, given opportunities to express themselves—in dance, in painting, in design—in directions they could have scarcely foreseen. They were put on TV or the radio, asked their opinion, smiled at by strangers on the street, debriefed by the CIA. . . . Universities paid them to speak and offered them even more to teach. They had assumed, in effect, the mantle of a new profession: Herr Doktor Dissident, Professor of Exile.<sup>4</sup>

Gropius became chair of the architecture department at Harvard. Mies started a new school of architecture in Chicago, built an entire campus, received major commissions, and transformed corporate practice in America—Chicago even named a street after him. In contrast to these celebrity

iles of the mid-20th century, who were fully developed as professionals prior to their displacement, most of today's successful Latin American architects practicing in the U.S. emigrated when they were in their twenties to study architecture in graduate school or to do post-graduate work—often at elite schools such as Harvard, Yale, Columbia, and Princeton. Age is a significant factor because, the older one gets, the more difficult it is to become established in a new country. The academic connection is also significant because it forms base of operations upon which many successful careers have been built, and to which they often return as faculty members.

Many, though not all, of the more notable figures are from Buenos Aires. That so many of these distinguished architects are from and often received their formative architectural training in Argentina is a testament to the wealth and sophistication of the country's architectural culture. While they are very different individuals, each with unique histories, many share some of the tributes of the successful exile. Again, the eloquent observations of Gass:

Whose are those who make the transition most easily? Those for whom exile turns out not to be? The lucky ones scarcely cared about their native soil, were into making it one way or in one place or other, were cosmopolitan in their dress and tones and tastes and bones, and had early on freed themselves of clan and family, from countryside and climate. . . . The region that they had always cared about remained a region of the mind, and the mind was mainly a midden made of texts . . . and they understood *geography as a text, history as a text, texts as texts*, and were able then to transfer themselves as on library loan from one book depository to another, suffering only the ordinary wear and tear of careless usage.<sup>5</sup>

is characteristics of many immigrants, of different professions, from many countries. Is there anything distinctive about the case of architects from Latin America who have become successful in the United States? These are really two separate questions: what does it mean to be a "successful" architect in America, and what does it mean to be an architect from Latin America working in a different culture? As we shall see, the *text* is a key to their success.

#### THE TEXT OF SUCCESS

Americans are obsessed with success and competition, with winning and losing. Success as an architect in America means to build—and the more, the bigger, the more important, the costlier, the better. This frank, pragmatic, sometimes crude attitude is shared by the majority of the architectural profession. What is distinctive about this group of



successful Latin American architects is that most of them have built only a few buildings, if any at all; Cesar Pelli and Rafael Viñoly are significant exceptions. For most of them, recognition is a result of their conceptual designs and theoretical essays—of their *texts*—which are at odds with the dominant ethos of the profession and thus represent a paradox that merits some scrutiny.

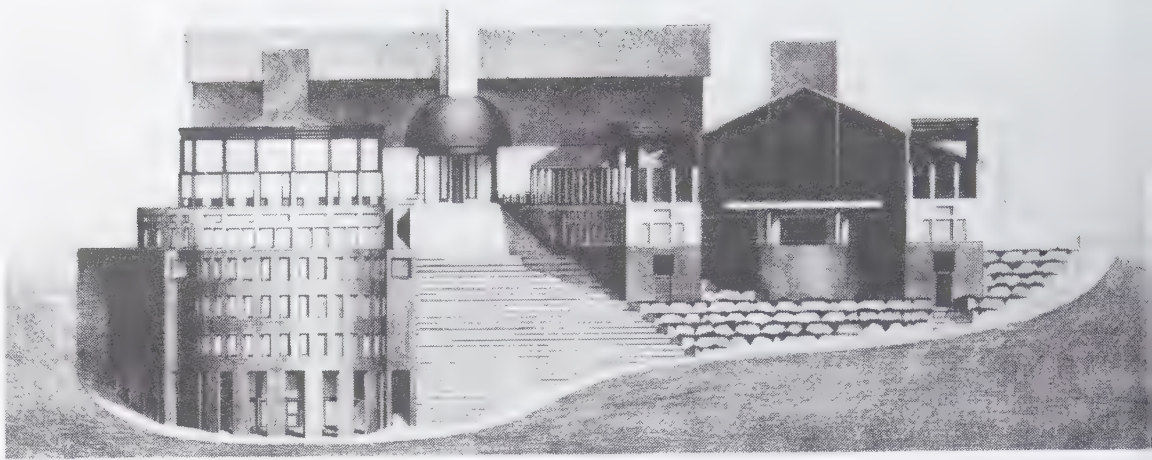
We may assume that there are many architects from Latin America who are practicing in the U.S. who have produced substantial bodies of built work, and who receive some amount of recognition and admiration. For instance, Costa Rican Carlos Jiménez who practices in Houston, Ecuadorian Carlos Zapata and Cuban José Gelabert-Navia in Miami, and Argentine Lalo Zylberberg in New York have all received some recognition for their realized projects. For the most part, however, many talented or successful practitioners remain relatively unknown. Arguably, the level of talent is a factor, but that does not go far enough in explaining the disparity of attention. As an example, Joe Gonzalez, a young design partner at Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill in Chicago, has major built works to his credit, as well as AIA and other awards, yet he remains relatively unknown.

The fame of the higher-profile figures rests on their contribution to the formation of the canon, defined by Joseph Kerman as "an enduring, exemplary collection of books, buildings, and paintings authorized (by criticism) for contemplation, admiration, interpretation, and the determination of value."<sup>6</sup> Their achievement is a result not only of their innovative and inspiring designs but of their participation in architectural discourse.<sup>7</sup>

Architectural discourse is the discourse of an elite that is *authorized* (as authors with authority

The Steps of Providence, a design to restructure and expand the Rhode Island School of Design; Rodolfo Machado and Jorge Silvetti, designed in 1978 (unbuilt). View of Memorial Steps leading to the entrance of the student union. Courtesy: Machado and Silvetti Associates.

The Steps of Providence, a proposal for the Rhode Island School of Design; Rodolfo Machado and Jorge Silvetti, designed in 1978 (unbuilt). Elevation of the Garden Steps with a new student dormitory on the left, a studio and tower at the top of the Steps, and outdoor dining facilities added to the refectory on the right. Courtesy: Machado and Silvetti Associates.



are) to present its concerns in the public arena, collectively constituted by books, magazines, symposia, conferences, seminars, and, of course, juries. The members of this elite are easily recognized; they are the well-known architects, writers, academics, and other intellectuals who have access to these influential discursive sites and the legitimacy to speak in them. This architectural intelligentsia is cosmopolitan and international, so it is fairly receptive to foreigners, to outsiders.

The famous Latin American architects practicing in the U.S. today all belong to this elite, and, with their privileged positions, have had the freedom to develop their individual voices and establish their presence in the profession as artist-architects or artist-intellectuals. Their success is manifested in their prestigious practices, which are rich in cultural capital. Such firms generally rely on the “charismatic authority” of the principal designers, and serve to promote their personal interests, which they achieve through the production of “artistic” drawings. This contrasts with more conventional, commercial architectural practices, which are richer in economic capital and are sustained by the production of “working” drawings. These practices are motivated by rational factors like financial profitability and fulfilling contractual obligations.

The economic power of profitable firms rests on their productive capacity, on their ability to do large projects. The cultural power of prestige firms is more subtle because it rests on the architects’ participation in canon-formation, on the promise that they will create Architecture. As a result, the architecture market has both a high end, which is more intellectual and artistic than profitable, and a low end, which is more pragmatic and profitable than prestigious. The hierarchical relationship between the two types of practices is unstable and highly contested. Often, both are allies: when small prestige firms are lucky enough to receive sizeable commissions that require enlarged productive capacities, they typically establish joint ventures with commercial firms, which serve as the “architect of record.”

