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international working party for  
**documentation and conservation**  
of buildings, sites and neighborhoods of  
**the modern movement**

**Proceedings**  
**VIIIth International Conference**  
**Import-Export:**  
**Postwar Modernism in a Expanding World,**  
**1945-1975**



Editors  
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DOCOMOMO International  
DOCOMOMO US  
New York, 2008



*In memory of Paul S. Byard (1939-2008)  
His enthusiastic support made this conference a success*



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## Preface

The VIIIth International DOCOMOMO Conference took place at Columbia University in the City of New York in September 2004. Its theme was “Import/Export: Postwar Modernism in an Expanding World, 1945-1975,” and was the first DOCOMOMO International meeting entirely devoted to the postwar period and the first to consider not just the impact of preservation on modernism but the impact of modernism on preservation, thus highlighting the opportunity modernism offers preservation to engage the central issues of our times. We will consider postwar modernism as an international phenomenon, for it is the appearance of modernism in all parts of the world and the scale of the manifestation that distinguish the modernism of the postwar from that of the interwar period. The very ubiquity of postwar modern architecture and its significance as infrastructure in many nations and regions that were industrialized in the postwar era obliges us to consider preservation through design, in particular design that rehabilitates existing buildings, and thus to negotiate, if not overcome the perceived tension between design and preservation.

The conference displayed the truly international character of DOCOMOMO, more than 450 people attended the various sessions on the conference theme and keywords representing over 40 different countries. The financial support provided by foundations, institutions, firms and individuals made attendance possible for many scholars, architects, and preservationists from abroad. A complete list may be found in the back.

The publication of the proceedings was made possible through the efforts of Nancy Levinson, Brendan Moran, Flora Chou and Deirdre Gould and the generosity of The Getty Foundation and Brent Harris.

*Theodore H.M. Prudon*  
*Hélène Lipstadt*  
Editors



# DOCOMOMO US and Change in Preservation in America<sup>1</sup>

In 1989, in North America, far sighted individuals raised the question of whether or not the architecture of the recent past would become the future of preservation and concluded: "it is a question of when, not if."<sup>2</sup> The mainstream US preservation movement and the public have would have disagreed. But no longer. The eighth conference provides DOCOMOMO US with an opportunity to explain its role in this radical change. DOCOMOMO US has aspired to make its mark on what Herbert Muschamp of the *New York Times* called the "cultural plane"<sup>3</sup> by using critical history to restore the possibility of claiming meaning for modern architecture and to challenge the conventional view of preservation as an obstacle to great design.

The US preservation movement arose in the 1960's in response to purportedly modernist-inspired urban renewal. Its mission was, therefore, the protection of the material record of the past from modernism. Historic architecture was meaning-laden, and, as a shared cultural heritage, something inherently comprehensible to all. The preservation movement thus established meaning as the high ground on which it staked its claim and simultaneously made that high ground accessible to all. Modernists could no longer simply assert that modernism's meaningfulness was its identification with innovation, for by the 1960's this avant-gardist proposal was taken for granted. They could make no counterclaim of accessibility since the aesthetically meaningful qualities of modernism such as space and abstraction required some initiation to understand it. By 1989, it was well established in the US that, with a few exceptions, preservation was about meaning and cultural accessibility, and that modern architecture was about neither.

That was then. Today, DOCOMOMO US is proud to be cited in the professional and general press as one of the reasons that things are changing. As a union of seven sub-chapters all engaged in advocating for varieties of modernism in very different regions, DOCOMOMO US's very existence attests to the variety of trajectories that modernism took in the US.

When DOCOMOMO US converses with authorities or adversaries, it uses the complex tools that interdisciplinarity brings. When it contends with the difference between actual technical, material, spatial and programmatic innovation in a building and the ideological claims made for it, it tries to explain that these beliefs, although sometimes exaggerated and since disproved, were necessary for there to be forms and spaces that not only *looked* new but *felt* new to live in. The question of meaning is responded without recourse to nostalgia for the modernist utopian project or a return to the aesthetic plan that originally earned modernism its reputation for inaccessibility.

Conservation of an entity this complex and contradictory is as creative as "design." In fact, the opposition of design and preservation is a false polarity. Historically, the conservation architect and the design architect were one and the same. Designing architects are often consolidating, rehabilitating, and adding to the old; preservation architects are often devising creative ways to conserve it. However false, the polarity is widely embraced. Much work is still required to convince "creative architects" to accept the creativity of conservation and to recognize it as in the common interest, for surely they expect that modernism that is their cultural legacy be preserved, and be preserved carefully, which means creatively.

This will be one of DOCOMOMO US's tasks in the aftermath, and what will soon be the afterglow, of the eighth International Conference in New York.

*Theodore H.M. Prudon  
President, DOCOMOMO US,  
Chair, Eighth International Conference*

*Hélène Lipstadt  
Director, DOCOMOMO US,  
Associate Chair and Program Chair,  
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Notes

- 1 *This article appeared earlier under the same title in DOCOMOMO International Journal 31*
- 2 *Mike Jackson, "Preserving What's New." APT Bulletin 23, 1991, 10.*
- 3 *"It's History Now, So Shouldn't Modernism Be Preserved, Too?" The New York Times. December 17, 2000:40.*

## The 2004 Conference Theme\*

The conference's theme, "Import/Export: Postwar Modernism in an Expanding World, 1945-1975," made it the first DOCOMOMO International Meeting devoted to the postwar period and the first to encourage the application of current thinking about postwar modernism to preservation practice. Preservation was defined as both traditional 'conservation' and rehabilitation through (design) intervention. We considered postwar Modernism as an international phenomenon, for it is the appearance of Modernism in all parts of the world and the quantity and scale of that manifestation that distinguishes the Modernism of the postwar from that of the interwar period.

DOCOMOMO sought papers from professionals, researchers, and advocates; from various perspectives-- historical, theoretical, political or practical-- and in various formats-- overviews, analyses of case studies including those of design and technical interventions, and policy proposals-- about international postwar modernism as manifested by one of the many trends that grew out of import/export and that are captured by our Keywords: *Internationalization; Polarization; Reconstruction And Rebuilding; Resistance And Independence; Time Zones; Utopias.*

The Keywords, which appear here as introductions to the papers they inspired, constitute a not too thinly disguised homage to the logo-like words that served to structure debate in CIAM during the postwar period from the Athens Charter to the Team Ten Primer. The Keywords are also platforms for the consideration of challenges both to contemporary historical study and to the use of such study in present and future preservation efforts.

The Keywords are therefore intended to function on multiple levels. As is clear from the structure of each Keyword description, they were concepts recognizable to the historical actors under study and are now pertinent to the contemporary critical work of historical analysis and preservation practice. The Keywords underscore some of the challenges, both philosophical and logistical, attendant on current attitudes towards the preservation of postwar modern movement architecture and city planning. Competing visions of modernity were at play in the landscapes of modernism as it became increasingly international. Do they require alternate notions of preservation? How can historical analysis that captures both the ideals of postwar modernism and the enthusiasm it engendered and that, simultaneously, documents its limitations and internal contradictions best serve preservation practice and the public?

We also recognize that there is a perceived tension between design and preservation. This perception of tension was accentuated in the postwar period and continues today. The very ubiquity of postwar modern architecture and its significance as infrastructure in many nations and regions that were industrialized in the postwar obliges us to consider preservation through design, in particular design that rehabilitates existing modernist buildings, and thus to negotiate, if not overcome that tension. The conference therefore brought together the too-often separate, and sometimes opposed, perspectives of design and preservation.

*\*This text has been adapted from the Call for Papers as issued in 2002*



## Internationalization

In the postwar period, *Internationalization* took on new or renewed meanings, ranging from the optimism for peace through the establishment of organizations such as the United Nations, UNESCO, ICOMOS and UIA to the growth of multi-national corporations and the powers that they wield. A new meaning also accrued to the word in architecture, landscape and planning after the war. In the interwar period, Modernism had been international in name and rhetoric (CIAM; Hitchcock and Johnson's ideology-free "International Style"; the socialist-inspired notion of Gropius's *Internationale Architektur*) and in fact (the shared faith in universally applicable experimental techniques and materials). *Internationalization* after 1945 came increasingly to seem to signify the inevitability of the processes of modernization and their legitimate expression. Manifestations include: the "corporate international style;" official and state representational Modernism; architects and engineers in incorporated practices with a global presence; and the import/export of technologies, structural and construction management techniques, and standardized building procedures, elements, types, and programs. *Internationalization* involved intensified Americanization, but there was also multi-directional exchange: the international embrace of national Modernisms (Swedish Grace, *Brazil Builds*); international building exhibitions, ephemeral and permanent (Hansa Viertel, Berlin; Stuttgart Garden Show); official missions by architects and planners; and scholarships for education and travel abroad.

The preservation of buildings and spaces that display postwar universalizing concepts and successful Americanization, on the one hand, and of those that record subtle hybridizations, on the other, poses a particular challenge in our very different days for the publics who associate preservation with the securing of the material record of a national history.

Crossman's paper on the postwar internationalization of CIAM, the quintessential interwar Modernist organization, radically departs from the consensual view of CIAM as a symbol of Modernist failure, thereby striking a revisionist note which will reappear as a leitmotiv in many of the others papers on *Internationalization*. He argues that the spread to Canada of CIAM's ideas and certain of its members (Jacqueline Tyrwhitt and the couple of Sandy Van Ginkel and the repatriated Blanche Lemco Van Ginkel) had an important and beneficial impact on the cities of Toronto and Montréal where they worked, most especially in Montréal, which owes some of the development of its modernist infrastructure and the survival of the city's historic core to the Van Ginkels.

The manifestation of the *Internationalization* in official and state representational building is the subject of four papers devoted to cross border and what might be called 'cross commission' comparisons and confrontations: two buildings of the same type by different architects for one state in two foreign capitals (Martina Millà Bernad); two buildings of the same type for two states by different architects in two different foreign capitals across the imperial/colonial divide (Miles Glendinning); two buildings of the same type for two instances of state power across the East/West divide (Vladimir Kulić); and a variety of building types for the same state and its subjects by the same architect, some in the imperial capital and some in its colony (Johan Lagae).

Bernad compares the Brazilian state's two risky and ultimately unhappy (for the state) and deleterious (for Brazilian Modernism) experiments with Modernist representation, namely the student residences and cultural centers of the Maison du Brésil in Paris by the international 'partnership'—in reality, a forced marriage—of a national and an international star, the French Le Corbusier and the Brazilian Lucio Costa, and of the Casa do Brasil in

Madrid, by the young and internationally unknown Brazilian Luis Affonso d'Escragnolle Filho.

Glendinning writes the politically, diplomatically and architecturally complex histories of the architecturally and ideologically "closed"—contextualist and deferential—Modernist British Embassy Chancery in Rome by (Sir) Basil Spence and "open"—provocative and assertive—New Zealand Commonwealth Commission (the equivalent of an embassy) in London by (Sir) Robert Matthew, not a tale of the decline of empire and the rise of a former colony (although it might be read that way), but as that of two triumphs over incomprehension and opposition and the implementation of the desired positive expressions of future ideals.

Kulić twins the history of the design and destruction (both by airborne bombs) of two signature skyscrapers, the World Trade Center for the capitalist Port Authority of New York and the "CK" tower for the Central committee of the Yugoslavian Communist Party in Belgrade, to make the case that, our expectations notwithstanding, the choice of designs of the same Modernist lineage for these opposing representations proves that Modernism could, and occasionally did, make good on its claim to universality.

Lagae uses his comparison and confrontation of designs by Claude Laurens for the Belgian colony of Leopoldville and Brussels, the capital of the *métropole*, to plead for a new historiography in which the so-called "tropical Modernism" which Laurens' work is said to exemplify is "no longer [to] be seen as a "unified idiom," but as the inflected response to specific local social conventions and architectural expressions."

In their respective studies on the London exhibition "Architecture in Finland" of 1957, the Commonwealth Games in Perth, Western Australia, 1962, and The New York World's Fair of 1964-1965, Petra Čeferin, Hanna Lewi, and Julie Nicoletta address the Internationalization manifested in international exhibitions and events.

Attempts to use Modernist architectural expressions and representations by the city of Perth and by the several former colonial countries exhibited in New York to claim right of entry in the dominant international postwar club of Modern nations and cities, and the assertion by the Finnish curators of Finland's architecture as a constituent part of a Modern architectural movement were thwarted. In New York and London the architecture on display was met by a reception that imposed a national and thus traditionalist, even primitivist, otherness on the exhibitors. In Perth, the Modernist message prevailed for the city, but the architecture that was its expression has seen the intended meanings eroded as the privatization of fair buildings absorbed them into everyday life which always has a banalizing effect.

*Resistance and Internationalization* meet in two studies of the deflection of consecrated postwar Modernism's claim to inevitability by Bernard Flaman and Silvano Rubino. Rubino argues that the emigré position of the Italian architect Lina Bo Bardi allowed her to integrate opposing notions of Modernism in her two museums in Salvador in the Brazilian province of Bahia, creating another postwar Modernism, which she describes as "after Team X and before postmodernism." Similarly, Flaman finds that Joseph Pettick's use of site-specific contextualism, regional materials and regional symbolism in his design for the corporate headquarters for the provincial power authority of the Canadian province of Saskatchewan in Regina transformed the forces and models of Internationalization, Americanization, and Brazilianism into a rare kind of Modernism, one so rich in place that the building was embraced by the general public, which, forty years later, continues to cherish it.

The seven papers which examine Internationalization as manifested in the import/export of technologies, techniques, and technical knowledge make a valuable and innovative addition to its history. By revealing this lacunae, they show it to have been too often concerned with tracking the world-wide circulation of famous architects and

their designs and the influence of diffused imagery and formal models. María de Lourdes Cruz and Franco González introduce us to the little known innovate appropriation of imported technological systems and materials by Augusto Harold Álvarez García in his buildings for Mexico City, ascribing his success to his belief that modern technology constituted a universal heritage and a new culture that serves the common good. Roberta Chionne argues that while the city of Nowa Huta was built *ex novo* between 1949 and 1956 to promote Communist strategies and policies, its designers heeded interwar Modernist principles such as *Existenzminimum* and participated in a mutual exchange of knowledge and technologies with the creators of other East Bloc cities. The result was a uniformity of planning, of architecture and of technologies which is so thoroughly “placeless” that it can be argued, it was in socialist countries that Modernist *internationalization* was most successfully achieved.

For Hiroshi Matsukuma, Kunio Maekawa’s taking into account of Japan’s customs, traditions, and specific climatic conditions in his adaptation of Le Corbusier’s Dom-ino system created a truly Japanese, truly Modern architecture that he deems an instance where *internationalization* succeeded by being accepted in order to be surpassed. Yasunori Kitao investigates European (Belgium, Finland, France, the German Federal Republic) and North American (Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Mexico City) examples of postwar urban design to demonstrate that the collaborative design method typically used for these projects was the instrument of the creation of democratic landscapes.

Jack Pyburn presents compelling evidence that architectural precast concrete, and especially the technique of precasting developed by the Dutch company Schokbeton, was a vital agent for the internationalization of Modernism. That company’s development of the most advanced precasting technology in the 1950’s and especially in the 1960’s provided a construction assembly that became the solution for constructing Modern

architecture adaptable to the world’s diverse climatic and cultural conditions.

Beatriz Oliviera and Kiran Joshi modify two well-established national narratives of *internationalization*. Oliviera’s analysis of interwar and postwar Brazilian architectural publications demonstrates the ambiguity of their relation to internationalization; for their editors simultaneously sought and rejected it, sometimes depicting it favorably as a sharing of ideas and ideals, and sometimes unfavorably, as a form of cultural domination. Joshi argues that the consensual view that there is a strict distinction between the pre- and post-independence Indian architecture is oversimplistic, for it obscures the continuity between pre- and post-colonial periods and the mediating role played by regional, national and international forces.

The conceptual, ethical political, and design challenges posed by the preservation of postwar Modernism is the subject of papers by Ela Kaçel, David N. Fixler, and Christine Madrid French.

Ela Kaçel employs a comparison of the entirely canonized architecture of Sedat Hakkr Eldem and the partially canonized work of the partnership of Haluk Baysal and Melih Birsal to challenge the use in preservation of the dyad of iconic and ordinary for determining a building’s interest and eligibility for DOCOMOMO’s registers. The historians who canonized the partners’ Hukukçular Sitesi by establishing its relationship to innovative international architecture have lost sight of the fact that it was the partners’ transformation of the international typologies into ordinary architecture which saves the building from being a mere imitation.

The powerful opposition to the preservation of Richard Neutra and Robert Alexander’s Cyclorama Center (1961) at the Gettysburg battlefield inspires Christine Madrid French’s challenge to historians and preservation professionals. She takes the provocative position that current historiography’s

continual stress on the international roots of American Modernism and the resulting lack of a 'nationalized' narrative of American Modernism are the root causes of the public's failure to understand or appreciate Modern architecture in general, and Neutra's building in particular.

David Fixler uses Alois Riegl's three forms of Value--Historical, Use, and Age--to theorize the dilemmas he faces as one of the restoration architects of the United Nations Headquarters (UNHQ) in New York. He proposes that integrating new technologies while treating the existing components deferentially will maintain the UNHQ's Historical Value as the acknowledged symbol of Internationalization and a significant object of mid-twentieth century culture patrimony, while enhancing Use Value, on the one hand, and expanding the Newness which is the ground for Age Value in the case of all Modernist Buildings, on the other

## Jaqueline Tyrwhitt, Sandy Van Ginkel, Blanche Lemco and The Internationalization Of CIAM

Kelly Crossman

*CIAM has been widely accepted as part of the shared negative symbol of the failure of modernism. Since the 1970's the influence of post-war (as opposed to pre-war) CIAM in North America has been little discussed. During the 1950's and 60's CIAM was perceived as primarily European in orientation with limited impact on the North American scene. This interpretation of events is overdue for reassessment.*

*The historical record shows that during the 1950's and 60's - the period when the impact of the Modern Movement spread across the globe - educators and practitioners closely associated with CIAM had a profound impact on the Canadian architectural scene; often with unexpected and still generally overlooked consequences. In Toronto the English landscape architect and planner Jaqueline Tyrwhitt encouraged local interest in CIAM, helped preserve historic working-class neighborhoods in the city's harbour and worked closely with media theorist Marshall McLuhan and visual anthropologist Edward Carpenter at the University of Toronto. In Montreal CIAM/Team 10 members Sandy and Blanche van Ginkel brought their interest and skill in planning to bear on a burgeoning North American metropolis. By successfully opposing plans to construct a waterfront expressway, they encouraged the implementation of an alternate plan (based on their design) which brought suburban traffic into the heart of the city by means of tunnels and the inventive use of existing rail corridors. This work - a direct consequence of ideas then current in CIAM circles - created conditions which set the stage for the long-term preservation of Old Montreal's historic fabric and the adjacent waterfront.*



Figure 1: "CIAM Resurrection Move Fails at Otterloo." (Courtesy of *Architectural Review*, 127: 756 (February, 1960).

In February 1960 the *Architectural Review* published a photograph together with the headline: "CIAM: Resurrection Move Fails at Otterloo." (Figure 1) In the photograph a number of people are gathered around a grave marker, a memorial wreath, and a sign reading CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne). The photograph's caption tells us the names of the figures in the group. They include Alison and Peter Smithson, John Voelcker, Jacob Bakema, Aldo van Eyck, and Blanche and H. Daniel "Sandy" van Ginkel. Although the mood of the picture is lighthearted, the photograph commemorates the moment when, following the tenth CIAM Congress held at Otterloo, Netherlands in September 1959, CIAM came to an end.

The young people we see in the photograph from 1960 were instrumental in the decision to end CIAM. For them, however, CIAM's end was also a beginning. Voelcker, Bakema, the Smithsons, and a handful of others continued to meet on a regular basis, soon forming a recognizable group which came to be known as Team 10. Like CIAM before, the meetings of Team 10 were an opportunity for professional critique and advancement of the Modernist architectural project, often through wide-ranging discussion and observation and in a way which questioned received orthodoxies. For example, at a meeting of Team 10 held at the Abbaye Royaumont in France in 1962, Alison Smithson told

the Japanese architect Kisho Kurokawa that:

"I think the problem with Kyoto is one of not stimulating it at all. When we went there we were probably just in time to see Kyoto before it was gone. The brown sea of house roofs was absolutely wonderful. But all over there were people building four-storey concrete blocks on these little sites; signs, patent glazing; all over people decide to put in a bit of stimulus of one kind or another and Kyoto is one of those places that ought to be thought of seriously before it is destroyed, the way we have destroyed our old European towns by letting people put up buildings which break the skyline for really no good reason."<sup>1</sup>

Or, to take another example, later in life (1995) the Dutch-born architect and urban designer Sandy van Ginkel noted that among his generation even the work of the so-called "prophets" of modern architecture came under attack:

"Any architect must be ahead of his time. Whether he can execute it exactly the way he thinks about it – that he doesn't really know. We struggle with that problem, but we also work together so we see the failure of things that have happened. We see how things and what things go wrong. We see it [in] the things we do ourselves. The incredible devastating problems that we have created with tall buildings. We create plazas for what? And because there is so much sun on the plazas we also have stores under it because we have all that space. We know that we have made terrible mistakes in that and it is a result of the tall building. It is one of the reasons why I have been against tall buildings. Notwithstanding the fact that I was brought up by prophets of modern architecture who made very tall buildings: Le Corbusier, Mies and Gropius. It is remarkable the identical thing happened. We have created these problems and we have recognised them. Also we have learned some very good things as we go on. Like the

Economist in Haymarket. How it stands, just delicious and so well done. That's what you try to do, that is what you want to do."<sup>2</sup>

Both Alison Smithson and Sandy van Ginkel were key figures in the development of postwar CIAM and Team 10. Their comments are helpful to us who live now, more than half a century after the end of CIAM, because they suggest that despite widespread perceptions to the contrary, many of the architects in the CIAM/Team 10 circle were by no means doctrinaire ideologues. They might be better seen as committed practitioners well aware of the failings of the modern movement, even if it was their desire to work within its intellectual and professional framework. More controversially perhaps – and in keeping with the theme of this session – "Modernism in the Future: Understanding the Past" – we can say that in the North American context, and particularly with regard to the City of Montreal, the internationalization of the CIAM/Team 10 point of view – the spread of its ideas and personalities from Europe to North America – had an important, and in many ways beneficial, impact on that city's confrontation with the economic and political forces of Modernism. In particular, the ideas and personalities emerging from advanced European Modernism during the late 1950's and 1960's played a crucial role in the development of Montreal's Modernist infrastructure and more surprisingly, perhaps, the survival of that city's historic core.

Current historiography suggests that in the North American context in the 1950's the impact of post-war CIAM and its spin-off, Team 10, was relatively minor compared to the influence of Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius (with the important exception, arguably, of the work of Richard Neutra in Los Angeles). For example, Robert Geddes has remarked that few students at Harvard in 1950 knew of or had any interest in CIAM in the immediate postwar years.<sup>3</sup> Given that both Gropius and Mies had been closely associated with CIAM during the 1930's this remark might seem perplexing, but by 1950 neither Mies nor Gropius had much to do



Figure 2: Giedion reading a statement at CIAM 10, with Jaqueline Tyrwhitt on left and Sert on right. (Courtesy of CIAM Archives, gta/ETH Zurich).

with the postwar organization. Even though the presence at Harvard by the mid-1950's of CIAM heavyweights Jose Luis Sert, Sigfried Giedion and Jaqueline Tyrwhitt suggests an American leadership of sorts, American contributions at the congresses of Aix in 1953 and Dubrovnik in 1956 were relatively minor and restricted to the work of small groups in Philadelphia, Boston, and New York.<sup>4</sup> (Figure 2)

In many respects the situation north of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel mirrors that in the United States: there too, historians of Modernism have had little to say about the influence of CIAM in the 1950's. In Canada, scholars of Modernism have focused on the work of Gropius, Mies, Frank Lloyd Wright, and their students. But a close look at the historical record shows that by the late 1930's, and then beginning with presentations at CIAM 6 at Bridgewater in 1947, there were a significant number of Canadians active in CIAM. These included Hazen Sise, Blanche Lemco, Peter Oberlander, Ann Luke, Ross Anderson, John Stokes, and Frank Chapman.<sup>5</sup>

The Canadian contribution to CIAM is partly explained by the role which expatriate Canadians Wells Coates, Peter Oberlander, and others played in introducing their countrymen to the European Modernist scene. The career of Blanche Lemco (later Blanche van Ginkel) is a case in point. Born in London, Lemco was raised in Montreal and then studied Architecture at McGill University and City

Planning at Harvard. In the 1940's she worked both in London and in Paris (for Le Corbusier on the Unité d'Habitation) and in 1947 was introduced to CIAM through fellow Canadian Peter Oberlander. Thereafter she took an active part in its congresses and became closely associated with the group that later formed Team 10. From 1951 to 1957 Lemco taught at the University of Pennsylvania, where she was an important member of the local CIAM group. In 1957 Lemco returned to Montreal with her husband Sandy van Ginkel and began to practice architecture. Through the Van Ginkels contacts were established between the advanced currents of European Modernism and architectural practice in the northern half of the American continent.

Another significant development in the spread of CIAM culture to North America was the somewhat earlier move to Canada by the British landscape architect and planner Jaqueline Tyrwhitt. Until very recently the figure of Jaqueline Tyrwhitt has been absent from accounts of architectural Modernism in the postwar period even though she was at the heart of European and to some degree American architectural Modernism in the 1950's. Born in 1905, the daughter of a South African architect, Tyrwhitt trained first as a landscape architect and then in London at the Architectural Association, graduating with a degree in planning. During World War II she ran the Association for Planning and Regional Reconstruction and was Director of Studies at the School of Planning and Research for Regional Development at London University. In 1941 she joined CIAM, and in 1949 she was appointed assistant director of MARS. Tyrwhitt spent 1948 teaching at the New School for Social Research in New York and in 1950 went to the University of Toronto on the recommendation of the British Modernist planner Gordon Stephenson. There she taught in the fledgling urban design program, while also engaging in other activities such as work in India for UNESCO.

Tyrwhitt's arrival in Toronto coincided with a period of intense involvement in CIAM. In 1951, Tyrwhitt, who had met CIAM secretary Sigfried

Giedion at CIAM 6 and was now the group's acting secretary, organized CIAM 7 at Hoddesdon on the theme "The Heart of the City." This idea, which balanced a second idea of Le Corbusier's on the need for a charter for the urban habitat, a French term then undergoing a broadening and redefinition, was related to the idea of the city's core as an image of a built space, a place where the sense of community is physically expressed. The MARS group, in particular, was interested in the means by which this concept could be analyzed and thus better understood.

In Toronto these ideas had at least two important repercussions: one in the realm of intellectual life, the other in the more prosaic realm of city politics. While at the University of Toronto, Tyrwhitt – as a result of an introduction by Giedion – developed a close relationship with the budding media theorist Marshall McLuhan and his close friend, the visual anthropologist Edmund Carpenter. This collaboration led in 1953 to her participation in a seminar on Culture and Communications sponsored by the Ford Foundation. By December, 1954 McLuhan's interest in advertizing, Carpenter's in perceptions of space, and Tyrwhitt's in the perception of the urban environment (an idea closely related to the interests of the MARS group) led to the famous Ryerson study. In this study 844 students enrolled at the Ryerson Institute (now Ryerson University) in central Toronto were given a questionnaire which attempted to analyze their response to and perception of urban space in terms of advertizing, aesthetic objects, and utilitarian features. The results of the study – which anticipated in form the interests and, to a limited degree, the findings of work done later in the decade by Kevin Lynch and Edward Hall – appeared in June, 1955 in the seminar's journal, *Exploration* in an article co-authored by Jacqueline Tyrwhitt and D.C. Williams titled "The City Unseen."<sup>6</sup>

A second aspect of Tyrwhitt's career in Toronto was an incident which demonstrates that for her, at least, the debates within CIAM on the need for a broader understanding of and professional

reaction to the conditions of the contemporary city than that provided by the Athens Charter were far from academic. While teaching at the University of Toronto, an activity through which she was able to influence many students with her ideas and encourage the establishment of a Toronto branch of CIAM, Tyrwhitt became aware of a plan to displace the working-class inhabitants of a long existing neighborhood on islands in the Toronto harbor to make way for a large-scale development. In the face of official displeasure she marshaled the energies of her students and employed the nascent media of television to oppose and eventually defeat the plan.

While Tyrwhitt's activism undoubtedly helped preserve the neighborhoods on Toronto Island, it also cost her, in the view of Edmund Carpenter, her colleague at the University, a permanent position at Toronto.<sup>7</sup> As a result, in 1955, Tyrwhitt left Toronto for Harvard where she joined her close friends Sigfried Giedion and Jose Luis Sert. But it is indicative of Tyrwhitt's approach and broad understanding of the complexity of the built environment and its impact on human beings that in this instance, and although she was a committed Modernist, her energies were directed towards a policy of conservation and the stabilization of an existing environment rather than the propagation of large-scale Modernist redevelopment.

Tyrwhitt's activities in Toronto took place in the context of debates within CIAM itself. During this period, the critique of functionalism implicit in *The Heart of the City* (1951) intensified at the following conference held at Aix-en-Provence in 1953. Responses to that conference included the so-called Doorn Manifesto drafted at a meeting held in Doorn Holland in January 1954 at the villa of Lucia Hubrecht, the wife of Sandy van Ginkel. Rejecting the functionalism of the Athens Charter, the contributors of the Doorn Manifesto wrote that "Urbanism considered and developed in the terms of the Charte d'Athens tends to produce "towns" in which vital human associations are inadequately expressed. To comprehend these human associations we must consider every community

as a particular *total* complex. In order to make this comprehension possible, we propose to study urbanism as communities of varying degrees of complexity.” In the words of the English architect Denys Lasdun, “English and Dutch groups found their closest affinities” at the Doorn meeting, and the ideas they developed there led by 1956 to the formation of Team 10 and the collapse of CIAM at Otterloo in 1959 – the moment which was commemorated and registered, as we have seen, by a photograph and article published in the *Architectural Review*.<sup>8</sup>

The 1953 conference at Aix is famous for a party which took place on the roof of the Unité d’Habitation in Marseille. As it included dancing and *musique concrete*, it must have been a 1950’s version of an impromptu “rave” with an electronic soundtrack. From our point of view it is also important as the moment when two of the central figures in our story met: Sandy van Ginkel and Blanche Lemco. By this time, Lemco was well known for her work on the Unité roofscape, but Sandy, too, was well-known in European Modernist circles. Born in 1920 in the Netherlands into a family of architects and engineers, Sandy had studied architecture at the Academy of Architecture and Applied Art, Elckerlyc, The Netherlands and then sociology at the University of Utrecht. After World War II, van Ginkel worked as a planner in Sweden and Ireland before returning to Holland in 1953 where he joined the Amsterdam town planning department. There he met Aldo van Eyck, with whom he became a close friend, traveled to North Africa, and collaborated on the planning of the New Town at Nagele.

In 1957 Blanche Lemco and Sandy van Ginkel married and moved to Montreal, at that time the undisputed cultural and commercial capital of Canada. In the late 1950’s it was a city on the brink of the greatest economic, social, cultural and political transformation in its history. Although Sandy van Ginkel later remarked that apart from a very few examples they found little in Montreal that was modern, what they did find was a city of surprising historical depth and complexity. This

complexity, as well as the need to modernize its infrastructure, made Montreal an ideal subject on which to test the modes of analysis and techniques of urban design proposed in the Doorn manifesto. For the van Ginkels and their colleagues in Europe, the challenge of their generation was to find the means by which the socio-spatial and economic conditions of modern life could be accommodated within a formal structure which would, simultaneously, amplify human experience and protect the particular qualities of urban life at the various scales and for the various uses that had been handed down and developed through generations of human experience. Today we might see this as a sensibility which lies between the functionalism of the inter-war years and the anti-modern reaction of the 1970’s. In the mid-1950’s it represented a conceptual sophistication light years ahead of standard North American planning practice.

On coming to Montreal, the van Ginkels, during the late 1950’s and early 1960’s, worked on projects directly related to CIAM/Team 10 concerns. This was a question both of choice and opportunity, and, in a manner reminiscent of the work of Jaqueline Tyrwhitt in Toronto, of activism long before it became fashionable. Looking back, one early project stands out as especially significant. By the late 1950’s the City of Montreal had prepared plans for the construction of an expressway which would connect the downtown core with the growing suburbs. As planned, the expressway would have passed through Montreal’s core by way of a route which skirted the shoreline of the St. Lawrence, adjacent to the most historic part of the city. As occurred in nearby Toronto and other North American cities, the construction of a waterside expressway would have resulted in a separation of the city from its shore. In addition, in Montreal, planned access ramps would have obliterated much of the old city with its morphology and fabric dating back to the French colonial period. Like Tyrwhitt, the van Ginkel’s sympathies in this case were not with the utopian new, but with the sensitive accommodation to preexisting conditions.

Out of a desire to protect the historic core of Montreal from what they saw as inconsiderate and indifferent planning, they pressed for a revised, more rational and more thoughtful design. The effects of this can be seen today. Unlike Toronto, where construction of the Gardiner Expressway resulted in a multi-billion dollar urban design problem which awaits solution, in Montreal, the Autoroute Ville Marie passes through the city centre by means of a tunnel immediately adjacent both to the central business district and Old Montreal, and well north of the river shore.

The story of how the van Ginkels were able to mitigate the worst effects of modern planning and give Montreal the lasting benefits of their skill and art in modern urban design is an involved and fascinating one. But the basic elements of the story are straightforward. In 1959, in response to newspaper reports outlining the City's plans for a waterfront expressway route, the Van Ginkels, alarmed and anxious to forestall what seemed imminent, engineered the preparation of an alternate assessment under the auspices of a quickly organized association called the Montreal Citizen's Committee. Ostensibly the study was prepared for review by the Montreal Port Council, but from the beginning it had larger aims. In their report, the van Ginkel's demonstrated that the new route would seriously hamper the successful functioning of Montreal's bustling port, but also noted that it would do irreparable damage to the fabric and integrity of Montreal's historic core:

A further note with respect to the East-West Expressway should be made concerning historic buildings. If the current proposal is effected all the finest old buildings of Montreal will ultimately be destroyed. Most of the buildings, squares and streets worthy of preservation lie immediately north of the proposed route – if not bordering it. The designers of the Expressway have stated that they can avoid most of these buildings – but this in itself will not save them. The character of Place Royale will be completely destroyed

with the expressway adjacent to it; Youville Square will cease to exist as a square when it becomes a principal means of access to the expressway. But most important to consider are the inevitable changes which will occur immediately following the expressway construction. The narrow streets of this old quarter are quite incapable of taking the load of traffic which will pour off the artery and the city will be forced to widen streets and demolish fronting buildings particularly in the case of St. Paul, one of the finest remaining.

We do not advocate the preservation of the old quarter at the harbour as a museum piece at great public expense, but it has an irreplaceable value as a symbol of pride in an old historic city...it requires only minor changes within the area to revitalise it and bring it back as a living and economically sound part of the city fabric.<sup>9</sup>

The tactics of the Van Ginkels and their associates in the Montreal Citizen's Committee were effective. The economic arguments of the port study aroused widespread concern and led to a more comprehensive circulation study of the entire project. This was in turn followed by a subsequent study of Old Montreal itself, the findings of which prepared the ground for approaches to that district which prevail today. Key to the van Ginkle's contribution to the debates and decisions of that era was their proposal that the route of the expressway be moved north, away from the port, so that it would pass directly through the heart of the city. (Figure 3) This was an audacious but brilliant move and one which reflected their wide experience and skill. In a way which recalled recent American work, especially the parkways of Brooklyn Heights, the van Ginkel's took advantage of two existing conditions: a Canadian Pacific Rail line which ran from the suburbs into the central station and the natural fall of the land towards the river. They realized that by following the CPR line into the city and then sheltering the expressway in the shadow of the escarpment the freeway could be built with



Figure 3: Aerial view showing construction of Guy and Atwater access ramps, Autoroute Ville-Marie, Montreal. (Photo: Henri Talbot, *La Presse*, 1970).

minimal disruption, on land that was little used and could pass through the heart of the city in a way that was virtually unnoticed. At the center of the city the expressway would disappear into a tunnel facilitated by rising land levels and emerge on the other side following the line of a buried river which formed a natural depression. This idea solved the requirements of circulation, brought traffic directly into the heart of the city in an efficient and elegant way and protected the morphological structure and fabric of the historic city. In the freeway zone itself provision was made for land above the tunnel to be used as parks or built over, a process which is now, 40 years later, well underway. When the expressway was eventually built, the van Ginkels were not in charge. Changes were made to the original proposals, and its construction was not without significant damage to the existing city, but, nonetheless, enough remained of the van Ginkels' conception so that Montreal's port and the adjacent city remained relatively unscathed.

As Eric Mumford noted in his study, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928-1960*, CIAM has been widely accepted as part of the shared negative symbol of the failure of Modernism.<sup>10</sup> As Sandy van Ginkel himself observed, his generation of Modernists made mistakes. But in looking at the work of the CIAM-associated practitioners in Canada in the 1950's – Jaqueline Tyrwhitt in Toronto and Blanche and Sandy van Ginkel in Montreal – one is reminded of an earlier episode in urban design which took place in North America. In this case the setting was Quebec City in the 1870's. The situation was familiar. Quebec City was growing; traffic was having difficulty moving in and out of the central core and to facilitate commerce the City Engineering Department proposed the destruction of the City's ancient walls and gates. In this case an Englishman in the guise of the Governor-General Lord Dufferin blocked the plan and proposed instead a sensitive combination of conservation and reconstruction.

Today it is possible to see that Lord Dufferin, living in the midst of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was motivated by a kind of Ruskinian Romanticism: an example of just that Romantic response to the city which the prophets of Modernism, such as Le Corbusier and others realized, would be unable to come to terms with and in any way mitigate the increasingly powerful realities of economic and technological change. To compare the Quebec City of the 1870s with the Montreal of the 1950's is to remind ourselves that the conditions confronting Tyrwhitt and the van Ginkels, and, indeed, ourselves, have been in existence now for some time and vary more in scale and intensity than in kind. The goal of architectural Modernism was in some way to accommodate those same forces within the realm of culture, and in Canada at least, the internationalization of CIAM played an important and generally unrecognized role in demonstrating how that might be done.