Commercial architecture firms engage in marketing practices to attract clients—in other words, they participate in the marketplace of commodities. The artistic/theoretical practices aim to establish an intellectual basis in order to be entrusted with the resources to build—in other words, they participate in a marketplace of ideas. Their efforts are targeted at the “critical apparatus” of the architectural establishment, which serves to define the canon. Their audience includes students, aspiring architects, and general architectural fans, who may not have the resources to commission buildings but who judge performance and bestow recognition.

Many of these distinguished Latin American architects have been instrumental to recent institutional transformation through which artistic/theoretical practices have acquired more prestige, overshadowing the status of corporate commercial firms. But even when artist-architects have the opportunity to build, their work is clearly not commercial in orientation. This contrast between artistic and commercial practices is evident even in the case of Cesar Pelli, who has built major projects in the United States and abroad: unlike the standard American corporate office, his firm concentrates on design work and farms out the working drawings to other firms—a typical practice in Europe but still a relatively novel phenomenon in the United States.

Many countries are able to sustain both a large community of practicing architects and a critical apparatus for fostering architectural discourse. The United States, Japan, and some countries in Western Europe and Latin America have the financial resources, the tradition of free press, and a growing audience for architectural criticism to support the “theoretical practices” of architects who are distinguished for their concepts yet who have built very little. These artistic/theoretical practices, which are strongly rooted in academia, are a privilege, a luxury that is nonexistent in most developing countries.

The success of this particular group of expatriate architects is unconventional because it is based

not on actual building, but on *ideas* about building. This is a distinctly American phenomenon, as the United States provides a large market for the consumption of architectural ideas, offering architects generous opportunities to engage in intellectually motivated practices. While this privileged theoretical practice also exists elsewhere, particularly in Western Europe and Japan, in the United States it is uniquely open to foreign-born architects.

#### THE CITY AS TEXT

The question remains: do these figures have anything in common as architects from Latin America? By and large, the Latin American architects who have succeeded in the United States have not established their presence in their adopted country. Latinos and Latinas in the political sense (an approach that is *de rigueur* in the art world). These architects are not interested in proselytizing or using architecture as a political statement. For most of them, being from Latin America is simply a fact, without intellectual or political implications. Susana Torre is one of the few who acknowledges and critically engages the question of her Latin roots in her work, as a source of inspiration, a source of strength.<sup>8</sup>

This is an observation, not a criticism. The advantage of such an apolitical attitude is that the work may assume a cosmopolitan, antiparochial character. These architects aim to be players in an international intellectual arena. They are by most accounts worldly and urbane, and most of them share a distinct concern for issues of urbanism. In fact, this is their common trait as architects from Latin America: while they may not be unified by any definable sort of "Latin style," they are clearly linked by a preoccupation with the city as both a physical object and an intellectual subject. Texts are a privileged medium for their success, and the text of the city is a common subject of inquiry.

This overwhelming interest in the city is distinctly Latin American in two ways. First, urbanity presents a Latin cultural preference. Generally speaking, Latin Americans are traditional city dwellers who prefer the amenities of city life, of living with public streets and squares, in contrast to the antiurban tastes of most North Americans. Second, this interest in architecture's place in the city is informed by their own personal displacement, the experience of being in exile. This dialectic of place and displacement is played out in different modes by individual architects.

Arguably the most pragmatic reading of the city is represented by the work of Pelli, who frequently collaborates with Diana Balmori, both from Argentina. Pelli's best-known urban projects are two major corporate centers, the World Financial Center at Battery Park City in New York and a similar project at Canary Wharf in London. Both were built in the 1980s as large speculative office

complexes, and have since become viewed as post-modern icons of that decade. The master plan for Battery Park City was designed by Cooper-Ecstut for a landfill to the west of lower Manhattan. A mix of corporate offices and housing, it sought to recreate a New York neighborhood by establishing careful design standards and expanding the city grid. Unfortunately, it is an island of development, cut off from the city by a busy freeway. Pelli's corporate center, located near the World Trade Center, is connected to the city by a pedestrian bridge. These vast office complexes testify to an incredible concentration of capital for speculative commercial work. The eight-million-square-foot development consists of four large towers surrounding a winter garden. Each tower has a large square floorplate, giving the towers fairly stocky proportions despite their height. These tasteful, postmodern buildings have distinctive pyramidal caps that provide interest in the skyline, and a glass-and-granite curtain wall that gives the illusion of a wall with punched openings. Both complexes are now recognized as signature Pelli buildings. The winter garden is the most successful feature of the complex. Overlooking the Hudson River, with New Jersey and the Statue of Liberty in the distance, it has a soaring glass vault over a vast space for events as diverse as orchestral concerts and wedding parties. Pelli's work at Canary Wharf is a clone of the Battery Park project, with a similar tower and a long vaulted mall containing a food court within it.

These elegant works represent an urban vision of triumphal corporate capitalism, of the dominant powers at play in New York and London in the 1980s. Pelli's view is pragmatic: the role of the architect is to give coherent form to clients' diverse needs and sometimes conflicting priorities. In the process, the architect hopefully serves the public by creating memorable architecture and contributing graceful spaces for public use, even if they happen to be privately owned, as these are. Beyond any architect's control is the irony of the situation, the intersection of pragmatism and gambling inherent in real estate speculation. To Pelli's credit, the resultant works possess a level of urbanity rare in speculative office complexes. They stand as a significant critique of the modernist vision of "towers in the parking lot," which is still typical of American suburban development.

A different yet equally pragmatic reading of the urban text, though perhaps more traditional and nostalgic, is represented by the work of Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk (DPZ). They are still very young and have been remarkably successful in the public art of urban design, having actually built new towns, notably the much-lauded Seaside, Florida. Their ideas of the city balance both form and process. Through a contemplative, gradual, and participatory process of design, they develop codes to regulate future development. Their codes recall the clarity and simplicity of the Law of the Indies and represent a generous open-

ness to change. DPZ's urban text is both literal and metaphorical. It represents a significant critique of suburban sprawl, and their overall traditional character reflects the democratic process at the core of their work.

By contrast, Mario Gandelsonas and Diana Agrest offer the most theoretical and abstract reading of the city. Gandelsonas' *The Urban Text* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991) is an extended meditation on the formal structure of downtown Chicago. The beautiful computer-generated drawings are a conscious form of reading the city, of deciphering the "urban text." Gandelsonas remains purposefully descriptive in his minimalist text to avoid the temptation of being prescriptive.

As a former student of Colin Rowe's at Cornell University, I am very familiar with and sympathetic to this kind of formal analysis, with its grids, grid collisions, and so on, which reveal underlying structures like an X-ray. But as an urban designer in Chicago, now familiar with the process through which the city is shaped, I find *The Urban Text* a famished performance, which pales in comparison to its famous predecessor, Daniel Burnham's 1908 "Plan of Chicago"—though this may be an unfair comparison, given that Burnham's plan took ten years to produce, and had more ambitious and optimistic goals.

Accepting Gandelsonas' intention to be purely analytic, one must wonder whether his esoteric language and minimalist attitude toward the city constitute a "mis-reading" of sorts. The exclusion of other urban "texts"—such as the three-dimensional modeling revealed by vast differences in building height, the archaeological layers of past development, the elevated train and the subway which provide an alternative to the street grid—leaves Chicago's distinctive architectonic features overlooked. The exclusively analytic approach of *The Urban Text* is not typical of Gandelsonas'

work, however; many of his urban proposals often executed in collaboration with Agrest, are more pro-active.

Agrest's collection of essays, *Architecture from Without: Theoretical Framings for a Critical Practice* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), provides a range of speculative readings of the city, and addresses issues of signification, representation, cinema, and critical practices. They provide a French structuralist reading of the city and architecture, conceived in terms of the "grand tradition": the frame of theoretical reference and most of the paradigms she discusses have European and North American provenance. The final and key essay, which gives the book its title, critiques the "system of Architecture" for its exclusion of women, "a witch, a hysteric, an outsider." It posits as an alternative, "a critical work, and the inclusion of the denied, the excluded, the hidden, and the repressed." She illustrates this proposal with the only example of her own work that appears in the book: an urban design proposal, entitled Park Square, to rebuild an area adjacent to Boston Commons.