Notes

1. *Alison Smithson, in discussion with Kisho Kurokawa, Team 10 meeting at Abbaye Royaumont, 1962. Published in Team 10 Meetings 1953-1984, Alison Smithson, New York: Rizzoli, 1991, p. 72-73.*
2. *Interview H.D.P. van Ginkel and Kelly Crossman. Oral history tape, August 23, 1995. ARCON 1996:002-001 Canadian Centre for Architecture.*
3. *Eric Mumford, The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928-1960 (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2000) p. 323 note 14; this statement is attributed to an interview with Geddes by Mumford 19 March, 1992.*
4. *Eric Mumford, The CIAM Discourse, pp. 225-258.*
5. *For instance at CIAM 7 held in Bergamo in 1949, the only North American presentation was a scheme for the Montreal waterfront by Ann Luke, Mumford, p.176.*
6. *J.D. Tyrwhitt and D. Williams, "The City Unseen," Explorations, (June, 1955), 88-102.*
7. *Edmund Carpenter, "Rethinking Explorations," Canadian Notes and Queries, 46 (Spring, 1992) p. 9.*
8. *As quoted in Mumford, p. 239.*
9. *Montreal Citizens Committee, Central Area Circulation Study, 1960, pp. 6-7. Van Ginkel Associates Ltd. Fonds, 27-A13, Canadian Centre for Architecture.*
10. *Eric Mumford, The CIAM Discourse, p. 268.*
11. *Figure 1 also appears in in Frances Strauven, Aldo van Eyck, The Shape of Relativity, Amsterdam: Architectura and Natura, 1998, p. 347.*

## Brazilian Modernism on the European Campus: The *Casas do Brasil* in Paris and Madrid

Martina Millà Bernad

*In the postwar period, the Brazilian Ministry of Education built two residence halls for Brazilian students in Europe: one in Paris, designed by Lucio Costa and Le Corbusier, and another one in Madrid, designed by Brazilian architect Luis Affonso d' Escragnolle Filho. The construction of these two buildings enjoyed varying success but they both illustrate Brazil's use of its renowned modernist architecture to enhance its international agenda. This agenda was intended to reverse the traditional flow of influence between former colony and métropoles and to establish Brazil as an important international player.*

*A Brazilianist project for the Maison du Brésil in Paris was developed by Costa in 1952 but the building was not inaugurated until 1959. In the intervening years, as the surviving drawings show, Le Corbusier changed Costa's initial design. This transformation contravened Brazil's intention to publicize its modernizing face abroad. The 1962 Casa do Brasil in Madrid, a derivation of Brasilia architecture, was Brazil's renewed and arguably more successful attempt to establish a place for itself in the cultural landscape of Europe.*

*In Paris, the Brazilian cultural métropole par excellence, Brazil was frustrated in its international architectural campaign, but in Madrid the Brazilian government was able to create a self-defining modernist backdrop for its expansionist efforts. In both cases, Brazilian political elites were promoting a return to the old métropoles to even out the exchange of influences while ensuring its continuation. The Brazilian residence halls were built to provide an architectural expression that would articulate such internationalizing efforts.*

In the early 1950's, the Brazilian Ministry of Education began planning to build a residence hall in Paris to assist Brazilian students at the Sorbonne with their acute housing problems. The Brazilian House or *Maison du Brésil* took seven years to build and was finally inaugurated in 1959. After Paris, came Madrid and London in 1962. By the mid-1960's, Brazil had managed to create a constellation of *Casas do Brasil*.<sup>1</sup> There was a Casa do Brasil in Rome, albeit non-residential, and soon after the openings in Madrid and London, talks started regarding a Brazilian Hall in New York City, and another one was later considered for Portugal.

This paper will focus on the Brazilian Houses in Paris and Madrid, the only two that involved the construction of brand new buildings.<sup>2</sup> They were not only dormitories but, like all the *Casas do Brasil*, were also intended to operate as cultural and public relations platforms to promote Brazil's internationalist aspirations. To reinforce their propaganda mission, they capitalized on the tremendous success Brazilian modernist architecture had enjoyed since the MoMA exhibition "Brazil Builds" of 1942. Through their architecture, these buildings were to function as beacons of Brazilian modernity and showcase an image of Brazil as a dynamic, young democracy while at the same time underscoring the country's ties to its European sources.

In Paris, those initial intentions were never fully realized. The preliminary project Brazil submitted for its *Maison du Brésil* initiated an architectural confrontation that can be regarded as one of several signs pointing to the end of the modernism that had reigned in Brazil since the 1940's. In Paris it became clear that, beyond magazine articles and symbolic awards, the "mother countries" and "father architects" of the Brazilian architectural prodigy were not entirely ready to embrace, much less import, Brazil's modernist lessons. A challenging postwar period left little room for the suave, but increasingly monumental, statements coming from the other side of the Atlantic. One might even argue that the infighting in France was so intense and so absorbed the professional milieu that there was no room for the new arrival. Brazil then learned that its novel designs

had been praised internationally not for their own merits, but as evidence of how Western modernism had sprouted new adepts beyond its borders. Western modernism was not really praising Brazil, but rather itself; as long as Brazilian architects remained good pupils and their buildings exciting images from a faraway country, the international architectural *status quo* remained untouched and all was well. Problems appeared when the traditional flow of influence threatened to be reversed, and this is exactly what happened in the case of the Maison du Brésil in Paris. With this project, its first Casa do Brasil, Brazilian modernism stepped out of its earlier security zone and trespassed on the hallowed grounds of its European sources. In the Cité Universitaire in Paris, the preliminary Brazilian project was seen as a double act of transgression, as it combined modernism—which the Cité had not fully accepted, yet—and independent creativity in the midst of an educational environment based on the uncontested superiority of French culture.

By the time a new Casa do Brasil was to be built in Madrid, the Brazilians had learned from their experience in Paris. This time, however, they were disembarking in a different university campus and for different reasons, while their host country was not the same as a postwar France going through the pains of decolonization and loss of hegemony. By the late 1950's, Brazil had been an architectural leader for almost two decades and the country was experiencing a wave of accelerated development in the hands of Juscelino Kubitschek, its hypermodernist President, and the creator of Brasilia. With a brand-new, colossal capital in its final construction stages, it was clear that in Madrid, the seat of a troubled Fascist regime eager to jump on the same high-speed development train as Brazil, the South American country felt it could play its architectural card with greater assurance than in France.

Of the three Brazilian residence halls in Europe, the Maison du Brésil in Paris is the earliest and best known. It is usually attributed to Le Corbusier and Lucio Costa, and stands one

building away from Le Corbusier's Swiss Pavilion. The earliest plans to build a Brazilian dormitory in the French capital went back to the 1920's. However, it was only after World War II that the old initiative was revived by the Ministry of Education and Health in Rio de Janeiro. At the time, Brazilian modernist architecture, and most notably the very building in which the Ministry of Education was housed, were the object of international acclaim, and the Brazilian authorities were fully aware of the attention Brazilian architecture was receiving abroad when they chose their architect for the residence hall in Paris. The commission went to Lucio Costa, a follower of Le Corbusier and the leader in 1936 of the team of architects that designed the Ministry of Education under the initial guidance of Le Corbusier himself. Costa was also responsible, with Oscar Niemeyer, for the Brazilian Pavilion at the 1939 World's Fair in New York. Finally, in 1952, when the Maison du Brésil project was taken up again, Costa was in Europe as a member of the "international panel of five architects" that supervised the plans for a new Unesco headquarters in Paris. In short, Costa was the prime representative abroad of Brazil's new architecture, and he happened to be in Paris.

Pressed by the Brazilian educational authorities, Costa readied a preliminary project with the few tools he had at hand. A set of delicate drawings featured a design that reflected how Le Corbusier's teachings had been assimilated in Brazil.<sup>3</sup> Just as Costa thought Candido Portinari's mural painting *Jogos Infantis*,<sup>4</sup> displayed in the Ministry building, was an "anti-Guernica" of sorts,<sup>5</sup> a Brazilian reversal of what Picasso's painting stood for, his project for the Maison du Brésil can also be seen as a response to Le Corbusier's Swiss Pavilion, showing the contrast between modern architecture in Europe and Brazil. Thus, although Costa's residence hall was also a reconsideration of his 1940's prize-winning Parque Guinle apartment complex in Rio de Janeiro, it was, above all, his way of showing how Brazil had transformed Le Corbusier's lessons and produced a different architecture. Like the Swiss Pavilion, Le Corbusier's prototypical dormitory, Costa's Maison du Brésil project consisted of a residential

block elevated on pilotis. There were similarities in the facade as well with a curtain wall side and Costa's take on the Swiss Pavilion fenestration, on the other side, and free-form ground-floor extensions finished with rough-stone walls. While Costa aimed to create an agreeable environment for Brazilian students in Paris, he also chose what he considered to be a French palette to integrate his building into the surrounding urban landscape. Last but not least, his ground-floor extensions, a Brazilian version of the annex abutting the Swiss Pavilion, were, as architectural historian Marcelo Puppi has pointed out, a way for Costa to pay homage to Oscar Niemeyer, whom Costa always regarded as the uncontested genius of Brazilian modern architecture.<sup>6</sup>

As his obligations in Rio made it impossible for Costa to stay in Paris to supervise the construction of the Maison du Brésil, he entrusted the development of the project to Le Corbusier's studio. This time, however, Le Corbusier was not going to stop at the consulting level as he was constrained to do with the Ministry building in Rio. Encouraged by the objections to Costa's preliminary project voiced by Lucien Bechmann, the Cité Universitaire's head architect, and by other administrative hurdles, he transformed Costa's project beyond recognition. For the first time in his entire career, Le Corbusier was very busy with projects that could actually be built. He was also absent from the studio for long periods of time to attend to his obligations in India. As a result, his assistants were left free to work on the current projects and their efforts at the drawing boards were only revised when Le Corbusier came back from his travels. By the time the Brazilian authorities and Le Corbusier finally signed the architect's contract in 1954, Costa's project had already undergone considerable changes in the hands of these assistants.<sup>7</sup>

A second design version was completed in 1955,<sup>8</sup> and a model was made to coincide with the building's foundation stone ceremony later that year. The differences between those intermediary versions and Costa's initial project could not be greater. It became clear that Le Corbusier

and his assistants were too invested in their new *béton brut* aesthetic to respect Costa's sensibility. This time it was the Atelier's turn to reconsider the Swiss Pavilion. They sidestepped Costa's proposal and came up with an updated version of the early 1930's building that had created such a stir in the conservative Cité Universitaire. However, a second Swiss Pavilion, and a brutalist one at that, was too much for the Cité authorities to bear. They opposed Le Corbusier's version and tried to convince the Brazilian authorities to change the project entirely and create something resembling a traditional Portuguese building in tune with the historicist tenor of the Cité. Despite the evident violation of Costa's project, the objections coming from the Cité fell on deaf ears, and the Brazilian authorities made it clear that it was "Le Corbusier or nothing."<sup>9</sup>

At this point, Le Corbusier started introducing new changes to the project. He altered the 1954-1955 squarish ground-floor annexes that had brushed aside Costa's curvilinear homage to Niemeyer, but he had difficulty finding a satisfactory alternative for them.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, in Rio, his clients started to be concerned and Costa was asked to go to Paris. Le Corbusier then gave up on his latest version and "decided to wait for Costa."<sup>11</sup> When Costa arrived in Paris and saw what had become of his preliminary project, a tense debate ensued. He insisted that the ground-floor extensions be altered one more time. There is a drawing featuring Costa's name above those of Le Corbusier, his assistant Wogenscky, and the draughtsman Michel that shows how a final solution was being worked out by the four men.<sup>12</sup> Another drawing, on which we read "*dessin Costa*,"<sup>13</sup> corroborates the important participation of the Brazilian architect in the redesigning of the ground-floor extensions, as this version was already very close to the final drawings.

The letters exchanged by the two architects after their difficult encounter help us to better understand the nature of their disagreements. A first letter sent by Costa made it clear he had given up authorship of the Maison du Brésil and accepted Le Corbusier's leading role. It was the price Brazil had to pay to settle its "debt" with the Swiss-French

master for his participation in the Ministry design and his role in launching the vogue for Brazilian modernism.<sup>14</sup>

With Costa as the consulting figure, the reversal of the Ministry episode was now made bizarrely complete. Costa agreed that the Casa was a building for Paris, but he warned Le Corbusier that it was also a building that was destined to house Brazilians and thus should *not* be designed with “a spirit or an intention that could be regarded as anti-Brazilian.”<sup>15</sup> Le Corbusier responded with a final set of drawings<sup>16</sup> and with a letter in which he resisted any suggestions to renationalize the building he had denationalized and made his own. If the Maison du Brésil was to be built in Paris, why make it look “Brazilian” and fall into the pastiche trap that was at the base of the architectural “salad” in the Cité Universitaire?<sup>17</sup> For him, the Maison du Brésil had no reason to represent anything. Rather, it had to be a building adapted to the context for which it was built. I would argue, however, that by appropriating the Maison du Brésil project, Le Corbusier was engaging in a symbolic erasure that could be extended to all derivations of his work. Yet, the final design was the result of a last-minute joint effort between Le Corbusier and Costa that extended the Marseilles, La Tourette, and Ronchamp vocabularies without altogether effacing its origins in Costa’s preliminary project and Le Corbusier’s Swiss Pavilion.

Also in 1956, while Le Corbusier and Costa were working out a compromise solution for the Maison du Brésil, the new Brazilian president, Juscelino Kubitschek, visited Spain, a country living under a fascist regime that had caused many Spaniards to migrate to Brazil and other Latin American countries. Aware of the growing demographic importance of that immigrant group, Kubitschek sought to smooth relations with Spain and did not seem to be bothered by the nature of Franco’s regime. Among the various agreements he made with the dictator, one included the idea of building a Casa do Brasil in the Ciudad Universitaria in Madrid. However, it was not until 1959, shortly after the inauguration of the Maison du Brésil in

Paris, and one year before the presidential elections in Brazil, that Clovis Salgado, the Brazilian minister of Education, gave the final impetus to the Casa do Brasil project in Madrid. This time, the Brazilian authorities were not willing to get caught up in a war between architectural stars, and so for Madrid Salgado chose a young architect who had designed schools for the Ministry. His name was Luis Affonso d’Escragnolle Filho and, unlike Costa, he was ready to stay in Europe to supervise the work from beginning to end. Like Costa, Escragnolle had to seek the help of local architects and adapt his design to the local context, but unlike Costa, he held fast to the authorship of his project.

Reminiscent of a constructivist sculpture, Escragnolle’s building consisted of an ensemble of intertwined prismatic volumes and courtyards finished with typically Brazilian contrasting opaque and transparent facades. Inside, the horizontal entrance pavilion opened up to a series of open-plan, multi-level spaces that cascaded down a sloping site. Finally, in a Niemeyerian coupling, a half-buried, arrow-like chapel—a mandatory feature under a regime whose leading ideology had been dubbed “National Catholicism”—provided the counterpoint to the orthogonality of the whole, and there was also a touch of segregation—or perhaps a neocolonial lapse—in the isolated service block down the hillside.

Just as Le Corbusier had disregarded the stylistic rules favored by the Cité Universitaire administration, first with his Swiss Pavilion and again with his Brazilian House, for his European debut Escragnolle was determined to introduce some Brazilian novelty into a landscape of Fascist buildings and monuments. In contrast to the strong colors and massive, exposed-concrete forms proposed by Le Corbusier in Paris, Escragnolle’s Brazilian building featured a more delicate formal play and a lighter palette, precisely the elements that made Costa’s preliminary project for Paris Brazilian in the eyes of the older architects. Escragnolle chose local materials—brick and limestone—in combination with glass and aluminum, and it was

in this way that his building, especially in its first version, took on the tonalities of the surrounding buildings.

The Casa do Brasil in Madrid aimed at striking a balance between contextual concerns and the desire to showcase Brazilian modernism. The eventual change from a brick facade to a Brasilia-like *cobogó* facade exemplifies Escragnolle's difficulty in finding that balance. His contextual effort, moreover, raises an important question about the consequences of adapting one's work to a context of authoritarian architecture, and one wonders if his decision to create a Brasilia-like facade on the front of the building stemmed from a desire to stress the Brazilian origins of the building. Escragnolle's project can thus be said to be the result of a certain clash between the architect's primary sources of inspiration: Brasilia's recently unveiled *superquadras* architecture and the new Miesianism coming out of the United States, on the one hand, and the architecture of Madrid's Ciudad Universitaria, on the other. The contrasting *cobogó* and curtain-wall facades that were finally built would lead us to think that the influence of Brasilia won the day. In a promotional brochure published in Spanish, however, Escragnolle insisted on his contextualist intentions and went as far as underplaying the Brazilianness of his building.<sup>18</sup> He barely mentioned the *cobogó* facade and attributed what he called the "neobaroque" layout of the building not to any connection with Brazilian free-form style, but to its organic functionalism, a characteristic he had found and admired in vernacular Spanish architecture.

When, shortly after the building's opening, the first construction problems started, the ambivalence regarding the Brazilianness of the building became more pronounced. This time it came from Fernando Moreno Barberá, Escragnolle's architectural consultant in Madrid, who in response to the first director's complaints retorted, "the Casa do Brasil is an exponent of Brazilian architecture; you must suffer the consequences."<sup>19</sup> Such demonstrations of ambivalence on the part of the architects could also have been prompted by a

desire not to be identified with a branch of modernism that was losing favor, but up until the opening of the Casa in 1962, the official line was best expressed by the Brazilian ambassador in Madrid. For him, the development of Spanish architecture could be divided into two phases, one before the Casa do Brasil and another one after.<sup>20</sup>

While the Maison du Brésil was created through the efforts of a group of Brazilian educational reformers in response to a real demand for lodging, in Madrid the new construction was prompted by foreign policy interests. Whereas in Paris, two major figures of modern architecture debated their differing visions for a new architecture, in Madrid, Brazil proceeded to exploit its established formulas to impress a country that was opening up to postwar modernism. By making the Casa do Brasil in Madrid the symbol of the *rapprochement* between Brazil and Spain, and by giving the commission to a little-known architect, the Kubitschek administration downplayed the role of individual designers and aimed to present Brazil's hard-won architectural capital behind a seamless facade. By exporting a set architectural style and using it to favor relations with a disreputable ally, one wonders if it did not also debase Brazil's richly complex architectural development, as well as the international ambitions of its educational reform.

Notes

1. Brazilian Houses.
2. Images of these two buildings can be found on the Internet. See the following websites: <http://www.maisondubresil.org>, <http://www.fondationlecorbusier.asso.fr/bresil.htm>, and <http://www.casadobrasil.org>
3. All the Maison du Brésil drawings mentioned in this paper—including Costa's—can be found in the volume *La Tourette and Other Buildings and Projects, 1955-1957 of Le Corbusier's complete drawings*, published in 1984 by Garland (London and New York) with the Le Corbusier Foundation (Paris).
4. In English, *Children's Games*. Portinari's mural was painted in the early 1940's.
5. Lucio Costa and Maria Elisa Costa, *Lucio Costa: Registro de uma vivência* (São Paulo: Empresa das Artes, 1995), 128.
6. Marcelo Puppi, "Des espaces inachevés: Le Corbusier, Lucio Costa et la Maison du Brésil" (unpublished paper, Université de Paris I (Panthéon-Sorbonne), 1996.)
7. The drawings from the 1954 stage of the project can be found on p. 140, 135, 139 (top), and 137 (bottom) of the Garland volume cited above.
8. A west facade view of the 1955 stage of the project can be found on p. 145 of the Garland volume cited above.
9. Paulo Carneiro, Brazil's Unesco representative, cited by Péricles Madureira de Pinho, "Le Corbusier e o Brasil," *Correio da manhã*, September 5, 1965.
10. See p. 267 (bottom) and p. 148 (ground floor drawing) of the Garland volume cited above.
11. On an early January 1956 drawing reproduced on p. 307 of the same Garland volume, we find the phrase "decidé attendre L. Costa" ("decided to wait for L. Costa").
12. The drawing is reproduced on p. 330 of the Garland volume cited above.
13. "Drawing by Costa." The drawing is reproduced on p. 200 of the Garland volume cited above.
14. "Le Corbusier au Brésil ou la dette impossible à payer," a paper on the concept of debt in Franco- Brazilian architectural relations, was presented by the author in the "Le Corbusier Messenger" international conference held in the Maison du Brésil in Paris to mark the 70th anniversary of the Swiss Pavilion (24-25 September 2004).
15. Costa's letter is transcribed in Gilles Ragot and Mathilde Dion, *Le Corbusier en France* (Paris: Moniteur, 1997), 352.
16. These drawings can be found on p. 157 and p. 158 of the Garland volume cited above. See also the 14 February 1956 drawing on p. 281.
17. Le Corbusier's letter, dated 23 February 1956, is transcribed on p. 354 of *Le Corbusier in France*.
18. *Casa de Brasil* (1962).
19. Cited in a letter by Joaquim Costa Pinto Netto, the first director of the Casa do Brasil, dated 2 April 1963 (Péricles Madureira de Pinho archive, AMLB, Rio de Janeiro).
20. Cited in a letter by Costa Pinto Netto dated 31 March 1962 (Péricles Madureira de Pinho archive, AMLB, Rio de Janeiro).

## Sunset or Sunrise? Modernist Embassy Architecture and the Twilight of British Empire

Miles Glendinning

*The main building of a normal present-day embassy is the chancery, which acts as a centre for administration and routine contact with the host country's citizens - including cultural promotion activity. Chanceries stand midway between the practical anonymity of conventional government office blocks and the temporary, symbolic character of world's fair pavilions - projecting their nation in immediate and forcible contrast with others. Typically, they take much longer as projects to carry through, however, partly because of their multi-function character and partly because of the ideological and political tensions bound up with them.*

*In this paper, I focus on two of the most important of these tensions: first, between asserting one's own country and respecting the host country; and second, between 'closed' and 'open' character, architecturally or ideologically speaking. The paper compares two British-related chancery projects, both designed by Scottish architects: New Zealand House, London, 1954-62, by (Sir) Robert Matthew, and the British Embassy chancery in Rome, 1960-71, by (Sir) Basil Spence.*

*In Rome, Spence's architecturally deferential design formed part of a shared vision for the deepening of British-Italian relations, as well as helping perpetuate and reinvigorate the wider Western reverence for Rome as an international seat of culture. And in London, the New Zealand vision of a progressive, post-colonial future was eagerly echoed and taken up by a reformist coalition within the British establishment, including Matthew himself, whose design, as Central London's first really prominent 'skyscraper', itself then helped shape the further modernisation of the former imperial capital.*

The main building of a normal present-day embassy is the chancery, which acts as a center for administration and routine contact with the host country's citizens, including the activity of cultural promotion. Many embassies are contained in pre-existing structures. Purpose-built chanceries, however, especially those constructed during the Modern Movement and in accord with its individualistic design fashions, allow their conception to be used to convey conscious or unconscious messages about national identity and the countries' mutual relationships. Chanceries therefore stand midway between the practical anonymity of conventional government office blocks and the temporary, symbolic character of world's fair pavilions; they project their nation in immediate and forcible contrast with others. Typically, chanceries take much longer as projects to carry through than either of these types, partly because of their multifunctional character and partly because of the ideological and political tensions associated with them.

The focus of this paper is on two of the most important of these tensions: first, the tension between asserting one's own country and respecting the host country; and second, the one between 'closed' and 'open' character, architecturally or ideologically speaking. The tensions are illustrated by a comparison of two British-related chancery projects, both designed by Scottish architects: New Zealand House, London, 1954-62, by (Sir) Robert Matthew, and the British Embassy chancery in Rome, 1960-71, by (Sir) Basil Spence.

It begins with an architectural summary of the two complexes, and then takes up their wider political and cultural context. Chronologically, the first of the two was New Zealand House, built for the country's High Commission in London—a commission being a Commonwealth title equivalent to that of embassy. Designed in 1954-1956 by Matthew, a Modernist architect with a strong public-sector background and constructed eventually in 1959-1962, it is built in a straightforwardly International Modern Movement style, and was the first 'tower block' in the symbolic, historic core of London. Situated at a prominent

junction near Trafalgar Square, it comprises a three and four-story podium with a fourteen-story tower perched on top, using an approach that was clearly influenced by Lever House in New York City (1951-1952), although not quite as much as was Basil Spence's slightly earlier Thorn House, completed in 1959. New Zealand House, as completed—is an important qualification as will become clear—is treated in a smooth, somewhat unassertive style, its plain, rectangular profile sleekly faced with almost continuous glazing bands, with the podium punctuated by sharp voids which allow views through the complex. Internally, the emphasis is on spatial interpenetration. A staircase hall rises up through the podium, with various public spaces branching off it, including a reception hall, public lounge, library and cinema, and rooftop courtyard. All in all, this is a building of assertive modernity and cultural openness, which sets out to make a calculated contrast with its historic townscape setting.

Spence's chancery in Rome was designed in 1960-3 and built in 1969-71: there was again a long gap between design and construction. But this project was as different from Matthew's as one could imagine, while still remaining within the general scope of the Modern Movement. Spence's architectural education was very similar to Matthew's, but in the middle and late thirties he launched into a radically different career path in private practice, variegated and eclectic, ranging from boldly Modernist exhibition design to the more traditional stateliness of Coventry Cathedral, which he designed after winning the 1951 competition. Rome was purely an office building, but for security reasons it was situated on a fenced-in site. Its location in lush gardens beside Michelangelo's Porta Pia and the Roman Aurelian Wall, however, was one of tremendous cultural prestige, so a highly deferential approach was followed. Spence designed the building as a compact two-story block, self-contained and detailed in a busy, late Modernist manner, but raised up a full story on slender columns, allowing the garden space to flow beneath it. This was a challenging concept

which, during construction, would require extensive propping up of the structure until the roof slab was cast. This plan was probably influenced by some recent United States embassies, especially the stepped-out section of J. L. Sert's Baghdad Embassy (1957). Its imagery and metaphors were, however, more 'traditional.' The plan comprised a square of sixteen sections joined "like a necklace." Each stood on a single column. The symmetrical plan prevented any direct expression of the normal threefold split into a chancery building's functions of public areas, private chancery division offices, and secret zone. The building was built with a reinforced concrete frame with set forward travertine cladding, heavily modelled with largely vertical patterning, to shade the occupants from the strong sun. Spence's own advocacy texts expressed best the historically rooted Modernist character at which he aimed. This "modern palazzo in travertine" would be "an object of quality set in a garden with ample space around and through it, a light but strongly modelled structure" that would "with one hand stretch back to Roman times and, with the other, grasp the present day. The building must have classical unity, beautiful materials, expert craftsmanship; it must have the Roman scale and the same 'blood group' as its immediate surroundings."

Thus, the architectural picture was one of fairly simple contrast between the Rome and London projects. But in the cultural-political contexts of the two projects, the complications began to mount up, not least because in both cases there was a large degree of actual or potential opposition. And while both projects ultimately arose in the early postwar context of the late forties, the origin of the Rome chancery was also curiously prescient of today's obsession with Middle Eastern 'terrorism': the previous chancery on the site was blown up in 1946 by terrorists, in this case not Arab, but Jewish. This necessitated the evacuation of the staff, ironically, to the former German embassy and Gestapo headquarters at the Villa Wolkonsky, where they worked in dilapidated huts built by the Germans during the war. After the bombing, the cleared site was zoned as a park by the Rome authorities, which

required the British government to use special tact to secure any new building at all. For New Zealand, there was also a practical drive to build something new, as their old quarters were scattered in various unsuitable buildings. In both cases, however, there was also a strong ideological impetus shaped by the particular national relationships concerned.

In Rome, there was an overriding concern to 'fit in.' This was partly influenced by the geopolitical relationship of Britain and Italy, briefly wartime enemies but now potentially allied in counterbalancing Franco-German power within the European Community (EEC). Unlike the asymmetrical relationship between the United States and Canada, this was a more balanced one. In 1971 Evelyn Shuckburgh, the ambassador during much of the construction process at Rome, recognized "the general decline in the number and size of British embassies, owing to our lesser weight in world affairs." He nonetheless emphasized the necessity for special treatment at Rome. As a Grade One embassy in a key location, the chancery project must convey the full prestige of an embassy. Shuckburgh stressed that as "Italians attach importance to appearances," the "commonplace" must be avoided at all costs, even in utility areas; building in grand style would "not [be] wasted in Italy."

Thus, architecturally, in this case symbolism was more important than practical function. But Spence understood intuitively that any 'grand' elements would also have to be tastefully discreet. His palazzo concept allowed the only overtly stately element, a sweeping external staircase, to be contained within the central courtyard. As he put it in 1961: "the main objective is to create a symbol representative of Great Britain in a foreign capital, but with a difference, as Rome may be considered to be the cradle of our modern civilisation. A secondary objective is to provide an Embassy office building which is efficient. It must look 'right.' It should, if possible, excite admiration from the Italians and should not dismay our own people. It should harmonize with the unique surroundings, in scale, rhythm and materials." Writing in the

popular *Daily Express*, Spence was more blunt: as the embassy was "our own little piece of Britain in Rome," one had to show sensitivity towards the existing landscape, to prevent the British being "shown up as a lot of cultural barbarians."

For New Zealand, the London project was also of high ideological significance. Of all the former 'dominions,' it was culturally still the closest to Britain, and especially to Scotland, and the London High Commission was still the country's most important diplomatic post. But alongside this, as Andrew Leach and Paul Walker's recent DOCOMOMO papers have pointed out, the country had since 1935 embarked on a quiet social-democratic revolution, and the New Zealand House project would therefore become one of the symbolic standard bearers of the country's accelerating modernization and emancipation. The Labor government had been replaced in 1949 by the more populist right-wing National Party administration of Prime Minister Sidney Holland, but the modernizing urge had continued unabated, as did the impatience with anything that sounded like 'English self-righteousness' or establishment high-handedness. For all the New Zealanders involved in the project, the aspiration was that New Zealand House should be proudly, even provocatively modern. While the British aim in Rome was to make a quiet and restrained contribution, the New Zealand aim in London was to build "the best of modern creative architecture."

In both cases, London and Rome, an historic, sensitive location caused the project to be confronted by very strongly organized potential opposition, but the extent to which that opposition was realized was very different. The Rome chancery largely won over potential Italian critics, falling foul only of internal British cost-cutting pressures. New Zealand House inspired both vehement opposition and passionate advocacy. The Rome site was first proposed for rebuilding in 1950, in the utilitarian Modernist style of the Ministry of Works' in-house architects, a system that was used for twenty-two chanceries between 1950 and 1971 and which produced far more run-of-the-mill results than the

U.S. system of commissioning private architects. Even when re-packaged as a joint development with a hotel, the Rome project proved too expensive for the parsimonious fifties, and was turned down by the multi-layered Italian heritage and planning bodies. Acknowledging the exceptional site, in 1957 the Ministry of Works' permanent secretary hit on the idea of appointing Spence, whose Coventry Cathedral, then under construction, well displayed his special talent for adapting modern architecture to building-types which required elements of stately national symbolism and an effective juxtaposition of new and old. Spence was officially engaged in 1959. In January 1960, he set to work personally, for he saw it as his chief architectural challenge after Coventry. His concept of a modern palazzo 'floating' in the landscape turned out to be perfectly attuned to Italian official expectations, and when, at the EUR in September 1962, he presented a model of the scheme at an hour-and-a-half-long meeting to a forty-five person strong consultative municipal vetting panel of planners, architects and officials, the event turned into a triumph. A senior architect in the firm recalled that at the end, 'they all stood and applauded: it was exactly what they hoped to see!'

It was actually not in Italy but 'back home' that the main threats to the Rome project arose. To begin with, Spence's 'client' was multi-headed. The Ministry of Works staff had given it its unflinching support, but the Foreign Office also had to be kept happy, as did the periodically-changing ambassadors and staff at the post itself. In 1960-1961, for example, Spence devoted much effort to politely rebuffing the attempts by ambassador Sir Ashley Clarke to advocate an elongated, U-shaped block instead of the 'palazzo.' The most serious problems, however, concerned cost, especially after the 1964 Labor victory brought a new suspicion of 'prestige' buildings. Between 1966 and 1967 the project was repeatedly deferred by the Treasury and nearly scrapped altogether, much as happened to the project for the Brasilia embassy, designed by Alison and Peter Smithson. Simultaneously, and ironically, Spence's temporary but far more costly British Pavilion at Expo '67 in Montreal was

being pushed ahead! Building work at Rome was only started in February 1968, but thereafter things went smoothly. Good relations were maintained with the Italian contractor, Castelli, and the various consultants, and the building was well received by the Italian press upon its completion in 1971

In London, the New Zealanders and Matthew met a far more aggressive opposition than Spence had encountered in Rome. The opposition, however, turned out to be something of a paper tiger, one lacking wide public support. From the very inception of Matthew's tower proposal, a complex network of old-style Tory establishment grandees, irritated by the New Zealanders' choice of a Scottish modern architect with strong social-democratic connections, set out to frustrate the plans. The grandees expressed their opposition not openly, as with the earlier Rome debates, but through the secret manipulation typical of British government. The opposition was led by Sir Malcolm Trustram Eve, head of the government land-holding agency, the Commissioners of Crown Lands (CCL). His cautious, conservative approach had numerous allies across the government of Sir Anthony Eden, including the Minister for Commonwealth Affairs, Lord Home, and the Minister of Works, Patrick Buchan-Hepburn, both Scottish Tory aristocrats. From the beginning, they were opposed by 'progressive' forces such as Duncan Sandys, the Minister of Housing and Planning, and even Prince Philip, who "let it be known" at a dinner with New Zealand diplomats in late 1956 that "if it is blocked, they cannot lay it at my door—it's time we saw some buildings from Buckingham Palace!"

The Tory grandees' irritation turned to fury when, in March 1956, Matthew produced an assertive, expressionistic design with a multi-element, dynamically-massed tower that was 315 feet tall, including the flagpole. The design used the newly introduced, Modernist-influenced 'plot ratio' approach to office design and a very individualistic interpretation of the tower and podium fashion that had been established in 1951-1952 by Lever House, in a style somewhere midway between that

of Willem Dudok in the thirties and an anticipation of Postmodernism of the eighties. Horrified, the CCL set about manipulating establishment bodies such as the Royal Fine Art Commission to stifle the project behind the scenes. In April, it commissioned three semi-traditionalist architects, Sir Howard Robertson, Sir Edward Gillett and Anthony Minoprio, to write a condemnatory report on the scheme. They condemned it in outspoken terms, as “harsh and overpowering in scale...a powerful and dynamic mass, symbolic of an intention to dominate at all costs its architectural environment.” It appears likely that Matthew’s first spiky design was merely a negotiating position, for he readily toned down the design, making the tower smaller and more subtly and regularly rectangular.

But Eve’s position eventually began to be undermined by his own hubris, when he unilaterally cancelled a meeting arranged with Prime Minister Holland, then on a visit to London, which made him “hopping mad at the way he was fobbed off,” and determined to force the issue into an open confrontation. The coup de grâce to the opposition was delivered by the unexpected, completely external factor of the Suez Crisis of November 1956. New Zealand was one of only a handful of countries to support the British position, and even allowed a cruiser, H.M.N.Z.S *Royalist*, to be briefly attached to the British invasion fleet. It was something of an irony, to say the least, that New Zealand’s backing for the last display of British imperialism—backing procured through deception by the Eden government—should subsequently and within weeks have secured the victory of this self-consciously progressive and distinctly post-colonial architectural project. Swept along in a wave of public goodwill towards New Zealand and Australia, and in the more general tide of post-imperial reformism unleashed by the Suez debacle, the scheme was swiftly approved in early 1957, as “a ‘good conduct medal’ linked with the present crisis.” Thereafter, progress, compared to Rome, was straightforward. Planning took two years, work on the foundation began in May 1959, and the building was completed three years later. However, a second phase, which would have

extended the podium northwards and accentuated the ‘horizontal’ element of the complex, remained unrealized, owing to the ‘listing’ of an adjacent theater.

In conclusion, if one can arguably and legitimately interpret the story of these two chancery projects as an architectural reflection of the decline and fall of the British empire, then one needs immediately to qualify that interpretation. For the reflection is a complex one, characterised by diversity of perspective, and by positive ideals of the future as much as by negative defensiveness. In Rome, Spence’s more architecturally deferential design formed part of a shared vision for the deepening of British-Italian relations, and it also helped to perpetuate and reinvigorate the wider Western reverence for Rome as an international seat of culture. And in London, New Zealand’s vision of a progressive, post-colonial future, far from being a hostile concept forced on a defeatist host nation, was eagerly echoed and taken up by a reformist coalition within the British establishment, including Matthew himself, whose building, as Central London’s first really prominent ‘skyscraper,’ itself then helped shape the modernization of the former imperial capital.



Socialist Realism vs.  
Socialist Modernism:  
History and Meanings of the  
Tower of the Central Committee  
of the League of Communists of  
Yugoslavia

Vladimir Kulić

*The paper analyzes the former building of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in Belgrade in the light of the historical and political conditions that led to its creation. A building of great political significance and one of the focal points of the new city of New Belgrade, the "CK" building was also representative of the patterns of adoption of modernism in post-war Yugoslavia and of the political evolution occurring in the 1950's. Reflecting the current Soviet dominance in Yugoslavia, many of the original 1947 designs were rendered in monumental Socialist Realist style. However, after the communist leadership of Yugoslavia came into conflict with Stalin in 1948, Yugoslavia reestablished friendly relations with the West, which in architecture resulted in the official acceptance of the high International Style. That acceptance was confirmed by the new design for the CK, which referred to the latest works by Western architects such as Mies van der Rohe and Oscar Niemeyer. The paper analyzes how these international models were appropriated and transformed in the local conditions and how they paradoxically changed meanings when applied to the seat of a communist party. It also traces the controversial public reception of the building, which even led to an unsuccessful terrorist attack in 1979. Finally, the paper explores the current meanings of the building, since both its function and its physical appearance have changed after it was bombed by NATO in 1999.*

It is a rather uncanny feeling to be in New York only a couple of weeks after the anniversary of September 11 and to talk about a building in a distant part of the world whose fate was strangely similar to that of the World Trade Center. The building known as the seat of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in New Belgrade is such a case, despite the cultural, geographical, and ideological differences involved. Built and destroyed around the same time as the Twin Towers, it was an office tower that followed a similar stylistic lineage, descending from Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. Its height of 100 meters (about 300 feet), which made it the tallest building anywhere near it, was a reflection of its prestigious purpose. Even its structural system was similar to that of Minoru Yamasaki's towers. But neither design was considered to be an unequivocal architectural success, and they both carried powerful ideological overtones that attracted hatred from various sides. In 1979, the Belgrade building was a target of an unsuccessful terrorist attack that was planned in the same way as the attacks that destroyed the Twin Towers. Twenty years later, it would not be fortunate to enough to escape disaster once again. It became a victim of NATO missiles and was severely damaged to the point of being scheduled for demolition. But, in the end, it survived and is currently undergoing reconstruction. In its new, post-Communist reincarnation, the former seat of the Communist Party is becoming a business center.

The official name of the edifice was the Building of Social and Political Organizations, but the tower was popularly known as "CK," which stood for the Central Committee of the League of Yugoslavian Communists, one of the "political organizations" it housed. For some forty years, the solitary building was one of the landmarks of New Belgrade, the new capital that embodied the ambition of socialist Yugoslavia to modernize. Indeed, the CK building was in many ways intended as a symbol of modernization and it also represented a good example of the architectural Modernism of its own time. But its prehistory goes back to a period that was less positively inclined toward the Modernism that conquered the world in the 1950's. If Yugoslavia

had had a less complicated history, the CK building could easily have been a grandiose example of Socialist Realism.

The initiative to erect a building for the Central Committee of the Communist Party originated in the same year as the first plans to build the World Trade Center: 1946. It was a part of the larger project of the creation of New Belgrade, which was supposed to be the capital of the new Communist Yugoslavia. The project had a predominantly representational character. Most of the country was devastated by the war and large-scale reconstruction had only begun; in Belgrade alone, approximately one-third of all the city's buildings were completely destroyed. Yet, despite its severe poverty, the new state launched a gigantic project to colonize the marshes on the left bank of the Sava River, as a symbolic gesture of the founding of a new society. Conceived as the seat of the state's most important institutions, the new city was intended to serve as its political heart and as a model for other new towns.

The representational purpose of New Belgrade was firmly set by three simultaneous architectural competitions: for the Presidency of the Federal Government, the Central Committee of the Communist Party, and a luxury hotel for the Party officials and foreign delegations. The competition attracted the best Yugoslav architects of all stylistic and ideological persuasions, mainly from Belgrade, Zagreb, and Ljubljana. As critics at the time claimed, the results revealed two major lines: "functional" and "monumental," which, speaking in very general terms, indicated a tension between Modernism and Socialist Realism. Pressure to accept Socialist Realism came from the politicians; some architects obliged, others resisted, and the situation often resulted in projects that mixed classical monumentality and Modernist elements. The first prize entry for the Presidency of the Federal Government was paradigmatic: its overall form could be linked to Le Corbusier's projects from the 1930's, but the heavy cladding in white marble and the imposing portico were reminiscent of the wide-spread classical revival of the 1930's.

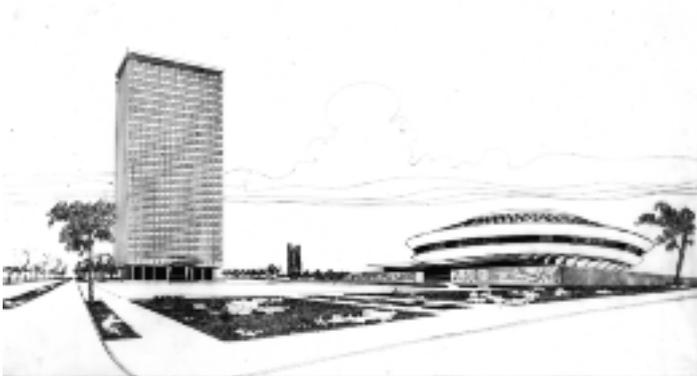
Of the three buildings, that for the Central Committee carried the greatest political charge. The competition propositions openly called for a "monumental" design, preferably in the form of a tall tower that would show the predominance of the Communist Party. Obviously none of the entries was deemed monumental enough, since no first prize was awarded. Still, some of the premiated entries, especially after a second round of competition, were more or less heavily influenced by Socialist Realism; and some of these were probably the closest that Yugoslav architecture ever got to the Soviet version of Socialist Realism.<sup>1</sup>

When the construction of New Belgrade began in April 1948, the building of the Central Committee was still waiting for an appropriate design. Then came the fateful events of 1948. The Communist Party of Yugoslavia, headed by Josip Broz Tito, resisted Stalin's repeated attempts to take greater control of the country, and punishment soon followed. In June of that year the Yugoslavs were expelled from the Communist International and proclaimed traitors to Communism. This break-up resulted in the sudden economic and political isolation of the country, followed by a serious economic crisis. Almost the entire building industry was brought to a halt, including the construction of prestigious state buildings in New Belgrade. When work finally continued in the mid-1950's, the political situation had already radically changed.

Between 1948 and 1956, Yugoslavia made a surprising political summersault, leaving the Communist bloc and reestablishing friendly relations with the West. While still clinging to Communism, the country experimented with somewhat more liberal forms of government. The reformist project was significantly aided by the West, which was eager to weaken the Communist bloc even at the price of supporting an outcast Communist country. Yugoslav culture opened to Western influences and, indeed, within a few years, it caught up with the latest developments in Europe and the United States.

In architecture, the result of these political changes was the early abandonment of Socialist Realism. By 1950, obligatory Soviet influences of previous years were officially condemned and less than a handful of buildings in Belgrade could be very broadly characterized as Socialist Realist, the most prominent of them being the Trade Unions' House. High "International Style" gained official acceptance, with Yugoslavia even hosting the last meeting of CIAM, in 1956. Many buildings whose construction had begun in the early postwar years were altered to match the newly adopted Modernism, including the half-finished building of the Federal Government in New Belgrade.

A renewed, limited competition for the building of the Central Committee was held in these changed conditions in 1959. The principal designer of the winning entry was Mihailo Janković, who had made his name as a designer of the first large sports stadium in Belgrade. He also redesigned and finished the Federal Government Building after its construction was resumed in 1955. Although not a particularly innovative designer, he was a competent architect who had mastered the language of the high International Style, and with the commission for the CK building he became an unofficial "court architect" of Tito's regime. How Janković acquired that position is not quite clear, especially in the light of the fact that he was not a member of the Party.



*Figure 1: Mihailo Janković, Dušan Milenković: The building of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in New Belgrade, post-competition design with a conference pavilion. (Courtesy Aleksandar Janković).*

Despite this prominent position, however, he was never really recognized by the profession, and his name is practically forgotten today.

Janković and his team (Dušan Milenković and Mirjana Marjanović) proposed a 100 meter (300 feet) tall office tower and a low conference pavilion raised on stilts, a generic type of the International Style employed for the widest array of office buildings, including SOM's first proposal for the WTC. During the development of the design, however, the lower volume was transformed into a round conference hall in the form of a "flying saucer" sitting on a thin horizontal slab. (Figure 1) A previously generic reference thus gained specificity, recalling the contemporary work of Oscar Niemeyer. That Brazilian architect certainly exercised some influence in Belgrade at the time: Janković himself used Niemeyer-inspired free-form curves on several other occasions, while the contemporary design for the building of the Municipality of New Belgrade—not far from the site of the CK building—proposed a meeting room in the form of an upside-down pyramid. The low pavilion of the CK very clearly and specifically recalled Brasilia, Niemeyer's convex and concave "bowls" here being united into a single element. The fact that New Belgrade paralleled Brasilia as a new capital, that Brazil was a former colony governed by socialists at the time, and that Niemeyer was himself a Communist, may have made the reference politically desirable.

In the end, though, the conference pavilion was never built, and the solitary prism of the CK tower unwittingly shifted its reference from Niemeyer to Mies. (Figure 2) The prismatic box of the tower was easily recognizable by contemporary commentators as basically Miesian.<sup>2</sup> Similarities extended to the interiors, too; the lobby with its marble-clad walls and large expanses of glass indeed resembled that of the Seagram Building, except that it was decorated by the obligatory bust of Lenin. However, there were also significant differences, not without a hint of irony. Mies' skyscrapers belonged to a building type that owed its existence to dense urban conditions, whereas the CK building was erected within a vast empty space and owed its height exclusively to



Figure 2: The CK building as finished in the early 1960's.  
(Courtesy Aleksandar Janković).

symbolic aims. More importantly, Mies's skyscrapers were commercial buildings that became prototypes and symbols of corporate architecture. Housing the seat of a Communist party in a building like that was a paradoxical transfer of form that only proved the difficulty of establishing direct relationships between forms and ideologies.

The structural system of the building very much resembled that of Yamasaki's slightly later towers, although built of different materials. It consisted of a central elevator core and a perimeter concrete "cage" of thin columns densely arranged on the façade. That left clear spans in the interior with no columns interrupting the space. The original design proposed light infill panels for spandrels, but they were actually built in traditional masonry,

most likely because more advanced technologies were not available. But from the outside, the façade conveyed a completely different message; with its columns clad in aluminum and spandrels covered with green glass, it looked like a curtain wall. Yugoslavia at the time had an advanced technology of reinforced concrete, but metal constructions—including curtain walls—lagged far behind, and this mock curtain-wall was obviously used for visual effect. It seems that it was important to demonstrate that the country could catch up with the latest architectural trends, even at the expense of making the building look like something that it was not.

Despite its Modernist abstraction and seeming disinterest in conveying overt ideological messages, the CK building still had a representational function to fulfill. The height of the building had a symbolic meaning from the very start; the tower indeed dominated the landscape, especially at the time immediately after it was finished, when there was not much built around it. It also offered a corresponding sense of power to those inside the building through its commanding views of the whole city. Despite its height, the abstract, boxy tower had much less representational potential than the original 1947 designs, whose messages were clearly conveyed by sculptures of workers and Partisans. As it turns out, the new version of the CK building contained a "secret device" that bridged this problem in an ultimately Modernist way: the curtain-wall was equipped with special lights built into every window, thus enabling the facades to be lit at night in different patterns.<sup>3</sup> The facades functioned as a primitive version of a gigantic digital display that conveyed political messages, the most memorable one being "Long Live Tito" displayed on the occasion of major state holidays. That must have made a powerful impression on the city, since even the *New York Times* correspondent wrote about it.<sup>4</sup> But, in this way, the symbolic content of the building became detached from its physical structure; it became transitory and fully dependent on those who controlled the building. The ease with which the building would later change its function was obviously built into it from the very start.

Thus, an edifice that contained no clear ideological label came to be identified as a symbol of Communism. But it fulfilled that function only in part. While it was mainly the seat of the Communist bureaucracy, everyone in the country knew that the real power lay elsewhere: with Tito, who allegedly hated the building and entered it only at the opening ceremony. Without any overt ideological attributes, the CK building was at most an ambiguous symbol that functioned by association with its current inhabitants. However, even that was enough for the uninformed, as illustrated by an episode when the building became a target of a real terrorist attack. In 1979, Serbian anti-Communist émigré Nikola Kavaja, who was obsessed with assassinating Tito, hijacked an airplane in Chicago with the intention to fly it to Belgrade and crash into the CK tower. The plan was imaginative and, as proven later by the fate of the World Trade Center, viable, but it failed due to Kavaja's incompetence. First, it was based on a false assumption that Tito lived in the building; and second, Kavaja did not know how to find the CK building in Belgrade. When he realized that he was not able to complete the mission, the would-be assassin surrendered and was sent to prison.<sup>5</sup>

Political changes that occurred in the early 1990s made the unwitting reference to Mies's commercial skyscrapers ironically appropriate. Slobodan Milošević and his profit-minded Socialist Party claimed to be the only heirs to the property of the League of Communists and turned the tower into a rental building. For almost a decade they collected considerable income from it. While they kept a part of the space inside for themselves, they rented the remainder to newly founded private companies close to Milošević's clique. These included several radio and TV stations, one of them owned by Milošević's own daughter. For their broadcasting needs a large antenna was placed on the roof, which proved fatal during the bombing of Serbia in the spring of 1999, because NATO declared broadcasting facilities to be legitimate targets as parts of the Serbian "war machine." Several Tomahawk missiles hit the building on two different occasions, demolishing both a few top floors along with the antenna and some of the floors

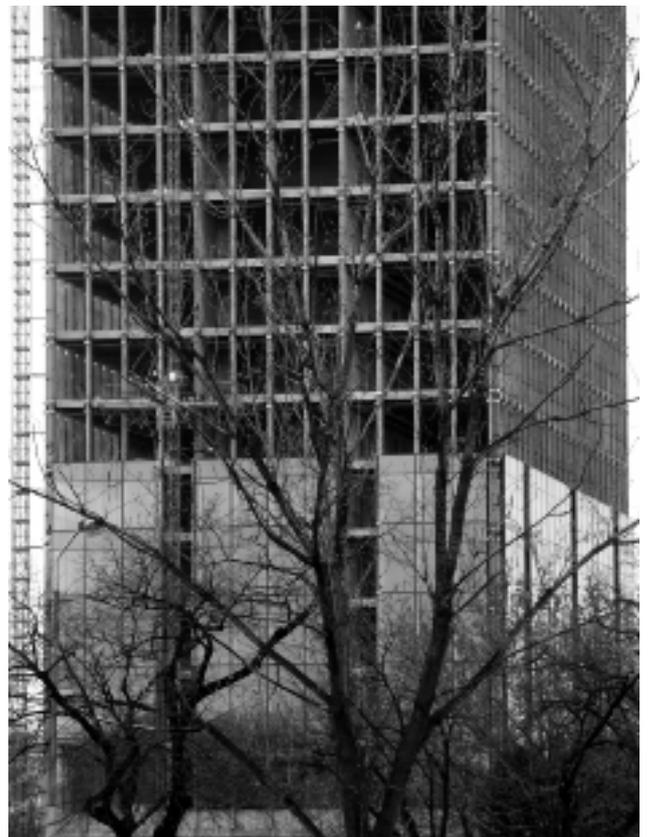


Figure 3: Reconstruction of the CK building. (Photo by author, 2004).

near the ground. Strangely enough, the building did not collapse, and for some two years it stood like a ghost overlooking the plains of New Belgrade.

After Milošević was ousted in October 2000, the new government sold the building to an international consortium. The tower was at first scheduled for demolition, but the new owners eventually decided that it was worth repairing. The building was stripped to its bare structure and the damaged areas were reinforced. In 2003, a competition was organized to gather ideas for the reconstruction and enlargement of the tower. The fact that none of the winning entries made any comment on its original function only confirms its status as an unlikely symbol of Communism.

At this moment, the CK building is getting a new façade, this time a "real" curtain-wall: light,

transparent, and technologically very up-to-date. (Figure 3) It will be reopened as a business center and, considering its location and size, it is certain that it will attract the wealthiest among the foreign companies that are doing business in Belgrade. The old seat of the Communist Party happily shed its obsolete skin and is changing into a new post-Communist cloak. What remains permanent, though, is the fact that it will continue to be the seat of power of the country's rulers. The only difference is that now its veneer is no longer political ideology but money.

What can we learn from the strangely parallel aspects of buildings that embodied totally opposed ideologies, such as the CK and the Twin Towers? Probably that it is next to impossible to establish firm and definite connections between architectural forms and political and cultural identities. As the 19<sup>th</sup> century had already shown, internationally accepted architectural languages, then in the guise of historicism, could be used to represent a variety of identities. The same thing happened with the widespread acceptance of the International Style. Despite the world being divided by irreconcilable differences, Modernism after World War II paradoxically confirmed its own claims to universality, thereby subverting our normal expectations and categorizations.

*AUTHOR'S UPDATE: The reconstructed CK building opened in 2005 as the most prestigious rental office space in Belgrade. Its height was increased by two additional floors containing a luxury restaurant with the most spectacular view in the city. The façade is still used for displaying ideological messages, but of a different kind; ironically, instead of hailing Tito, last Christmas it showed a gigantic cross, which would have been unimaginable during the Communist times.*

*The building is currently undergoing expansion: besides a large shopping mall at its foot, the tower will soon have an identical twin next door. In a fascinating twist of events, the unlikely parallel with New York's Twin Towers will be thus confirmed.*

#### Notes

1. For an overview of the competitions, see *Arhitektura* (Zagreb) I: 3 (1947); also: Bratislav Stojanović, "Konkursi za dom Centralnog komiteta KPJ i zgradu Predsedništva vlade FNRJ," in: *Tehnika* (Belgrade) II: 6 (1947): 141-47.
2. Ranko Trbojević, "Zid zavesa i njegova primena u Beogradu," *Arhitektura Urbanizam* 8:44 (1967): 18-19.
3. For a description of the system, see Trbojević, "Zid zavesa."
4. See David Binder, "Those Friendly Beogradjani," *New York Times*, Nov. 21, 1965, 98. A photograph of the building lit up with the words "Long Live Tito" was published in *Arhitektura urbanizam* 7: 41-42 (1966): 6.
5. See Nathaniel Sheppard, "New York-Chicago Jet Hijacked: Passengers Free, It Returns Here," *New York Times*, June 21, 1979, A1; see also Toma Džadžić, "Predskazanja: Milić rušio-Kavaja robijao," *NIN*, July 15, 1999.

## Claude Laurens and a New Architecture for “le Nouveau Congo”: Assessing Postwar Tropical Modernism in a Colonial Context

Johan Lagae

*The work of the French born architect Claude Laurens in Leopoldville (nowadays Kinshasa) ranks among the most striking fifties architecture in Congo, Belgium's former colony. Drawing on a Corbusian formal vocabulary (pilotis, brise-soleil,...) and being reminiscent of 1930's and 1940's Brazilian modernism in its rational approach to climate, Laurens' projects belong to the “tropical modernism” that flourished in various continents during the postwar period. As such, they can easily be read as examples of an emerging international practice of which Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew count among the most prolific exponents.*

*This paper, however, argues that this “tropical modernism” should not solely be studied as an international idiom, nor be analyzed as a particular category of “critical regionalism”. It rather makes a plea for a historicizing approach that discusses this form of modernism within particular local economical, political, and social contexts. This paper, then, aims at showing how despite their somewhat generic modernist appearance, Laurens' Congolese projects are in fact embedded in the very specific 1950's context of colonial Leopoldville. To that end, questions of patronage, of architectural representation, as well as of domestic practices will be addressed. This will make clear that these projects are as much expressions of local building attitudes and social conventions governing colonial society in the Belgian Congo, as they are indebted to the widely emerging design approach towards climatic responsiveness. In doing so, similarities and, albeit sometimes subtle, differences between metropolitan and colonial postwar design practices will come to the fore.*

### Tropical modernism, a “dialect of internationalism”

It was once typical of architectural historians to limit the geographical scope of historical research on modern architecture almost exclusively to the many wanderings of Le Corbusier, notwithstanding the fact that these are, as Jean-Louis Cohen once aptly remarked, “equaled only by those of Tintin in Hergé's comics.”<sup>1</sup> Major efforts to document and study the “diaspora of modern architecture” outside the canonized regions of architectural historiography are therefore a recent phenomenon. In this study, I will focus on a modernist architectural oeuvre in a part of the globe where Le Corbusier never set foot, but that was the destination of one of the most well known journeys of Tintin: the Democratic Republic of Congo, which had been a Belgian colony until 1960. More particularly, my paper will address the postwar designs of the French architect Claude Laurens for the former colonial capital Leopoldville, today Kinshasa. Laurens' work is one of the most striking legacies of modern architecture in the former Belgian Congo. He was, in fact, one of the few architects working in the colony whose buildings received international acclaim. Some of his completed works were published in *l'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, and he is mentioned in Udo Kultermann seminal 1963 survey, *Neues Bauen in Afrika*.<sup>2</sup>

My focus on Laurens' work is not for its own sake, but for the way it allows me to address some of the broader questions of internationalization in postwar architecture. In fact, the rational climatic approach of Laurens' projects makes them reminiscent of Brazilian modernism of the 1930's and 1940's. As a result, they belong to a particular strand of modern architecture that flourished in the hot and humid climate zones of the globe beginning in the late 1940's. Laurens' projects can thus be read as examples of an emerging international practice exemplified by its most prolific exponents, Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew, authors of the classic book *Tropical Architecture in the Humid Zone* of 1956. This study's objective is a critical assessment of the paradigm that is often referred to as “tropical modernism” and that Maxwell Fry himself once

described as a “dialect of internationalism.”<sup>3</sup> I will not discuss this “tropical modernism” as a form of “critical regionalism,” as Liane Lefaivre and Alexander Tzonis have done in a recently published book.<sup>4</sup> I will, rather, make a plea for a historicizing approach that not only discusses this form of modernism in cultural terms, but also analyzes it within particular local economical, political, and social contexts. I will show how, despite their somewhat generic modernist appearance, Laurens’ Congolese projects are, in fact, embedded in the very specific 1950’s context of colonial Leopoldville. Addressing questions of patronage, architectural representation, and domestic practices allows me to demonstrate that these projects are as much expressions of local building attitudes and social conventions governing colonial society in the Belgian Congo as they are of their debt to the above-mentioned international design approach towards climatic adaptation. In the process, similarities and sometimes subtle differences between metropolitan and colonial postwar design practices will become apparent.

### **“Towards a new architecture in the Belgian Congo”**

Trained in France in the 1930’s, Laurens established his office in Brussels in 1946 and immediately gained a certain national and international acclaim. In 1951, he discovered



Figure 1: First project for the Aviamar-hotel in Leopoldville, 1951 (© Archives Laurens, Paris).

that the Belgian Congo was a new and promising area for his work. While he never established an office in the colony, between 1951 and 1960 he nevertheless did produce a significant body of work in the colony. His very first projects for the Belgian Congo already displayed his keen preference for a tropical modernist idiom that resolutely broke with the then-current design practice in the colony, which was still rooted in interwar approaches to climate, construction and form. (Figure 1) These designs demonstrate the logical and coherent approach towards climatic responsiveness Laurens energetically promoted in his 1953 text, *Vers une nouvelle architecture au Congo belge*.<sup>5</sup> They take into account orientation and protection from sun, rain and glare, as well as cross ventilation.

The formal vocabulary of *pilotis*, *brise-soleil* and *loggia*'s that is characteristic of Laurens' work is openly indebted to the Corbusian oeuvre, which, as the son of the famous French sculptor Henri Laurens and Le Corbusier's personal friend he had come to know well.<sup>6</sup> He never incorporated the “Africanizing” patterns of the kind Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew had used to give some of their designs “a flavor associated with Africa” and a “definite local character for their formal language nor in their architectural detailing in order.”<sup>7</sup> Laurens adhered to the then common conviction among architects that from an architectural point of view Central Africa was virgin territory, and that local building traditions offered no viable model whatsoever for the articulation of a contemporary architecture.<sup>8</sup>

With their strongly articulated building volumes and elegant façades enlivened by playful contrasts of light and shadow, Laurens’ projects became a crucial part of the 1950’s image of “*le nouveau Congo*” that was propagated in the popular press. Some of them were featured on the covers of colonial magazines and even appeared in illustrated missionary magazines, where they served as icons of the so-called “modernized” colony. The straightforwardly modernist look of Laurens’ most remarkable projects for the Congo can be explained at least in part by their specific patronage. In fact, it



Figure 2: The Sabena high-rise towers in Leopoldville, 1952-1954 (Period photograph, © Archives Laurens, Paris).

was at the request of Sabena, Belgium's national airline, that Claude Laurens had first traveled to the Congo in 1951. Sabena had commissioned two large projects from him: a series of high-rise residential towers to house the company's rapidly growing staff and the impressive *Aviamar* complex, consisting of a hotel of international rank annexed to the air terminal which was meant to mark Leopoldville as the central node of Sabena's African airline network. Both projects were clearly intended to define Sabena's corporate identity as a company that fully embraced modernity.<sup>9</sup>

In this respect, Sabena's building policy in Congo's capital was the mirror image of its policy in the mother country. Indeed, the construction of the two high-rise towers in Leopoldville coincided exactly with that of a new air terminal in Brussels which was meant to transform the Belgian capital into the "Crossroads of Europe." Situated next to the central railway station and thus in the vicinity of the capital's historic center, the terminal stood out as an unmistakably contemporary construction,

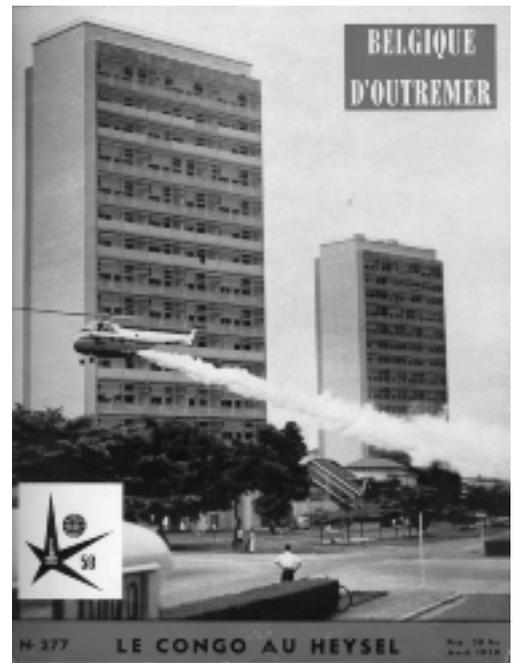


Figure 3: Cover of *Belgique d'Outremer*, 277 (1958), showing the two Sabena high-rise towers as icons of "le nouveau Congo."

the moderate degree of its modernist appearance notwithstanding. An article in *Sabena Revue* devoted to the recently finished building was tellingly entitled "Old Lace and Brave New World in Brussels, Belgium." A nighttime photograph depicting the air terminal as a modern light beacon unlike anything in its setting conveyed this message visually.<sup>10</sup>

Laurens' projects for Sabena in Leopoldville testify to the extent to which the colonial capital of that time functioned as an extension of the metropolitan building market and its private entrepreneurship and real estate logic. For an architect like Laurens, working conditions in the Belgian Congo did not seem all that different from those *en métropole*, in the metropolitan center of the empire, where he had his office. Nor did the building programs, for that matter. As in Belgium, his commissions in Leopoldville consisted of single family houses, apartment buildings, commercial buildings and garages, bank branches and a few recreational complexes. The image of "le nouveau Congo" that was conveyed by Laurens' buildings in Leopoldville,

however, highlights only one particular part of the colonial capital. It is important to keep in mind that he operated exclusively in the so-called *ville européenne* of that segregated colonial city. Constructing housing settlements for Congolese, for instance, remained the responsibility of either large enterprises or of governmental services.<sup>11</sup>

### **Building for “the demands of a colonial lifestyle”**

As a colonial city, Leopoldville possessed a social context that contrasted in many respects with the one in an urban center like Brussels. Not only was colonial urban space in the Congo divided physically into a *ville européenne* and one or more *cités indigènes*; it was also separated by a so-called *zone neutre*, a no-man’s land where construction was forbidden. Belgian colonial society was also divided socially by a “color bar” that regulated many aspects of daily life. Even if they were never as openly acknowledged as apartheid was in South Africa, various forms of segregation existed in domains such as leisure, commerce, transport, education and work, and they were maintained by many laws. The colonial encounter in the Congo thus took place within a framework of a racially defined hierarchy that was itself rooted in a paternalistic colonial policy.<sup>12</sup> A photograph of a Congolese nanny escorting a white boy with the two Sabena high-rise towers in the background published in the popular weekly paper *Zondagsvriend* depicts a scene typical of postwar daily life in the colony. It reminds us that the context of segregation should not be omitted from readings of Laurens’ tropical modernism.<sup>13</sup>

Laurens himself clearly acknowledged that his architecture concerned only the colonizers’ community and not the Congolese population, and that it was designed specifically to “respond perfectly to the needs of the modern white man in Africa.”<sup>14</sup> This message is echoed in real estate advertisements for his residential projects, which asserted that the apartments provided all the comfort necessary for leading “an urban life in the

colony.” Close readings of plans of his buildings reveal how his projects took into consideration notions of dwelling specific to the Congo of the 1950’s and accepted the social implications of colonialism as a given for the building program.

Between 1951 and 1960, Laurens designed a large number of luxury apartment buildings in Leopoldville. They were to be constructed in durable, noble materials, with spacious living rooms, wide terraces and, in most cases, bathrooms and kitchens equipped with up-to-date facilities.<sup>15</sup> This provision of the latest modern comforts was linked to a new social phenomenon in the colony of the immediate postwar years. Promising economic perspectives in the colony encouraged a growing number of Belgians to immigrate there. A significant part of this postwar immigration consisted of families, in contrast to the bachelors of previous times. As the cost of employing several African domestic servants, especially in large urban centers such as Leopoldville, was becoming extremely onerous, the European spouse was obliged to take a more active role in the colonial household than European women had done previously. Debates about domestic practices then raging in Belgium, especially those concerning the necessity of providing the home with a “*cuisine laboratoire*,” were, therefore, quickly introduced into the Congo.<sup>16</sup>

This does not mean, however, that domestic servants were completely absent. In fact, Laurens’ various residential projects all have specific facilities that still reveal the presence of nannies and the so-called “boys” in the daily routine of a 1950’s colonial household. Ground plans articulate different circulation patterns for inhabitants and servants: elevators as opposed to staircases and separate hallways and galleries. In keeping with the usual building regulations, there are separate sanitary facilities, with the ones for the domestic servants generally found in proximity to the kitchen and laundry room. The plans of Laurens’ apartments or flats also typically contain a so-called *office*, or butler’s pantry, which served as a buffer zone between kitchen and dining room while providing a space for contacts

between servants and inhabitants.

Such layouts are, of course, not exclusively colonial. They were also inherent to the typology of metropolitan dwellings for families with domestic servants. In his 1946 book *L'appartement d'aujourd'hui*, for example, the Belgian architect Jean Delhaye described the indispensable use of the *office* as a buffer between kitchen and dining room to block the sounds or smells of food preparation as well as to offer protection from the "indiscrete" gazes of the servants.<sup>17</sup> Laurens' residential projects in Congo show remarkable skill in providing these service spaces. This is hardly surprising, if one takes into account the fact that a major part of his metropolitan work consisted precisely of upper class residential projects, where households were run with the help of a domestic staff. The apartment complexes he designed for Brussels' *Avenue Louise*, one of the elite boulevards of the Belgian capital, are a case in point that illustrates the fact of colonial segregation. The sleeping facilities for domestic servants included in his apartments for the *métropole* do not appear in those for the colonial capital, for local policy in Leopoldville stipulated that after work servants had to return to the *cité indigène* to spend the night.<sup>18</sup> How these colonial policies, which varied locally throughout the Congolese territory, transformed European domestic practices by shaping new living patterns and by inducing distinct notions of privacy and intimacy in both the private and the public realms of colonial cities is a topic that needs further research.

### **The colony versus the métropole**

Laurens' colonial apartments ranked among the "top places to live" in Leopoldville, and the space and comfort they provided were considered quite exclusive even according to standards in vogue in the *métropole*. Yet, their occupants did not necessarily belong to the upper class of the colonial establishment. As colonial policy stipulated that employers should provide their employees with housing, ordinary agents of governmental services or commercial enterprises could live in spacious

urban dwellings such as these. The fact that they could enjoy a standard of comfort on par with that of some members of the elite in Belgium shows that typical living standards in the capital of the Belgian Congo were considerably higher than those *en métropole* during the 1950's. In this respect, it must be noted that Belgian colonization was never a *colonisation du peuplement* that encouraged permanent settlement. Most Belgians served only for short periods in the Congo. Moreover, the colonial government even put in place a strict immigration policy meant to prevent at any price the emergence in the Congo of a community of "poor whites" that could lead to social conflicts within the white community of the kind that had emerged in South Africa. In contrast to the colonies that encouraged permanent settlement, in the Belgian colony there were absolutely no programs of low-cost housing for Europeans.

We should not, however, conclude that the Belgian Congo was an architectural laboratory, where architects were free to design as they wished, as has been suggested.<sup>19</sup> While the tropical climate offered Laurens the opportunity to legitimize the use of a modernist idiom and provided him with enlightened patrons as clients, even he experienced the limits of working in the Congo. The two high-rise towers commissioned by Sabena are a case in point. Indeed, Sabena was quickly confronted by its agents' lack of enthusiasm for this new housing solution. Just as in the mother country, Belgians preferred single-family houses, even if these needed to be located at a greater distance from the city center than high-rise apartment buildings. Three towers were planned initially but only two were actually executed. Moreover, only thirteen of the thirty-two projects Laurens designed for the Belgian Congo were built, for the economic prosperity that made the real estate market flourish in the early 1950's began to decline rapidly after 1956. Some of his designs were drastically reduced in size. All of his built projects in Kinshasa, however, are still standing today and testify to that very brief era in which the city became what is nowadays remembered by Congolese as *Kin-la-Belle*.

When the Congo became independent in 1960, Laurens returned to the metropolitan design practice that, in fact, he had never abandoned.<sup>20</sup> Even if his “tropical modernist” projects often display a more plastic formal treatment and design than his metropolitan work, his whole *œuvre* is typified by a remarkably coherent design approach. His projects in the Congo therefore are linked to a generic form of “modernism” that pervaded the globe in the post-war period. However, as I have tried to illustrate, there are small but significant differences between his Congolese and metropolitan projects. That is why this paper suggests that “tropical modernism” should no longer be defined as a unified idiom, but rather be studied in a historically nuanced manner that reveals its diverse local expressions. Only then will the canonical modern survey, with its geographical blind spots, be rewritten in a meaningful way.

**Notes**

1. Jean-Louis Cohen, “In search of a critical practice,” *Casabella*, 1 (1996): 23.
2. For a complete survey of the oeuvre and its reception, see Johan Lagae and Denise Laurens, *Claude Laurens. Architecture. Projets et réalisations de 1934 à 1971* (Ghent: Department of Architecture and Urban Planning, Ghent University 2001).
3. E. Maxwell Fry, “West Africa,” *Architectural Review*, 761 (1960): 8.
4. Liane Lefaivre, Alexander Tzonis & Bruno Stagno, *Tropical Architecture. Critical Regionalism in the Age of Globalization* (Chichester: Wiley Academy, 2001).
5. Claude Laurens, “Vers une nouvelle architecture au Congo belge,” *La Revue Congolaise du Bâtiment et de l’Industrie*, 7 (1953): 9.
6. Henri Laurens. *Rétrospective* (Villeneuve d’Ascq: Musée d’Art Moderne, 1992).
7. For instance in the Adisol College, Ivory Coast, see *Architectural Review*, 677 (1953): 298–299.
8. Senec, ‘Le Congo à l’âge du building’ (interview with Claude Laurens), *Pourquoi pas?*, March 13, 1953, 33–34.
9. This corporate identity was introduced by Sabena’s president of the time, Gilbert Périer; cf. ‘Gilbert Périer ou 25 ans de fidélité à l’aviation commerciale,’ *Sabena Revue*, 3 (1955).
10. *Sabena Revue*, 1 (1954), n.p.
11. Bruno De Meulder, *Kuvuande Mbote. Een eeuw koloniale architectuur en stedenbouw in Kongo* (Antwerpen: Houtekiet/deSingel, 2000).
12. On the “color bar” in the Belgian Congo see Georges Brausch, *Belgian Administration in the Congo* (London/Oxford: Institute of Race Relations/Oxford University Press, 1961). For its impact on planning and building practice, see E. Devroey, *La réglementation sur les constructions au Congo belge* (Bruxelles: I.R.C.B., 1941).
13. *Zondagsvriend*, May 30, 1957, 19.
14. Claude Laurens, “Vers une nouvelle...,” 9.
15. Laurens, for instance, often provided apartments with the Cubex kitchen, designed in the mid 1930’s by Louis-Herman De Koninck and still considered a first-class kitchen in Belgium in the 1950’s.
16. These topics were addressed in, among other publications, the *Bulletin de l’Union des Femmes Coloniales*.
17. Jean Delhay, *L’appartement d’aujourd’hui* (Liège: Ed. Desoer, 1946) 108–109.
18. On April 7th, 1937 a new law was decreed further limiting traffic at night between parts of the colonial city.
19. See, among others, Anne Van Loo, “Introduction,” *Dictionnaire de l’Architecture en Belgique de 1830 à présent* (Antwerpen: Mercatorfonds, 2003).
20. Laurens would design three more projects for Africa after 1960, of which only the airport in Kigali, Rwanda was partially executed.

## (Inter)nationalizing Modernism: The Case of Finnish Architecture

Petra Čeferin

*In the late 1950s and 1960s the Museum of Finnish Architecture arranged a number of exhibitions with an aim to make Finland's modern architecture internationally known. These exhibitions incited a lively dialogue between foreign critics and Finnish architects surrounding the subject of Finnish modernism, a dialogue through which the public image of Finnish modernism gradually crystallised.*

*In this dialogue both sides "talked" about the key qualities that determine Finnish modernism. However, the views of each side differed significantly with regard to one question: the national or international character of Finnish modernism. The foreign critics insisted on discerning the difference. The Finns, however, were concerned with emphasising precisely the opposite; they tried to show that Finnish modernism was simply a constitutive part of the international architectural production.*

*This curious dichotomy is the subject of this paper; it shows how Finnish modernism was understood by each of the respective sides and why it was understood in such divergent ways. To explain the reasons for this dichotomy is actually to reveal the positions – the sets of beliefs and images - from which each of the respective sides spoke. This paper shows that in the architectural discourse of the late 1950's the concepts of national and international were far from being univocal. Rather than simply denoting a dissemination of an architectural expression to either one or several countries, they had strong political, social and economic connotations.*

*This paper focuses on the first exhibition held in London, 1957, and examines the photographs and texts that were exhibited and published in relation to this event.*

On April 11, 1957 the exhibition Architecture in Finland opened at the Royal Institute of British Architects in London. This was the first in an extensive series of general presentations of Finland's modern architecture that the Museum of Finnish Architecture arranged until the end of the 1970's, with the explicit aim of bringing international attention to the topic. These exhibitions incited a lively dialogue between foreign architectural critics and Finnish architects on the subject of Finnish Modernism, a dialogue through which its public image gradually crystallized. In this dialogue both sides "talked" about the key qualities, that determines Finnish Modernism: Finnish architects through the medium of the exhibitions, and foreign critics through the medium of the daily and professional press.<sup>1</sup> However, the views of each side differed significantly with regard to one question: the national or international character of Finnish Modernism. The foreign (Western) critics insisted on discerning the difference in Finnish Modernism: its national character, its flavor or the small twists and turns that made it different from architectural production elsewhere. The Finns, however, were concerned with emphasizing precisely the opposite: its sameness. They tried to show that Finnish Modernism was simply a constitutive part of international architectural production.

This curious dichotomy is the subject of this paper, which attempts to show how Finnish Modernism was understood by each of the respective sides and why it was understood in such divergent ways. To explain the reasons for this dichotomy is actually to reveal the positions – the sets of beliefs and images - from which each of the respective sides spoke. Analysis of this dialogue shows that in the architectural discourse of the late 1950s, the concepts of national and international were far from univocal. Rather than simply denoting the dissemination of architectural expression to either one or several countries, they had strong political, social and economic connotations. My focus here will be on the dialogue elicited by the first of these exhibitions. In the late 1950s, London was a center for the formation of architectural discourse; thus this dialogue had particularly far-reaching effects on further discussion – and consequently

on the crystallization – of the image of Finnish Modernism.