The proposed plan is framed by urban vignettes reminiscent of de Chirico via Aldo Rossi. The plan itself presents a curious collage where each block corresponds to a different urban paradigm. The most complex block is a large square divided by a diagonal street into two sections: one consists of a grid of miniature towers, the other of a grid of courtyards that recalls Candilis, Josic and Woodcock's plan for the University of Berlin. It is adjacent to a symmetrical perimeter block. The corners of these two blocks have been curved to create a baroque *ronde point* that acts as a gate to the Commons. The next block consists of parallel housing blocks à la Ludwig Hilberseimer. This urban mix is supposed to provide an epiphany: "All of a sudden an erasure, the erasure necessary to remark, reestablish the obvious not seen, the tabula rasa that could become fabric, the object that would rather be a public place."

In spite of the theoretical sophistication and critical ambition of Agrest's work, it retains a blind spot, "the obvious not seen." Latin America in general, and, for Agrest, Buenos Aires and Argentina in particular, remain the silent and unacknowledged "without," the "repressed" that has not been allowed to surface. As a result, her project remains a spectral vision, abstract, incorporeal. Perhaps an engagement with her personal urban experiences would add life and meaning to her intelligent and erudite work.

An example of a more suggestive, more vital urbanism is represented by the work of Rodolfo Machado and Jorge Silvetti. One notable example is "The Steps of Providence," a proposal for the Rhode Island School of Design, which, though unrealized, is exceedingly poetic and convincing. The architects have created a series of discrete plazas as positive, figural spaces that weave through the campus to provide a connection

Concept for Ellis Island, by Susana Torre; 1981. Courtesy: Susana Torre and Associates.



the river it fronts. The buildings that frame these outdoor spaces have plausible programs, demonstrating a clear consideration for academic life. In addition to their reference to the Piazza di Spagna in Rome, the grand steps recall the entrance to the old University of Havana.

Emilio Ambasz's work represents an even more exuberant reading of urban possibilities. Merging landscapes and architecture in modern and refreshing ways, his designs recreate a playful tropical vitality, regardless of the actual climate of the place. While many of his projects have remained unbuilt, the Botanical Garden in San Antonio, Texas, is a remarkable *tour de force*. To compensate for the dry, desert climate, the rooms are carved into the earth to retain coolness and moisture. The subterranean rooms are covered with glass structures which, emerging from the ground, resemble giant, magical jewels.

Argentine-born architect Susana Torre has produced some of the most complex readings of the city as a cultural space. Her work critically explores the meaning of place and questions whether places still have stable meanings today. Her acknowledgment of her Latin American origins has enabled her to critically address the transaction between center and periphery, between the mother country and colony, and has allowed her to use displacement as a strategy and a theme.

Displacement is both the object and subject of her 1981 project for Ellis Island which she conceived as a tribute to the experience of immigration. Sixteen million immigrants, most of them poor yet ambitious, hopeful, nervous, and scared, passed through Ellis Island in the 19th and early 20th centuries. This human drama is silent, invisible in the original Immigration Hall, whose Beaux Arts architecture represents and thus amplifies state power. Torre's proposal recovers and recontextualizes the old building in order to recall the traumatic experience of the immigrant. This act of memory assumes architectural form through an exploration of the island's archaeology. Historic fragments are revealed as layers that intersect and create ambiguous zones; crossing their borders is possible only at specific checkpoints, paralleling the immigrant's frustrating experience when seeking safe passage. This tension is formally and symbolically reconciled on the other side of the island with an inclusive public space that represents a multicultural America.

The story of these notable Latin American architects practicing in the United States today is a story of success. Their success has been partially achieved through texts, which function as a vehicle for their vision, a vision of the city as a text to be read and to be written. This shared urban focus, despite their varied interpretation, marks their distinctive contribution as Latin Americans to contemporary architectural practice in the States. In their work, the experience of exile, of personal displacement, has been transformed metonymically

into the formal displacements of the city as a text. In different ways and to different extents, they have used this strategy to create a place of symbolic representation for other voices, other cultures. The city becomes a text to explore the uncharted places in-between: North and South America, Anglo and Latino traditions, urban and rural, land and sea, female and male, poetic and pragmatic.

Even in a place of exile, cultural memory—as embodied in the Latin American city, representing both an architecture and a way of life—offers an alternative text from which to understand and critique the modern city. This dynamic urban text is open to interpretation and reinterpretation, and, if read wisely, can provide a fount of knowledge and experience from which to build. Even in exile, when confronting unique sites and specific programs from a "foreign" culture, these architects draw from their memory of this urban text to create memorable, meaningful places, both in fact and in the imagination. ■

#### NOTES

1. Don Diego Hurtado de Mondoza, *La Vida de Lazarillo de Tormes, y de sus fortunas adversidades* (1554), R. O. Jones, ed., Sir Clement Markham, trans. (Manchester Press, 1963). This was the first picaresque novel and is still a classic of Spanish literature.
2. This literature includes: Diana Agrest, *Architecture from Without* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991); Mario Gandelsonas, *The Urban Text* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991); Agrest and Gandelsonas, *Complete Works, 1970–1985* (forthcoming) and *The Order of the City* (forthcoming); Emilio Ambasz, *The Poetics of the Pragmatic* (New York: Rizzoli, 1988); *Emilio Ambasz/Steven Holl* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1989); Paul Goldberger, *Cesar Pelli: Buildings and Projects, 1965–1990* (New York: Rizzoli, 1991); Alex Krieger, *DPZ: Towns and Town-making Principles* (New York: Harvard University GSD and Rizzoli, 1989); Peter Rowe, *Rodolfo Machado and Jorge Silvetti: Building for Cities* (New York: Harvard University GSD and Rizzoli, 1989).
3. José Donoso, *The Garden Next Door*, Hardi St. Martin, trans. (New York: Grove Press, 1992).
4. William H. Gass, "Exile," *Salgamundi* 88 (Fall 1990–Winter 1991): 101.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
6. Joseph Kerman, "A Few Canonic Variations," *Critical Inquiry* 1 (September 1983): 107.
7. For a fuller treatment of this issue, see Miriam Gusevich, "The Architecture of Criticism," *Drawing, Building, Text*, Andrea Kahn, ed. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1990).
8. Susana Torre conceived and organized the exhibition and conference "Hispanic Traditions in North American Architecture," at Columbia University in 1989. She also contributed the essay "En Busco de una identidad regional," to *Arquitectura neocolonial*, Aracy Amaral, ed. (São Paulo: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1994).

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RAMÓN GUTIÉRREZ

## *Toward an Appropriate Modernity*

Translated from the Spanish by Galaor Carbonell

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The promise of everlasting progress, long held out to Latin American countries if they would only adopt the behavior and models of “central” societies, survives to this day. It persists to this day, despite repeated changes in those models, their negative influence on the continent’s current economic and cultural crisis, and the simple fact that they have not led us from “savagery” to “civilization,” as proposed. Outside influences have, however, deeply altered our values: solidarity, the fair distribution of wealth, and ideological pluralism, for example, are no longer found in our society; profit, consumerism, corruption, violence, intolerance, and authoritarianism, however, flourish alarmingly. This perplexing condition leads us to search for explanations rather than to look critically at our circumstances. The illusion of “modernity” appears, then, as a way to exorcise the causes of our backwardness. In essence, our critics accuse us of being in this situation because we are what we are, without realizing that we can never be what others want us to be, nor what part of our own society has assumed it can become. For this model, “being” will always be a result of “having.”