Eight years before the opening, in his highly influential *Space, Time and Architecture*, Sigfried Giedion accorded Alvar Aalto the privileged title of one of the greatest masters of Modernism. In Giedion's view Aalto possessed the rare abilities to use standardization "from a human standpoint," "merge scientific reasoning and artistic imagination," and "integrate the latest mechanical processes with the regional element."<sup>2</sup> His work marked a fundamental change in architecture, which Giedion formulated as "the leap from the rational-functional to the irrational-organic."<sup>3</sup> This text must be borne in mind when we approach the exhibition reviews. It seems that the British critics of 1957 considered it a significant and highly reliable source of information, not only on the architecture of Alvar Aalto but, more generally, on Finnish architecture as a whole. Indeed, precisely where Giedion saw merit in Aalto, they saw merit in all Finnish architects.<sup>4</sup>

In his article on Finnish Modernism, suggestively entitled "Finland – the Best of Both Worlds," J.M. Richards praised precisely these "synthetic" abilities of Finnish architects. He explained that they knew how to use prefabrication yet developed their individuality as artists and that "the best modern Finnish architecture manages to be scientific without being inhuman, regional without being provincial, and individual without being whimsical or egocentric."<sup>5</sup> Here he is paraphrasing Giedion, but he went further, suggesting that Finnish architects in general were capable of effecting the crucial synthesis.

Several other critics expressed similar sentiments. They, too, tended to see a synthesis or integration of two worlds in Finnish Modernism: a world ruled by scientific reason and industrial production, together with a world distinguished by a humane approach (which softened scientific reason), artistic imagination (which invigorated standardized elements), and a sensitivity to regional and individual character (which differentiated the



*Figure 1: The Palace Hotel by Viljo Revell and Keijo Petäjä, seen in Finland as strikingly modern and distinguished by "a vaguely American touch". (Photo by Heikki Havas, Courtesy of the Museum of Finnish Architecture).*

prefabricated from the anonymous or general). Indeed, it was generally felt that Finnish Modernism had found the answer to what were recognized as the problems facing architecture in the modern age.<sup>6</sup>

Richards offered a few examples in which this crucial synthesis was achieved, the Palace Hotel (Figure 1) designed by Viljo Revell and Keijo Petäjä (1949–1953). "This building appears like dozens of other concrete frame buildings in central Europe or America," he wrote, "but instead of their smooth anonymity it has a tough individuality." In Richards's view this was a result of "treating the concrete as the craftsman's rather than an industrialist's material."

Richards saw another example in Kaija and Heikki Siren's Student Restaurant in Otaniemi (1952), where "again the material is used scientifically yet with the rugged quality we are more used to finding in the work of a less self-conscious craftsman such as a boat-builder."<sup>7</sup> These buildings were different – tough, rugged, more individual – because they were handmade rather than reproduced by mechanical processes. This view was endorsed by a number of other critics. They, too, referred to Finnish buildings as products of craft and emphasized their toughness, hardness, and even their muscular character.<sup>8</sup> In these qualities they identified the material expression of the Finnishness of Finnish Modernism. In an article published in the *Architectural Review*, Reyner Banham did not talk explicitly about the national character of Finnish Modernism. Yet he, too, focused on – as he put it – "the highly characteristic twists" that distinguished this architecture from the International Style and described these twists using terms similar to those of other critics. Writing about the Palace Hotel, he remarked that "instead of Hiltonian lushness and smoothness the building has a rather stern and hard-faced quality." Describing another of Revell's buildings, he wrote of the Kudeneule Factory (Figure 2) that "it seems to be only a variant of General Motors Technical Centre, but the effect is, in visual fact, surprisingly *different*" (authors italics).<sup>9</sup>



Figure 2: Viljo Revell's Kudeneule Factory, admired in Finland in the 1960's as an example of the American corporate image. (Photo by Heikki Havas, Courtesy of the Museum of Finnish Architecture).

Interestingly enough, both the Palace Hotel and the Kudeneule Factory were seen in Finland as architecture designed in tune with the latest international trends in architecture. The Palace Hotel, with its facade made entirely of industrially prefabricated concrete elements, and its introduction of air conditioning in Finland, was seen as strikingly modern and even distinguished by "a vaguely American touch."<sup>10</sup> Building companies took particular pride in participating in the construction of such a modern building, as the ads of the time clearly indicate. In the exhibitions this building was represented by a photograph in which its ribbon windows, the pilotis and the roof garden – the hallmarks of Modernism – were clearly shown. (Figure 1) Similarly, the Kudeneule Factory was admired as an example of the American corporate image in both its technical solution and formal language.<sup>11</sup> In the exhibited photograph this building appeared as a technologically advanced, anonymous structure that could just as well have been located anywhere. (Figure 2) The fact that these two buildings were repeatedly exhibited at the international exhibitions indicates that the Museum of Finnish Architecture appreciated architecture which, in its view, was the most modern both in its look and structure – in sharp contrast to the British critics who resolutely sought out deviations from the characteristically modern.

One building that seemed to fit the British critics' image of Finnish Modernism particularly well was the Chapel of the Resurrection, designed by Erik Bryggman (1938–1941). This building, which was always represented by the same photograph – where it looks as if it is hand-molded, with light pouring in from an invisible source and the cross at the end of the aisle adding a touch of mysticism – was cited in numerous articles as the prime example of Finnish Modernism. (Figure 3) The Finnish architects, however, didn't seem to share this point of view: in 1962 they withdrew this building from the international exhibitions, together with nearly all of the architectural production of the 1940's – all of which was rather decorative, employing traditional craft methods and eloquent detailing. In the exhibition catalogue, the author N. E. Wickberg summed up this period in a single sentence as one



Figure 3: The Chapel of the Resurrection by Erik Bryggman, recognised by the foreign press as the prime example of Finnish modernism. (Photo by A. Wahlström, Courtesy of the Museum of Finnish Architecture).

characterized by romantic tendencies that were soon followed by the architecture of the 1950s, which he described as *sobering*. To this architecture of sobriety Wickberg devoted several paragraphs.<sup>12</sup> Even less charitable toward the Dionysian 1940s was the highly influential director of the museum himself, Kyosti Ålander, who closely supervised the curating of the exhibitions. He referred to this period as “wandering in the wilderness.”<sup>13</sup>

The museum’s preference for unadorned, simple yet formally strong architecture was also expressed in the photographic representations of the selected architecture. The large black-and-white photographs that dominated the exhibition hall focused on the geometry of the represented

buildings and the play of light and shadow on their surfaces rather than the meticulous detailing, their material qualities, function or the mood of their interiors. The represented architecture thus sometimes indeed appeared as abstract black-and-white compositions, an assemblage of surfaces and volumes, rather than inhabitable buildings.

The foreign critics, however, approached Finnish architecture very differently. They were hardly interested in the buildings as such, that is to say, in their intrinsic (formal and other) qualities. Rather, they observed them in relation to the architecture that they considered the norm and explored the reasons for the deviations of the Finnish examples from this norm.

In Richards’s view the reasons were to be found in the nature of the most prominent Finnish architect, Alvar Aalto, and in the nature of Finland. Indeed, according to Richards – and Giedion too – the two natures were not entirely separate. Richards wrote that “Finland and its landscape are with him [Aalto] and within him whatever he does.”<sup>14</sup> Only a few years earlier, Giedion had written that “Finland is with Aalto wherever he goes” and continued that “[Finland] provides him with that inner source of energy which always flows through his work.”<sup>15</sup> According to these two historians, therefore, Finland was (within) Aalto. This explains why Giedion chose Aalto as the marker of the fundamental change in architecture “from the rational-functional to the irrational-organic.” Aalto proved the most suitable candidate for this role not only because his buildings and his discourse on architecture corresponded perfectly to Giedion’s “Programme of Humanization” but also because Aalto was a Finn.<sup>16</sup>

In the 1950s, mysticism, irrationality, intuition, and closeness to nature were seen as qualities of the Nordic peoples. Art in Northern Europe was seen as characterized by an ecstatic will to form and longing for primitivism.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, Finland was not only a Nordic country; for Giedion it was also the country “at the crossroads of East

and West.”<sup>18</sup> The East for him embodied the primitive and primeval while the West represented the civilized and advanced. He located Finland precisely between these two opposing terms – as the country where “many remnants of primeval and medieval times still remain alive and intermingle with modern civilization”; and he concluded that the dualistic nature of the country was – as he put it – “instilled in Aalto” and gave “creative tension to his work.”<sup>19</sup> Thus he introduced Aalto’s special abilities as having deep motivational sources. As both a Nordic and an Eastern man (Finland being the easternmost of the Nordic countries), he was well suited to assume the role of the protagonist of the fundamental leap. As a man from the crossroads of East and West he was well placed to play the role of the great synthesizer of opposing influences. This was in his nature; it was “within” him.

The articles published in the British press no doubt fed on these stereotypical concepts of Finland and the Nordic character, or most probably directly on Giedion’s text. Basil Marriott of *The Builder* wrote that Finnish architecture was distinguished by a matter-of-factness, yet at the same time “preserves that essential quality of mystery that can be identified as Byzantine.”<sup>20</sup> Similarly, it seems the image of an exotic Nordic character lingered in the background of the article published in the *Sunday Times*. Here Finland was introduced as a “land of wide plains, eternal night, gallant fighters and haunting music.” The author added, however, that it was also “the homeland of a group of remarkable architect-designers” who possessed not only imaginative skill but technical know-how as well.<sup>21</sup> Richards, too, saw Finnish Modernism as the “Best of Both Worlds,” with the other world being characterized not simply by a humane approach, individuality, and artistic imagination but also by a less civilized backwardness. When he discussed Aalto’s work, he attributed the architect’s ability to solve the problems of the time to his intuition, or something “inside himself” rather than his training, knowledge or intellect. Furthermore, in his view nature – not technology – was the major force that Aalto and the others confronted in creating their architecture. The processes of everyday life in Finland, Richards

explained, are never far removed from the taming of the landscape. He even argued that the architecture of Finland “clearly reflected” the nature of the country: it was harsh and rugged because it was made by hand rather than by machine, and because it was a reflection of Finland’s harsh and rugged nature itself.<sup>22</sup>

From these articles there emerged a rather peculiar image of Finland: as a remote, Eastern, exotic country, placed at the margins of modern civilization. It was far enough removed so that it could be imagined as a place where the problems confronting the architecture of modernity were either solved or did not exist; and, yet, located as it is within Europe, close enough to be considered a relevant reference. As such, it could be imagined as an isolated architectural paradise preserved within a technologically-driven world, the retreat where close contact with nature had not yet been lost, where craft methods of construction were still used, and where man still relied on his natural instincts. Finnish architects were thus able to resolve the conflicts imposed on them by increased industrialization and standardization, and they succeeded where most of the modern world failed. But they succeeded precisely because they were not quite part of the modern world.

How relevant, then, was the Finnish answer for those architects occupying the discursive center? Richard Llewelyn Davies, writing for the *Architects’ Journal* argued that it wasn’t. He referred to Finland as a “simpler, less advanced society” and – talking about the work of Alvar Aalto – explained that Aalto’s solution was no answer for those “who work in rapidly advancing and changing countries.” While Aalto and others could resort to intuition, as Richards would have it, “we must face and try to solve the problem of knowledge,” Davies concluded.<sup>23</sup>

How far removed this image was from the image offered by the Finnish architects! In Wickberg’s view, Finland wasn’t located on the border between East and West – as it was for Giedion and Richards – but on the border of the Western world. In the catalogue text he firmly

asserted: "Finland is decidedly Western, in both its traditions and modern attitude to life," and went on to point out that it had one of the oldest democratic traditions in Europe. This emphasis on its Western, democratic character can be explained within the political context of the time. In the late 1950s Finland was closely connected with the Soviet Union, economically as well as politically, and was often wrongly lumped together, in the West, with the countries of the Eastern bloc.<sup>24</sup> The exhibitions that reached the international public were embraced as an opportunity to correct this undesirable image, which indeed threatened to become reality. This goes some way towards explaining why Modernism was so strongly identified as *the* expression of Finnish architects. The political division between East and West during the Cold War also implied a confrontation of two artistic models: Modernist art in the West and Socialist Realism in the East. This is precisely how Ålander saw the architectural world: as divided in two. On the one side there was Modernism, the architectural expression of the West, and, on the other, the holdover post-classicism of Russia and its satellites.<sup>25</sup> To opt for Modernism thus actually meant to opt for the West, that is to say, for democracy and political independence, rather than for becoming one of the Soviet satellites. Furthermore, Ålander advocated the view that Modernism was the true expression of the time; to foster Modernism meant to be up-to-date, progressive.<sup>26</sup> In this sense, he was in agreement with the British critics; since for both, progress was synonymous with West.

The critic of the *Architects' Journal* was one of the few who noticed the curious dichotomy in the dialogue between the foreign critics and the Finnish architects. In Davies' exhibition review, published on April 18, 1957, he asserted that Finns were no "happy hicks from out in the sticks" but urbane, sophisticated colleagues – one simply had to look at the exhibitions to see that this was the case. He added that Finnish architects could indeed use their "natural" materials (placing "natural" in quotation marks to point out its ambiguous status) with, at times, almost the knowing ways of the English eighteenth century picturesque. One might well ask, however, why *almost*?

In the years that followed the opening in London, the exhibitions of Finnish architecture travelled on. Gradually the critical reception of the (Western) reviewers began to correspond more closely with the image offered by the exhibition's curators. Yet, the attention of the foreign critics remained focused on the difference. Finnish Modernism came to enjoy widespread respect, and it entered the canonical professional literature. It continued, however, to be appreciated as a different Modernism, marked by the peripheral position of Finland, its Eastern and Nordic character, and all that these implied. To adopt this position was the only way for the Finns to enter the international architectural discourse. Hence, Finnish architects were accepted into the center (of architectural discourse) only conditionally. They were considered either almost-as-good as their Western colleagues, as the critic of *Architects' Journal* suggested, or else a peculiar "species" of their own.

The attitudes of the Finnish architects have also changed over time. After all, they could hardly have remained immune to the observations of the foreign critics – to the view held by those who set the norms. Today, in this country of highly advanced technology, the main international architectural event, the *Alvar Aalto Symposium*, begins with a steamboat trip on the pristine lakes of Finland and ends at Aalto's remote, lakeside summer house, where food is prepared on an open fire. Foreign guests cannot help but get the impression that they have entered a world where the remnants of primeval times still remain and where the processes of daily life are never far removed from the taming of nature.

Notes

1. The present article is based on my published PhD dissertation in which I discussed the construction of the image offered by the exhibitions and its critical reception in the foreign press: Petra Čeferin, *Constructing a Legend: The International Exhibitions of Finnish Architecture 1957 – 1967* (Helsinki: SKS Publishing, 2003).
2. Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952), 454, 468, 489.
3. Sigfried Giedion, *Space*, 454.
4. In Alvar Aalto, *British critics recognized the master, the leader, even the father of Finnish architects; the other Finnish architects they referred to simply as the others, followers of the same architectural idiom. Consistent with this position, they attributed the qualities already recognized as characteristic of Aalto's work to Finnish architecture as a whole.*
5. James Maude Richards, "Modern Architecture in Finland," *The Listener*, April 25, 1957, 671. Initially Richards' article was broadcast on the BBC under the title "Finland – the Best of Both Worlds."
6. Richards, "Finland," 671.
7. Richards, "Finland," 671.
8. See for instance: "Aalto and Others," *Sunday Times*, April 14, 1957; Basil Marriott, "Architecture of Finland," *The Builder*, April 12, 1957, 663; and "Exhibition of Finnish Architecture – Talented Work of Younger Men," *The Times*, April 11, 1957.
9. Reyner Banham, "The One and the Few," *The Architectural Review*, April 1957, 248.
10. Aino Niskanen explains that the Palace Hotel marked the beginning of large-scale prefabrication of façade units in Finland. Aino Niskanen, "A Time of Experimentation. The Use of Concrete in Architecture of the 1940's and 1950's," in *Tehdaan Betonista – Concrete in Finnish Architecture*, ed. Aarno Ruusuvuori (Helsinki: Association of the Concrete Industry in Finland and The Museum of Finnish Architecture, 1989), 33. Sirkkaliisa Jetsonen writes that this building has been considered a symbol of the beginning of the flourishing of postwar Modernism and that progressive techniques were used in its construction, in particular in the construction of the façade elements. Sirkkaliisa Jetsonen, "Humane Rationalism. Themes in Finnish Architecture of the 1950's," in *20<sup>th</sup> Century Architecture: Finland*, ed. M. R. Norri, E. Standertskjöld, W. Wang (Frankfurt am Main: Museum of Finnish Architecture and Deutsches Architektur-Museum, 2000), 94.
11. Jetsonen, "Rationalism," 95.
12. Nils Erik Wickberg, "Finnish Architecture and its Background," in *Architecture in Finland*, exhibition catalogue (London: The Gresham Press, Unwin Brothers, 1957), 18–20. This catalogue text was repeatedly used in almost all of the exhibitions of Finnish architecture until the end of the 1960's.
13. This is how Ålander explained it: "Once again [in the 1940's] the modern international style appeared threatened but the threat proved to be empty. A few years of wandering in the wilderness sufficed to lead architecture from the quicksands of subjectivism back to the firm path of progress." Kyösti Ålander, "Architecture From the Renaissance to Functionalism, Chapter Concerning Functionalism," in *Abacus – Museum of Finnish Architecture Yearbook 3*, ed. Asko Salokorpi (Helsinki: Museum of Finnish Architecture, 1982), 228. (The essay was translated from: Kyösti Ålander, *Rakennustaide renessanssista funktionalismiin* (Helsinki-Porvoo, 1954), trans. Desmond O'Rourke. Kyösti Ålander was the director of the Museum of Finnish Architecture for almost twenty years. During this period he was in charge of the shaping of the policy of the museum and he took particular interest in the international promotion of Finnish modern architecture. The decisions concerning this project were always made with his knowledge and approval. For more on the role of Ålander and the promotional policy of the architectural museum see Čeferin, *Legend*, 33–56.
14. Richards, "Finland," 671.
15. Sigfried Giedion, *Space*, 455.
16. Sigfried Giedion, *Space*, 454. The fact that Aalto received a particularly prominent position for the first time in Giedion's 1949 edition of *Space, Time and Architecture* is not at all coincidental. By the late 1940s Giedion began to support and spread the ideas of "humanising the civilisation." Aalto's work or, more precisely -

- as Sokratis Georgiadis observes - Giedion's interpretation of Aalto's work, proved to be a perfect example of his renewed point of view, as expressed in his "Programme of Humanisation." Sokratis Georgiadis, *Sigfried Giedion: An Intellectual Biography* (Edinburgh, 1993), 173.
17. Mysticism, irrationality and intuition were still referred to in the 1950s by both popular writers and art historians as traits of the Nordic peoples. For the art historian Wilhelm Worringer, as Harri Kalha explains, "art in Northern Europe was characterised by mysticism and intuition, a yearning for "redemption," an ecstatic "will to form" and longing for primitivism." Harri Kalha, "The Other Modernism: Finnish Design and National Identity," in: *Finnish Modern Design*, ed. Marianne Aav and Nina Stritzler-Levine (New Haven and London: The Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts and Yale University Press, 1998), 31. Similarly, Kari Jormakka writes that "one of the Worringer's followers, Herbert Read insisted that in the Northern tradition ... the concept of nature is there all the time." Kari Jormakka, "Constructions of Aalto," in: *The Use and Abuse of Paper: Essays on Alvar Aalto*, Datutop 20, ed. J. Jormakka, J. Gargus, D. Graf (Tampere: Tampere University of Technology, 1999), 17.
18. Sigfried Giedion, *Space*, 456.
19. Sigfried Giedion, *Space*, 456.
20. Basil Marriott, "Architecture of Finland," *The Builder*, April 12, 1957, 663.
21. "Aalto and Others," *Sunday Times*, April 14, 1957.
22. Richards, "Finland," 671.
23. This is what Davies wrote, referring to Alvar Aalto: "He returned deliberately to a simpler, less advanced society where he felt he could master the problems of design, and produce work which would satisfy himself. In this he has succeeded triumphantly as can be seen in his most recent buildings. Aalto's personal solution is of course no answer for us, who work in rapidly advancing and changing countries. We must face, and try to solve, the problem of knowledge." By "rapidly advancing and changing countries," Davies meant the United States and England. Richards Llewelyn Davies, "Deeper Knowledge: Better Design," *The Architects' Journal*, May 23, 1957, 769. This article was first issued in the *Architectural Record*, April 1957.
24. Matti Klinge writes that "the position of Finland as a good but nevertheless non-socialist neighbour to the Soviet Union was sometimes difficult to perceive both in Finland and the Western countries; when international tension eased, the position of Finland was admired; during periods of strained relations between the great powers there were doubts about Finnish independence and credibility abroad." Matti Klinge, *A brief history of Finland* (Keuruu: Otava Publishing, 1999 [1981]), 144. The doubts about Finnish independence have actually not been dismissed until very recently. In an article published in *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui* on the Nordic Council building in Berlin, for instance, the author referred to Finland as an ex-Soviet bloc country: "Of its five members, only ex-Soviet bloc Finland has embraced the European Union." "Scandinavian diplomatic enclosure, Berlin, Berger and Parkinnen," *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui*, July–August 2000, 329.
25. Kyösti Ålander, 1954, 229.
26. Thus Ålander, referring to the 1950's, concluded his essay with the assertion that: "This is the situation thirty years after Le Corbusier, alone and relying on his imaginativeness, declared "The Great Age has begun." Kyösti Ålander, *Rakennustaide*, 229.

## The Demonstration of Everyday Modernism: documenting the architecture of the VIIth British Empire and Commonwealth Games in Western Australia of 1962.

Hannah Lewi

*In 1962, the city of Perth in Western Australia played host to the VIIth British Empire and Commonwealth Games. This international event provided the opportunity for a neatly choreographed display of growing self-confidence, prosperity and a belief in modernism and development. The paper examines the reception, impact and legacy of this event on Australian architectural and suburban development. Specifically, the paper documents the main stadium and the Games village consisting of 150 modern demonstration homes which were converted to private housing post-Games.*

*The paper seeks to understand how the structures of this international event have been absorbed into the slower rhythms of suburban life over the last 40 years. Through an examination of images, interviews and the buildings themselves, the decay of a modernist vision is revealed. The analysis traces how the minimal landscape of the newly completed village has been altered through the growing of gardens and layers of extensions and demolitions, and how the stadium today has become a faded site – a modernist equivalent of the ruined classical arena at Olympia.*

*The stadium and the Games village have recently been the subject of a heritage debate, with opinions polarised between demolition and heritage-listing. The paper therefore also addresses the changing reception of late modernism in Australia, and its contested status today. The proposition is examined that heritage practices can benefit from avoiding the polarised choice between conservation and demolition through more particular and novel methods of bringing to the surface, recording and documenting the everyday past.*

### Staging the event

The idea that sport creates a public location for the playing out of national identity is longstanding. As Martin Polley has written: “Sport provides the metonym whereby the nation is presented as a single sentient being.” This representation of nationhood is enshrined through the use of ceremonial ritual.<sup>1</sup> In large-scale sporting events such as the Commonwealth and Olympic Games, architecture also becomes a strategic part of how a community imagines and represents itself. In the case of the staging of the Commonwealth Games in Perth, Western Australia in 1962, publicity was carefully managed to portray the personality of the place as a “modern go-ahead” city in terms of its urban management, architectural influences and domestic life. And the staging of this international event was seen as an opportunity to showcase the little known host venue to the Commonwealth nations and the rest of Australia. For example, promotional material boasted:

Perth is noted for its fine architecture, modern buildings, picturesque homes and friendly people, and the City and its environs are richly endowed with natural beauty ... The people of Western Australia have an abiding affection for England and the Empire peoples, and Perth and its



Figure 1: Aerial photograph of Games Village under construction, 1961. (Courtesy of Battye Library of Western Australia).

environs will not be found wanting in their ability to provide all the facilities for sporting and athletic contestants ...The sports men and women of Perth have throughout the years been noted for their competence and athletic prowess, and no people as a whole are more sport loving in their outlook.<sup>2</sup>

By today's expectations, the official application to host the VIIth British Empire and Commonwealth Games in 1962 was a very modest document. Nevertheless, it made some big promises to construct the required sporting structures to an international standard on time and on budget. The major facilities successfully completed included the main athletics stadium<sup>3</sup>, a boxing stadium<sup>4</sup>, a rowing facility, an Olympic swimming pool<sup>5</sup>, and dedicated athletes' housing with temporary dining and administration facilities.<sup>6</sup> This paper, which focuses on the main stadium and the Games village, is drawn from a larger research project and exhibition on the legacy of the architecture of the 1962 Games.

### **The nerve center**

The main athletics stadium was described on a number of occasions as the "nerve centre" of the Games, and certainly it was seen as providing a modern and muscular setting for the opening spectacle and athletics contests. The design for the stadium, like the Games architecture generally, was international in stylistic outlook. It was praised for the thinness of the cantilevered profile, sharpness of the aluminum curtain wall system, and integration of new materials and structural systems.<sup>7</sup>

The opening ceremony was held on 22 November 1962, a day when temperatures hit record highs of 115° F (46° C). The 50,000-strong crowd sweltered in the semi-covered stadium. Reports of the opening event were mixed. For instance, in the English press, *The Guardian* talked of "efficient organisation by the Australians" but complained of "untidy marching," while *The Daily Express* described the Western Australians as over-eagerly parading "almost everything" like

hosts "putting out the best china, silver and glass."<sup>8</sup> This encouraging, yet somewhat condescending commentary, reflected the nascent development of the Commonwealth after the Second World War, which had not yet replaced the parental ties of Empire, yet was fostering new networks through the friendly and "civilizing"<sup>8</sup> rivalry of international sporting events.

It was boldly predicted that the "soaring cantilever roof of [the] stadium pavilion is certain to remain as a permanent landmark of Perth in the minds of thousands of visitors who see the Games."<sup>9</sup> However, over time this once "healthy" and proud building became something of a local disappointment. Perhaps this is partly because modern functional structures valued for their newness, flatness and fitness do not generally age well.<sup>10</sup> Today, the stadium is testament to forty years of exposure to the Western Australian climate, and visitors are made powerfully aware of the decaying effects of time on visions of progress. The spalling salmon brick, bleached jarrah benches, rusted handrails, faded aluminum panels and dusty glass now compose another kind of site: a contemporary ruin that is perhaps the modernist interpretation of the ruined classical stadium of Olympia. Although now bleached and empty, it is still a place highly evocative of the continuity of everyday, suburban memories; for most local children can recall noisy sporting carnivals that seasonally filled the empty void.

### **Designing a modern suburb for the sport-loving nation**

The 1962 Commonwealth Games were the first to construct a permanent athletes' village.<sup>11</sup> The 150 houses in the village were designed to be sold immediately after the Games as private dwellings. Two competitions were held for the Games village: the first being for the layout of the whole site and shared facilities; and the second for individual house types. Sixty-five acres of government land in the beachside suburbs north of Perth were set aside for the development. This area had been

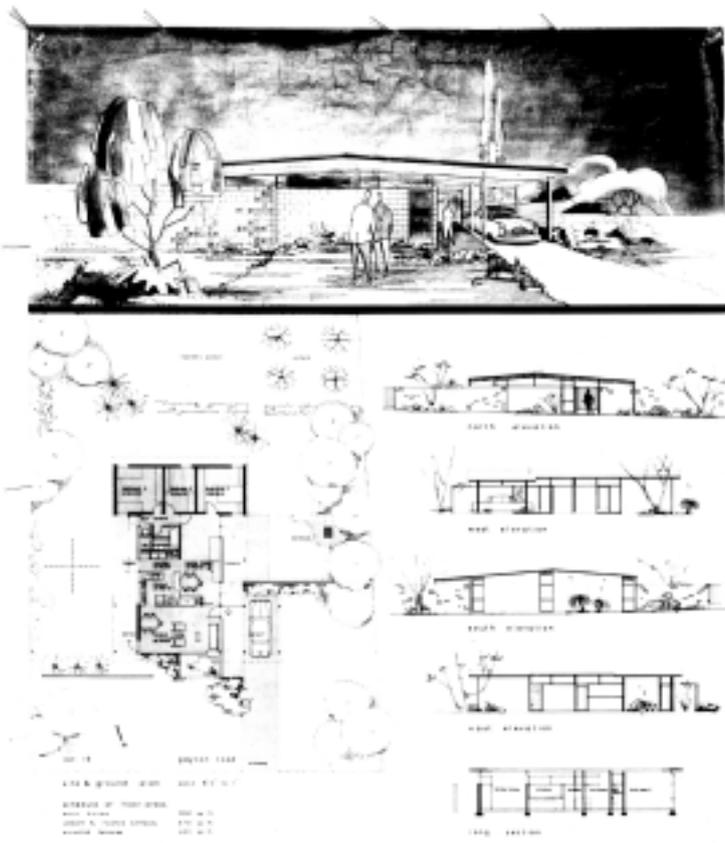


Figure 2: Original architectural drawings and perspective of a winning Games Village house type by Silver and Fairbrother. (Courtesy archive of Cameron Chisholm and Nicol Architects).

laid out some forty years previously as an organic dormitory community, collected around open green spaces and community facilities. The legacy of this garden-city model planning would be continued in the prize-winning layout of the village, which featured a sinuous road pattern across the sandy contours of the site, grouping two main zones of housing around a central node of temporary facilities. Individual blocks were wider and shorter than the traditional suburban lot, giving more scope for gaining good solar orientation and better integration with gardens. The second architectural competition, for the housing types, attracted some 40 architects – forming a “Who’s Who” of the local profession of the day. Ten individual house schemes were commended and awarded contracts to build, with first place going to the local firm of Silver Fairbrother, and second place to Cameron, Chisholm and Nicol.<sup>12</sup>

The historian and critic Robin Boyd, who represented an important voice in Australian architecture of the day, issued a challenge to architects in the last page of his 1952 book

*Australia’s Home*. Stressing the need for a new vision in Australian house design, he wrote: “In the new climate ... a house which better expresses the life and the land may grow more profusely and the scattered seeds spread by creative architects may take abundant root.”<sup>13</sup> The competition for the Games village was seen as an opportunity for such new ideas to take hold. And while the overriding competition criterion was economy, both in terms of scale and cost, the judges were also looking for modern innovations that would set the village apart from traditional housing precedents.<sup>14</sup>

But in an era of international modernism, what did it mean to be architecturally modern in the context of post-war Australian suburban housing? In October 1956 the *Sunday Times* newspaper ran an article called ‘Why It’s Modern’ that listed the pragmatic elements of the home-grown modern house. These elements included walls of clear glass forming two sides of a living room, a low pitched roof (usually of corrugated asbestos cement with overhanging eaves for sun protection), built-in kitchen and furniture, open-plan living with connections to the outdoors, paneled or feature walls of exposed material, open carport, and native trees forming the basis of a garden.<sup>15</sup> These features of the nascent Australian modernist style were clearly rooted in earlier European and American prescriptions for modern living. Although



Figure 3: Contemporary photograph of house type by Van Maidment. (Courtesy of photographer Tony Nathan).

the profession in Perth was a small and isolated one, local architects have talked at length of their exposure to international modernism from Europe and America through journals of the day, as well as through their education, trips abroad and professional exchange.

Some of the key attributes that set modern houses apart from more traditional Australian precedents were that they became far more technically inventive, more orientated towards economically driven construction methods, and more responsive to the climate and individual sites.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the architects of the Games village consciously incorporated new, low maintenance materials in their designs, including large-roll asbestos cement roof sheeting, Stramit ceilings, exposed concrete blockwork and slab floors, aluminum decking, and laminex joinery.

### **The athletes move in**

During the Games, the village accommodated more than 12,000 athletes. Men and women were housed separately, and within each area athletes were assigned houses according to their country of origin. There were no telephones, but boy scouts and girl guides were on duty every day to carry messages, and the houses were cleaned by 50 "house mothers."

The central node village consisted of temporary dining and recreation halls, kitchens and gatehouse buildings.<sup>17</sup> The central kitchens were described as "the last word in modernity ... the entire operation has been regarded with the pride and thoroughness with which the Australian always tackles his sport!"<sup>18</sup> The brief for these demountable, large-span structures required the buildings to be "economical, solid, attractive, weather-proof, quickly erected and quickly pulled down, with all materials being re-usable."<sup>19</sup> Cameron, Chisholm and Nicol's solution was a light-weight steel roof structure with timber beams and demountable walls of asbestos sheet. The horizontality of the elevations and thinness of the

wall panels, framed by contrasting structure, was reminiscent of international precedents such as Mies van de Rohe's IIT Campus, Chicago, and the Smithsons' Hunstanton School in Norfolk.<sup>20</sup>

### **Public and professional reception**

Both before and during the Games, the village was generally well received. For example, the *Daily Telegraph* described the athletes' houses as skillfully planned, modern bungalow-type dwellings near "golden Australian beaches."<sup>21</sup> Others cheerfully labeled the scheme "Sunlight Village," and *Australian Home Beautiful* wrote of the uniqueness and architectural diversity of each dwelling as a virtue.<sup>22</sup> However, in terms of local professional opinion, the design competition was controversial from the outset. It was felt that the inclusion of too many designs would lead to a fragmented and piecemeal solution, lacking unity or street presence. A number of architects saw it as a wasted opportunity to tackle new typologies for government projects. However, others were confident that the scheme would benefit from independence and individuality,<sup>23</sup> and the Games publicity described efforts to "banish uniformity" through the use of different types of designs, a varied palette of materials, and differing orientations, as well as of landscaping screen walls.<sup>24</sup>

This debate between uniformity and individualism was long running and stemmed from clashing interests. On the one hand, there was the need for commercial success when the houses were sold as private residences after the Games. On the other hand, there was the professional pursuit of the ideal of a coherent and modern model for future detached housing developments. This tension between the expression of owners' aspirations and the economy of repetition had plagued attempts to commercialize modern housing on a mass-scale in America in the 1950's.<sup>25</sup> In the case of the Games village, neither uniformity nor individualism really won the day, and the attempt to satisfy both led to a compromised project.

Other criticisms made after the Games stemmed mainly from a lack of public acceptance of the modern language of many of the houses, with some being un-flatteringly likened to cheap public conveniences and shearing sheds. One politician voiced his dissatisfaction as follows:

I have never seen in Western Australia, apart from minimum housing, such a dull, drab, uninteresting, and uninspiring group of houses ... Indeed it must have been a blind man who had the say, because there is no color there whatsoever ... and one would almost think one was around about the Fremantle gaol when traversing the village area.<sup>26</sup>

More measured reflections on the overriding sentiment of economy and minimalism were also expressed by the architects themselves.

After the athletes left, the village homes were refinished before being opened for public inspection and offered for sale by tender to private buyers.<sup>27</sup> All were sold by 1963.<sup>28</sup> In the early years of private occupancy, the village was still seen as an experimental and raw development. Despite frequent weekend visits from curious locals, original buyers recall a long-standing “village stigma” arising from the belief that the designs were somewhat ahead of their time for the mass market. They were, one resident commented, “something you either liked or you didn’t.”<sup>29</sup>

Wider public opinion softened as the gardens matured. Although efforts had been made to preserve native trees when clearing the site, aerial photos and contemporary descriptions of the area reveal that little notion of the garden suburb ideal was evident immediately after construction. Residents vividly remember a stark image; “it was just white, white sand everywhere” with the perimeter fence barely keeping back the sand dunes and native bush to the west. In response to the starkness, a kind of privatized garden city model evolved in which the greening of the whole became a collective responsibility through individual endeavor. Out of

these sandy foundations, many residents fondly remember the creation of a village community. As one original resident recalls: “everybody knew each other ... everybody bought hibiscus, everybody had a dog, everybody had babies.”<sup>30</sup> Residents describe a sense of neighborhood and kinship as families led their everyday lives, structured by modern, light, open and profoundly matter-of-fact houses. Thus, in its quiet way, the village integrated the unfamiliar mystique of modernism with the familiarity of the house as shelter and stage for living.

### **The demonstration of modernism**

The design of model homes to showcase both new ideas and modern ways of living was growing in popularity in Australia at the time, as it had done in America in the 1940’s and 1950’s. Going out and seeing the newly completed village – as indeed some 20,000 people did when it was on public display – was important in understanding the development as a demonstration piece. For the Games village was intended as a demonstration of “what modern architecture could do.”<sup>31</sup> In this regard its aims can be seen as threefold: firstly, to show new building techniques and materials – many of which were later successfully adopted in the domestic market; secondly, to show new planning initiatives in suburban housing – with hindsight, one sees that while it was a successful experiment in converting public housing to a private suburb, it did not produce any new public models; and thirdly, to demonstrate new solutions in domestic architecture within the language of modernism.

This was an experiment in creating a casual and pragmatic assemblage of house types in the antipodean sun. And in this sense, the village had most in common with the medium density neighborhoods designed by architects such as Richard Neutra in California, and Quincy Jones for Eichler Homes in the 1950’s and early 1960’s.<sup>32</sup> Ultimately, Perth used the event of the VIIIth British Empire and Commonwealth Games to show itself as an outward-looking modern place: modern in terms of a preference for new developments and pragmatic and functional living solutions, and, to a lesser

extent, modern in terms of style. The Games village presented a successful synthesis of the Australian suburban condition and modern architecture. This synthesis has been both enhanced and eroded over time.

#### **Afterword: fading events and places**

This historical account has described the building program of the main stadium and Games village. In undertaking this kind of architectural account, it is a relatively straight-forward task to document the immediate impact of one historical event, but a much more complex one to represent its diffused effects and reception over time. Gianni Vattimo points out the many different types of histories that are needed to chart changing times and places. He writes:

The history of events ... is but one history among many. The history of everyday life, for instance, which has a much slower rhythm of change, and almost takes the form of a "natural history" of human affairs, differs sharply from the history of events.<sup>33</sup>

The Games can be thought of as an event that has been slowly absorbed into the blurred rhythms of suburban life and memory over the subsequent forty years. This one-time international sporting spectacle was indeed a catalyst for the construction of modern buildings in Perth. However, in documenting the architecture it became evident – whether through the growing patina of the athletics stadium or the accretions of extensions and demolitions in the village – how such visions of modernity, progress and newness have decayed and been transformed over time.

Architectural histories examining modernity thus consist not only of distinguishable events, but also of the smaller, indistinguishable memories of everyday life. The writings of Henri Lefebvre support this bringing together of readings of modernity and the everyday: "The everyday is covered by a surface: that of modernity."<sup>34</sup> Indeed Lefebvre sees

the modern and the everyday as complementary: The modern is novelty and brilliance, daring and transitory, proclamatory in its initiative; the everyday is enduring and solid, humble and "taken for granted"; it is the ethics underlying routine and the aesthetics of familiar settings.<sup>35</sup>

It is therefore one thing to chart the history of the self-proclaiming novelty of modernism, and quite another to account for how such statements have been absorbed into the "taken for granted" banality of everyday life. Just how to bring the everyday to the surface, appropriately marked and conserved, presents a challenge to historical and heritage method.

As a final aside: in responding to this challenge of marking and documenting the language of "everyday" modernism before its disappearance, a colleague and I created a public exhibition of the Games village in 2003 – the effects of which we could not have predicted. For our research fueled a move to undertake conservation surveys of the village with the aim of listing all, or at least precincts of those houses remaining intact. This caused a great outcry among the residents, who perceived potential heritage listing as a threat to their right to demolish their modest houses and realize soaring land values. After a bitterly fought political campaign, listing was defeated, with the village being considered as not having recognizable heritage value. In the interim, a number of remaining houses were demolished in a knee-jerk reaction before proper documentation could occur.

Notes

1. Martin Polley, *Moving the Goalposts: A history of sport and society since 1945* (London: Routledge, 1998) 35.
2. *Application for Host Venue for the British Empire and Commonwealth Games of 1962* (Perth: City of Perth, 1958).
3. W. A. Mcl. Green of the Perth City Council. Green was trained in Adelaide and came to Western Australia as the Perth City Council Chief Building Surveyor and later City Architect. He was then appointed Town Clerk and Chief Executive Officer from 1944 to 1966. "Allan Green, as he was known, was reluctant to delegate authority. He preferred to do everything himself." *West Australian*, 8 September, 1972. (Courtesy Duncan Richards.)
4. Hawkins and Sands. The design input of Peter Little who had been working for Kenzo Tange in Japan is evident in this building.
5. Mcl. Green, Perth City Council
6. For a brief summary of the architecture of the Games see David Watson, "Empire Games Architecture in Perth, 1961," *Architecture Australia*, 51, 4 (1962):51-57.
7. The demonstration of innovative structural solutions and new materials became one of the major design forces of the Games architecture generally. For example, the stadium and swimming pool were the focus of local advertising campaigns for a number of building suppliers including the Crittall Window Systems Company. This advertisement's byline read: 'Architecturally in-step with civic and industrial progress'. Crittall had a long association with the construction of modernist buildings. (The Bauhaus architect Walter Gropius used Crittall steel window fixings in the Dessau Torten housing estate of 1926-28.)
8. Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning, *Quest for Excitement* (Oxford: Blackwell) 1996. This book explores the sociological reading of sport as a "civilizing" process in society.
9. *The Sunday Times*, November 25, 1962, 8.
10. Hannah Lewi, "Paradoxes in the Conservation of Newness," in *Back from Utopia*, eds. Hilde Heynen and Hubert van Henket (Rotterdam: 101 press) 2002, 350-357. See also Mohshen Mustafi and David Leatherbarrow, *On Weathering: the life of buildings in time* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press) 1997.
11. It is interesting to note that the very first permanent athletes' village for the ancient games at Olympia was constructed in the fourth century B.C. Before this, elaborate but temporary tent cities were erected in the meadows surrounding the stadium. Ulrich Sinn, *Olympia: cult, sport and ancient festival* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers) 2000, 89-90.
12. Other commended designs were: J.W. Johnson and Associates (Type B), Cameron Chisholm and Nicol (Type A and C), Howard Bonner (Type A), Hobbs Winning and Leighten (Type A), Silver Fairbrother (Type A and B), and P.C. Maidment (Type B). With the schemes of Silver Fairbrother and Cameron Chisholm and Nicol winning a large percentage of the awards, Dennis Silver and Ross Chisholm took on the role of site planners, allocating the winning type designs to individual lots.
13. Robin Boyd, *Australia's Home* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1952) 278.
14. Interview with Dennis Silver, Hannah Lewi and Stephen Neille, April 9, 2003, and confirmed in interviews with other architects from the village competition. Silver recalls: "I don't think any of us worked to a budget in the end. When they got out to tender, they all cost a little bit more than they thought. The budget was a little bit unrealistic because the commission was basing them on what they were doing. Even though they were repetitive and tendered out in clusters, there were new thoughts and new ways of putting a house together."
15. Jane Scott, "Why It's Modern," *The Sunday Times*, October 23, 1956, 44.
16. See Geoffrey London, "Modern Houses" in *Modern Houses: Architect designed houses in Western Australia from 1950 to 1965*, eds. Geoffrey London and Duncan Richards (Nedlands: University of Western Australia, 1997) 7.

17. Now it is replaced with a park and shopping center.
18. *The Daily Telegraph*, October 26, 1962.
19. *The Sunday Times*, November 25, 1962, 9.
20. Although Ross Chisholm talks of predominantly Danish and Japanese design as an influence on his planning of this time. From transcript of interview with Ross Chisholm, 1997 courtesy of University of Western Australia.
21. *The Daily Telegraph*, October 26, 1962.
22. "A Housing Dividend From the Games," in *The Australian Home Beautiful* (1962) 18.
23. Gregory, *City of Lights*, 19.
24. *The Official Guide*, 63.
25. Paul Adamson and Marty Arbunich, *Eichler: Modernism Rebuilds the American Dream* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 2002) 35.
26. *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, vol. 155, September 4, 1962, 815.
27. Confirmed in interview with Bruce Atkinson of Howard Bonner and Associates, conducted by Duncan Richards in 1974.
28. *The West Australian*, January 18, 1963, 2.
29. Interview with resident by Stephen Neille and Hannah Lewi, June, 2003.
30. Interview with resident by Stephen Neille and Hannah Lewi, June, 2003.
31. Duncan Richards, "Fading Events and Places," *The Architect*, 2 (1987) 10.
32. See for example, "Housing Le More" of 1800 houses in Fresno, California and Bewobau Development, Quickborn and Waldorf, Germany in Richard Neutra, 1961-66 (London: Thames and Hudson) 74-85. For Eichler Homes see Paul Adamson and Marty Arbunich, *Eichler: Modernism Rebuilds the American Dream* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith 2002).
33. Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Post-modern Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994) 8.
34. Henri Lefebvre, "The Everyday and Everydayness," in *Architecture of the Everyday*, eds. Steven Harris and Deborah Berke (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997) 37.
35. Henri Lefebvre as cited by Mary McCleod,

"Henri Lefebvre's critique of everyday life: an introduction," in *Architecture of the Everyday*, eds. Steven Harris and Deborah Berke (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997) 19.

## **Internationalization and Decolonization at the New York World's Fair of 1964–1965**

**Julie Nicoletta**

*The New York World's Fair of 1964–1965 provided a forum in the postwar world where many newly independent countries emerging from colonialism could present themselves to a global audience. In keeping with the fair's overall futuristic appearance, the architecture of foreign pavilions employed popular versions of modernism combined with regional and traditional elements to identify a particular nation with its unique heritage and distinguish it from the other nations exhibiting at the fair. Using photographs, documentary evidence, and an analysis of the buildings themselves, this paper focuses on the themes of internationalization and decolonization and how those processes were represented in the architecture of foreign pavilions, particularly those of African and Asian nations. It also examines the temporary nature of these structures and argues that they had an impact on modernism, despite their brief physical presence.*

*Nations such as India, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Malaysia, and Indonesia wanted to appear both modern and traditional, as places worthy of foreign investment through industrial development and tourism, but also as places of ancient civilization. The prevalence of modernism at the fair demonstrated the difficulty of breaking free from western modes of architecture and colonial hegemony, especially for nations in their infancy. The postwar modernism they incorporated in their pavilions reflected the dominance of the style after the war, its association with democracy and capitalism, and the desire of new nations to be players on a global stage. By displaying a popular form of modernism, however, the pavilions appeared exotic, even whimsical to compete with other attractions at the fair. Though temporary, these buildings lived on in the memories of the millions of people who saw them.*

The New York World's Fair of 1964–1965 provided a place in the postwar world where many newly independent countries emerging from colonialism could present themselves to a global audience beyond the bounds of their former colonial borders. In keeping with the fair's overall futuristic appearance, the architecture of the foreign pavilions employed popular versions of Modernism combined with regional and traditional elements so as to identify a particular nation with its unique heritage and distinguish it from the other nations exhibiting at the fair. Using photographs, documentary evidence, and an analysis of the buildings themselves, I will focus on the themes of internationalization and decolonization and on how those processes were represented in the architecture of the foreign pavilions, particularly those of African and Asian nations. I will also examine the temporary nature of these structures and assess the impact they had on Modernism, despite their brief physical existence.

Nations such as the Sudan, Sierra Leone, India, and Indonesia wanted to appear both modern and traditional, as places worthy of foreign investment in industrial development and tourism, but also as the sites of ancient civilizations. The prevalence of Modernism at the fair demonstrated the difficulty of breaking free from Western modes of architecture and colonial hegemony, especially for nations in their infancy. The postwar Modernism they incorporated in their pavilions reflected the dominance of that style after the war, its association with democracy and capitalism, and the desire of new nations to be players on a global stage. By displaying a popular form of Modernism, however, the pavilions appeared exotic, even whimsical, helping them to compete with other attractions at the fair. Though temporary, these buildings lived on in the memories of the millions of people who saw them.

The work of Edward Said and Homi Bhabha informs my placement of the fair in a postcolonial context, where newly independent nations had to compete with more powerful nations by re-interpreting and re-presenting themselves on a global stage. Using Said's concept of Orientalist discourse

as a Western exertion of power over the East, we can see how fair officials attempted to influence the ways in which new nations presented themselves to a largely American audience.<sup>1</sup> These officials encouraged new nations to focus on the exotic aspects of their cultures rather than on the more modern, progressive elements of their changing economies and social and political structures. In an age when the Cold War was raging, however, the fair's underlying themes of democracy and capitalism pervaded the pavilions of new nations. Those nations present at the fair wanted to show their affinity with, if not allegiance to, the United States, and to demonstrate that they were good places for foreign investment. Bhabha has written of the ambivalence between colonizer and colonized, arguing that reciprocal influences between the two cannot be ignored.<sup>2</sup> At the fair, decolonization for new nations was characterized by their ambivalence about forging a path as independent entities while still remaining dependent on the West for trade and economic aid. At the fair, we see this most clearly in the architecture of pavilions and their exhibits.

The New York World's Fair, which opened on April 22, 1964, was one of the most ambitious fairs ever held. Covering 646 acres, it included eighty countries, twenty-four states, and fifty corporations represented in a variety of pavilions. (Figure 1) By its end on October 17, 1965, over 51 million people had visited it, the highest attendance for a world's fair up to that time. Despite these numbers, most critics then and now considered the fair a failure.<sup>3</sup> Much of the criticism of the fair was directed at Robert Moses, who served as the Fair Corporation's president. In an effort to insure that the fair be profitable, Moses prohibited the Fair Corporation from building many pavilions itself.<sup>4</sup> Instead, nations, states, corporations, and other organizations rented land from the Fair Corporation and designed and erected their own buildings and exhibits. The result was what detractors decried as a cacophony of architectural styles and forms, mixing Modernism and popular culture, rather than the unified style that many critics expected of a world's fair.<sup>5</sup> In addition, Moses did not win approval



*Figure 1: Aerial View of Fair. (New York World's Fair 1964–1965 Corporation Records, 1959–1971, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library).*

from the Bureau of International Expositions (BIE), so a number of member nations, many in Western Europe, refused to participate. Another shortcoming was its inability to persuade the Soviet Union and the East Bloc to become exhibitors. Although Moses failed to enlist these nations, he did successfully attract many newly independent countries, including a number from Africa and Asia. Between 1944 and the early 1960's, more than twenty new nations had appeared on the globe, representing over three-quarters of a billion people, one-quarter of the world's population at the time.<sup>6</sup> These nations, some of them only a few years old, saw the fair as an opportunity to present themselves to the world for the first time.

Participation for new nations was not inexpensive or easy, however. The fair lasted for two six-month periods, twice as long as most fairs. Rental rates for land on the fair site were high – \$3 per square foot per year. Exhibitors were required to employ an architect or engineer licensed in the State of New York. This requirement meant that most countries had to hire an architect in New York, either as sole architect, or as lead or consulting architect to work with their own national architect.<sup>7</sup> Typically, the exhibiting countries hired their architects directly,

though some nations, such as Venezuela, held competitions to select their pavilion's designer.<sup>8</sup> In addition, construction, maintenance, and security at the pavilions had to be performed by unionized labor at high prevailing wages, presenting an economic hardship for several nations before and during the fair. Many nations decided not to participate because of what they considered excessive costs. Nevertheless, the Fair Corporation aggressively courted new nations, hoping for a unique and diverse group of pavilions that would uphold the fair's theme, "peace through understanding." The corporation even provided some financial aid to developing nations by renting additional land free of charge. A document produced by the Fair Corporation entitled, "Points to be Covered by Visiting Team Spokesman," stressed the potential advantages to nations who built their own pavilions: the promotion of tourism, increased exports to the United States, and encouragement of American private investment.<sup>9</sup>

Although the Fair Corporation's official policy regarding exhibitors was to "not presume to dictate or influence design, construction, exhibits, shows and products," documents in the corporation's collection show that fair officials did influence some exhibits of the new nations.<sup>10</sup> For example, when marketing the fair to Islamic nations in the Middle East, the Fair Corporation encouraged officials to focus exhibitions on the Muslim religion, which would seem exotic to most Americans.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, in 1978, Charles Poletti, Vice President of International Affairs and Exhibits, recalled suggesting that non-industrialized nations should not focus on technological achievements because American visitors would not be very impressed, given the technological prowess of the United States scheduled to be displayed in the corporate pavilions. Poletti encouraged developing nations to display their arts and culture, instead, which he thought would be more appealing to an American audience.<sup>12</sup> Some pavilions had to charge admission fees; nearly all had restaurants, bars, and gift shops to bring in revenue to cover expenses. Because of the costs of participation, many foreign pavilions were, in fact, run by private organizations based either abroad or in the United States. This

paper, however, will focus only on selected pavilions created by national governments – those of Sudan, Sierra Leone, India, and Indonesia.

Buildings throughout the fair site employed a popular version of mid-century Modernism, and the pavilions of most nations were no exception. Designs drew on popular interpretations of vernacular buildings, such as roadside architecture or traditional indigenous forms, so as to communicate ideas of national and cultural identity to visitors in an appealing manner. Yet, the dominance of the International Style as interpreted and executed in the United States after World War II required pavilions to adopt a Modern appearance, as well, in order to express the progressive, forward-looking goals of new nations. Thus, the Pavilion of the Republic of Sudan took the form of a modern, reinforced-concrete mosque partly enclosed on the second floor by a teak lattice screen and crowned by a white onion dome, both common elements of Islamic architecture. (Figure 2)

Designed by the architectural firm Noel and Miller of New York City, the pavilion was considered so striking by fair officials that they included a rendering of it in their Sixth Progress Report (1962) and used it as a marketing tool to encourage the participation of other Arab and African nations.<sup>13</sup> The structure was created with a budget of only \$125,000. Though its original masonry design was changed to concrete to cut expenses, financing



*Figure 2: Pavilion of the Republic of Sudan, postcard, c. 1963. (Collection of the author).*

continued to be a major problem.<sup>14</sup> The Sudanese government fell behind in its rental payments to the Fair Corporation, but remained in the fair for its full two-year run. At the pavilion's groundbreaking in June 1963, Ambassador Osman el-Hadari stated that the building's design was meant to "reflect traditional Sudanese architecture," whereas the exhibits would present the nation's ten-year social and economic development plan, the ancient and modern history of Sudan, and the life and culture of its population. He also hoped that participation in the fair would result in "greater and more effective exchanges in all fields between . . . Sudan and nations around the world."<sup>15</sup>

Most prominent among the pavilion's exhibits was that of the Sudan Madonna and Child, uncovered in 1963 in a Coptic church being excavated before the waters of the Nile flooded the heart of ancient Nubia as a result of the construction of the Aswan Dam. This 1,200-year-old fresco was displayed with other items exhumed through salvage archaeology as an example of Sudan's ancient civilization; yet the dam, and others like it, which caused so much destruction and the relocation of 50,000 people, was hailed in the pavilion as a key element in Sudan's plans to modernize through irrigation and industrialization. Other exhibits emphasized Sudan as a source of natural resources, such as cotton, gum arabic, and peanuts, all big export items to the Western world.<sup>16</sup>

Sierra Leone's pavilion, designed by architects J.R. Jarrett-Yaskey of Freetown and Costas Machlouzarides of New York, consisted of three conical forms floating above glass walls. The cones were supposed to recall the shape of the West African country's mountains; they also reflected the three pyramids represented on the nation's coat of arms.<sup>17</sup> The pavilion was one of the fair's smallest, measuring about 3,000 square feet on an approximately 10,000-square-foot lot located near the Unisphere. The frame, initially to be made of aluminum, was ultimately made of steel with tongue-and-groove wood sheathing and plastic

roofing to save money and expedite fabrication and construction.<sup>18</sup> Although the building's design involved minor encroachments on its side and rear lot lines, the Fair Corporation's Committee on Conformance approved the plans, acknowledging the structure's unique appearance and regarding it as an asset to the fair.<sup>19</sup> The clean, spare lines of the pavilion and its modern materials, combined with traditional forms tied to the nation's landscape and heritage, conveyed the aspirations of a young nation with an old history.

A raised stage under the main cone served as the location for a show of intricate dances and acrobatics. Because of the building's open plan and glass walls, performances could be seen throughout the pavilion and from the street, helping to lure visitors inside. Another cone was devoted to the display of diamonds, the mining of which was one of the nation's main industries, along with other industrial products. Yet another area served as the backdrop for a small cocktail bar, a photographic exhibit of tourist attractions, and the demonstration of crafts such as traditional woodcarving and weaving.

Sierra Leone was one of the newest nations at the fair, having only won its independence on April 27, 1961. At the groundbreaking ceremony for the structure two years later, the nation's ambassador, Richard E. Kelfa-Caulker, expressed the government's feeling that the pavilion would serve as Sierra Leone's embassy to the world:

We are endowed with the same intelligence, the same spirit for advancement, and we believe not only that we have a contribution to make, but especially that through our association with the Fair, we shall learn and profit equally from the experience of all peoples and nations. . . . We trust also that in presenting the spirit of Sierra Leone, we shall help America and the West to see not only Sierra Leone but Africa as a whole, her potential and her present needs.<sup>20</sup>

The country's participation in the fair was not without controversy, however. The nation's Consul General in New York, Claudius Gibrilla, was attacked by British Commonwealth colleagues for taking part in the fair when other English-speaking, former African colonies had stayed away in keeping with the BIE's decision to oppose the fair.<sup>21</sup> Ultimately, this division and differences within Sierra Leone's government resulted in the nation's absence from the fair in 1965. After much negotiation, an organization officially sanctioned by the United Nations took over the pavilion the following year to display exhibits on the U.N. and UNESCO.

Like some African nations, countries in Asia also wished to participate in the fair. Though India was a relatively old nation compared to Sierra Leone and Sudan, having won its independence in 1947, its presence at the fair was considered by fair officials and representatives of India alike as extremely important. Compared to other national pavilions, India's building was fully Modern in appearance, with nothing about its exterior suggesting India's traditions. (Figure 3) Designed by Mansinh Rana, Senior Architect of India's Ministry of Works, Housing, and Rehabilitation, in conjunction with



*Figure 3: Pavilion of India, Exterior View. (New York World's Fair 1964–1965 Corporation Records, 1959–1971, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library).*

Stonorov and Haws of Philadelphia, the pavilion used stark geometric forms and modern materials to create a structure that would convey India's progress and modernity. The building's design, however, was not fully in the International Style. The architect Rana had studied at Taliesin and worked with Frank Lloyd Wright, and the latter's influence can be seen in the solid, rectangular, two-story box of molded concrete blocks resting on a steel and glass base. Next door stood a circular restaurant with glass walls, connected by a steel and glass corridor to the main pavilion. This structure was also rather large for the pavilion of a developing nation, demonstrating India's geographic and demographic size, as well as its importance as the world's largest democracy. Inside, exhibits were intended to display the nation's diversity, but also the fundamental unity of its people. Arts and crafts filled the first floor, while displays of India's growing industrial maturity filled the second floor. In 1965, India loaned numerous works of bronze, stone, and wood art from the National Museums in Madras and Tanjavur; this was the first time many of these objects had left the country.

The national government was fully behind India's participation, and Indira Gandhi served as Chair of India's World's Fair Exhibition Committee. Despite having used its foreign exchange almost entirely for the purchase of arms in its war with China in the years leading up to the fair, the Indian government went ahead with its participation, although it had to scale down the design for its pavilion.<sup>22</sup> India believed its presence at the fair would be instrumental in encouraging trade and in changing Americans' perceptions of the country. It appears that India achieved its main objective at the fair. According to an undated document in the New York Public Library's world's fair collection, based on comments in the pavilion's visitors' book, the nation had "broken the myth that India was a land of snake charmers."<sup>23</sup> In fact, in December 1965, after the fair closed, India's Consul General, S. Gupta, remarked in a letter to Robert Moses that the pavilion had had a "splendid public response" with over five million visitors to the building during the fair's two years.<sup>24</sup>

Like India, Indonesia was not a brand new nation at the time of the fair, having achieved independence in 1949, and so it expended a relatively large amount of money on its pavilion, about \$2 million. Though not as large as India's building, the pavilion did not prevent President Sukarno from entertaining big ambitions for his nation's presence at the fair. He visited the fair site himself in 1961 to select a lot, which he wanted to be sure would be located halfway between those of the U.S. and the USSR.<sup>25</sup> The following year the government hired R. M. Sudarsono of Jakarta, architect of the State Palace in Bali, to design the building with Max O. Urbahn and Abel Sorensen, both of New York, as consulting architects. Sorensen had designed the National Housing Development Corporation Building (1960) and the State Development Bank Building (1960), both in Jakarta. He also served as the chief interior designer for the United Nations headquarters in New York, and had designed the U.S. exhibit for Cambodia's first international exhibition in Phnom Penh in 1956. In a 1962 letter to Gates Davison, of the Fair Corporation's Foreign Exhibits department, Sorensen claimed that his hiring meant that the Indonesian government wanted a contemporary design to reflect its "progressive aims and cultural art forms."<sup>26</sup>

The pavilion was overwhelmingly modern in appearance, though its round form, zigzag roofline, and slender sixty-one-foot-tall central tower seemed to take inspiration from popular forms of American roadside architecture. The top of the tower represented a stylized five-petal flower, which symbolized the Pantja Sila or Five Principles that provided the ideological foundation of the nation: Belief in God, Humanity, Devotion to Country, Democracy, and Social Justice.<sup>27</sup> The tower and the pavilion's white roof appeared to float on the glass walls below. The combination of forms was meant to give the pavilion a tropical accent. The first floor contained exhibits of traditional arts and crafts, such as woodcarving and batik-making, as well as photographic exhibits of the country's natural resources and industry, along with a gift

shop selling crafts, while the second floor contained a theater-restaurant in which traditional dances were performed while "East Indian Modern" food was served.<sup>28</sup> Speaking at the pavilion's groundbreaking in January 1963, His Highness Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono IX, representing President Sukarno, said:

The Indonesian Pavilion . . . will have a circular main structure which will reflect our way of life; our rich and dynamic culture; our huge natural resources and the possibilities of exploiting them; and our contributions to world trade. And last, but not least, it will reflect our efforts to attract foreign tourists. In this area we have seen the emergence of many unique nations – each one struggling to develop its own identity, and Indonesia, too, is still in the process of consolidating the gains of its revolution.<sup>29</sup>

Though the pavilion itself was modern, adjacent structures reminded visitors of Indonesia's deeper traditions. Two eighty-five-foot-tall, hand-carved, stone replicas of Balinese towers flanked the entrance to the building and nearby stood a delicate, fifty-six-foot-tall, seven-roofed shrine.

Like Sierra Leone, however, Indonesia's participation in the fair was short-lived. Even though the pavilion and its exhibits were popular, they could not recoup their construction costs and the costs of operations and maintenance. More significantly, political tensions between the U.S. and Indonesia had heightened in 1964. Although Sukarno was pro-Western, he was displeased with the U.S.'s decision to support the sale of weapons to Malaysia.<sup>30</sup> In turn, he took over some U.S. Information Agency libraries, permanently seized American rubber estates, and threatened American oil investments in the region. Although the Fair Corporation encouraged Indonesia to stay, the nation deferred its 1965 rent payments, leading fair officials to confiscate the pavilion and terminate its contract in April 1965.<sup>31</sup> In addition, the Johnson administration put pressure on the Fair Corporation, threatening to padlock Indonesia's pavilion in retaliation for the

nation's actions abroad. The pavilion remained closed through the remainder of the fair, with the corporation holding all its contents.

The international pavilions at the 1964–1965 fair represented a turning point in how former colonies presented themselves. Since their beginnings in the mid-nineteenth century, world's fairs have served as arenas for diverse cultures. Colonialism shaped how these cultures were exhibited and perceived, however. At most fairs before the mid-twentieth century, exhibits of non-Western cultures were created by Westerners who frequently presented these cultures as inferior and exotic. For example, at the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris, Charles Garnier designed an exhibit of foreign buildings called the History of Human Habitation. Each structure was meant to embody the culture represented, though it is more accurate to say that they all bore the imprint of Garnier's own stereotypical ideas of world cultures and their architecture at the time. Likewise, displays at world's fairs in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries presented non-Western people in a manner which suggested that their subjugation by whites was a natural part of the progress of civilization. At the St. Louis fair of 1904, scientists and ethnographers created an exhibit on the Philippines that featured so-called primitive tribes in order to justify America's colonization of the islands. The last fair to feature colonial exhibits was the 1958 exposition in Brussels, which included an area devoted to the Belgian Congo. Pavilions in this section housed exhibits on agriculture, mining, and Catholic missions. Their dynamic designs, combining the International Style with popular forms, contrasted sharply with the traditional, thatch-roofed huts of the African village nearby. Although newly independent nations at the New York fair had to find their place between powerful Western nations and their own recent colonial past, they exercised far greater influence over their pavilions and exhibits than they had in previous fairs.

Though temporary, these postcolonial buildings lived on in the memories of the millions

of people who saw them, helping to form a picture of how new and innovative architecture should appear. Although most architecture critics found few buildings to praise at the fair – the Spanish and Japanese pavilions being exceptions – for most visitors the fair embodied ideas of progress and technological prowess. Foreign pavilions, especially those representing African and Asian nations, would have appeared exotic, in their architecture, exhibits, performances of traditional dance and music, and in the food served in their restaurants. Yet, most of these structures were able to compete for visitors with the larger, more ambitious and expensive designs of the corporate pavilions. Some of them even survived after the fair; the Spanish pavilion turned up again in St. Louis as the base of a Hilton Hotel, while India's pavilion was reconstructed in New Jersey to be used as the principal offices of an unnamed corporation.<sup>32</sup>

The prevalence of Modernism at the fair demonstrates the ambivalence that many nations, especially the newer ones, felt toward breaking free from Western modes of architecture and colonial hegemony. The postwar Modernism they incorporated in their pavilions reflected the dominance of the style after the war, its association with democracy and capitalism, and the desire of new nations to be players on a global stage. For visitors to the fair, the popular Modernism so widespread at Flushing Meadows helped to solidify a form of Modern architecture, which, while veering away from some of the purer interpretations of the latter, became a common style across the United States.

Notes

1. See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978).
2. See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).
3. See, for example, Robert A. Caro, *The Power Broker Robert: Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York: Knopf, 1974), and Ada Louise Huxtable's reviews of the fair as the architecture critic for the *New York Times* in the 1960's.
4. Robert Moses to Wallace Harrison, memorandum, 14 June 1960, Box 54, *New York World's Fair 1964-1965 Corporation Records, 1959-1971, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library* (hereafter cited as NYPL).
5. See Vincent J. Scully, Jr., "If This is Architecture, God Help Us," *Life*, July 31, 1964, and Huxtable's *New York Times* articles regarding the fair.
6. United States Department of State, "The Newly Independent Nations," n.d., Box 273, NYPL.
7. Allen E. Beach to Ruben Alvarez, memorandum, 27 July 1961, Box 530, NYPL.
8. *New York World's Fair 1964-1965 Corporation, Press Release 3/63-R9, 28 March 1963, Folder S228, The Papers of Charles Poletti, The Herbert H. Lehman Suite, Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Columbia University* (hereafter cited as *Poletti Papers*).
9. *New York World's Fair 1964-1965 Corporation, "Points To Be Covered By Visiting Team Spokesman," Poletti Papers*.
10. Robert Moses to General W.E. Potter, memorandum, 22 August 1960, Box 54, NYPL.
11. Douglas Beaton to File, memorandum, 4 January 1961, Box 279, NYPL.
12. "The Reminiscences of Charles Poletti," Vol. 4, Oral History Research Office, Columbia University, 1978, 572-573.
13. Lionel Harris to Allen E. Beach, memorandum, 14 June 1962, Box 119, NYPL.
14. Jack Potter to Record, memorandum, 3 January 1963, Box 534, NYPL.
15. "Pavilion of the Republic of Sudan: Groundbreaking at the New York World's Fair 1964-1965," pamphlet, 27 June 1963, *Poletti Papers*, 7.
16. "Pavilion of the Sudan Exhibits: New York World's Fair 1964-1965," pamphlet, *Poletti Papers*.
17. Time-Life Books, *Official Guide New York World's Fair 1964/1965* (New York: Time, 1964), 155.
18. William Douglas, Jr. to General William Whipple, memorandum, 6 November 1963, Box 536, NYPL.
19. General W.E. Potter to Robert Moses, memorandum, 31 October 1962, Box 536, NYPL.
20. "Sierra Leone: Groundbreaking at the New York World's Fair 1964-1965," pamphlet, 10 April 1963, *Poletti Papers*, 6-7.
21. George Bennett to Charles Poletti, memorandum, 4 December 1963, Box 119, NYPL.
22. Douglas Beaton to Charles Poletti, memorandum, 15 November 1962, Box 521, NYPL.
23. "India at the New York World's Fair," pamphlet, n.d., Box 273, NYPL.
24. S. Gupta to Robert Moses, 20 December 1965, Box 273, NYPL.
25. "The Pavilion of Indonesia: Groundbreaking at the New York World's Fair 1964-1965," pamphlet, 18 January 1963, *Poletti Papers*, 2.
26. Abel Sorensen to Gates Davison, 20 March 1962, Box 273, NYPL.
27. "Indonesian Pavilion," press release, January 1964, Box 273, NYPL.
28. "The Pavilion of Indonesia: Groundbreaking," pamphlet, 18 January 1963, *Poletti Papers*, 5-6.
29. "Pavilion of Indonesia," 4-5.
30. Reuters Report, 11 March 1965, Box 273, NYPL.
31. Herbert A. Payne to Robert Moses, memorandum, 6 April 1965, Box 273, NYPL.
32. Charles Poletti to Ernestine Haig, memorandum, 2 May 1966, Folder S226, *Poletti Papers*.

## Influence And Transformation: The Saskatchewan Power Corporation Headquarters

Bernard Flaman

*The paper will present the Saskatchewan Power Building, (Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada), the headquarters of the government-owned electrical utility, as a case study to illustrate the theme of "Internationalization." A stylistic analysis of the Power Building, based on identifying design influences, will form the basis of a reflection on future preservation strategies and possible heritage designation. The analysis will trace the arrival of modernism to the Province of Saskatchewan and explore the influence of Americanization and of Brazilian modernism that resulted in a site-specific, regionalized expression.*

*When the Saskatchewan Power Building opened in 1963, it quickly became a representation of the leading edge of socialist ideology in Canada. The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and its leader, Tommy Douglas, were elected in 1944 and would only be defeated in 1964. During their 20-year reign they introduced nationalized "Crown Corporations" for electricity, telephone, transportation and other manufacturing concerns.*

*The architecture of the Power Building (by Joseph Pettick) is as extraordinary as the ideological underpinnings of the Crown Corporations. Pettick became an architect through the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada apprenticeship program supplemented by a semester spent studying with Bruce Goff at the University of Oklahoma. During the design of the Power Building he traveled to Brazil to witness the construction of Brasilia and meet with Oscar Niemeyer in his office in Rio de Janeiro. When he returned he synthesized what he saw into a design that refers to both a regional and global context by combining, for example, local masonry cladding materials with mosaic tile and by*

*connecting the curved plan of the building to the urban morphology of Regina. The final product is an unique and enduring combination of influences resulting in a regionalized version of expressionist Modernism.*

### Introduction

Saturday, November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1963, could not have been a worse day on which to schedule a public event. U.S. President, John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas the day before and thus the opening of the new Saskatchewan Power Corporation headquarters, Regina, Saskatchewan, received no press coverage whatsoever, even in the local papers. <sup>1</sup> Luckily, this did not prove to be a bad omen for the building; it was avant-garde when new, and unlike many buildings from the modernist period that are often criticized for being cold and inhuman, it is still admired today. <sup>2</sup> The design avoided the International Style glass box and expressed steel frame form of modernism, prevalent in other Canadian cities, in favour of a gently curving expressionist façade clad in materials and colours that reflected a regional influence. The curved plan of the Saskatchewan Power Corporation Headquarters Building responds to its urban context by inflecting to Victoria Park, the central square of downtown Regina. The custom



Figure 1: Front Façade facing Victoria Park, late fall 1963. (Photo by the architect, Joseph Pettick.)

made wheat colour brick and polychrome Italian glass mosaic tiles interpret the colours of the Canadian prairie and recognize the agricultural roots of Saskatchewan. (Figure 1)

Clearly different from its national context of modernist office buildings, the project met with little comment in the architectural press,<sup>3</sup> but when viewed from today's perspective, the design remains compelling as an example of a humanized form of modernism, one that could offer inspiration for contemporary design. A hypothesis begins to emerge that encourages an investigation of the design sources and the political and cultural circumstances that resulted in the unique design of the Saskatchewan Power Corporation headquarters. Internationalization, Americanization, Brazilian modernism transformed by site specific contextualism and a regionalist approach to materials are all elements of the story. It also offers the opportunity to trace the roots of modernist architecture in Saskatchewan, a province that has never had an architectural school, but one that has always been open to influence and new technology; usually transformed by an inventive and self sufficient attitude that stems from the agrarian background of its citizens.

### **Saskatchewan**

The Canadian Provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta were formed in 1905 out of the land mass known as the Northwest Territories. Saskatchewan itself could be viewed as a Modernist project, one based on the ideas of mechanized agriculture, railway transportation and the control and modification of the natural environment. The plan for the settlement of the Canadian west had its roots in the "National Policy" of 1879, a policy of tariff protection that also envisioned a populated, agrarian west providing a market for eastern manufactured goods.<sup>4</sup>

The building of the railway in 1882 provided the transportation infrastructure to reach the remote area with settlers and manufactured

goods. It also provided the means for agricultural products produced in the region to reach outside markets. The First Nations (or Native Canadians) were peacefully, but systematically resettled on reservations after the prairie bison that sustained them, a creature perfectly adapted to the extreme climate, was essentially eradicated. Town sites with grain elevators, the product of elevating technology, were laid out along railway lines at approximately 8 mile (or 13km) intervals, a distance that a farmer could reasonably travel in one day with a horse drawn wagon load of grain.

The building boom that followed the creation of the province resulted in a series of extraordinary buildings. The Provincial Legislature in Regina remains a notable example of Edwardian Classicism<sup>5</sup> and the complex of collegiate gothic style buildings at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon are recognized as the finest example of their kind in Canada.<sup>6</sup> These buildings convey a sense of incredible optimism, permanence and a sense of mankind's triumph over nature.

The economic depression and drought that began in 1930 devastated the largely agricultural region. Institutional building activity ceased and did not resume until after the Second World War. The buildings that were realized during this period, started to illustrate a new trend; radio stations, airports, service stations and factories, the product of new technology and symbolic of Modernity, exhibited the influences of a streamlined Moderne style and European Modernism. The properties that support this claim are the Mainline Ford building in Indian Head, the Symons Oil Can factory in Rocanville, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Transmitter in Watrous and the first Regina Airport.

The 1930's were also the start of a new political direction that grew out of the agricultural cooperative movement, the hardship of the depression and war years and as a reaction against a distant federal government and powerful railway. In 1944, the Commonwealth Cooperative Federation party (CCF) was elected, the first declared socialist

government in North America.<sup>7</sup> This new provincial government, led by Tommy Douglas, a former Baptist minister, embarked on a program of public ownership of utility, manufacturing, transportation and insurance companies. The Saskatchewan Power Corporation was formed in 1949 and immediately embarked on a rural electrification project with a goal of bringing electrical service to individual farms.<sup>8</sup> The project illustrated one of the major benefits of public utility ownership by extending electrical service to all un-served portions of the province. With a large land area and small, dispersed and mainly rural, population, this goal would likely not have been achieved within a system of private utility ownership.

Another initiative of the socialist government was the creation of the Saskatchewan Arts Board (SAB) in 1948. Modeled on the British Arts Council and still operating today, its mandate includes words like "support", "facilitate", "public access", "quality", "innovation", "appreciation" and "understanding" as related to a range of arts disciplines in Saskatchewan.<sup>9</sup> By 1955, the Arts Board was well underway in its support of contemporary art and had also funded a series of artist workshops. The Emma Lake workshops for visual artists organized by the head of the visual art department at University of Regina, Ken Lochhead, and held at a sketch camp owned by the University of Saskatchewan in the boreal forest near Prince Albert National Park became well known, especially after New York artist Barnett Newman and art critic Clement Greenberg participated as workshop leaders. They were not entirely unfamiliar with the political situation in Saskatchewan before they arrived since "Time" magazine; "Newsweek" and the "New York Times" had each published several articles on the election of the socialist government.<sup>10</sup> What evolved over the 15 years following the formation of the Saskatchewan Arts Board was a general openness to outside influences, especially American influences. This trend conflicted with cultural policies that were evolving at the federal level as articulated in The Massey Report of 1951.<sup>11</sup> This document would guide Canadian cultural production until the 1970's and, at its core, warned

of the threat of American cultural assimilation.

The pragmatic openness to outside influence in Saskatchewan was carried over to the corporate sector when in 1954, David Cass-Beggs was hired as general manager of the Saskatchewan Power Corporation. An engineer, Cass-Beggs was originally from the United Kingdom and both he and his wife possessed a strong appreciation for the arts, including architecture. In 1956, with electrical prices falling, consumption rising, new users being added and in the midst of a booming economy, Saskatchewan Power Corporation administrative operations were spread over 11 different locations in Regina.<sup>12</sup> In that year, Cass-Beggs attending the opening of a facility in an industrial park north of Regina for the German chemical company, Hoechst, met the designer of the building, a 32 year old architect named Joseph Pettick. The conversation that passed between the two men impressed the general manager as days later, Cass-Beggs called Pettick to begin preliminary work on the design of a new headquarters.<sup>13</sup>

### **The Architect**

Joseph Pettick was born in Hungary in 1924 and immigrated to Canada as a child with his mother, joining his father on a farm in the Kipling area of Saskatchewan. When the Second World War broke out, Joseph joined the navy as a stoker and on his discharge, began an apprenticeship with the Regina architectural firm, Portnall and Stock. Eight years later in 1954, he received his professional registration after working on buildings such as Kirk Hall at the University of Saskatchewan and the Regina Post Office. During this time, he achieved the position of associate and chief draftsman, but was unable to participate in the design work within his own office that was regularly handed to those with academic credentials.<sup>14</sup>

To address what he saw as a deficiency, Pettick felt he needed some university training and decided to spend a year studying with Bruce Goff and Mendel Glickman at the University of Oklahoma in Norman. Pettick became familiar with

Goff's work through *Architectural Record* magazine. When he returned to Regina in 1955, his old firm, Portnall and Stock, offered him a partnership and the prospect of heading up a branch office in Saskatoon. Pettick decided to decline the offer and opened his own office. In 1956, after his chance meeting with David Cass Beggs, he was offered the job to start preliminary studies of the program, location and design of the new Saskatchewan Power Corporation headquarters.