For years the discourse on modernity has been central to our meager theoretical discussion on architecture. But the “modernity” we were promised was the old discourse of the prewar Bauhaus, merely new translations of old writings. Thus we received a vision of architecture centered on Europe, and searched for a way to classify our extensive works within these foreign categories. We severed all links with professionals who continued to produce parallel (eclectic) architecture, and adhered enthusiastically to whatever arrived from outside our countries, as long as it had the modern movement tag.

The cost was dear: for my country, Argentina, our inferiority complex in relation to all foreign objects and ideas grew (except, of course, if the objects originated in other Latin American countries, in which case we suffered from a superiority complex). We also avoided almost all independent analyses or explorations. The highest price, however, was the misguided belief of several generations of students and professionals that, in order to be the avant-garde, it was enough to be “modern”—a view that is completely oblivious of both time and space.

For several decades we have accepted modernities without being aware of their contradictions. We adopted foreign conflicts and debates without understanding their underlying arguments or issues. Assuming a universal modernity that could be installed, aseptically, any place on

earth, we built cities with urban housing complexes of supposed universal validity.

There are central modernities as well as peripheral modernities, which are born as conscious answers to the real needs of a society. But there is no such thing as a universal modernity, except as an abstraction or model. Thus, the notion that we are universal because we are modern is a fallacy. We are faced, then, with a deceitful fabrication especially designed for architecture: from building we go to deconstruction, where built architecture and drawn architecture are one in the same.

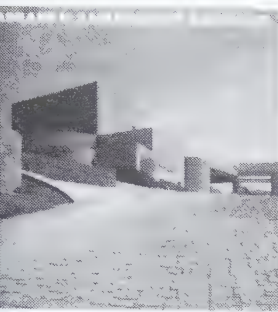
The conviction today that there is no single universal, abstract modernity shows that, beyond formulas and technologies, which were regularly featured in prestigious publications, there were no solutions to our problems as a society, no definitions about what the architectural profession’s contribution to society should be. Mimesis created the fiction of abstract and universal modernity. Architects employed industrialized construction (without industries) for large housing complexes that destroyed urban life in our towns. We adopted high-tech methods without considering the cost of their maintainance. We build systemic architecture without systems and large containers, without contents. In other words, we tried to speak without understanding the language or the original intention of the author.

Nevertheless, our generation feels compelled to be modern, to give testimony and leave cultural footprints of our times. But we must assume a modernity with a historical slant. We must recognize our own contradictions, successes, and mistakes. We need a modernity that is an expression of its time and place, that overcomes contradictions, and that builds on achievements and failures alike. A truly appropriate modernity would be one born of reality, careful of its social and cultural circumstance. It is a modernity that would belong to the country and the continent, that is oriented to the common good, and that is conscious of the role of architecture in society. It is a modernity that searches for its own path, that is respectful of its historic patrimony while responsive to its community’s needs. It is a modernity so appropriate that it integrates all technological possibilities and all forms of popular management, including self-construction. This modernity builds the present without destroying the past, and contributes to the consolidation of a national and Latin American identity. Appropriate modernity is the only path worth pursuing.

The crisis of architecture in the middle of this century gave us unexpected flexibility, and history—our own—again became the basis for any new proposal. Having overcome a time of silence, of whispers, of censorship, we now glimpse an alternative, a path that recuperates old footprints. The road already traveled represents a sensible and committed architecture that, beyond the restrictions of the current economic crisis, shows we can now conceive an appropriate modernity. ■

## Abraham Zabludovsky Architect 1979–1993

Paul Heyer, Princeton Architectural Press (New York), 1993



This striking monograph presents the work of Abraham Zabludovsky, one of Mexico's leading architects. Author Paul Heyer first published Zabludovsky's work in his 1978 book *Mexican Architecture: The Work of Abraham Zabludovsky*

and Teodoro González de León. This more recent publication is devoted to Zabludovsky's impressive oeuvre since 1979. In an age when architecture is increasingly synonymous with artifice, Zabludovsky's work has a sober demeanor, employing a straightforward and powerful vocabulary that owes much to the modern movement, but is also closely related to Mexico's pre-Columbian heritage. A new direction for Zabludovsky, one perhaps closer to today's issues, is evident in his controversial design for the Biblioteca de México (1988). This transformation of an old tobacco factory into a library is breathtaking, at least according to the photographs in this thoughtfully composed book, which was designed by Massimo Signelli. Aimed at an English-speaking audience, the text contributes greatly to the education of North American readers. **O.H.**

## Alemparte Barreda y Asociados

Victor Gubbins Browne, editor, Ediciones Arquitectura de la Escuela de Arquitectura, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (Chile), 1991

One of the leading architectural firms in Chile for the last forty years, Alemparte Barreda y Asociados has attempted in recent years to come to terms with the numerous currents that influence its practice, which editor Victor Gubbins Browne describes as "a journey towards an eclecticism." Strong ties to architectural education, combined with a sensitivity toward Chile's economic and political realities, have shaped the firm's diverse works. Although heavily influenced by corporate practices in the United States (Browne ventures a parallel with SOM), Alemparte Barreda y Asociados has managed to produce a wide-ranging body of work by allowing the personalities of the partners to surface in individual projects. **L.E.**

## Puntos para la historia de la vivienda obrera en México

Vicente Leñero et al., Instituto del Fondo Nacional de la Vivienda para los Trabajadores (INFONAVIT), Mexico City), 1992

This glossy volume summarizes twenty years of INFONAVIT, Mexico's public housing agency. A delightful, literary chapter on the meaning of

## BRIEFLY REVIEWED: *A Critical Bibliography*

By Thomas Angotti, Luis Estrada, Odile Hénault, John Loomis, Maria Oliver

housing, "La Casa en que se vive," by Vicente Leñero, is followed by a photo-filled review of INFONAVIT's projects. One concise chapter reviews housing policies and practices in Mexico from the 19th century through the Mexican Revolution in 1917, when the country's new constitution established housing as an essential human right. Still, it was not until the founding of INFONAVIT in 1972 that the vehicle for implementing this right existed. **T.A.**



## The Architecture of Ricardo Legorreta

Wayne Attoe, University of Texas Press (Austin), 1990

Words are almost inadequate to describe the work of Ricardo Legorreta. While his powerful forms and resonant spaces are no doubt best understood through firsthand experience, this beautiful monograph, compiled by Wayne Attoe, is the next-best way to become acquainted with the architect's formal craftsmanship. Attoe has done a thorough job in assembling images that depict Legorreta's various projects and their influences. The text, however, confirms the irrelevance of words. The book might have benefited by taking heed of Legorreta's own words: "We Mexicans don't analyze, we just live!" **L.E.**

## Arquitectura contemporanea en Puerto Rico 1976–1992

Andrés Mignucci Giannoni, editor, AIA Capítulo de Puerto Rico (San Juan, Puerto Rico), 1992

The relationship between innovation and tradition is the unifying theme in this compilation of the last fifteen years of design awards given by the Puerto Rico chapter of the AIA. An enlightening introductory essay recounts the struggles of architects in Puerto Rico to resolve a strong sense of tradition with contemporary issues. Despite this provocative opening, the book is more a catalog of works than a document of current architectural discourse in Puerto Rico. This publication is important, nevertheless, because it raises issues that will undoubtedly inspire future insightful inquiries. Unfortunately, the book's excellent cover photo belies the poor graphics contained within, where limited black-and-white images, accompanied by only brief texts, document the projects. Despite its weaknesses, this survey of the architectural profession in Puerto Rico is much-needed and long-overdue. **L.E.**

**Arquitectura latinoamericana: Pensamiento y propuesta**

Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana—Unidad Xochimilco, División de Ciencias y Artes para el Diseño (Mexico City), 1991

This book, the result of a collaboration between the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana and the Argentine journal *SUMMA*, is a compilation of essays by and interviews with Latin American architects which first appeared in various editions of the highly regarded magazine. The book covers a diverse range of topics, but pays special attention to issues of cultural identity, giving a broad portrait of current architectural discourse throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Though physically modest, the book's content is of great value.