### **The Building**

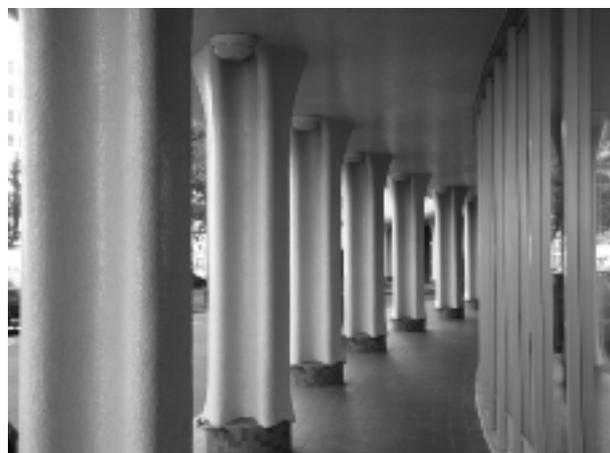
Seven years elapsed between the initial studies in 1956 and the opening of the finished building in the fall of 1963. Several locations were studied, a combined bus station/office building program was explored, five different designs were sketched and modeled, and the architect researched and visited other office buildings in Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal, Chicago, Detroit and San Francisco.

One of the preliminary schemes displays a level of prudent and almost contemporary urban design concern. The tall portion of the office tower is set back from the street, responding to typical modernist concerns of access to light and air, plus it minimized the shadow cast on Victoria Avenue, recognizing the northern latitude of the site. A podium level introduces a human scale at the base of the building, holds the street edge and is punctuated by circular elements. With the exception of the influence of Frank Lloyd Wright's later work, this preliminary version is very much within the accepted rules of Modernism and gives little clue as to the expressive and sensual quality of the final design.

In 1959, as part of his ongoing research into office projects and stemming from a belief that travel was an important component of an architect's education, Joseph Pettick traveled to Brazil, met with Oscar Niemeyer and observed the construction of Brasilia. By 1962, the final design of the Power Corporation Headquarters was complete. It was

a design that was clearly a departure from the mainstream modernism exhibited by other office towers being designed or under construction at the time across Canada. The British Columbia Electric Building in Vancouver by Thompson Berwick Pratt with Ron Thom as chief designer, the Monarch Life Building in Winnipeg by Smith, Carter, Searle architects, the Toronto Dominion Centre by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe in Association with John B. Parkin Associates and Bregman and Hamman Architects and, finally, the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (initially called Windsor Place) in Montreal by Peter Dickinson Architect, all display a version of International Style modernism with carefully composed rectilinear geometry and finely detailed curtain wall. These projects are strongly influenced by the work of Mies Van der Rohe, and in the case of the Toronto Dominion Centre include his direct involvement. For the Saskatchewan Power Corporation Headquarters, this Miesian influenced International Style evolved in favour of a Brazilian influenced expressionism. A few exceptions to the International Style started to appear in Canada as early as 1958 with the publication of Viljo Rewell's winning competition scheme for Toronto City Hall,<sup>15</sup> a building that would not be completed until 1965.

The front façade of the Saskatchewan Power Corporation Headquarters curves gently and orients many of the office windows to a view



*Figure 2: Sculptural columns defining street level driveway and entrance. (Photo by Bernard Flaman).*

of Victoria Park, the central square of downtown Regina. The secondary branch of the plan form, resulting in a “flowing Y”, completes the drive-through circulation at the base of the building that provides motorists with the opportunity to pay utility bills from their cars.<sup>16</sup> (Figure 2) A custom made brick was produced at the brickworks in Estevan with clay from the community of Halbrite to produce a “wheat” colored product<sup>17</sup> that combined with gold anodized window frames and white and blue-green mosaic tiles to produce a colour scheme that evoked the prairie landscape in the autumn. At the base of the building, a continuous colonnade composed of a series of sculptural columns maintains the idea of human scale that was evident in the earlier schemes. On the south façade the windows are shaded by a gold anodized aluminum brise-soleil.

The ground floor lobby area, top floor auditorium and the illuminated ceiling system in the public areas are unique hybrids of international modernism, regionalized by homage to the local climate, colours and even insects. The ceiling system, called “prairie ice”, evoking the snow and frost of the winter months, was invented by the architect when he baked a piece of plastic over sculpted sand in his kitchen oven. On the lobby level, the mosaic tile work takes inspiration from the lakes and boreal forest of northern Saskatchewan. And finally, the auditorium on the upper level, with



*Figure 3: “Grasshopper Belly” Auditorium. (Photo by the architect, Joseph Pettick).*

its series of curved plaster panels was designed to give the impression of being inside the belly of a grasshopper. (Figure 3)

The most convenient explanation for the design of the Saskatchewan Power Corporation headquarters is that it traces its lineage to Le Corbusier’s diagram from the 1930’s for housing in Algeria and Rio de Janeiro, translated through the Pedregello housing project in Rio de Janeiro designed by Alfonso Reidy, fashioned out of local Saskatchewan materials and molded to respond to a particular urban context. Rather than snaking its way around the hilly topography of Rio de Janeiro or curving along the waterfront of Algiers, the geometry of the Power Building strikes a balance between being clearly different from its surroundings, yet engaging a context composed of a flat topography and rigid street grid, populated by historic buildings around a traditional square.

This subtle tension between standing out and fitting in is still evident today and may provide a clue for contemporary practice. Joseph Pettick was able to combine many outside influences with what he knew about local materials and colours. He created an engagement with the building’s context and finally, he was able to invent motifs that were metaphors of a uniquely Saskatchewan experience, examples being the “prairie ice” ceiling system and the “grasshopper belly” auditorium. In our current globalized world, where star architects insert blockbuster projects into almost any context imaginable, the balance between influence and transformation exhibited by the Saskatchewan Power Building may provide a model for producing buildings that are contemporary and provocative yet delight and endure.

Today the building remains the headquarters and is recognizable as a symbol of the corporation. The fortieth anniversary of the building was celebrated in the fall of 2003 with the architect in attendance and three remaining employees who worked for the company in 1963. The interiors, most notably, the ground floor, have been renovated several times mainly to incorporate changes in technology and

security. Sadly, the idea of a headquarters of a publicly owned utility that is accessible to the public has disappeared and been replaced with strict security.

In the late 1980's, Joseph Pettick was retained to design a thermal upgrade for the north wall, where insulation and new anodized aluminum spandrels were layered over the original blue-green mosaic tile. The original windows remain in the building and were originally specified as double glazed with thermally broken frames. Last year the exterior fountain and parts of the lobby area were retiled.

On September 3 of this year an exhibition opened at the Mendel Art Gallery in Saskatoon in celebration of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the gallery.<sup>18</sup> The milestone presented an opportunity to tell a story about Modernist Architecture in Saskatchewan in advance of a show planned for 2005 on the work of architect Clifford Wiens, one of the province's most inventive and prolific Modernist architects. The goal of the Heritage Resources unit with the Government of Saskatchewan is to realize the designation of The Saskatchewan Power Corporation Headquarters, The Mendel Art Gallery and the four, what I call monospace buildings, designed by Clifford Wiens as Provincial Heritage Properties. This presentation at Docomomo 2004 combined with the current and planned exhibitions raise awareness about the value of Modernist architecture in Saskatchewan and assist in achieving preservation and protection of significant Modernist buildings.

Notes

1. *Leader Post*, November 23, 1963.
2. Saskatchewan Power Corporation organized a celebration of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the building, November 23, 2003.
3. Arthur, Eric, "Project: Saskatchewan Power Corporation Head Office Building", *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada*, (February 1961), page 37.
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11. *The Massey Report* was a federal document published in 1951 that would guide cultural activity in Canada until the 1970's. One of its central ideas was resistance to American cultural assimilation.
12. O'Brian, John, "Where the Hell is Saskatchewan and Who is Emma Lake?", *The Flatside of the Landscape: The Emma Lake Artists' Workshops* (Saskatoon: The Mendel Art Gallery, 1989) page 33.
13. Series of interviews with Joseph Pettick at his office in Regina, 2002-2004
14. *Ibid*
15. Arthur, Eric, "Toronto City Hall Jury Report", *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada*, (October 1958), page 360.
16. Creighton, Thomas H., "The New Sensualism", *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada*, (October 1960), page 396
17. Saskatchewan Power Corporation promotional booklet published for the opening of the new headquarter building, November, 1963
18. Conway, John F. "Crown Corp 101", *The Prairie Dog*, (September 16, 2004) page 6

## A Modern Museum in an Old House by the Sea: Lina Bo Bardi and the Modernism of Bahia<sup>1</sup>

Silvana Rubino

*This paper is about a modern museum for popular arts, installed in a colonial house by the Baía de Todos os Santos [All Saints Bay]. It is a point of departure to discuss themes as international/national and universal/local in the field of modern architecture after 1945, and notions like center/periphery. This museum was a consequence of the Museum of Modern Art of Bahia, directed by an Italian female architect, Lina Bo Bardi, co-responsible for the Sao Paulo Art Museum (MASP). Lina Bo Bardi, born in Rome, moved to Brazil in 1947 and spend five years in Bahia, between 1959 and 1964. The rehabilitation of Solar do Unhão, a complex of buildings including a mansion, a chapel and a house used as a depot, summarizes the tense relations between preservation, conservation and modernism, and the role of modern architects in the definitions of such boundaries in Brazil, as well as possibilities of post-war museums and exhibitions.*

The title of this piece may seem somewhat paradoxical: modern and old, and a situated modernism—in Bahia, Brazil—as well. All this suggests a revision of the notion of “Modernism,” if we understand that term as synonymous with a rationalist architecture. We will argue that there is another modernism of the postwar period, after Team 10 and before the Postmodernism debate. For this reason, a modern museum for popular arts, installed in a old colonial house by the Baía de Todos os Santos, the largest bay in Brazil, is a good point of departure to discuss themes such as international and national, and universal and local, as well as notions like the center and the periphery in the field—in the precise sense given to

it by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu<sup>2</sup> — of modern architecture after 1945.

This museum was conceived as part of the Museum of Modern Art of Bahia, whose director was Lina Bo Bardi, the female Italian architect who had previously co-designed the Sao Paulo Art Museum (MASP). When she arrived in Bahia, the trajectory that had brought her to design the MASP was well-known. She had arrived in Brazil with her husband possessing considerable symbolic and material capital. He had brought with him a collection of masterpieces for exhibition and sale. She, however, had brought the intangible capital of someone whose architectural education took place during the period of the Modern Movement in Italy—this was her trajectory.<sup>3</sup>

According to Alan Colquhoun, the Modern Movement in architecture appeared in Italy soon after World War I, promising a “return to order” and the rejection of some of the principles of Futurism.<sup>4</sup> In Milan, rationalism was successful despite the indifference and (sometimes) the hostility of Fascism. In this context, the conflict between Giuseppe Pagano and Giuseppe Terragni was not about politics, as both were sympathetic to the regime of Benito Mussolini, but rather about the kind of issues that divided Hannes Meyer and Le Corbusier: moralistic rigor versus idealistic aestheticism. In the field of modern architecture in Italy, the architecture practiced and theorized by Marcello Piacentini and Gustavo Giovanonni in Rome represented another point of view. This was the context and the state of the field when Bo Bardi was in liceo (high school) and decided to become an architect.

The revisionist pressures of postwar reconstruction required an engagement in some of the current ideological debates. Milan and Rome were the cities emblematic of the opposing poles. Bo Bardi was born in Rome in 1915 and studied architecture in that city before spending time in Milan. After 1945, Milanese architecture supported the rationalist ‘agenda’ of Pagano and Edoardo Persico, but was associated with left-wing politics. The main critics of these positions were

the Roman architects, led by Bruno Zevi. Zevi was a Frank Lloyd Wright and Alvar Aalto enthusiast and the author of *Verso una architettura organica* (1945), in which he had opposed organicism to rationalism, without, however, abandoning the field of modern architecture. According to Benevolo,<sup>5</sup> until 1947 Italian architectural activism was focused on construction and its techniques. A period of theoretical proposals with the aim of extracting theory from practice and a flirtation with neo-realism emerged at this time when almost nothing could be built. Bo Bardi, who had worked for *Domus* and other journals, joined Zevi in creating a new one, *A*, soon re-baptized as *Cultura della vita*. This was the state of field at the moment when she could have made her debut as architect. Soon after joining Zevi, however, she married Pietro Maria Bardi,<sup>6</sup> the editor of *Quadrante* and a supporter of Terragni, and moved to São Paulo, Brazil to participate in the adventure of creating an art museum.

Lina Bo, the eldest daughter of an engineer and amateur painter, grew up in Rome during the Fascist period. After graduating from liceo, she entered the *Scuola di Architettura di Roma*, where she was a student of both Piacentini and Giovanonni. While she would never acknowledge Piacentini's importance, she greatly admired Giovanonni because of his knowledge of the philology of buildings. After finishing her architectural studies, she moved to Milan, an industrial town where rationalism was able to succeed, despite connections with the Fascist regime, and where there were new experiments in exhibit design that we can consider among the major Italian and specifically Milanese contributions of those years. In 1947, when Lina Bo, now married to Bardi, arrived in Rio de Janeiro, she was probably searching for a new field in which to work in a country where innovative architecture was internationally celebrated. However, the fact that her husband brought a collection of art masterpieces for exhibition and sale gave her an intangible capital, a vivid knowledge of the possibilities of being modern in a field where various definitions were being constructed and disputed. And while reconstruction had revived that debate in Europe, Brazil was a country where Modernism could still be heroic,

state-driven and innovative. *Brazil Builds*, both the exhibition and the publication of the accompanying book, were still recent events. She could thus believe the country offered her good opportunities. We can imagine her feeling that the Ministry of Education building,<sup>7</sup> designed by Lucio Costa with help from Le Corbusier, was welcoming her to the tropics.

It's significant that the first collective exhibition of the modern arts of Bahia occurred exactly at mid-century. The main significance, to us, is that we realized that Bahia's experience, in terms of art, was many years behind the civilized world<sup>8</sup>.

With these words, the art critic Jose Valadares introduced the exhibition of *The New Bahia Artists* (*Novos Artistas Baianos*) in 1949. It coincided with the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the city of Salvador. The commemorations, made possible by the recent discovery of oil on state land, the encouragement received from the newly founded university, and the presence of many émigré artists have prompted many to call this period the *baiana renaissance* and to consider it as the end to years of solitude, which included those of the presidency of Getulio Vargas (1930-45).

This was the climate and context in 1958, when Bo Bardi was invited to teach some classes in architecture. One year later, she became the curator of an exhibition, *Bahia no Ibirapuera* (*Bahia in the Ibirapuera Park*), an event that paralleled the *São Paulo Biennial*. While the main *Biennial* exhibition had as its highlights the work of Van Gogh and Torres-Garcia, the minor one displayed popular and anonymous arts and crafts and photos of the town of Salvador in a space where the floor was covered by leaves, in an installation that was inspired by Milan. In the words of the best known *baiano* writer Jorge Amado: "Everything that people touch in Bahia land turns into poetry, even with the persistence of drama." Or, in Bo Bardi's terms: "We who are present in Bahia could have chosen Central America, Spain, Southern Italy or any place where what we call 'culture' has not arrived yet."

Soon after, Bo Bardi was invited by the government of the state of Bahia to create a new museum for modern art inside the ruins of the unused interior space of a burnt-out theater. The particular words she chose to present this new project reveal a 'return to order.'

An agreement about the term Modern is necessary. Once the time of rebellions against reactionary tendencies in art has passed and the necessity of shock has ceased, we can arrive at the point where modern art is accepted by all. Taking the period of destruction as having ended, we need to start building; otherwise we may be part of the 'delaying avant-garde' and therefore be left out of modern reality.

One may note that, despite the earlier demand for a "retour à l'ordre" published by Le Corbusier and Amédée Ozenfant in 1938 in *Après le Cubism*, where they proposed an artistic, social and political order, it was not until the postwar years that this "old" modernist demand encountered the rather 'routinized' and now consecrated Modernism.

Nevertheless, the Modernist predicament Bo Bardi faced led her to a choice of renovation, as can be seen from the redevelopment of the Solar do Unhão structures. Preserved by federal law in 1943<sup>9</sup>, the ensemble of Solar do Unhão (Figure 1) was "revealed" as part of a plan that created new avenues in the town, turning Salvador, the capital of Bahia State, towards the sea and creating new landscapes and perspectives. In her restoration, Bo Bardi deliberately demolished some buildings in order to conserve and preserve others. (Figure 2) The rehabilitation of the complex of buildings, including a mansion, a chapel and a house used as a depot, summarizes the tense relations between preservation, conservation and modernism, order and innovation, and the role of modern architects in the definitions of such boundaries in Brazil. In other words, it is emblematic of the tensions within the field in those years when modern Brazilian architecture was accused of formalism.<sup>10</sup> The emigré—outsider in the sense of Norbert Elias,



*Figure 1: The ensemble of Solar do Unhão before the restoration. (Courtesy of Instituto Lina Bo e P.M Bardi, São Paulo).*



*Figure 2: The Solar do Unhão after restoration. (Courtesy of Instituto Lina Bo e P.M Bardi, São Paulo).*

maverick in the term of Howard Becker, or simply the stranger, as Georg Simmel would write—Bo Bardi, managed to integrate, not without some ambiguity, several opposed notions and, in the context of the leftist social proposals for culture in Brazil,<sup>11</sup> come up with a design for a modern museum in an old building, much as Franco Albini, Ignazio Gardella and Carlo Scarpa were doing at the same time in Milan. The museum was not simply modern in its discourse; it was modern in its exhibition display. The objects, which in this museum were not exactly masterpieces, but anonymous and popular works of art, would not be placed on the walls, but would form an ensemble in an apparently free arrangement that occupied the whole space of the building. As in the design for the MASP headquarters, where she

had proposed a wide and empty space, here Bardi removed all the internal divisions of the colonial house.

During her five years working in Salvador, Bahia, Bo Bardi directed both the Museum of Modern Art and the Museum for Popular Arts in the complex of the Unhao, the latter having been conceived as an offshoot of the former. In order to insert the new museum, some crucial changes in the buildings of the Unhao were required. The doors and windows of the main house were painted in red. She made this choice, which would later create some political trouble for her,<sup>12</sup> in order to reflect the poor people's enjoyment of the color red that was often used in the popular quarters of Salvador. This idea of dialogue with a highly constructed and specific notion of popular culture was much informed by the writings of the Italian Communist intellectual Antonio Gramsci. Her distinction between national and nationalism and the statement that every person has knowledge were borrowed from Gramsci.<sup>13</sup>

But the great transformation was inside the Solar, the ancient manor house, where stairs that connected the two floors were replaced. In the place of the second floor, she created a new, empty space. In the middle of this space, mooring the four sides of the house, she designed large wooden stairs, whose rabetting or joinery, she said, reproduced that in use in the construction of popular ox carts. (Figure 3) The project choices make explicit an interpretation of Brazilian colonial architecture that was informed by Italian museography, which Bo Bardi knew from her contact with Gio Ponti during her years in Milan.

The new design revealed her modern manner of dealing with with cultural heritage and the look of the popular culture that Bo Bardi found in Bahia. As a disciple of Gustavo Giovanonni, she could feel secure about which elements of it to discard and which to keep. For those interventions based on notions of history and popular culture, she could draw on her studies of both Gramsci and Benedetto Croce, which, she believed, justified



*Figure 3: The internal space after restoration and the emblematic wooden staircase. (Courtesy of Instituto Lina Bo e P.M Bardi, São Paulo).*

her choices in terms of a scientific and philological position regarding the restoration of cultural heritage. As a friend of the governor, she could do whatever she considered best for the building, her proposals and for the specific site. Finally, as the author of the innovative design of the second MASP headquarters, she was less subject to the objective constraints that weighed on the average architects of her (and our) time.

The mansion became a modern museum. Exhibiting objects that were not conceived as works of art in a museum is a means of appropriating them; for the status of these objects is upgraded and, consequently, so is the status of the populations that produce them. The new arrangement created an ambience where they could be read as a whole, as an ensemble. This was perhaps the right solution to the problem of adding value to these small and unimportant pieces.

World War II was followed by a period of re-democratization in Brazil. Petroleum was found in the state of Bahia, and its capital, the city of Salvador, began to be modernized, and old buildings by the seashore began to be demolished, the desperate efforts of its historians, chroniclers and intellectuals notwithstanding. In spite of this modernization, the inner city of Salvador was saved. Preserved by stringent preservation laws, the colonial past that remains in the "high town"—known as Pelourinho—is a legacy of colonial Portuguese planning. This

arrangement of historic and modern helped to make the now democratic and more powerful Salvador capable of competing with Rio de Janeiro, the Brazilian capital, for the role as symbolic center of the country, and to avoid being relegated to the periphery. The city, was, on the one hand, modern enough to overcome its previous political and economical isolation, and, on the other, historical enough to remind everyone that it used to be the first capital of the colonial Brazil.

A certain characteristic of postwar Modernism is relevant here. In the early years of the Modern Movement, debates were mainly in French and German. Now, in a period of reassessment, there were dialogues with the Italian and English. They could therefore celebrate some “other” (and national) modernisms like Scandinavian and Brazilian as novelties. The latter was soon seen as too formal, or was it that it was too modern for a poor country? Among the severe criticisms of Modern Movement developments in Brazil during the 1950’s, Max Bill’s accusation of academicism and the contemporary discrediting of the supposed formalism of Oscar Niemeyer were the most prominent. To these, we can add those of Benevolo,<sup>14</sup> who observed that the new works of modern architecture in Brazil were not capable of being integrated with the historic sites, thus raising doubts about their ability to create a unity.

Within the field of Brazil’s celebrated architecture we can perhaps find a response to these criticisms. Maybe we should use the term in the plural – modern architectures. If in Milan, Italy, the modern Pirelli Tower (Giò Ponti, 1958) paralleled the somewhat nostalgic Torre Velasca (BBPR, 1956), in Brazil we can find the “carioca school” of Lucio Costa, Oscar Niemeyer and others confronted by many alternatives to its dominant position in the complex field of Brazilian architecture in this period. As Gorelik argues, there was a crisis concerning the canonic classification, since there existed projects that did not fit into its framework.<sup>15</sup>

Among these redefinitions of art and architecture’s symbolic geographies and historical

traditions, we have this old mansion transformed into a modern museum. Perhaps this process of conversion reflected a relationship of forces, in Carlo Ginzburg’s terms,<sup>16</sup> considering that different cultures do not have the same power. Bo Bardi could “read” the possibilities of popular objects and knowledge—i.e. building a stair of ox cart components—thanks to all she had learned in the conflict-ridden field of Italian architecture circa 1945. Perhaps she found a new way to be modern, a mode of thinking not in terms of the principle of “form follows function” but rather advocating the notion that materiality can follow and propose uses. In any case, this museum was a turning point in the architect’s trajectory. By this time, as many would argue, Bo Bardi “had gone Brazilian.”

A tense line was drawn between the modern and the old, and between highbrow and popular culture. Here we have late Modernism in Bahia. This tension may constitute the context, or, using the terms of Mikhail Bakhtin, the chronotopo, in which the museum was conceived as modern. The result of the five years that this Italian woman architect spent in Bahia, this old house reminds us that center and periphery, past and present, time and zone, are interdependent terms.

Notes

1. Thanks to DOCOMOMO United States for accepting this paper, which is derived from my doctoral dissertation, *Rotas da modernidade. Trajetória, espaço e história na atuação de Lina Bo Bardi*. PHD Dissertation, State University of Campinas, 2002, about the trajectory of Lina Bo Bardi, completed in 2002.
2. *The Field of Cultural Production* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1993). The field is a space of symbolic struggle for power within and for the definition of the field itself.
4. Alan Colquhoun, *Modern Architecture* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).
5. Leonardo Benevolo, *História da arquitetura moderna* (São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva, 1979), 666.
6. In whose *Galeria d'Arte* at Rome the Gruppo 7 exhibited in 1931. An open opponent of Piacentini, Bardi edited *Quadrante* together with Massimo Bontempelli. The periodical had expressed explicit sympathy for Mussolini.
7. The *Ministério da Educação e Saúde Pública* (MESP) was designed by Lucio Costa and collaborators, Le Corbusier included among them. It is recognized as the first high-rise building to apply the five points of Le Corbusier.
8. *É de fato bastante significativo que a primeira exposição coletiva de artistas modernos da Bahia tenha lugar exatamente no meio do século. A principal significação - ao nosso ver - está na constatação do atraso que na Bahia se vive em matéria de arte, distância de muitos anos do mundo civilizado.*
9. The protection of historical and artistic monuments started in Brazil in 1937. The *Solar do Unhão*, built between the XVII and XVIII centuries, was preserved by federal law in 1943.
10. When visiting São Paulo in 1954, Max Bill wrote an article condemning the excess of pilotis in Niemeyer's *Palace of Industry*, arguing that the spirit of decorativeness was the opposite of the art of building. Frampton, Kenneth. *Modern architecture. A critical history*. (London, Thames and Hudson, 1992): 257. According to Benevolo, the accusation of formalism is quite right, and the cycle of the Brazilian architecture, which about 1960 was still a experiment of avant-garde seemed to be a finished chapter in the following decade, when he published his *Storia della Architettura Moderna*.
11. *By then she had already designed the Museu de Arte de Sao Paulo [Sao Paulo Art Museum], directed by her husband, the journalist and art dealer Pietro Maria Bardi.*
12. *By political trouble I mean that after the coup d'état of 1964, prospects for her in Brazil did not seem promising.*
13. *According to some Brazilian intellectuals I interviewed, Bo Bardi was the first person to mention Gramsci in Brazil, and she surely read *Quaderni eli carcere* in the postwar Italy.*
14. *Op. Cit., 716*
15. *Adrián Gorelik, *Das vanguardas a Brasília Belo Horizonte: Editora da UFMG*, 2005.*
16. *Carlo Ginzburg, *(Relações de força. História, retórica, prova. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras)*, 2002.*

## Augusto H. Álvarez: Pioneer and Innovator of Mexican Modernity

María de Lourdes Cruz González Franco

*The professional career of the architect Augusto H. Álvarez began in the early 1940's; after the Second World War, vanguard international movements were incorporated into Mexican architecture, as its practitioners —Álvarez among them— adopted the postulates of the Modern Movement. Even as a young man, during his years as a student, he was impassioned by modernity and the "spirit of the age". He was convinced that he neither could, nor should, abandon the technological systems and materials that were being used universally. He was a pioneer in the adoption, study and adaptation of construction technologies used in more developed countries, and tirelessly fostered changes in Mexican architecture in an attempt to have it reflect the period, both inside and outside the country. He ably combined technique, form and function, arguing that innovative architectural forms could only be created if they derived from new structures. His architecture was characterized by the rigor of its composition, its proportionality, modulation and order and a certain moderation. He was, indeed, a pioneer of modernity and an innovator in construction systems in Mexico, who utilized local materials and labor to develop an architecture style the quality of which caught people's attention.*

*Augusto H. Álvarez was one of the most distinguished representatives of post-war Mexican architecture (1940-1970). He imported the canons and technology of the Modern Movement and his architectural work was attuned to both the historical moment and the geographical place. Finally, he exported the quality of his work as testimony to an era that has not been repeated in Mexico, one characterized by craftsmanship and professional commitment.*

The Mexican architect Augusto Harold Álvarez García was born in the city of Merida in Yucatan State in 1915, in the middle of the Mexican Revolution. He later moved to Mexico City, where he remained until his death in 1995. He was an eager and observant young man whose love of building model airplanes, cars and trains led him to develop exceptional cleverness, manual abilities, and drawing skills. He learned from these experiences that he could not build things that did not work, and he kept learning until the end of his life. In 1933, he began his architectural studies at San Carlos Academy, where the curriculum was oscillating between the academic tradition and the discovery of the avant-gardes. Le Corbusier and the German and Dutch schools became his inspiration. He said that his identification with them was immediate and the result of an affinity of temperaments.<sup>1</sup>

Álvarez graduated from architecture school at the age of 24. He was soon invited to teach a design studio at the National Architecture School, where his teaching of the principles of the Modern Movement proved to be revolutionary. Many of his students from both this institution and from the Iberoamericana University remember his friendly but respectful personality with great affection, but they remember even more how his rationalist teaching, governed by order, a commitment to volumetric purity, and work with modules first aroused a love for architecture in them. It is noteworthy that many of them became close friends and outstanding architects.

When Álvarez began his professional practice in 1933, Mexico was a post-revolutionary country, filled with hope and possibilities. It was a fertile field for young architects, because the conflicts of the First World War had created a demand for products manufactured in Mexico and decisively improved the Mexican economy. Little by little, Mexico became a country with a growing industrial sector that encouraged the movement of population to the metropolis. This in turn meant there were needs to be satisfied, including that for administrative, commercial and financial buildings. These architectural typologies, representative

of modernity and economic activity, demanded an image that corresponded to that of the more developed countries. A few architects knew how to respond to this need, Alvarez first and foremost among them.

Álvarez's affinity with the Modern Movement was not casual. Since his youth, he had been firmly convinced that everyone belongs to the same world. As a man of his time, he was deeply impressed by the technological developments of the second quarter of the twentieth century. He believed that improved communications made scientific and technological achievements a universal heritage, not one belonging to a single country. He therefore felt obliged to work for the common good and embrace this newly developing culture. This was his justification for appropriating new technological systems and materials. For him, modernity was not a style; it was a passion, a form of life, and a permanent commitment.

Álvarez was drawn to a rationalism based on the myth of a scientific and ordered society, one that admired the machine and technology. Architecture was essentially understood to be concerned with creating a physical, mathematical, rational and functional space, based on surface and on the plastic, visual, and abstract perception of space. This explains both the absence of any concern for place, history and tradition and the unceasing desire for innovation that is characteristic of this view.

He believed that in order to achieve a transcendental change, a great familiarity with technology was necessary, and that the creation of innovative forms could only be derived from new structures. He would always say: "we have the obligation to give new answers to old problems through novel solutions and formal expressions. This is why research and exploration is fundamentally important for every project studied."<sup>2</sup> He imported technology, adapting it to Mexico's materials and manual labor, and this helped him to produce work that met international standards of quality.

His constant restlessness made him one of the pioneers in the use of modules as a design tool. They had interested him since architectural school, because he found them to be a simple, appropriate, and rational way of designing. Like many others, he was convinced that the future of architecture would be based on standardization. The module allowed him to achieve clear internal distribution, coherent circulation, controlled costs, optimal solutions and, above all, to establish rhythm and harmony. Abandoning the metric system used in Mexico, he adopted the British system of measurement because of its relation to the human body, and because of its use for the dimensions of industrial materials such as steel, glass and wood. The foot was the point of departure for the exploration of innumerable combinations that allowed him to establish coherent relations between all the elements of a building, both in plan and in elevation. He did not find it limiting; to the contrary, he compared it to the musician's ruled paper. It was a simple form which was well suited to expressing his thoughts in a plan.<sup>3</sup>

Working in association with Juan Sordo Madaleno, he completed many of his early experiments in the 1940's, all inspired by the work of Le Corbusier. They built numerous apartment buildings in the fanciest neighborhoods of Mexico City. In these buildings, which were constructed from concrete in order to make possible a free façade, glass slowly took on greater importance. They contained spacious apartments that were functional and well lit. From then on, light became one of his priorities. They were also successful designers of office and commercial buildings. At the time, many companies were moving from the center of the city to less crowded neighborhoods and were looking for open spaces, comfortable and well lit, unlike the dark spaces of older buildings. Among these, the one standing at the corner of Reforma and Morelos streets is the most noteworthy. It is thought to have pioneered the use of the free plan, certain types of material finishes and something unusual at that time – air conditioning. Henceforth, Alvarez would specialize in office spaces, designing more than fifty of them as well as many office building renovations and expansions.

At the beginning of the 1950's, Alvarez's professional career took a vertiginous turn, and the period between approximately 1950 and 1960 became the most significant of his career. He designed many projects in Mexico City that came to represent, both at home and abroad, what was most interesting in contemporary Mexican architecture.

Influenced by the ideas of Mies van der Rohe, particularly by his preoccupation with structural sincerity and his attention to details, and convinced by the new international trends in architecture, Alvarez sought to achieve simplicity, clarity, and transparency by stripping away all forms of ornamentation. He repeatedly said that he wanted to create a quiet architecture that was not flashy, that offered the maximum efficiency and the best quality of life to the user.<sup>4</sup> He became the main exponent of the International Style in Mexico, promoting modernity as a representation of progress and the spirit of the time. He was determined to improve flexible office spaces, making them more effective, light, detachable, multipurpose and reusable. In this way, he could offer exactly what the businessmen were looking for: an image informed by the look of the building they inhabited, that is to say, a building that advertised their status.

On the one hand, he increased the use of steel in his constructions, because it allowed more height and openness in the interior spaces, and greater flexibility and lightness generally. He adopted it in numerous buildings in which he was looking for better solutions. On the other hand, he was also partial to glass, because for him, sun and light were, apart from being free, essential elements of his architecture--glass allowed the fusion of the interior and the exterior. He never wavered on this point: "I like light, I like the sun and I do not care where it comes from, whether from the east, the west or the south. I like the sun and I like to be able to see the exteriors. This is the reason why I make so much use of glass."<sup>5</sup> Certainly, he became one of the most vocal exponents of the curtain wall, and he was constantly designing new fastening systems.

In 1952 he participated in the construction of University City, designing the Administration and Commerce School in association with Ramón Marcos Noriega. They worked within an overall rationalist framework in this great complex, but also produced an innovative metal and wood structure for the library.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, Alvarez was invited to collaborate on the design of the building for the Latinoamerican Insurance Company, one of the most significant of its time. Because World War II had created a steel shortage in the United States, there was only one steel structure imported into Mexico, and it was his job to "dress" the frame; that is, to design the glass facade for it. At a height of 182 meters, including the antenna, it remained Mexico's tallest building for many years. The foundations and the structure designed by the engineer Leonardo Zeevaert are also admired for their capacity to resist a number of strong earthquakes over the past 50 years. While its height disturbed the profile of the city's historical center, its silhouette has remained one of the architectural icons of the city's identity to this day.<sup>7</sup>

In 1950 Alvarez, in association with Enrique Carral, Manuel Martínez Páez, Ricardo Flores Villasana, and Guillermo Pérez Olagaray, won the competition for the design of Mexico City's Airport. (Figure 1) This project consisted of a Meccano-like building (Meccano is a type of erector-set toy) made of perfectly modulated interchangeable elements in steel, although for administrative reasons they were actually made of concrete and not of steel. The result was a structure that presented an image of modernity to foreign visitors: the control tower was outstanding and properly contrasted with the structure of the 280 meter-long terminal building, which was a transparent volume with interesting movable parasols that resembled plane ailerons.

During the postwar period steel was almost impossible to buy, since the price was very high, and because of the limited funding for national government structures, architects and engineers had to be creative to be able to build tall buildings. In collaboration with the engineer Carlos Rousseau, Alvarez designed a structural



*Figure 1: No. 20.- Mexico City's Airport, 1950. At the present time is transformed. (Courtesy of the Mexican Architects Archive). Faculty Architecture, UNAM).*

system that was without precedent in Mexico and little known abroad. He combined locally available and manufactured structural elements with welded steel plates that acted as reinforcement and allowed the creation of new and innovative structures in columns and beams. They used this technological innovation in a building for the El Valle de Mexico Bank, in the center of the city, now demolished. With this structure they managed to cover the 15-meter span of the terrain, allowing a space that was free of supports; the metallic columns appeared bare and the façade revealed a structural simplicity.<sup>8</sup> Alvarez used this system to build much of the work for which he is best known. Years later, he did a small branch for the same bank. Located at the crossing of many avenues, it is one of the first attempts to use architecture as advertisement.

In 1955, Alvarez won the competition for the Oxford School. He used a flat-slab structural system that was not very well known in Mexico, consisting of a flat slab floor system without beams that was supported by columns with integrated capitals. He obtained a patent for this system, which has since been used by many architects. He particularly liked it because of the clean structure it achieved.

At around the same time, he experimented with another innovative structural system in Mexico called the lift-slab, which he patented in the United States. It consisted of a system in which all the slabs were constructed at grade and embedded all at once with the installations integrated and raised subsequently, floor by floor, with the help of hydraulic jacks, which saved a considerable amount of time. He later designed both the Urban Complex Palmas and the Tepeyac Insurance Company buildings using this same system, and in each case the result was a clean, glassy volume that revealed the structure and the ample interiors.

Without any doubt, the best example of his work in the International Style was a building for the Jaysour Real Estate Company, completed in 1965 in collaboration with Octavio Sánchez, on Reforma Avenue, in a wealthy part of the city. (Figure 2) It integrated technique, functionality, innovation, experimentation and a very precise formal intention. It is a building formed by 3 volumes: the lower one of four levels, a service volume, and the 19-story tower. Here, employing a 4-foot module, he created a clean prism, which is recessed from the street front to form an access plaza. The architect wanted a building with a curtain wall all the way to the floor slab without a base. He achieved his goal with a building that was the first example of the use of integrated aluminum framing. Specially designed to allow emergency ventilation in case the air conditioning failed, it represented an epoch of economic power in the country's development, but even more, an architecture drawing on advances in other parts of the world.<sup>9</sup>



*Figure 2: No. 30.- Office building Jaysour Real Estate, 1965. At the present time is little transformed. (Courtesy of the Mexican Architects Archive, Faculty Architecture, UNAM).*

At the same time, he designed the Iberomericana University with Enrique Carral. It is a complex consisting of a main building connected perpendicularly by bridges with five other buildings, which have a structural system of poured in place cast concrete located around the perimeter of each building. It was outstanding for its excellent construction and, even more, for its simplicity and for the austerity of its finishes, which translated into easy maintenance, indispensable in this kind of building. The Iberomericana University, another remarkable example of his rationalist spirit, collapsed entirely in the 1979 earthquake.

Alvarez's own house, located in San Angel Inn, one of the most prestigious neighborhoods south of the city, is built in the same spirit as an



*Figure 3: No. 35.- House in San Angel Inn, 1961. At the present time is transformed. (Courtesy of the Mexican Architects Archive, Faculty Architecture, UNAM).*

experiment he carried out in 1961 in collaboration with Luis Guerrero. (Figure 3) In this residence, as well as in the other ones, he kept on experimenting with materials to analyze their qualities: in this case, with asbestos panels, parquet, plastic laminate, linoleum, and washed concrete. In the same spirit, he experimented with hydraulic installation using a hydro-pneumatic system, which was highly unusual for a residential building at the time. Most importantly, he paid special attention to the design of a new mechanism for the sash windows and to the building's most outstanding detail, the biggest sliding glass door in Mexico at that time, 2.44 by 7.32 meters (8 by 24 feet).