**M.O.**

**Arquitectura y modernidad en Chile (1925–1965): Una Realidad múltiple**

Humberto Eliash and Manuel Moreno, Universidad Católica de Chile (Santiago de Chile), 1989

This comprehensive and well-organized book contains the research of Humberto Eliash and Manuel Moreno, which covers four decades in the history of architecture in Chile. Included are topics concerning urban issues, the architecture of the state, and the importation of modernity and other European and North American influences. Drawings and black-and-white photographs complement the instructive text.

**M.O.**

**Arquitectura y urbanismo en Iberoamérica**

Ramón Gutiérrez, Ediciones Cátedra (Madrid), 1983

RAMÓN GUTIÉRREZ  
ARQUITECTURA Y URBANISMO  
EN IBEROAMÉRICA



This book is a cornerstone in the history of architecture and urbanism of Latin, or as the author prefers, Iberoamerica. No other book presents such an inclusive survey, covering significant works from pre-Columbian times through the 20th century. A project of such magnitude inevitably sacrifices some depth

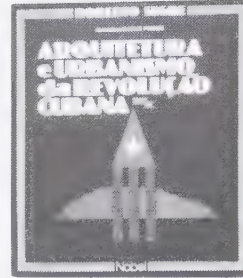
in order to achieve its intended scope; nevertheless, the book's many examples, which demonstrate the various facets of architecture and urbanism in Iberoamerica, are highly instructive and greatly appreciated. Gutiérrez's informative and clearly written text is supplemented by black-and-white photographs of fair quality and an extensive, useful bibliography. The book is an excellent resource for instructors and students.

**M.O.**

**Arquitetura e urbanismo da Revolução Cubana**

Roberto Segre, Studio Nobel (São Paolo), 1986

Published in Brazil, this book by Roberto Segre is a higher-quality version of a previous Cuban edition. An openly partisan and sometimes rhetorical account of the course that Cuban architecture has



taken from 1959 to 1985, the book is divided into three parts. The first part establishes the context and theoretical framework for the subsequent chapters by examining the pre-Revolutionary role of the modern movement in Cuba and by

describing the basic ideological and cultural assumptions that guided later architectural development. The second part examines the period from 1959 to 1969, encompassing comprehensive territorial planning, the development of technology (in particular, prefabricated building materials), and issues of cultural and national identity. The third part spans 1970 to 1985, covering such subjects as historic preservation, popular mobilization for construction, and systems for school construction. Though the book only has information through 1986, it remains the most complete document on Cuban architecture since the Revolution.

**J.L.**

**La Avenida de Mayo: Un Proyecto inconcluso**

Justo Solsona and Carlos Hunter, Facultad de Arquitectura, Diseño y Urbanismo de la Universidad Nacional de Buenos Aires (Buenos Aires), 1990

The Avenida de Mayo is a historically important avenue in Buenos Aires that is now deteriorating. This book presents research and proposals by architects Justo Solsona and Carlos Hunter and several collaborators in attempts to preserve this urban space. The book opens with a historical overview of the avenue, followed by beautiful drawings and black-and-white photographs documenting the buildings that define this space. The last part of the book depicts proposals for its rehabilitation. The drawings, photographs, and text admirably communicate the imperativeness of preserving this vital avenue in Buenos Aires.

**M.O.**

**Breve historia de la arquitectura Argentina**

Jorge Glusberg, with introduction by Kenneth Frampton, 2 vols., Editorial Claridad (Buenos Aires), 1991

This synthetic, comprehensive survey covers the history of architecture in Argentina from the beginning of the colonial period through the early 1990s. Kenneth Frampton cites this book as "an extraordinary, courageous, and critical review of the cultural and political development of Argentina." He continues to describe it as "a vast encyclopedia, that serves, above all, to remind us of those causes lost. Intentionally or not, the book demonstrates, aside from some puerile excesses of stylistic postmodernism, the true complexity of the Argentinian



tine tradition." Unfortunately, the small format and poorly reproduced photographs do not do justice to the scope of the author's research. **J.L.**

#### **Buenos Aires**

Jorge Enrique Hardoy and Margarita Gutman, Editorial MAPFRE (Madrid), 1992

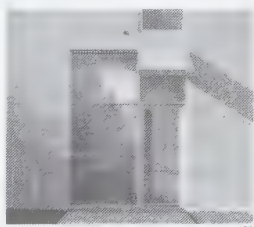
According to *Buenos Aires*, part of the Colección Ciudades de Iberoamérica (see below), at the end of the 18th century, the city was merely the insignificant capital of the poorest and least populated Spanish viceroyalty in America. It wasn't long before it became one of the centers of a revolutionary movement that would ultimately sweep the continent. From then on, Buenos Aires would be considered one of the great cities of the world, known as a heavily populated, ethnically diverse center for culture, science, and politics. A quintessential melting pot and, at the same time, a city accused of aspiring to be "the Paris of South America," Buenos Aires' growth has been shaped by a series of political, economic, and human factors. The authors of this unconventional urban history have selected specific urban situations to convey the city's evolution across distinct moments in history. **J.L.**

#### **Carlos Jiménez**

essays by Aldo Rossi and Kurt W. Forster, Gustavo Gili (Barcelona and Mexico), 1991

This small, well-documented monograph traces the work of the young Costa Rican-born, Houston-based architect Carlos Jiménez. The work presented here, mainly of private residences, is characterized by a minimalist, geometric clarity based on a respect for formal typology. His attention to the use of light imparts a meditative, introspective quality to the interior spaces of his buildings. Kurt W. Forster's essay articulately analyzes the poetic and material qualities of Jiménez's work. The Houston Fine Arts Press and other projects show that Jiménez is developing a syncretic architecture that is culturally relevant to the southwest and to the suburban environment of Houston. In the years since the book's publication, Jiménez has realized several significant public projects that will hopefully inspire a sequel to this admirable monograph. **J.L.**

Carlos Jiménez



#### **Colección Ciudades de Iberoamérica**

Manuel Lucerna, director, Editorial MAPFRE (Madrid), 1988-present

The MAPFRE American Foundation in Spain is an important sponsor of scholarly research in both Latin America and the Iberian peninsula. Since 1988 it has published more than 250 books on historical, sociological, ethnic, and urban issues. Titles include *Buenos Aires* (see above), *Río de*

*Janeiro*, *Caracas*, *São Paulo*, *Quito*, *Santiago de Chile*, *La Habana*, *Sevilla*, *Bogotá*, *Proceso de urbanización de América de Sur*, *Manila*, and *Madrid*. Books currently in preparation are *Ciudades pre-Colombinas*, *La Fundación de las ciudades hispanoamericanas*, *Lisboa*, *México*, and *El Futuro de la ciudad iberoamericana*. This impressive collection is of great value to the field of urban history. **J.L.**

#### **Da Senzala ao Sobrado: Arquitetura Brasileira na Nigéria e na República Popular do Benim / From Slave Quarters To Townhouses: Brazilian Architecture in Nigeria and the People's Republic of Benin**

Marianno Carneiro da Cunha, Livraria Nobel S.A. (São Paulo), 1985

In the 19th century, when African slaves in Brazil began obtaining their freedom, prior to abolition, many of them returned to their native continent. Repatriating themselves to West Africa, they formed the early bourgeoisie in the coastal towns of present-day Nigeria and Benin. Coming primarily from the state of Bahia in Brazil, they developed a hybrid architecture that communicated their status and wealth in their newfound African homeland. This architecture, which drew from the Portuguese colonial precedents of Bahia, was often blended with native Yoruban formal and decorative traditions. More than just an architectural history, this bilingual (in Portuguese and English) book is a fascinating account of a unique episode in social history and its multicultural manifestations. **J.L.**