Towards the middle of the 1960's, Alvarez started to look for new paths without, however, departing from the essential tenor of his work. He explored different possibilities of cast concrete not only for structure but also for its capacity for expression, much as other architects had done in the previous decade in different parts of the world, including Le Corbusier, Pier Luigi Nervi, Louis I. Kahn, Paul Rudolph, Kenzo Tange, and, in Mexico, Félix Candela.

For approximately a decade, Alvarez built many projects with this material whose malleability and ability to achieve increased strength properties excited him. He did not use superfluous elements or decorations; concrete was the only expressive component. It was combined with glass, because he never abandoned the idea of transparency, although he decreased his use of this material considerably.

He continued to design office buildings successfully, introducing terraces, vegetation and innovative designs in the window framing in order to make the working areas more user-friendly and more flexible. Of all these buildings, the one for the Transnational Insurance Company "La Interamericana," designed in association with Hector Meza and finished in 1971, was the most outstanding. The original complex was meant to include four buildings, but only one was built. It had a square plan and was laid out on a 4 feet module, with the service areas and the vertical circulation in the center. On the exterior, the facades were treated with two materials only: exposed concrete and bronze-color tinted glass. The use of the false ceiling system Acorme, designed in a workshop and installed for the first time in this structure, produced the interesting interior. This false ceiling system, with good acoustic properties and a fire retardant, contained the air conditioning vents, the lighting, and the communication and sound system, as well as the suspension system for the window casing. It was a novelty that he repeated in other projects in the interests of efficiency.

The Durango Cordoba Real Estate building is also a relevant example of his office building typology. For the top of its impeccable facade in exposed concrete and for the attractive constructive system of the auditorium, he used a structure based on a grid that supports each hollowed floor with open web beams, which allowed easy distribution of installations and a raised floor, anticipating a solution that is now in common use in office building construction.

The best example of his flexibility in office design is the 1972 IBM building, designed in collaboration with Enrique Carral and Héctor Meza. The rectangular-plan building was totally modular and built in large part with prefabricated elements, which reduced construction time. It was designed with a high degree of internal adaptability not only in the office areas, but also in the bathrooms, which can be removed altogether if necessary. This flexibility was accentuated by the use of the "Acorme" detachable false ceiling system and by the "Acro" dividing panels designed especially for this project. The exterior highlighted the light and darkness of the façade in a manner reminiscent of the work of Marcel Breuer.

Augusto H. Álvarez was without doubt one of the most important Mexican architects of the postwar period. His architecture merits attention for its quality, and many of his buildings were considered landmarks because they contrasted so favorably with their context. Unhappily, many of them have been demolished or have suffered terrible renovations. His personality, his thinking, his attitude and his passion for architecture have lasted longer than his buildings, and his legacy is an example to future generations of architects. In fact, while his architecture provides testimony of an epoch that has never been repeated in Mexico, one rich in quality and professional competence, his ideas found resonance well beyond Mexico.

Notes

1. Graciela de Garay, *Historia Oral de la Ciudad de México: testimonio de sus arquitectos (1940-1990)* (Mexico: Institute José María Luis Mora, 1994), p. 14.
2. "Arquitectura es vivencia," *Obras* 12, no. 142 (October 1984): 55
3. Augusto H. Álvarez, "La enseñanza del diseño. Mesa redonda," *Cuadernos de Arquitectura y docencia*, 2, Mexico, Faculty of Architecture, UNAM, October 1986, 16.
4. Graciela de Garay, *Historia Oral*, op. cit., 79.
5. *Ibid*, 1.
6. See Enrique del Pani Mario y Moral , "Escuela de Comercio y Administración" en *La Construcción de Ciudad Universitaria del Pedregal, México*, UNAM, 12 (1979); "Escuela de Comercio y Administración", *Arquitectura/ México*, 39, September 1952.
7. "Aeropuerto Central de México," *Arquitectura/ México*, 49 (March 1955).
8. See "Edificio de despachos," *Arquitectura/ México*, 58 (June 1957).
9. See "Edificio de oficinas, México, D. F.," *Cuadernos de Arquitectura*, No. 18 (Mexico: INBA, 1966).



## From International to National and Back: the heritage of Modern Movement in the new socialist town of Nowa Huta

Roberta Chionne

*Founded in 1949 ten km east of Krakow, Nowa Huta is a metallurgical industrial whole with residential area, planned as a new independent town.*

*The plan follows the outline of a project conceived by the Polish architect Tadeusz Ptaszycski, but the realization reflects the changes of the political and economical life occurred during the years 1949-56. The first quarters show the influence of the neighbourhoods units and the garden-city ideals. The ones designed between 1952-1954 respect the aesthetic principles of the socio-realism doctrine. The part realized after 1956 is a consequence of the political transformation started from the Soviet Union, which stimulated a progressive return to the International Style and the massive employ of prefabrication and standardization.*

*Today, only the part of Nowa Huta built under the influence of socio-realism is considered an historical witness. In fact, the process of growth of Nowa Huta represents an interesting connection between the pre- and post-war experience: its foundation was promoted by the strategies of the communist system but the realization was also based on practices experimented within the modern movement: the organization of the urban and social spaces, the heritage of the Existenzminimum studies, the import-export of knowledge, technologies and products. Similar procedures, introduced during the construction of socialism, produced an uniformity of quarters, buildings and technologies which legitimises speaking about a form of internationalization between the various countries of the former East block.*

After World War II, Poland, like other Eastern European countries, found itself within the political, cultural and economic orbit of the Soviet Union. One of the consequences was the introduction of models and strategies developed during the period of Stalinist political domination and the adoption of socialist economic planning. This study intends to show that while the foundation of the city of Nowa Huta was promoted by the strategies of the Communist system, its realization was also based on practices that had been utilized by the Modern Movement: the organization of urban and social spaces, the heritage of the Existenzminimum studies, along with the import-export of knowledge, technologies and products between the various countries of the former East bloc. Similar procedures introduced during the construction of socialism produced a uniformity of quarters, buildings and technologies that allows one to argue that internationalization occurred in the socialist East block countries.

Nowa Huta, whose name means “new foundry,” was the result of objectives established by the triennial Plan formulated for the years 1947-1949. The Plan’s aim was to make the country a self-sufficient producer of strategic goods and to transform Polish society from a rural into an industrial and proletarian one. In this context, the foundation of the city-kombinat<sup>1</sup> complex of Nowa Huta was the most important initiative for the country’s economic recovery.<sup>2</sup> Situated ten kilometres east of Krakow, the town was built ex novo in 1949 to house the workers of the new steel plants Huta im. Lenina,<sup>3</sup> built at the same time in the immediate vicinity. (Figure 1)

The city was initially planned to house 100,000 inhabitants. Building began in 1949 and proceeded by stages until 1956. (Figure 2) The original nucleus was divided in four sectors, which were designed through a competition. The manner in which these different units were realized allows the identification of the formal, political and economic changes that took place during the different phases of construction: the first part of the city shows the influence of the model of neighborhood units and of garden city ideals; the quarters designed between

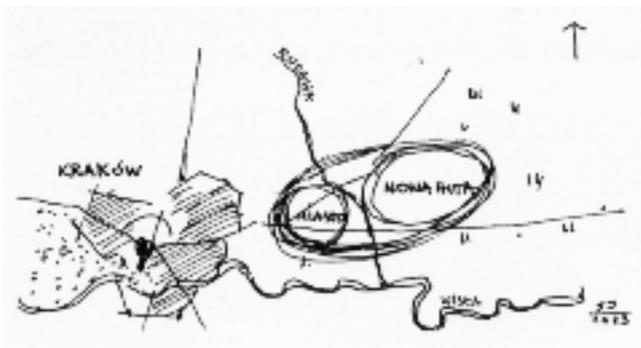


Figure 1: A drawing of the localization of Nowa Huta by Stanisław Juchnowicz: to the left Kraków, in the middle, the residential area of Nowa Huta, to the right the industrial plants. (Nowa Huta, *Architektura i twórcy miasta idealnego*, Muzeum Historyczne Miasta Krakowa, Kraków 2006)

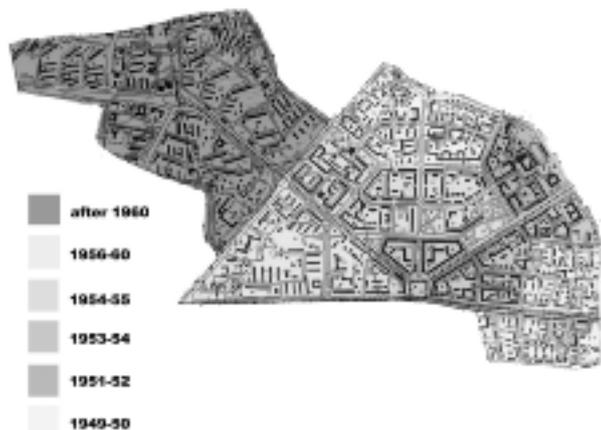


Figure 2: Scheme with the different phases of growth of the original nucleus of Nowa Huta (made by Roberta Chionne).

1952 and 1954 follow the aesthetic principles of socio-realism ; and the areas built after 1956 reflect the political transformation initiated by the death of Stalin, which started in the Soviet Union and then lead to changes in other socialist countries. The last quarters of the original nucleus and the subsequent enlargement of Nowa Huta towards the north and west saw a progressive return to the International Style and the massive employment of prefabrication and standardization. Therefore, the

whole process of the growth of this city represents an interesting continuity between the pre- and post-war experience, with the “Socialist Realism” period constituting a short interruption.

In Poland two fundamental events led to the establishment of the socialist system in architecture: the unification of the Socialist Party and the Unified Polish Workers Party (POUP) in December, 1948, and the National Conference of the Architects of the Polish Party, held on 20 and 21 June, 1949 in Warsaw, where the adoption and promotion of Socialist Realism in architecture was formally ratified. The presence of specialized Soviet managers, accompanied by a series of measures that led to the suspension of independent professional activity, also made the introduction of the new style possible. The first organization for national planning was the BOS (Office for the Reconstruction of the Capital). It was followed by the creation of local Miastoprojekt, whose projects were regularly inspected by a governmental agency.

The Soviet works were accompanied by a systematic propaganda effort in the cultural sector in the form of exhibits and magazine articles by Soviet or Polish authors who supported the cause of Socialist Realism, like Edmund Goldzamt and Jan Minorski. This was accompanied by the travelling exhibition *Architektura Narodów ZSRR* (National Architecture of the USSR), which was shown in eight Polish cities between April and October 1949. Publicity made a great contribution to the diffusion of Socialist Realism: in 1951 the magazine *Architektura* hosted a column dedicated to Soviet works, which in 1952 was transformed into *Architecture of the Soviet Union and of Countries of Popular Democracy*. The same magazine hosted a report of a “study-trip” made in the USSR in 1950 by a delegation of Polish architects at the invitation of the Association of Soviet Architects. The reference model imported from the Soviet Union was the one developed during the 1930s to define the political objectives and formal aspects of architectural and urban planning. In it, historicizing architecture, intended as a social art capable of impressing

people and educating them in the advantages of socialism, took the place of formal, modernist language. In fact, in countries like Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary, where the influx of functionalist ideas was strongly felt, new residential complexes constructed in the years 1949–1950 still referred to the experience gained in the interwar period and to the concepts formulated in the Athens Charter. Some examples are the Koło and WSM Mokotów quarters (1947–1950) in Warsaw, Solidarit in Prague (1947–1949) and Komló in Hungary. The basic concepts of the regional plans of Warsaw, Prague, Ostrava and Zlin, elaborated during the German occupation, were revived in the first years after the war. The functionalist plan for Warsaw, elaborated by Szymon Syrkus<sup>4</sup> and Jan Chmielewski<sup>5</sup> and which had aroused enthusiastic interest and approval from Le Corbusier at the 1934 CIRPAC, served as a basic guide for the reconstruction of the capital.

In 1949, when Nowa Huta was founded, the model of the compact city promoted in the Soviet Union was used as a reference point. At the same time, the need to house the first workers employed in the steel plants as quickly as possible meant that the construction of the city began long before the approval of the urban plan. The first residential units returned to one of the trends in urban planning developed in Poland preceding the war, namely those inspired by the garden city model and by the ideals of Clarence Perry. The units were free standing, with large green areas between the two- and three-story multi-family dwellings.<sup>6</sup> The team of designers involved in the planning of the first section consisted of very young people who had completed their studies at a time when the notions of the Modern Movement were still dominant.<sup>7</sup> They were guided by Tadeusz Ptaszycki<sup>8</sup> and by the general guidelines of his plan. Inspired by the hierarchic and scenographic organization that characterized the general outlines of Soviet Socialist Realism, it had been formally approved only in 1952. (Figure 3)

Although the urban composition was of evident historical inspiration, the design of Nowa Huta's spatial organization was functional. The site plan was subdivided<sup>9</sup> into four sectors: A, B,



Figure 3: Model of the plan of Nowa Huta in 1951 (Nowa Huta, *Architektura i twórcy miasta idealnego*, Muzeum Historyczne Miasta Krakowa, Kraków 2006).

C and D. Each one was again sub-divided into three or four quarters (osiedle) of 4,000-5,000 inhabitants each and provided with shops for basic commodities, a nursery and elementary schools, and medical services. (Figure 4) The decision to create subdivisions with numerous independent units was determined by the need to house the first inhabitants in completed quarters, while the rest of the city was still under construction. Building began with sector A, i.e. at the eastern and northern outskirts of the area as delimited by the plan. This corresponded to the areas closest to the steel plants, from which the city was separated by a protective green zone of two kilometers (approximately 1.2 miles).



Figure 4: Scheme of the functional subdivision of Nowa Huta, in a drawing by Stanisław Juchnowicz.

The next portion of the city to be constructed, between 1952 and 1955, abandoned the semi-rural character of the first settlements and followed the directives of Ptaszycki's approved project. (Figure 5) This building phase corresponded to the process of industrialization, to the contemporary cold war political situation, and the imposition of "Socialist Realism" as a stylistic doctrine. The desired objective was the recovery of a means of expression that conformed to tradition and that, at the same time, was socialist in content and national in form. In Poland, the architectural patrimony of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the period of greatest cultural and political importance of the country, had been chosen for the campaign to revive the national heritage. In urban planning, the imported Russian model was found also in the MDM complex, built along Marszałkowska Street in Warsaw. Similar urban and architectural situations were created in the centres of Berlin and Sofia, and in the new cities of Eisenhüttenstadt (East Germany), Dunaújváros (Hungary), Dimitrowgrad (Bulgaria), and Nova Ostrava (Czechoslovakia), which were all founded in conjunction with a metallurgical kombinat.

Today, although it is only the part of Nowa Huta built in conformity with Socialist Realism that is considered to bear witness to the postwar period,



Figure 5: Model of 1951: the central axis of Nowa Huta and, in the primo piano, the town hall, never realized (Nowa Huta, *Architektura i twórcy miasta idealnego*, Muzeum Historyczne Miasta Krakowa, Kraków 2006).

the whole district, in fact, constitutes a precious document for identifying the architectural and urban trends characteristic of the course of Poland's reconstruction, which, in many ways was similar to that of other European popular democracies. In 1987 Edmund Goldzamt<sup>10</sup> and Oleg Szwidkowski<sup>11</sup> argued that the socialist countries possessed the political conditions for the creation of an urban culture based on the development of egalitarian functional and aesthetic values. They point out that this culture was developed in a context already marked by common historical-cultural characteristics: the opportunity for numerous contacts and reciprocal influences was due to their close geographical location to each other and to the Soviet Union as well as to the conflicts they all had endured. The linguistic affinity of the Slavonic languages and the historical links with German, Hungarian and Rumanian cultures also played an important role in bringing these countries closer together.<sup>12</sup>

While there is some truth to their arguments, the spontaneous common culture they describe actually originated in response to a politically imposed systematization. The uniform and similar path in urbanism and architecture followed by the ex-Soviet bloc countries depended on a process of pan-Sovietization that manifested itself in a common planned economic program, the nationalization of key sectors of the economy, and the systematic state control of urban and architectural planning. The models and strategies developed over the course of the period of Stalin's political domination were introduced through the imposition of measures, provisions and strategies that were similar in all the East bloc countries. In Poland, the process began in 1946 with the nationalization of key sectors of the economy. It was followed by the 1947 law concerning regulations and standards and by the laws of 1950<sup>13</sup> and 1952<sup>14</sup> that defined the role of government authority in the field of construction.

Residential construction in the socialist countries was based on contemporary methods of systematization imported from the Soviet Union: walls, floors, roofs, stair-wells, balconies, windows,

doors, bathrooms, kitchens and communal laundries constituted the basic alphabet, and their location, dimensions, appearance, and construction procedures were established by the government. In addition, official provisions defined the dimensions and number of rooms (bedroom and kitchen, in general) and the number of inhabitants and estimated area per person (around 5–10 sq. m, between 50 to 100 square feet, in this area of Poland until the beginning of the 1960s). Still, it was only at the end of the 1950s that the standardization required by the Polish government authority led to the complete industrialization of construction methods.

Systematization and standardization were already declared objectives of the avant-garde in the 1920s and 1930s. In the 1950s, however, it was a question of living up to the Party slogan of “building well, quickly, and economically”<sup>15</sup>—something that did not happen in reality. The monumental and historicizing architecture of Socialist Realism, in fact, required the use of decoration and employment of specialized workers. At that time, as well as in the years of industrial prefabrication, the residential complexes were generally built quickly in inferior materials, to the detriment of their overall quality. Many of the representative complexes promoted during the period of Socialist Realism were not completed: the political changes that followed the death of Stalin revealed the whole anti-democratic and costly anachronism of this architecture, which lacked not only funding but also the skilled workers to build it. The return to the Modern Movement that began in the Soviet Union itself,<sup>16</sup> eventually involved other East bloc countries. There was a quick return to those principles in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, where the functionalist idea had taken root during two interwar decades. In Nowa Huta, the theatre and city hall- the heart of an axial system converging on the central square- were not built, sector D, the last to be realized, was constructed between 1954 and 1960 using a rationalist urban layout and building type, similar to the new buildings realized after 1956 in the original nucleus of Nowa Huta (for example the so-called “Swedish block”) and for the new quarters in the areas of Bieńczyce

and Krzesławice. (Figures 6 and 7)



*Figure 6: The so-called residential complex “Swedish block” in the sector B, designed by architect Ingarden, in a picture of 1960 (SIBILA L., Nowohucki design, Historia wnętrz i ich twórcy w latach 1949-1959, Muzeum Historyczne Miasta Krakowa, Kraków 2007).*



*Figure 7: Competition project for the expansion of Nowa Huta in the area of Bieńczyce, design by Andrzej Basista and Stanisław Juchnowicz (Jacez Salwiński and Leszek Sibilla, editors., Nowa Huta przeszłość i wizja. Studium muzeum rozproszonego. Muzeum Historyczne Miasta Krakowa, Kraków 2006).*

The change from Socialist Realism to the International Style was marked by widespread reflection on experiences underway at the time in Western Europe and by a consistent use of prefabrication. The formal and organizational similarities between the socialist countries, the result of the sharing and exchange of knowledge, documentation and technology which had begun as early in 1947 with the drawing up of agreements for scientific, technical and cultural collaboration, also contributed to this change.<sup>17</sup> This cooperation mainly involved the metallurgical, chemical, and building industries, but it also touched other sectors, such as the public transport system.<sup>18</sup>

Mirroring the changes taking place elsewhere in the country, the first residential quarter in Poland to use prefabricated elements was built in 1955, again in Nowa Huta. From that year on, there was a progressive increase in industrial construction that proceeded hand-in-hand with technical developments and with growing residential demand. Prefabrication was consolidated as a common practice during the 1960s and 1970's. It took shape in endless successions of quarters composed of rows of buildings or towers separated by common green areas, the so-called "osiedle." An estimated seven or eight million Poles—a fifth of the national population—live in these quarters today.<sup>19</sup>

In a recent book about architecture in the Communist period, the architect Andrzej Basista writes that its most characteristic quality is the anonymity of the houses, a quality which extends to the larger buildings, to the quarters, and to the towns.<sup>20</sup> The absence of landscape or urban references makes it impossible to identify the place or even the quarter when you look out of the window of one of those houses. One can argue, in addition, that it is not even possible to identify the country, since similar urban and architectural conditions can be found in the outskirts of cities throughout the former Soviet bloc, where they create an urban and architectural continuum that goes beyond the physical and cultural borders of the individual countries.

Notes

1. *Kombinat is a term used to indicate large industrial complexes realized according to Soviet planning models.*
2. *That realization was possible thanks to an agreement made in 1948 with the Soviet Union, according to which Moscow would undertake to send technicians and supply the documentation and basic equipment necessary to set up the new factories. The agreement fit into the Soviet policy of those years, to increase the political and economic control of those countries not participating in the Marshall Plan, in order to make strategic use of their industrial potential*
3. *The name was maintained until 1989, when, following the political changes, the steel plants changed names to Huta Tadeusza Sendzimira (HTS) and were dedicated to Tadeusz Sendzimierz, the Polish scientist who emigrated to the United States, where he invented new methods of steel production.*
4. *Szymon Syrkus (1893–1964), architect.*
5. *Jan Chmielewski (1895–1974), architect.*
6. *The houses were designed according to a standardized model for buildings with pitched roofs, common in other Polish cities and elaborated by Franciszek Adamski for the state institution ZOR (Study for Workers' Houses).*
7. *Bolesław Skrzybalski, Tadeusz Rembies and Stanisław Juchnowicz.*
8. *Tadeusz Ptaszycki, architect, was 35 years old, and had been employed until then in the reconstruction of Wrocław (Breslavia). Stanisław Juchnowicz, "Nowa Huta," Architektura 1 1986) 66–72.*
9. *An area of almost triangular shape with a surface area of about sixty square kilometres (approximately 23 square miles).*
10. *Edmund Goldzamt was part of a small but important group of Polish architects who spent the war years in the Soviet Union, maturing from personal contacts and an experience in practical knowledge of Socialist Realism that lent prestige and authority to their activities once they returned to their homeland in the 1950s.*
11. *Oleg Szwidkowski. Architect and author of numerous studies on Russian and Czechoslovakian architecture.*

12. *Edmund. Goldzamt, Oleg Szwidkowski, Kultura urbanistyczna krajów socjalistycznych, (Warszawa: Arkady, Moskwa: Strojizdat, 1987).*
13. *Dziennik Ustaw no. 58, 1950, 523.*
14. *Dziennik Ustaw no. 34, 1952, 235*
15. *W.E. Korenkov, Typizacja masowego budownictwa mieszkaniowego (Warsaw, n.p.:1954).*
16. *Despite some attempts to mitigate the regime, after the death of Stalin the dissatisfied population revolted (Facts of Poznan, 28 June, 1956), provoking a serious crisis in the party and government, the so-called "Polish October," Gomulka emerged victorious from the crisis and initiated a gradual liberalization.*
17. *The first Polish agreement for scientific collaboration was signed with the USSR on 5 March, 1947. Agreements followed with Czechoslovakia (1947), Hungary (1948), East Germany (1949) and other Socialist countries in the years to follow.*
18. *"Jelcz, Ciąg dalszy historii," Automobilista 4 (2003)*
19. *Andrzej Basista, Betonowe dziedzictwo, Architektura w Polsce czasów komunizmu, (Warszawa Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2001).*
20. *ivi*



## Kunio Maekawa's "Technical Approach" to the Creation of a Modern Japanese Architecture

Hiroshi Matsukuma

*The aim of this paper is to examine the introduction of modern architecture from the Western countries into Japan as a process of internationalization. I decided to focus on a Japanese architect Kunio Maekawa (1905-1986). I will examine his works in terms of internationalization. He stayed at the Atelier of Le Corbusier from 1928 to 1930.*

*There he learned the principles of modern architecture symbolized as "Domino System", led by a technical methodology to re-construct space of modern life such as free-plan and free-elevation, and he brought these principles back to Japan. His "Technical Approach" (describing Maekawa's activity in the post-war) meant adaptation of Le Corbusier's method into Japanese climate and social condition with processing modification and conformation. There were several barriers to overcome such as a modernization of building technology, an increasing structural anti-earthquake engineering standard, and an appropriation of hard environmental conditions such as high temperature and humidity. There was hardly any Japanese architect to tackle these problems thoroughly, continuing to ask "What is modern architecture in Japan?" during his life more than Maekawa.*

*I will focus on Maekawa's own methodology different from Western modern movement: to design deep eaves, symbolically integrating the whole building, to invent an original tiled panel system derived from the traditional method of Japanese ceramic craft, and to plan building layouts with enclosed spatial units. In this way Maekawa had explored modern architecture which can grow mature in the cultural context of Japan.*

## Introduction

Within the topic of the internationalization of modern architecture, this paper examines how European modernist architectural ideals entered Japan and were developed through the work of the pioneering modern Japanese architect Kunio Maekawa. He worked from 1928 to 1930 in Le Corbusier's atelier, where he came to learn the principles of modern architecture through Le Corbusier's Domino system -- namely, the "free plan," "free façade," and the reorganization of living spaces based on industrialized materials and methods. These he brought back with him to Japan.

Maekawa's postwar "Technical Approach" aimed at modifying Le Corbusier's methods to fit into the Japanese social and regional climatic context. There were many hurdles to overcome, including the modernizing of building technology, meeting of the rigorous anti-seismic structural engineering requirements, and making allowances for the country's rainy, humid climate. No other Japanese architect could tackle these problems as thoroughly as he did, or match his determination to create a modern architecture unique to Japan by modifying the principles of Modernism in a way to make them suitable to his country. This is why Maekawa's pursuit of modern architecture merits examination here.

## What Maekawa Learned from Le Corbusier

Maekawa joined Le Corbusier's atelier in 1928, a year after Le Corbusier was awarded the first prize ex-aqueo in the 1927 League of Nations Competition for his strikingly new design proposal. The realization of the project, however, was blocked by the academic members of the jury with ties to eclecticism, as Le Corbusier complained in his publication *Une Maison – Un Palais* of 1929.<sup>1</sup> During his time there, Maekawa worked mostly on the proposal for CIAM II in Frankfurt, which was dedicated to "The Minimal Dwelling Unit." While this was a steel-frame, prototypical industrialized

housing scheme, it originated in Le Corbusier's 1914 Domino concept of space

Domino was the mass-produced housing scheme Le Corbusier devised to address the housing shortage after World War I. An epoch-making proposal for the creation of light-filled, hygienic spaces, with a free plan and free façade, it was based on the most advanced structure, namely in reinforced concrete, which was to replace the heavy and thick walls of conventional stone masonry and brick style. Moreover, Domino could be used to construct buildings of any size and form, as its spatial units could be freely combined, much like toy blocks. Domino embodied Le Corbusier's strong belief in the ability of new industrial technologies to fundamentally reconfigure poor living environments into human-scaled spaces and his ambition of reconceiving architecture and its constituent elements. Maekawa's direct exposure to Le Corbusier's principles and desires subsequently inspired his own search for a Domino-like system throughout his career.

### **Pre-War Works I: Under the Influence of Le Corbusier**

Upon his return to Japan in 1930 after working for two years with Le Corbusier, Maekawa set about creating a modern architecture. However, in an increasingly conservative Japan, many buildings were being built in the eclectic Imperial Crown style that used Kawara tile roofs topping reinforced concrete volumes, such as the Nagoya City Hall (1933). Furthermore, a majority of the architectural competitions held at that time did not allow for truly creative design, as floor plans were fixed, and an exterior façade design in a "Japanese taste" was a requirement.

Just as Le Corbusier had done in the League of Nations competition, Maekawa always sought from the outset to design completely new architectural plans and façade designs in his competition entries. His first step forward was a competition entry for the Imperial Museum,

Tokyo, which used an International Style scheme strongly influenced by Le Corbusier. Needless to say, he did not win this competition, but his entry was extensively covered in the Japanese journal *Kokusai Kenchiku*. This made Maekawa famous as an advocate of Modernism in Japan. Prior to World War II, seven out of his twenty competition entries won prizes. Due to the war, almost none of them were built.

From 1930 through 1935, Maekawa worked for Antonin Raymond. The latter had come to Japan in 1919 to assist Frank Lloyd Wright in the construction of the Imperial Hotel, Tokyo (1923), and in 1921 he became an independent architect. Raymond had created his own Modernist style incorporating in it elements extracted from the Japanese traditional architecture embodied in minka farmhouses and the Ise Shrine. From him, Maekawa not only acquired practical skills as an architect, but also a way to rediscover elements of Japanese tradition.

Since commissions in Raymond's office were waning in the mid 1930's due to the increase in tensions between Japan and the United States prior to World War II, Maekawa opened his own office in October 1935 with three colleagues from Raymond's office. His first independent built work was the Morinaga Candy Store (1935), a renovation of a brick barrack. There, he eliminated all the dividing walls that had created a number of small and narrow spaces. A new staircase and a void created an open space that connected the upper and lower floor in the manner of a free plan. Moreover, the exterior wall along the roadside was renovated to include a large sash window. These methodologies reflected Le Corbusier's Domino idea of the free plan and free façade, showing Maekawa's efforts to employ Le Corbusier's method in his first independent work.

### **Pre-War Period II: Discovery of Methodologies to Challenge the Theme of "Japan"**

In 1937, soon after Maekawa had established his office, building materials came

under strict war-time government control, limiting construction to small wooden houses. Like many other architects, Maekawa therefore sought to expand his practice by building in the then Japanese colonies on Mainland China and in other Southeast Asian countries. As Japan increasingly moved towards war, Maekawa was faced with the challenge of translating European Modernism into the particularities of the Japanese context and answering the question of what a modern architecture in Japan should be. A review of his interwar works shows how he did this.

In the wooden Maekawa Residence (1942), he employed a large steep roof structure using the Kawara tiles inspired by traditional Minka farmhouses. (Figure1) However, he incorporated a large opening in the front of the house, based on the conception of a free façade not found in farmhouse construction. The large ground-level opening extended into the interior as a space with a white flat ceiling and into a double-height modern open space based on the ideals of the free plan. In this work, Maekawa discovered ways to create a new space based on Modernist thinking while maintaining the tradition of Japanese wood-frame culture. In the Japan-Thailand Cultural Center competition (1943), he was awarded

second prize. The first prize went to Kenzō Tange, who was Maekawa's disciple. It, too, was not built due to the war. To meet the requirement of a Thai teak timber-made structure, Maekawa proposed a steep roof structure in the place of the flat roof typically used in Modernism. For reconfiguring the required floor plan, Maekawa, as was usual in his competition entries, was inspired by the comfortable and relaxing ambience of the reception room for guests found in the Japanese traditional Shoin style. He was successful in creating a spatial layout integrating the room interior with the garden, enabling the free-flowing spaces to interlink. He later used this planning method as the basic architectural component of "Hitofude-Gak," a design drawn with a single stroke of a brush that subtly interconnects the interior and exterior space with a consistent flow.

#### **Maekawa's Works in the Post-War Period: 1<sup>st</sup> Phase, the "Technical Approach Era"**

In 1945, Japan, devastated by air raids, faced a housing shortage of 4.2 million units. As in many other countries, Japanese architects faced the challenge of resolving a housing crisis. Maekawa addressed this situation by devising a timber-frame, prefabricated housing system which he called PREMOS. The individual parts of this system could be assembled by anyone and did not require specialized craftsmen. Moreover, PREMOS called for the construction of simple units that could be assembled to form larger units of basically any size and could thus be used to construct both small houses and large palaces. The project for PREMOS housing, which included a nursery school and communal kitchen, proposed a new lifestyle in which women were to be liberated from traditional house work, thereby strongly reflecting the ideals of so-called "postwar democracy." Maekawa also clearly followed the ideals of Le Corbusier's Domino system in his own PREMOS system. Unfortunately, the PREMOS project was abandoned after only five years; only 1000 housing units were built due to economic difficulties and problems in securing delivery of the necessary materials.



*Figure 1: Maekawa Residence, Tokyo Prefecture, 1942, view from the north., 1997.*

In 1950, all restrictions on the use of building materials were lifted, including steel-reinforced concrete. As war restrictions had been in effect since 1937, the 13-year period of limited construction meant that there were no stocks of materials, that building technology was in a poor state, and that there was a dearth of skilled craftsmen. Furthermore, since the prewar period, seismic building stability had been an ongoing problem for modern architecture in Japan. Following the destruction caused by the Great Tokyo Earthquake in 1923, building codes required the use of thick concrete bearing walls. These drastically minimized architectural design flexibility and increased building weight and construction costs. They made the realization of Le Corbusier's idea of free plan and free façade next to impossible. Maekawa was nonetheless committed to addressing these challenges.

Immediately following the PREMOS work, Maekawa received a commission for branch buildings for the Nihon Sôgo Bank. In the course of about fourteen years, he designed over twenty branches. Although they were small buildings (around 700 square meters), they were ambitious experiments by an architect intent on bringing the level of industrial production in modern architecture in Japan up to par with that of Europe and America. The materials and skeletal systems developed in these smaller buildings were then employed in larger buildings. Throughout his designs, he sought to lighten buildings through the removal of heavy structural walls and use of simple skeletal frames of the type used in the Domino system, and to develop satisfactory industrial cladding materials. This was the start of Maekawa's "Technical Approach."

The first stage of the "Technical Approach" can be seen in the Nihon Sogo Bank, Omori Branch (1951). He adopted a steel-frame, reinforced concrete structure combined with large glazed openings with steel sashes instead of solid structural walls. The building's interior accommodated a large and open atrium. Completed in 1952, the Nihon Sogo Bank Headquarters used an aggressive program that synthesized previous experiments

conducted in the branch building designs. Maekawa removed all the structural walls and realized a true free plan and free façade. The front façade was formed by a curtain wall using aluminum, the most advanced material at that time, and the exterior wall was made of light-weight pre-cast concrete panels. However, the many difficulties he encountered with water leakage in the exterior wall caused by rain made him keenly aware of the difficulties involved in the industrialization of architecture. Through these experiences Maekawa learned to face the challenges posed by the industrialization of architecture.

In the Kanagawa Concert Hall and Library (1954) he created a light and transparent space by concentrating the structural walls in the library stack room and at the periphery of the concert hall and by enveloping these walls with steel sashes, pre-cast concrete panels, hollow bricks and concrete louvers. This work also realized the planning method of organically integrating the exterior and the interior, which Maekawa had conceived for the first time in his entry to the Japan-Thailand Cultural Center competition. Maekawa then tried to realize a real Domino system in the design of his own office, the Mido Building (1954). With the exception of the steel frames used for the columns and beams that were erected on site to cast the concrete, all the remaining elements, including the floor and roof slabs, were industrial products assembled on site. In 1955, Le Corbusier visited the site.

### **Postwar II: Skepticism toward modern architecture and retreat from the "Technical Approach"**

The Technical Approach begun in 1950 was intended to promote the modernization of industrial methods in architecture that the war had delayed, while trying, at the same time, to employ, in the Japanese context, the principles of modern architecture advocated by Le Corbusier. The more Maekawa worked toward this end, the more he recognized the limits and problems of directly importing such European principles into Japan. As he noted; "I believe it was correct to say modern architecture should deny classical architecture and

become naked at the time of its inception. However, I regret that it was imprudent to say so, because that merely becoming naked would be no guaranty of the birth of architecture either.”<sup>2</sup>

Maekawa came to realize the fragility of the industrial products used to create the free façade and that in a rainy country like Japan concrete could not be maintained over time and would become dirty. He came to recognize that his Technical Approach was not the panacea for developing modern architecture in Japan and that alternative solutions had to be sought. This change in his approach became evident with his design of the Japan Pavilion for the 1958 Universal Exposition in Brussels. Its main feature was a big roof, which was not part of the vocabulary of Modernism.

Kyoto Hall (1960) symbolized Maekawa’s conversion to a new approach. (Figure 2) In contrast to Tokyo, which had suffered air-raid bombing damage, Kyoto was intact, and its old cityscapes and temples and shrines still survived. Maekawa set himself the problem of constructing buildings using modern materials that would gain in dignity with the passage of time, and which would be comparable to those used in the timeless old traditional buildings. He used custom-made brick tiles inspired by traditional earthenware in the exterior wall for the first time in his work. To make the space, he used a fluid configuration that gently interlinked the exterior and interior by connecting



*Figure 2: Kyoto Hall, Kyoto Prefecture, 1960, view towards the main concert hall wing from large pilotis to the entry to the courtyard, 1997.*

the building complex with a huge eave and balcony, highlighting the horizontal elements, and by providing large pilotis at the entry to the courtyard. Similar large eaves could be found in the Tokyo Metropolitan Festival Hall (1961). The architectural critic Youichiro Kouzuro compared the Kyoto Hall to a temple and the Tokyo Metropolitan Festival Hall to a Japanese castle.<sup>2</sup> Each building employed symbolism drawn from traditional Japanese architecture in an attempt to express monumentality in architecture, thereby joining, I believe, in the postwar global debate about monumentality in architecture.

The improved version of the brick tile used in the exterior wall of the Kyoto Hall was developed using Maekawa’s proprietary construction method, the “pre-tiled panel method.” This procedure uses custom-made rough and thick tile bricks pre-set on the frame. The reinforcement and pre-tiled frames are then erected, followed by the pouring of concrete. As a result, the concrete and tile are tightly integrated to maintain the textured expression on the exterior wall for long periods, with no maintenance required and without dirt on the tile surface caused by exfoliation or efflorescence. From this point on, the “pre-tiled panel method” became a central element in his works.

### **Postwar III: In Search of a Unique Personal Form of Modern Architecture**

In Saitama Hall (1966) Maekawa fully deployed the “pre-tiled panel method.” He sited most of the building below ground, while opening the roof-top area of the main hall foyer to its urban setting in the form of an “Esplanade” piazza. He used the level changes in the Esplanade to indicate the entrance. Here he retreated from using the deep eaves used in the Kyoto Hall and Tokyo Festival Hall and appears intentionally to have abandoned a monumental approach to design. Instead, he divided the exterior façade into multiple volumes and clearly created an urban plaza. In this one building, he eliminated the effect of a singular façade, replacing it with the overall effect of an urban cityscape.



*Figure 3: Saitama Municipal Museum, Saitama Prefecture, 1971, view towards entrance hall from courtyard, 1998.*

Maekawa continued this approach in his next work, the Saitama Municipal Museum (1971). (Figure 3) He articulated the building as multiple masses, avoiding the existing trees. From the light, open entrance foyer supported only by concrete pillars, the enclosed exhibit rooms extend over the site following the pattern of trees. The refreshing long zigzag approach through the trees leads the visitors to the entrance in the end, the tile-wall space creating shade tucks in and out. In this building, Maekawa mastered the use of a solid material, creating a fluid planning method that could comfort the mind and bodies of visitors.