#### **El Diseño se definió en Octubre**

Gerardo Mosquera, Editorial Arte y Literatura (Havana), 1989

Art has long been considered a tool for social transformation, to be integrated into everyday life. The 1917 October Revolution brought profound economic, political, and social changes to Russian society. Cuban author and critic Gerardo Mosquera provides a fresh historical analysis of the changing role of design in society, from the beginning of the Industrial Revolution to the years of the formation of the Soviet Union. The book is well organized, and each chapter is extensively annotated. The author quotes theorists such as Bruno Zevi and Roberto Segre to support his theses. This book has attained critical significance in Cuba, where it has contributed to the current critique of the role of architecture and design in the thirty years since the Revolution. **M.O.**

#### **Flaño Nuñez Tuca Arquitectos: Ediciones arquitectura de la escuela de arquitectura**

Ramón Alfonso Mendez Brignardello, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (Chile), 1991

This attractive monograph documents the work of Chilean architects Hernan Flaño Amado, Max Nuñez Danus, and José Tuca García. Author Ramón Alfonso Mendez Brignardello's introductory essay is a detailed discussion of their practice in relation to the modern movement in Chile. "In

twenty years of work, architects Flaño, Nuñez, and Tuca have elaborated an original proposal, coherent with the history and the traditions, adequate to the social and economic realities of the country, but at the same time consistent with the fundamental directions of the contemporary architecture." Black-and-white and color photographs, drawings, and commentary make this a concise presentation of the work of these architects. **M.O.**

**Formación urbana de Venezuela: Siglo XVI**

Craziano Gasparini, Armitana Editores (Caracas), 1991



This book is much more than a study about the urban development of Venezuela in the 16th century, as the title indicates. It enters into the debate over the origins and significance of the grid in the urbanization of the Spanish New World. Gasparini examines and compares pre-Columbian, Spanish, and Hispanoamerican urban structures. With this as a premise, he goes on to describe and analyze specific urban developments in Venezuela. Aerial photographs and analytical diagrams enhance this carefully researched book, making it a valuable resource for any urban historian. **J.L.**

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**La Habana colonial (1519–1898): Guía de arquitectura**

Maria Elena Martín Zequeira and Eduardo Luis Rodríguez Fernández, Junta de Andalucía (Havana and Seville), 1993

This chronicle of significant architectural works from Havana's rich colonial heritage would be of interest to anyone planning a visit to the city. The guide, a Cuban and Spanish joint venture, begins with a brief survey of the city's urban history. Each building is documented with at least one photograph and often a plan, as well as a succinct description. The map is useful in identifying all the buildings in the historic center. However, many buildings outside of this area will be difficult, if not impossible, for visitors to locate. A more comprehensive offering of maps would have made this otherwise informative guide more user-friendly. A second volume documenting Havana's architecture from the country's independence to the present is in preparation. **J.L.**

**Housing, the State and the Poor: Policy and Practice in Three Latin American Cities**

Alan Gilbert and Peter M. Ward, Cambridge University Press (New York), 1985

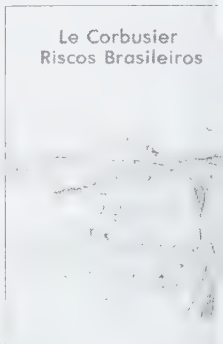
This book, published in both English and Spanish, contains the results of an extensive survey of housing issues and policies in Mexico City, Bogotá, and Valencia (Venezuela). Authors Alan

Gilbert and Peter Ward conclude that community organizations tend to legitimize state control of poor communities, even when they arise from spontaneous protest movements with popular support. Their study reveals that there are limitations to the gains that can be won through struggles over "collective consumption," because, in most cases, the state is able to control and channel protest movements through a variety of institutionalized programs. This valuable study finds that property owners are often the most active participants in community organizations, whereas the poor tend to acquire land illegally to build housing. The state then effectively legalizes tenure in a way that benefits the the legal owners. **T.A.**

**Le Corbusier: Riscos Brasileiros**

Elizabeth D. Harris, Studio Nobel (São Paulo), 1992

Elizabeth Harris recounts the special relationship Le Corbusier formed with Brazil during his visits to the country in 1929 and 1936. These trips proved to be formative both to Le Corbusier's professional development and to the development of modern architecture in Brazil. The book includes his urban proposals for Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and the University City, however, it focuses primarily on the Ministry of Education and Health building, a project with many authors, largely credited to Oscar Niemeyer and heavily influenced by Le Corbusier. This informative book, whose manuscript was originally written in English, is unfortunately available only in Portuguese. **J.L.**



**Impacto de la urbanización en los centros históricos de Iberoamérica**

Jorge Enrique Hardoy and Margarita Gutman, Editorial MAPFRE (Madrid), 1992

As part of the Colección Ciudades de Iberoamérica (see page 101), this book conveys how the recovery and conservation of a city, or even a neighborhood, may aid in our understanding of the past. Historic centers are formed and altered by people and their adaptations to the changing economic and political cycles. With rare exceptions, all the historic centers of Iberoamerica and the Caribbean have suffered from destruction and intervention during the last decade. Many historic centers in large metropolises have lost their significance, rejected by governments and business as overly congested and dangerous. In this book, the authors discuss theoretical and practical approaches for the rehabilitation of historic centers, identify the risks that Iberoamerican historic centers, cities, and towns will face in the future, and present some of the initiatives taken in the last decade. **J.L.**

### **Le Corbusier y Sud America: Viajes y proyectos**

Fernando Pérez Oyarzún, Ediciones Arquitectura de la Escuela de Arquitectura, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (Chile), 1991

In this handsome book, Fernando Pérez Oyarzún has compiled writings about Le Corbusier's travels, lectures, and projects in South America. The book is divided into three parts. The first recounts his trips to South America in 1929, 1936, and 1962, which contributed deeply to his affinity for the continent. The second section describes his urban proposals for the cities of Buenos Aires and Bogotá, and the last part presents his numerous residential and urban projects in South America. This book not only discusses how Le Corbusier's ideas impressed and captivated architects throughout the continent, but significantly contributes to our understanding of the influence of South America on the international modern movement, via Le Corbusier. **M.O.**

### **Lembrança de Le Corbusier: Atenas, Itália, Brasil**

Pietro M. Bardi, Studio Nobel (São Paulo), 1992

Despite the misleading title (there is little about Athens or Italy here), *Lembrança de Le Corbusier* is an informative collection of documents and accounts of Le Corbusier's architectural sojourns in Brazil. Author Pietro M. Bardi discusses projects such as the Ministry of Education and Health and the Casa do Brasil student dormitory in Paris. He also touches on Le Corbusier's relationship with the modernists who preceded him and had settled in Brazil earlier on, such as Gregori Warchavchik, Rino Levi, and Bernard Rudofsky. The book includes information on the 1950 retrospective of Le Corbusier's artwork in São Paulo and transcripts of his lectures delivered in Brazil. This work is particularly noteworthy for the quality and quantity of its graphic reproductions, which includes many sketches that are published for the first time. **J.L.**



### **El Lote 9 x 18 en la encrucijada habitacional de hoy**

Francisco Vergara Davila and Trias Palmer, Montserrat Ediciones Arquitectura de la Escuela de Arquitectura, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (Chile), 1990

This study of eighteen neighborhoods and 165,000 housing lots in Santiago, Chile, documents how working-class homeowners accommodate their need to expand their homes in older, densely developed neighborhoods. Homeowners have traditionally built their own additions and maximized lot coverage, and these practices are often not sanctioned by planning regulations. The authors argue for housing policies that support the traditional incremental upgrading process. They oppose government programs that

undervalue and displace dense neighborhoods, and criticize government subsidies for sprawling new communities on the urban periphery, composed of small lots. The "9x18" of the book's title is the typical lot size, in meters—a standard the authors advocate. **T.A.**

### **Malaussena: Arquitectura academica en la Venezuela moderna**

Silvia Hernández de Lasala, Fundación Pampero (Caracas), 1990

Transitional periods in architecture have only recently generated interest; their past slight is due in part to the lack of easily defined continuity in terms of vocabulary, use of materials, or architectural expression. This point is well established in the prologue of this book, which examines a particularly ambiguous period of Venezuela's architectural history, as illustrated by the work of father-and-son team Antonio and Luis Malaussena. Author Silvia Hernández de Lasala's extensive research explains how these two architects managed to bridge the principles of what is referred to as "academic architecture" with the vocabulary of modernism. The carefully annotated text is accompanied by numerous photos and highly informative drawings. Handsomely designed and produced, this finely crafted publication is an excellent introduction to relatively obscure period of Venezuelan architecture. **L.E.**

### **Memoria y utopia en la arquitectura mexicana**

Pedro Conrado Sonderegger, Tilde Editores (Mexico City), 1991

This book examines current trends in Mexican architecture, paying special attention to attempts to develop a formal language apart from that influenced by foreign models. The book's examples are primarily works executed during the 1980s by three of the most prominent practitioners in Mexico today: Teodoro González de León, Abraham Zabludovsky, and Agustin Hernández. Their work is characterized by a formal, minimalist strength that often borders on the severe. This trait is clearly the result of a process of analyzing and abstracting pre-Hispanic forms, in efforts to create contemporary architectural language that is appropriately Mexican. **L.E.**

### **Miami: Architecture of the Tropics**

Maurice Culot and Jean-François Lejeune, editors, Princeton Architectural Press (New York), 1993

This attractive catalog accompanied an exhibit of work by Miami architects, many of whom are associated with the University of Miami's school of architecture. Despite the implications of the book's title, however, this book is not about building issues as they pertain to architecture in the tropics. Maurice Culot's good-natured, meandering travelogue covers just about everything, from the history of architectural styles to his favorite "adult entertainment" haunts. Jean-François Lejeune's essay is more informative, recounting Mia-

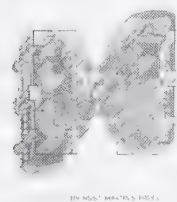
mi's urban history and giving significant attention to the new suburbanism of Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk. But the catalog is mostly a celebration of style, depicting beautiful houses in highly privatized landscapes. *Time* magazine recently called Miami the "Capital of Latin America," and it is no coincidence that almost 70 percent of the architects represented in the book are of Latin American (mostly Cuban) origin. **J.L.**

**Miguel Angel Roca**

Jorge Glusberg, Oriol Bohigas, and Miguel Angel Roca, Academy Editions, St. Martin's Press (London), 1981

This by-now-dated monograph documents the work of Argentine architect Miguel Angel Roca, who has built extensively internationally.

MIGUEL ANGEL ROCA



Roca studied and worked with Louis Kahn in Philadelphia, and this influence is evident in much of his work, especially in his attitude toward geometry and volume. Roca's built and proposed work from his tenure as municipal architect for the city of Córdoba is a testament to his abilities as an urban

designer. His international status today calls for an updated (and better organized) version of this book. **J.L.**

**The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasília**

James Holston, University of Chicago Press (Chicago and London), 1989

No work of modern urbanism has received as much initial acclaim or subsequent criticism as Brasília. More than any other project, it embodied the optimism as well as the disconnected naiveté inherent in a modernist urban program. James Holston presents a thorough, well-documented chronicle and analysis of Latin America's greatest contemporary urban undertaking. Holston brings to his study the perspective of his discipline, anthropology, as well as that of social history. He also relies on the tools of architects and urban planners—formal analysis and typology—in order to create an understanding of the urban environment's physical structure. The result is a formal ethnographic critique that should be read by all those interested in the complexities and contradictions behind the building of Brasília. **J.L.**

**Murtinho & Asociados: Obras y proyectos 1978-1991**

Teodoro Fernández Larrañaha, Ediciones Arquitectura de la Escuela de Arquitectura, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (Chile), 1991

Established twenty years ago, the architectural firm Murtinho & Asociados has been active in education, criticism, and publications alike, and its

various ties have inevitably influenced its practice. These other activities have allowed the company to focus on their primary concern: how the formal aspects of architecture translate into norms that can help in the reconstruction and consolidation of the rapidly expanding city. **L.E.**

**Oscar Niemeyer**

Josep Maria Botey, Fundació Caixa de Barcelon (Barcelona), 1990

This exceptional exhibition catalog of Oscar Niemeyer's work, produced by Catalan architect Josep Maria Botey, is a unique and personal document that offers intimate insight into the Brazilian architect's life, work, and ideas. It is largely a photographic essay of his buildings in Brazil, as well as in France, Italy, and Algeria.

The texts and their translation into Portuguese, Spanish, and English from Catalan, are introduced in a somewhat chaotic manner, but the overall high quality of the book compensates for it amply. There is a rather endearing self-portrait in Niemeyer's own handwriting and an interview conducted by Botey that portrays the architect within the political, social, and cultural framework of Brazil. The book also provides rare insight into Niemeyer's relationship with Le Corbusier, and with Lúcio Costa, his early mentor and collaborator. **O.H.**



**Para una historia de la arquitectura mexicana**

Carlos Lira Vásquez, Tilde Editores (Mexico City), 1991

Developed as a textbook for an architectural history course, this book is an accessible, attractive survey of Mexican architecture from pre-Hispanic periods to contemporary times. Accompanying the historic survey are various interpretations of the pre-Hispanic formal legacy in Mexico. **L.E.**

**The Religious Architecture of New Mexico: In the Colonial Period and Since the American Occupation**

George Kubler, foreword by Barbara Anderson, University of New Mexico Press (Albuquerque), 1990



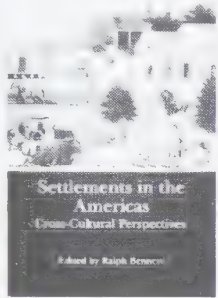
This seminal work by George Kubler, originally published in 1940, is an important early contribution toward expanding the canon of architectural history. The political resonance of the title attests to the respect for the legacy of Hispanic culture embodied in this disciplined piece of scholarship. This survey documents over sixty adobe churches built by the Spanish settlers and their Native American converts in New Mexico, and

illustrates indigenous transformations of European building types. Kubler's interest in the poetics of his humble architecture runs parallel to his interest in the modern movement. The power of form over decoration in adobe churches could be seen as a validation of modernist principles. The significance of this book endures as architects seek to come to terms with issues of regionalism, and as Hispanics seek to understand the historic presence of their people in North America. **J.L.**

### **Settlements in the Americas: Cross-Cultural Perspectives**

Edited by Ralph Bennett, editor, University of Delaware Press (Newark), 1993

A compilation of essays by eleven authors, including George Kubler, Graziano Gasparini, Dora Crouch, and Stanford Anderson, this book evolves around the theme of how settlements in the New World were informed by various forms of cultural expression. The book offers a valuable cross-cultural perspective by comparing the different settlement patterns of Spain, England, and France. **J.L.**



### **Tendencias arquitectónicas y caos urbano en América Latina**

Edited by Rafael López Rangel and Roberto Segre, Gustavo Gili (Mexico City), 1986

With the intention of raising questions rather than proposing summary solutions, this work provides case studies of thirteen Latin American cities, detailing the many conditions that have affected their growth and transformation. The book illustrates that architectural and urban trends are often not synchronized, and even the most successful architectural works can do little to address the explosion of the Latin American city, with its spontaneous, sprawling patterns of development. The authors present material in a manner that is accessible to both the general public and professionals, and is a well-documented introduction to Latin America's urban issues. **L.E.**

### **Teoría de la arquitectura**

Edited by José Villagrán García and Ramón Vargas Salguero, editors, Universidad Autónoma de México (Mexico City), 1989

José Villagrán García (1901–1982) was the principal founder of the modern movement in Mexico. Influenced early in his career by the theories of Henri Gaudet, Villagrán went on to promote the development of a Mexican modernism in accordance with the social program of the Mexican Revolution. This book, which is more of historical and pedagogical interest, is a compendium of Villagrán's history and theory lectures, delivered over the course of his fifty-year teaching career. **J.L.**

### **The Traditional Architecture of Mexico**

Edited by Mariana Yampolsky and Chloë Sayer, Thames and Hudson (New York), 1993

A cross between a coffee-table book and a historical survey, this book is a well-intentioned but generalized and often amateurish approach to architectural history and ethnography. Its thematic organization creates some confusion: for example, topics ranging from vernacular to Beaux Arts are all assembled under the single title of "traditional architecture." The book is perhaps better viewed as a photographic lament for what has been lost and is currently threatened by modern development in Mexico. The images demonstrate an eclectic fascination for detail and form. The documentation of Mexico's "architecture without architects," such as the monumental water tower at the San Roque hacienda in Puebla and the conical granaries of Zacatecas, is perhaps the most striking aspect of the book. These examples illustrate a relatively unknown built heritage that has influenced some of Mexico's finest modern architecture. **J.L.**

### **La Tierra Amarilla: Its History, Architecture and Cultural Landscape**

Edited by Cris Wilson and David Kammer, New Mexico Historic Preservation Division (New Mexico), 1989

The United States land grant area called La Tierra Amarilla has long been a symbol of the Hispanic military tradition and pride in New Mexico. This book is the result of research conducted by the state's historic preservation division, which documented the area's historic buildings, irrigation systems, and field patterns. Ultimately, however, the research reveals layers of Anglo-American influences atop layers of Spanish tradition, creating a unique blending of cultures. This small book is not so much a document about historic preservation as an eloquent plea for the salvation of an endangered local cultural heritage. **J.L.**

### **Urban Planning for Latin America**

Edited by Francis Violich, with Robert Daughters, Oelgeschlager, Gunn & Hain (Boston), 1987

This is the most comprehensive English-language book on planning in Latin America during the postwar period. Francis Violich and Robert Daughters' interdisciplinary approach encompasses the physical, social, economic, and political aspects of urban planning. They base their analysis on four critical issues: social and economic dualism within cities; spatial and functional inequalities; regional polarization; and centralization and political favoritism in public institutions. Individual chapters are devoted to Caracas, Bogotá, Santiago, and São Paulo. This clearly written book places urban planning in a historical context and discusses interurban (regional) as well as intraurban trends. The book contains highly useful material such as primary urban planning documents, information on participating institutions, and background on the planning process, which the authors consider to be generally rigid and overly centralized. **T.A.**

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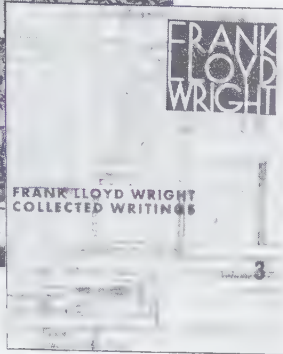
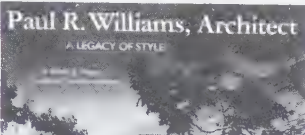
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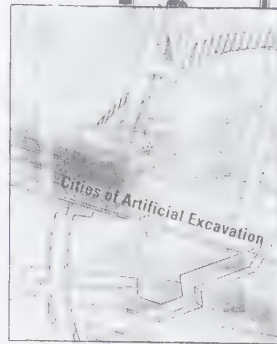
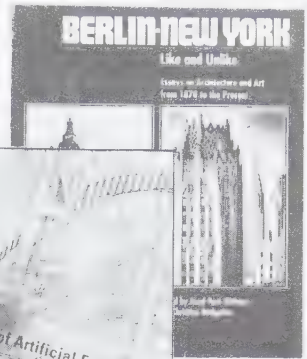
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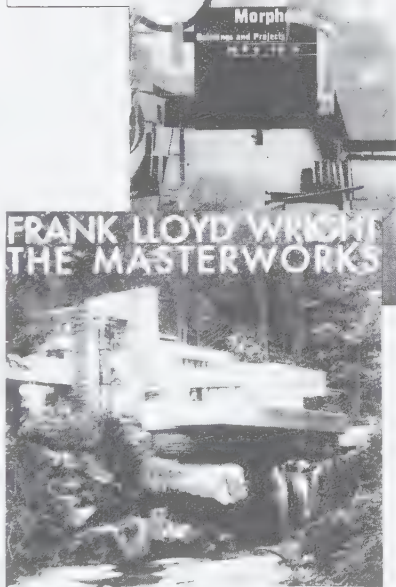
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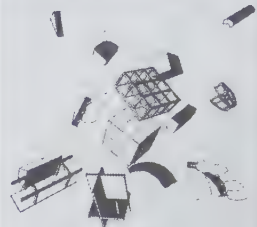
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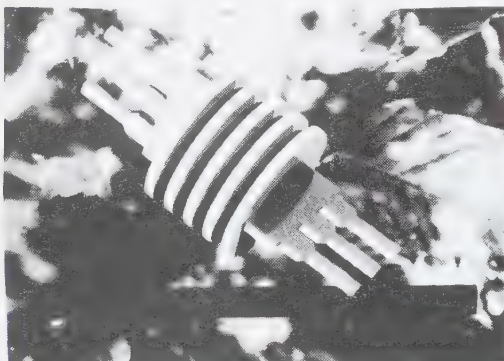
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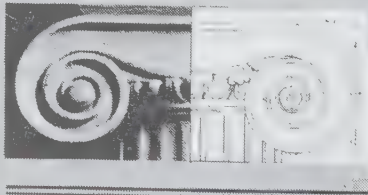
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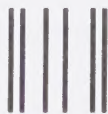


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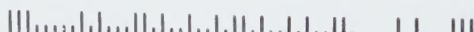
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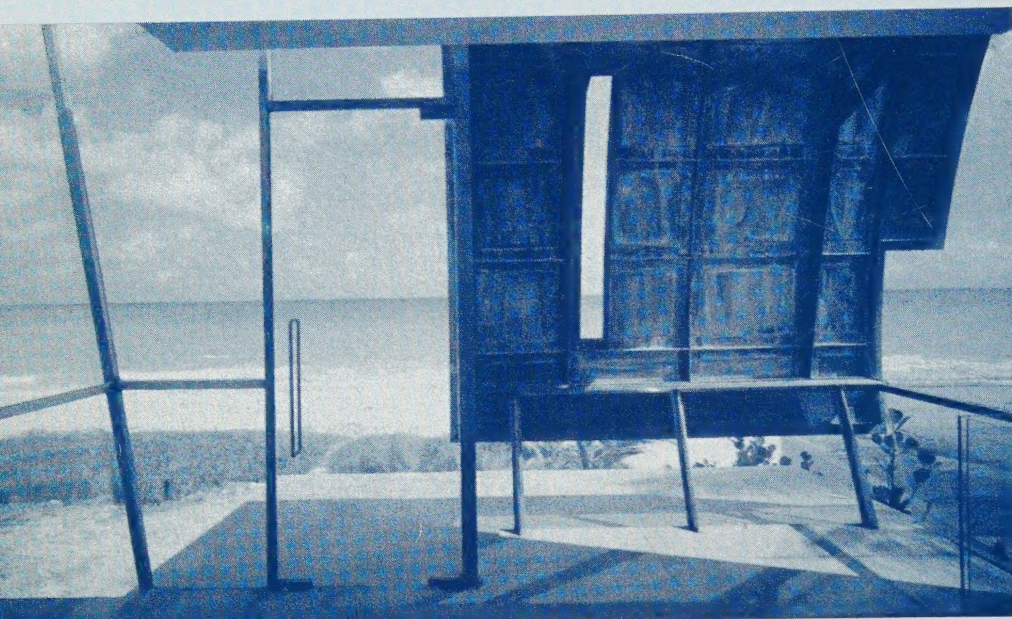
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