Maekawa's Kumamoto Municipal Museum (1977) marks the apex of his design career and expresses the refinement he had achieved. The exhibit rooms, surrounded by pre-tiled concrete panels, are combined with the open foyer, covered by a huge concrete roof, to create a fluid interior and exterior space. The elevation is straightforward and lacking in ostentation. In other words, it is an "un-designy" design. Here he achieved the long sought after design that culminated in a transparent spatial order.

### **Conclusion: The Meaning of Maekawa's Modern Architecture**

Maekawa had pursued the realization of Le Corbusier's principles of modern architecture, as represented by the Domino system, within the realities of the Japanese context. This effort led him to ponder the kind of architecture that could be sustained in the Japanese climate, taking into account as well the country's customs and timeless character. Beginning in the late 1950's, he sought a method that would resolve this issue. He introduced symbolism by adding deep eaves and invented the pre-tiled concrete panel method based on Japanese traditional earthenware. Furthermore, drawing on Japanese traditional architecture, he developed a planning method that created a fluid interior and exterior space and provides a contemplative respite within an urban setting. Maekawa's work is neither fashionable nor overwhelmingly impressive. Rather, it intrigues people with its warm and welcoming ambience. His works and their spaces can withstand harsh climates and be enriched and mature as time passes. Maekawa's approach offers a valuable test of the way that modern architecture, which began in the West, could be adapted and established in other countries, thereby surpassing the simpler levels of internationalization.

Notes

1. *Une maison - un palais..A la recherche d'une unité architecturale (Paris, G. Crès et cie: [1929])*
2. *Design, June, 1961.*

*All Photos by the Author.*



## Study on Collaborative Projects by Modern Architects: Urban Design Projects from 1945-1970

Yasunori Kitao

*The purpose of the paper is to examine internationalization of collaborative urban design projects done by modernist architects. Internationalization of the concept of democracy was the most important historical fact after the Second World War, so we will try to understand the internationalization of the collaborative design (the case when many architects participate in a project) as a part of the process of democracy internationalization. This paper's hypothesis is the following: since a collaborative method was regarded as a kind of democratic design method, this design method was mainly used by public sectors or public organizations in order to show a democratic urban space. Actually architectural historians have not yet discussed in detail collaborative design works, in particular there was no focus on the history of collective form of architecture. The postwar period gives us the chance to discuss the collaborative design process, because this issue appeared at the beginning of CIAM conferences and such an idea was originally developed by modern architects.*

*Starting the discussion on the collaborative projects we have to consider the complex relationship between architects and their project, because the relationship between the architectural work and the individual character of each architect is not always clear. We examine two types of architectural works: 1) a project produced by more than one architect, 2) complex projects (which constitute a 'collective form') designed by more than one architect. Walter Gropius is the key architect who starts the architects' collaboration, aiming a reconstruction of society after the Second World War. His manifest of T.A.C. (The Architect Collaborative) was the departure point for the collaborative architectural projects at that period and since then we can use his way of thinking to*

*understand the collaborative reconstruction projects in democratic countries. I will discuss the history of the collaborative projects in terms of design process and significance of projects. Finally I will discuss the architectural utopia of democratic urban space, and how the collaborative concept plays a key role in the postwar architectural movement. How were the collaborative design methods used for reconstruction projects? How did architectural internationalization spread all over the world by means of these collaborative design methods?*

*To evaluate the collaborative projects of that period is very important, because since 1990's in the conditions of globalization we are designing and planning many urban redevelopment projects all over the world by using the architects' participation process.*

### 1. Introduction and purpose

#### 1-1. Democracy at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century

The term 'crisis of democracy' is not a new one. When we consider the series of wars that have followed September 11, 2001, 'democracy' appears to be one of the most important words, if one is to understand what is happening in the postwar period. Conflicts among different religious groups and between the rich and poor, and differences of social class are still critical issues. From the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, democracy has been regarded as the best social principle in the world. World War II seems to have been won by democracy, but we still have not achieved a genuine democratic world.

There were many collaborative architectural projects and urban design projects in the postwar period. This paper's hypothesis is the following: since democratic urban design method was regarded at that time as a kind of collaborative design method, it was mainly used by public

organizations to represent democratic spaces. Since architectural expressions of a collective form represent accumulated ideas from participating architects, accumulated architectural ideas reveal a democratic aspect of the projects.

We try to understand the significance and features of a democratic society as seen within collective forms from that period by analyzing 12 collaborative urban design projects; Tapiola Garden City (Finland), the reconstruction project for Le Havre (France), the Lansbery neighborhood (United Kingdom), Nagele (Netherlands), the University of Liege (Belgium), the Catholic University of Louvain-la-neuve (Belgium), the Hansaviertel (Germany Federal Republic), the Märkisches Viertel (German Federal Republic), Constitution Plaza (United States), Ciudad Universitaria de Mexico (Mexico), the vacation villages of the Languedoc region (France), and Six Moon Hill (United States).



*Figure 1: An example of collaborative urban design project, the Nagele neighborhood. Aldo van Eyck, Jaap Bakema and other 'Forum group' architects designed the Nagele neighborhood in the Netherlands. This project is regarded as an example where the CIAM concept was realized (Photo by the author).*

### **1-2. 'Collaboration' and architectural works in the Modern Movement**

From the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many kinds of organizations became larger with the result that various localities and closed local societies

disappeared and association in modern society became important. When we work in an association, collaboration is called for. We will use the word 'collaboration' in this paper as it is used by the social scientist Chester Irving Barnard. For Barnard, 'collaboration' is the process in which a job that cannot be performed by a single individual is performed by several individuals working in cooperation (Sawada, 1996).

Association is a typical social aspect of modern times (MacIver, 1924). This brings up a difficult question when we try to understand an architect or an architect's works. To understand association in architecture, we have to consider the relation between architect(s) and architectural work(s), the relationships between an architect and his own work, and the following four types of architectural works:

- 1) A building made by one architect;
- 2) A collective form made by one architect;
- 3) A project produced by more than one architect;
- 4) Multiple projects which taken together, constitute a 'collective form' produced by more than one architect.

Type four projects are the subject of this paper. After World War II, there was a trend toward architectural works designed by two or more architects and toward collaborative architectural works.

## **2. Collaboration in modern times**

### **2-1. A history of collaborative urban design projects in modern times**

In the 1920s, collective building projects by modern architects were developed in the Weimar Republic and the Netherlands. The concept of architectural collaboration can be seen in the Netherlands among groups like 'De Stijl' and the Amsterdam School. The word 'collaboration' was also taken up by the CIAM congress, which tried to encourage collaboration among architects. When Le Corbusier and several architects discussed activities of the CIAM, they described their 'congress'

as 'collaboration' or as a 'working together.' The concept of architects' collaboration also appeared at the beginning of the 1920s (Sigfried Giedion, 1969). During the Weimar Republic, the Weissenhof Siedlung, Siemensstadt and the housing exposition of Breslau were typical collaborative projects.

In 1945, Walter Gropius proposed an architectural concept of democracy in the manifesto for T.A.C., The Architects Collaborative. This architectural concept had had some success in the Modern Movement before the war in Europe. Walter Gropius was a key proponent of architects' collaboration among those whose aim was the reconstruction of society after World War II. His purpose was similar in that regard to that of CIAM, which had started to conceive reconstruction projects during the war (Eric Mumford, 2000). His manifesto for T.A.C. was the first proposal to lead to collaborative architectural projects.

#### *2-2. The aim of TAC*

Gropius wrote that he did not like "boss style architects' offices" but preferred a more even and level organization (W. Gropius, 1945 and 1966). He appealed for collaboration in the reconstruction of society and cities in the postwar period. He wanted architects' groups to be organized around teamwork. He and his collaborators tried to create 'a Total Architecture,' one concerned with the development of a whole environment, which demanded collaboration on the broadest basis. He said that "the present casual way of solving problems of collaboration on large projects is simply to throw a few prominent architects together in the hope that five people will automatically produce more beauty than one." Within a group in which all members are equal, they are willing to work in concert but without losing their identities, and 'give-and-take' is regarded as an important principle. In particular, he insisted on recognizing personal freedom within the team, and regarded cross-fertilization of different minds as an important goal. To achieve this, he tried to include architects from different cultural backgrounds to further cultural integration within the group (Walter Gropius, 1966).

### **3. Democratic urban landscape**

#### *3-1. A typology of democratic regimes*

In order to discuss democracy, we will follow Arend Lijphart's typology of democratic regimes and his discussion of pluralism and democracy. Lijphart studied several pluralist societies where people have different religions, languages and historical backgrounds, such as the Netherlands and Austria, to explain the advantages of a pluralist society. He defined four types of democratic societies: 'De-politicized Democracy,' 'Consociational Democracy,' 'Centripetal Democracy,' and 'Centrifugal Democracy.' Since Gropius's TAC manifesto includes plural solutions, cooperative solutions, and architect's independence, it can be said to conform to the comprehensive concept of democracy defined by Lijphart.

#### *3-2. Types of urban design organizations*

We divided the twelve projects under study into either 'coalescent' organizations or 'adversarial' organizations.

Type-A) A development authority orders collaborating architects to design buildings in individual relation to each other.

Type-B) A development authority asks one architect to organize a collaborative architects' group. The coordinating architect gives architectural design directions to the collaborating architects, and asks them to carry out the projects.

Type-C) A development authority organizes a collaborative group to direct the urban design, and the collaborative group gives architectural design directions to collaborating architects.

Type-D) A development authority(ties) organizes a group of architects to direct architectural design.

Type-E) A development authority(ties) ask(s) an architect, who is called 'chief architect,' to

organize a collaborative group of architects, and the chief architect directs the architectural design.

- collective form is related to traditional or regional building form.
- b) International style (IS): Each architectural expression is tightly linked to modern building methods, using steel and concrete, etc.
  - c) One architect's style (OA): An architect who has a unique architectural identity in design creates the architectural expression of each building within the collective form.

**3-3. Type of urban landscape in terms of architectural expression**

We begin by defining the architectural expressions that go into a collective form according to three kinds of architectural expressions:

- a) Traditional (or regional) style (TS): Each architectural expression of the

In order to understand their urban landscape, we decided to analyze the architectural expression of the

**Table 1. Architectural expression**

		Typology of Design Organization	
Types		Adversarial Organization	Coalescent Organization
Homogeneous Architectural Expression in collective form	a) Traditional Style (TS)		Lansbury (The Architecture Style of the East End of London)
	b) International Style (IS)	Tapiola Garden City-C Märkisches Viertel(International Modernism) Constitution Plaza(International Modernism)	Tapiola Garden City-B (Regional Modern basing on Regional Tradition) Tapiola Garden City-A(Regional Modern, based on Regional Tradition)
	c) One Architect's own Style (OA)		Six Moon Hill (Gropius Style) Le Havre (Perret's Architectural expression)
Plural Architectural Expression in collective form	d) Traditional Style + International Style (TS+IS)	Holiday Villages (International Style, Mediterranean Style) Ciudad Universitaria De Mexico (International Style, Ancient American Style)	
	e) Architects' Style + International Style (IS+OA)		Nagele (Dutch Modern Style & International Style)
	f) Architects own Style + Traditional Style (TS+OA)		
	g) International Style + Architects Own Style + Traditional Style (IS+ TS+OA)	University of Liege (International Style, Traditional Style, Organic Style, Modern Style, etc)	Louvain-la-neuve (Anglo-Saxon, International Style, Old Louvain Style)

Note 1: ( ) in the matrix indicates the architectural expression(s)

Note 2: Tapiola Garden City A, B and C indicate each stages of urban projects in the project area.

projects we studied. Each architectural expression creates a homogeneous urban landscape. By combining them with the three kinds of architectural expression, we arrived at four kinds of mixed urban landscapes:

- d) Traditional (or regional) style + International style (TS+IS)
- e) One architect's style + International style (IB+OA)
- f) One architect's style + Traditional (or Regional) Style (TS+OA)
- g) International style + Architect's style + Traditional (or regional) style (IS+ S+OA)

**4. Architectural expression in collective form**

*4-1. Urban landscape of democracy*

We decided to replace Lijphart's 'elite behavior' with 'design organization,' because it allowed us to distinguish between types of urban design projects and to know whether the architects worked and used their architectural languages. (Table 2)

- a) 'Depoliticized Democracy' type of urban landscape
- b) 'Consociational Democracy' type of urban landscape
- c) 'Centripetal Democracy' type of urban landscape
- d) 'Centrifugal Democracy' type of urban landscape

*4-2. 'Depoliticized Democracy' type of urban landscape (type a)*

Analyzing the projects in the typology of the 'Depoliticized Democracy' type of urban landscape, one notes that all the projects were undertaken just after World War II. We observe cooperative solutions among the participating architects, because the participants shared the common purpose of reconstructing society after the war. A strong architectural leader was needed, and this resulted in a homogeneous solution for the urban landscape.

Table 2. Typology of Democratic Urban landscape

		Urban Landscape	
		Homogeneous (Urban landscape Type a, b & c)	Plural (Urban landscape Type d, e, f & g)
	Coalescental Organization Type-D & Type-E	Depoliticized Democracy Type of Urban Landscape  Tapiola (IS, Regional Modern based on Regional Tradition)  Le Havre(OA, Perret's Architectural Style)  Lansbury(TS, End's Style) Traditional London Style)  Six Moon Hill (OA, Gropius Style)	Consociational Democracy Type of Urban Landscape  Nagele (IS+TS*, Dutch Modern Style, International Style)  Louvain-la-neuve (IS+TS, Anglo-Saxon, International Style, Old Louvain Style)
	Adversarial Organization Type-A, Type-B & Type-C	Centripetal Democracy Type of Urban Landscape  Märkisches Viertel(IS, International Modernism)  Hansaviertel(IS, International Modernism)  Constitution Plaza (IS, High-Rise international style building)	Centrifugal democracy Type of Urban Landscape  University of Liege (IS +TS, International Style, Traditional Style, Organic Style, Modern Style, etc)  Holiday Villages in Languedoc Lucion (IS+TS, International Style, Mediterranean Style)  Ciudad Universitaria De Mexico (IS+TS, International Style, Ancient American Style)

Note 1: ( ) in the matrix indicates type of architectural expression and the substance(s) of architectural expression.

Auguste Perret shared his individual architectural expression with collaborating architects to produce a common architectural expression. Gropius showed his own house to the collaborators. As their project was related to the regional house of New England, the collaborating architects used his house as a reference for the design Six Moon Hill. In Tapiola, the collaborating architects used a common modern architectural expression. In England, the L.C.C., the development authority for the Lansbery neighborhood, wanted to display English town design for the Festival of Britain.

We observe how these projects reflect the social attitude of the war period, when great unity among the population was called for by their governments. Collaborative attitudes based on nationalist concerns led architects in coalescent organizations to achieve homogeneous urban landscapes.

**4-3. 'Consociational Democracy' type of urban landscape (type b)**

The urban design groups hired for the projects of the Consociational Democracy type of urban design are represented by the regional architectural contexts and traditional contexts of Nagele and Louvain-la-Neuve. They represent the democratic political climate of the Benelux countries.

Nagele is the project in which the architects belonged to a single architectural movement. The participating architects all used Dutch brick, slabs and long horizontal windows, but each produced individual architectural expressions. Louvain-la-Neuve is a campus city in which many monumental buildings on each street corner have individual characteristics. Along the streets, the common use of brick on the buildings' facades unify the campus. The buildings on the side streets have their own subtle individual expression. Modern architectural expression and regional expression are merged in the building design, and this architectural form shows a harmonious unity of collective form.

**4-4. 'Centripetal Democracy' type of urban landscape (type c)**

The architectural expression of the International Style within the collective form is observed in the 'Centripetal Democracy' type of urban landscape. Traditional (or regional) architectural expression is not observed in the type of urban landscape of two projects, the Märkisches Viertel and the Hansaviertel in West Berlin. The Hansaviertel project was meant as a display of the power and successes of capitalism in order to impress the East bloc countries. It is probable that the purpose of the project was the display of the American style of democracy, including its capitalist economy.

In the United States at the same time, many for-profit urban renewal projects were undertaken. Constitution Plaza in Hartford, CT is one such project. Since the project was to create a new downtown business district, the building designs had to reflect the demands of each client. The buildings probably had to represent a free market economy. While the use of the skyscraper building type gives the Plaza a homogeneous appearance, the characteristics of the urban landscape were the result of the combining of modern building technology and economic factors. These three projects have in common a strong architectural expression and strong relations among the buildings. The 'Centripetal Democracy' type of urban landscape is, therefore, a good representative of American capitalism.

**4-5. 'Centrifugal democracy' type of urban landscape (type d)**

Analyzing the projects in the 'Centrifugal Democracy' type of urban landscape, we observe the two architectural expressions of International Style and traditional style together in the collective forms. Here the two architectural expressions were not merged, but remained independent of each other, displaying an adversarial relationship between regional architectural expression and international expression. A coordinating architect supervised

each project and gave the participating architects a certain freedom of architectural expression. The adversarial and plural solutions are results of the design process.

The University of Liege hired a coordinating architect, but he did not control architectural expression. The Ciudad Universitaria de Mexico is a project in which International Style architecture and ancient architectural expression are used together in a campus. In the design process of the vacation villages in Languedoc Lucion, the coordinating architect, did not give a clear architectural direction. Instead, he organized the design process and established several architectural design elements and compositions, allowing the architects to endow their work with a certain degree of individual expression, under his overall direction.

## **5. Internationalization of democratic urban landscape**

### *5-1. Internationalization of the 'Centripetal Democracy' type of urban landscape*

'Equality' and 'freedom' are the basis of democracy, yet these two concepts show a contradiction in urban landscapes. On the one hand, democratic 'equality' led to a uniform urban landscape; on the other hand, democratic 'freedom' led to a free style of architectural design and individualistic architectural characteristics. As a result, urban landscape lost its coherent harmony. The urban landscape that consists of high-rise buildings with free architectural expression and homogeneous building shapes, now so common in cities throughout the world, represents capitalist economic activity.

The same problems and similar urban landscapes are found in the projects of the Hansaviertel, Märkisches Viertel, and Constitution Plaza. We conclude that these urban landscapes were the departure points for this type of democratic urban landscape.

As we analyze the urban landscape in terms of democratic 'freedom' and 'equality,' we also

conclude that the homogeneous appearance of the urban landscape of the world's cities is the result of a method of building that has been adopted internationally. The building type used by modern architects, the success of democratic industrialization, and the strength of capitalism at the time in Western countries all contributed to this result. This type of building and its associated urban design also caused many urban problems. These projects, even when they are the work of some of the most talented architects of the time, are examples of modern capitalist democratic city planning. Too much emphasis on architectural 'freedom' and 'equality' does not lead to a coherent collective form; rather, it causes problems, or what we might call the 'irreconcilable demands between freedom and equality, or chaos.'

### *5-2. Regional (traditional) architectural expression in collective form in modern times*

At the time, many urban projects employed regionalist design principles. Plural solutions using a regional architectural expression emerged from the collaboration among architects. Collaborative processes introduced pluralism in the form of collective design. Traditional (regional) concepts played an important role in those collaborative projects that managed to achieve coherence in their efforts to create an urban landscape of pluralism, with the exception of the 'centripetal type' of urban landscape. Traditional expression can be observed, for example, in the project of Ciudad Universitaria de Mexico. One of the collaborating architects of the project said he sought to design by entering the unconscious minds of the Mexican people. This is a very democratic architectural design concept.

It is paradoxical that modern architects discovered the democratic urban landscape in the vernacular architecture that they had paid little attention to before World War II. The discovery of the democratic aspect of the vernacular was an inspiration for architectural theory in the 1960's. At that time, it was associated with pluralism in architectural expression. The link with pluralism was pointed out by Bernard Rudofsky, Fumihiko Maki,

Denise Scott Brown (1965), Christopher Alexander (1964), Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter (1975), and Robert Venturi (1968), among others. The village plan was considered a model for democratic pluralist urban design.

multi-nationalism are remarkable features of the postwar period (1945-1970).

## **6. Conclusion**

After the war, modern architects and public authorities undertook many collaborative urban design projects, including reconstruction projects, new town projects, etc. Gropius's idea and CIAM's initial intention were realized by this combination of the public sector and modern architecture.

Four kinds of urban landscapes showed democratic aspects in each country, but it was the Anglo-Saxon style urban landscape (the 'Centripetal Democracy' type of urban landscape) linked with capitalism that was most dominant internationally. When 'freedom' and 'equality,' which are the basis of democracy, are overly emphasized in architectural design, urban landscape loses its coherence, along with architectural design.

On the one hand, the internationalization of democratic urban landscape might have extended to the world cities in conjunction with capitalism and democracy, though without taking regional democratic aspects into account. On the other hand, regional architectural expression in modern architecture, or traditional architectural expression together with modern building design, provided coherent solutions when the collective approach was adopted, as is shown by three of the four types of urban landscape – the exception being the 'Centripetal Democracy' type.

A plural solution in urban design calls for regional (or traditional) architectural expressions. Lijphart published 'Pluralism and Democracy' in the 1970's, when the United States was trying to establish a pluralistic society. The pluralistic aspirations of United States of that period may be compared to that of the contemporary world as it grapples with globalization. Pluralism as well as

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## **The Role of Architectural Precast Concrete Technology in the Internationalization of Postwar Modernism**

Jack Pyburn

### *Hypothesis:*

*Architectural precast concrete contributed significantly to the internationalization of postwar Modernism. In addition, the refinement of architectural precast concrete fabrication technology and the quality of precasting craftsmanship at mid-century supported Modernist architects exploring the boundaries Modernism between 1945 and 1975.*

### *Means Used to Demonstrate or Document Argument:*

*This presentation will be based on research of private documents of the Eastern Schokbeton Company, headquartered in New York City between 1959 and 1972 and the first United States licensee of the Dutch Schokbeton concrete precast system developed in the 1930's in the Netherlands. In addition, primary research will include recent interviews with the surviving founders of Eastern Schokbeton in both Holland and the United States. Library research in both the Netherlands and the United States will focus on the development and evolution of architectural precast concrete technology and the architects who used it as a form of Modernist architectural expression. The findings from the research will be synthesized into an illustrated presentation that documents the significance of architectural precast concrete, specifically the Schokbeton system, in postwar Modern architectural design and construction. Marcel Breuer was committed to exploring the potential of architectural precast concrete to achieve mid-century Modernism's design ideals and worked closely with the Schokbeton Company*

*in both Europe and the United States. The designs of Marcel Breuer that used architectural precast concrete will further illustrate the synergy between the architect and the precast concrete craftsman in the internationalization of Modernism.*

### *Relevance of Argument to Conference Themes:*

*Architectural precast concrete was a significant medium in the evolving palette of postwar Modern architects. The Schokbeton technology was transported to the United States several ways; through the efforts of the Marshall Plan, via secret United States Cold War military construction projects and by immigrant mid-century Modernist architects who knew of the process from their experience in Europe.*

## **Introduction**

The ability to prefabricate concrete for use as an acceptable exterior building finish was substantially achieved by the mid-1950's. This capability supported the exploration of design and aesthetics beyond Modernism's minimalist origins over the subsequent 25 years. In the 1960's and 1970's, the Dutch precasting company, N.V. Schokbeton, and its licensees engaged in a far-reaching collaboration with mid-century Modern designers. Schokbeton was an agent of postwar Modernism by deploying its architectural precasting concepts, processes and custom production equipment worldwide.

## **Antecedents of Mid-Century Architectural Precast Concrete**

Acceptable architectural concrete precast evolved over the first half of the twentieth century from the work of designers, engineers, and builders with divergent objectives and using a variety of mixing and casting methods. One member of that group was New York housing activist and architect, Grosvenor Atterbury (1869-1956). Working with Frederick Law Olmsted and with the support of

the Russell Sage Foundation, Atterbury developed and applied his concepts for precast housing in the early suburban planned development of Forest Hills Gardens in the Borough of Queens in New York City. By 1950, Atterbury's precast concrete system was being produced under the name Precast Building Section, Inc. (PBSI). The PBSI system was engineered to cast large (4' x 8'-10') lightweight concrete panels for affordable housing.

Working in parallel with Atterbury in the United States were those exploring concrete's aesthetic potential. Such was the focus of James Earley (1856-1906), a sculptor, and his son John (1881-1945), working in Rosslyn, Virginia. The "Earley Process," as it came to be known, concentrated on the exposure of aggregate to achieve an architectural concrete finish that Earley referred to as "mosaic."<sup>1</sup> The Earley Studio, in partnership with a New Haven, Connecticut, cast stone producer, Dextone, established Mo-Sai Associates in 1940 to license its "mosaic" casting method to other precasters. By 1959 there were fourteen Mo-Sai licensees across the U.S.<sup>2</sup>

In the Netherlands, the Schokbeton precasting system emerged in the second quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in a region depleted of wood, but with an abundance of river rock, with access to lime and with an escalating demand for construction. From its origins, Schokbeton progressed from precasting discrete building components such as delicate concrete barn windows to complete barns to concrete housing and ultimately to custom architectural precast concrete.

The export of Schokbeton's knowledge and technology internationally is a story linked to post-World War II reconstruction in Europe, Cold War defense construction in Greenland, the end of colonialism in Africa, and the American building boom of the 1960's.

### **Characteristics of Architectural Precast Concrete**

Concrete's potential as an architectural material lies in its three primary qualities: structure, plasticity, and finish. Architectural precast concrete is a custom product. It becomes economically competitive in the construction marketplace through repetitive production of building elements. The process of producing architectural precast concrete includes the following steps: batch design and mixing, mold design and fabrication, the tying and placing of reinforcing steel, casting, curing, finishing, transport of the product to the job site, and erection. This process is complex, with significant challenges and risks that have to be mastered to achieve consistent concrete quality, uniform finish, and undamaged installation.

To produce aesthetically acceptable results, greater control over the entire precasting process was required than could be obtained with in situ casting. To gain the necessary control, the casting process was moved to a plant. In the plant, talented patternmakers could affordably produce quality molds unachievable at a project site. In addition, environmental conditions, mixing, casting and finishing could be more carefully managed. With precasting, concrete construction became modular to achieve the economic efficiencies of repeated mold use and constrained in size by the necessity to transport finished products from the plant to the project site.

Creating an acceptable architectural casting requires that concrete be placed in the mold using methods that leave minimal or no voids in the casting and achieves uniform consolidation. At mid-century, vibration, produced by various automated and labor-intensive techniques ranging from probes to surface vibrators, was typically used to achieve acceptable consolidation and appearance.

### **The Schokbeton System**

The Dutch word "schokbeton" means "shocked concrete." The Schokbeton system was

patented in Holland in 1932. Legend has it that an alert craftsman who was wheel barrowing batched concrete across a bouncing wooden scaffold discovered a fundamental principle of the Schokbeton process. Other reports suggest wheelbarrows with ropes tied through the wheels were used to experiment with the effects of a shock on concrete placement and consolidation. In fact, the Schokbeton approach to precasting was ultimately developed through engineering research and testing. The resulting system produced exceptional castings using engineered mix designs with optimal water to cement ratios, carefully and creatively constructed molds, and the application of calibrated shocking during concrete placement.

Schokbeton's distinction in the global field of concrete precasting was its technological innovation and attention to production details. The Schokbeton system employed a horizontal steel-framed shock table 10 meters (32.8 feet) by 2.5 meters (8.2 feet) in size. (Figure 1) To achieve the shock action, the table was raised and lowered approximately one quarter of an inch two hundred and fifty times a minute. The height of the drop and number of shocks produced by the table were empirically established to achieve an even distribution of force throughout the casting while avoiding damaging aftershocks. The result was optimally consolidated concrete, evenly distributed



*Figure 1: Scaled Model of Schoktable showing drive shaft, cams & table (Credit: Unknown.)*

component materials, and a uniform finish. In addition, rather than using standard concrete mixing equipment, Schokbeton used rotating upright drums with counter-rotating paddles designed for the demanding standards of the glass industry and produced in Germany by Gustav Eirich<sup>3</sup>. In the production process, mix design was a critical step that received the attention of experienced engineers who selected the optimal grading of aggregate and proportioning of component materials. Schokbeton's overall objective was to produce a custom casting that contained the maximum amount of stone and the least amount of cement and water for optimal finish, strength, and economy. Typically, due to the capability of the shock table to consolidate concrete, zero slump concrete was used in Schokbeton castings. The ability to minimize the use of water in the mix while achieving proper placement resulted in consistent high quality castings of exceptional strength.

By the mid-1950's, the Schokbeton system was reliably achieving an exceptional architectural precast concrete quality in Western Europe, clearly distinguishing its products from cast-in-place finish work and from that of less disciplined precasters. With its ability to achieve predictable and acceptable results, Schokbeton became exportable.

### **Schokbeton: an Agent in the Internationalization of Modernism**

The Marshall Plan, charged with the mission of rebuilding the European economy after World War II, included a program to identify viable European businesses and match them with suitable opportunities. An astute entrepreneurial American economist working for the U.S. State Department to implement the economic recovery program, George J. Santry, spotted the potential of Schokbeton and made the firm aware of opportunities for working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.<sup>4</sup> As the postwar mutated into the Cold War, the United States sought to establish defensive positions against Soviet attack from across the Arctic region. It thus embarked on a secret program to build air bases and communications outposts in Greenland

capable of supporting jet aircraft whose range had not yet reached intercontinental distances. North Atlantic Constructors, a construction consortium led by Kewit Construction Company and using N.V. Schokbeton as its precast concrete subcontractor, was hired to build a number of these facilities, including a U.S. Air Force base at Thule, Greenland. Donald Rothenhaus, a young American civil engineer, was placed in charge of receipt and erection of the Schokbeton product at the Thule site.<sup>5</sup>

Upon his return to the United States from Greenland in 1952, Rothenhaus was hired to take over the management of Precast Building Section, Inc. (PBSI)<sup>6</sup>. Despite decades of investment and experimentation, PBSI was not competitive in precast concrete housing or the emerging architectural precast construction market in the New York City region. However, using the equipment from the Atterbury process modified with knowledge of Schokbeton's concepts and production methods, Rothenhaus and his colleagues produced notable precast assignments while at PBSI. For example, PBSI cast the only piece of architectural precast on the exterior of Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum, a circular copper coated band at the round clearstory on the north corner of the building. One of the more demanding architectural precasting assignments fabricated in PBSI's makeshift plant was one hundred fifty-two twelve foot wide and 60 foot tall triangular structural and architectural panels for the First Presbyterian Church of Stamford, CT, designed by Wallace Harrison and his collaborator, Felix Samuley, who was also the British structural engineer for the Penguin Pool at the London Zoo.

Having completed his State Department assignment and based on his belief in the potential of the Schokbeton system, George Santry acquired the exclusive rights to license the Dutch precasting process in North America in the mid-1950's. Rothenhaus tried to convince his employer at PBSI, the former Housing Authority and Building Commissioner of New York City, Alfred Rheinstejn, of the advantages of purchasing a Schokbeton license. After two rejections, Rothenhaus and

three professional colleagues purchased the first license to produce Schokbeton in the United States in 1960, under the name of Eastern Schokbeton.<sup>7</sup> Eastern Schokbeton went on to produce work for Marcel Breuer, Philip Johnson, Minoru Yamasaki, Edward Durell Stone, Geddes Brecher Qualls and Cunningham, The Grad Partnership and SOM, to mention a few names in a long list of mid-century architects. In addition to Eastern Schokbeton, George Santry established licensees in sixteen states from the East Coast to Hawaii and Canada during the 1960's. All produced notable work regionally.

Schokbeton exported its technology and methods for precasting to eleven countries across the world and produced projects in scores more. The export of Schokbeton from Holland to parts of the world other than the U.S. illustrates the variety of conditions and circumstances that precipitated the spread of precasting technology and the role of precasting in attempting to adapt Modernism to varying cultures and climates. (Figure 2) When Ghana won independence from Great Britain in 1956, its economy was opened to international investment. Traditional wood construction had not performed well against Ghana's indigenous termite population. Concrete was a viable alternative. Schokbeton's interest in Ghana was undoubtedly influenced by the fact that, prior to independence,



Figure 2: Countries to which Schokbeton Precasting System was exported (Credit: OJP/Architect, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia).

mid-century architects from Great Britain had transported Modernism and the use of concrete in producing it to Ghana. British architects were adapting the principles of Modernism to the tropical environment in the spirit of Gropius' Modernist principle of favoring the appropriate approach over style.<sup>8</sup> British Modernists working in Ghana at the time included Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew, who published an exceptional book on building with concrete in tropical environments.<sup>9</sup>

### **The Role of Architectural Precast Concrete in Mid-Century Modern Design**

The 1960's saw the most genuine and far-reaching exploitation of the design potential of architectural precast concrete up to that time. The precast architecture of this period was defined by the exploration of the boundaries of Modernism and the presence of a supportive and versatile architectural precasting production technology.

Marcel Breuer had a significant influence on the sixties generation of Modernists. Breuer's influence was exerted through his instruction at Harvard and by his own work. Concrete was Breuer's material of choice. Precasting was a preferred method of assembly both for its sculptural potential and its economy. His architectural career was dominated by the exploration of concrete's relationship with sun and shadow.<sup>10</sup> According to Robert Gatje, his partner, Breuer was enchanted with Schokbeton's casting process.<sup>11</sup> Schokbeton produced buildings for Breuer in the U.S., the Netherlands, Belgium and France.

It was the mid-century Modernist architects in the U.S. whose productive years coincided with the maturation of architectural precast concrete as a medium of architectural expression. In their hands, architectural precast concrete became a credible material for expressing the evolving substance of Modernism. This generation thus wound up as a group presiding over a movement in transition.

In over twenty years of production across the world, Schokbeton and its capable competitors,

particularly the Mo-Sai Associates group in the U.S., produced an exceptional array of architectural precast concrete projects. The following examples from that body of work were pivotal to the acceptance of precast concrete as an acceptable architectural finish at mid-century. They illustrate the international collaboration between architects and precasters of the time and demonstrate the capabilities of the material and the production process.

The Denver Hilton (1959-1960), designed by I.M. Pei, was the first high-rise building to use architectural precast panels as the dominant exterior finish building material.<sup>12</sup> Pei used the Mo-Sai process to produce the 22-story, 882-room luxury hotel. The signature thin, flat Mo-Sai panels featured exposed aggregate excavated from the site.<sup>13</sup> Beuhner Concrete Products of Salt Lake City, who five years later became the first Schokbeton licensee in the Rocky Mountain region of the U.S., carried out this pioneering architectural precasting assignment. Beyond its scale, the Hilton was significant for seeking to achieve in architectural precast concrete an aesthetic effect at the level attained by Gordon Bunshaft in the Lever House (1951) and by Mies van der Rohe in the Seagrams Building (1959) through the use of steel and glass.

In 1960, the year Eastern Schokbeton commenced operations; they were hired by Philip Johnson to fabricate a  $\frac{3}{4}$  size study model in



*Figure 3: Lake Folly, Philip Johnson Estate, New Canaan, CT. (Credit: The Getty Research Institute).*

the form of a folly over the pond below the Glass House at his New Canaan, CT estate.<sup>14</sup> (Figure 3) The structure was designed to explore the manipulation of scale, give an illusion of increased distance between the house and pond, increase the perceived size of the pond, and, according to Philip Johnson, make all the visitors to the folly feel like giants, with its 6' high ceiling clearance.

Johnson's experiment illustrates that, in 1960, the potential of precasting concrete as an architectural medium was still very much in the experimental stage. This project is also an example of Modernists moving away from the horizontal planes, volumes and unadorned simplicity of the earlier generations of architects to explore a more expressive Modernism that references, if it does not acknowledge, classicism.

The Philadelphia firm of Geddes Brecher Qualls & Cunningham designed one of the most significant precast concrete buildings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the United States, the Philadelphia Police Headquarters (1961). It was the first building



*Figure 4: Philadelphia Police Headquarters, 1960, Geddes Brecher Qualls & Cunningham, Architects, Eastern Schokbeton, Architectural Precaster. (Credit: Urban Studies Archives, Temple University Libraries).*

in the United States to use precast concrete in all its significant manifestations, namely, pre-tensioning, post-tensioning, precast structural columns and beams, and three-story curved architectural and structural wall panels supported by cantilevered precast floor slabs. The Police Headquarters is a precasting tour de force that was structurally designed by August E. Komendant, professor of structural engineering at the University of Pennsylvania and collaborator with Louis Kahn for seventeen years. The wall and floor panel design incorporated chases for building systems that produced a clean unencumbered building interior. (Figure 4)

Eastern Schokbeton was still in its first year of operation when it received the commission for this project. A precast project of this complexity and scope had not yet been undertaken in the United States. By this time, however, its Dutch parent, NV Schokbeton, had experience with the full spectrum of precast production. NV Schokbeton collaborated with Eastern Schokbeton on the mold design and construction, and Eastern Schokbeton produced the castings and managed the erection.

In his design for the United States Embassy in Dublin, Ireland (1964), John Johansen succeeded as much as any Modernist in capturing the plastic qualities of concrete through precasting. The State Department wanted the embassy to be neo-Renaissance in style. Johansen created an "updated example of a traditional rotunda building with an arcaded exterior."<sup>15</sup> The design concept was based on a round plan that responded to the streets surrounding the small triangular site. His design was characterized by an exceptional architectural precast element that was both structural and sculptural.

The casting for this project was carried out in the Kampen, Holland, plant of NV Schokbeton. After receiving Johansen's design for the precast elements, Schokbeton built a full-scale mock up of the primary design element, but it discovered that the proportions differed from those expressed

in the drawings. Johansen traveled to Holland to collaborate with Schokbeton's engineers to adjust the proportions of this primary structural and sculptural unit. Constructing the mold for this piece was quite challenging, and accommodating the steel reinforcing required to obtain the unit's structural properties added complexity to the assignment. The ultimate challenge, however, was that of shipping the castings from Holland to Ireland over the North Sea.

The Banque Lambert (1965) project in Brussels was a very important project for NV Schokbeton in Holland and SOM in America. The bank building was a prestigious corporate project by a leading United States design firm whose name would become synonymous with Modern corporate architecture. This project helped establish SOM as a purveyor of corporate design internationally. The honed structural precast upright tees of quartz and white cement were cast in Schokbeton's Kampen, Holland plant. Special stainless steel connections joined the precast elements to produce elevations with a handsome regimented pattern as well as a notable degree of translucency.

### **The Preservation of Mid-Century Architectural Precast Concrete**

Concrete is the only building product that develops its structural and architectural properties during the construction process. Architectural precast concrete is a building assembly, with the mix design and precasting process being integral to the character of that assembly. Architectural precast concrete not only possesses physical properties; it also embodies a set of technological and economic characteristics of its time. A holistic approach to understanding this building assembly enhances the quality of one's judgment when it comes to questions pertaining to its preservation.

### **Conclusion**

The 1960's were a dynamic period for the design and construction of Modernist architecture using architectural precast concrete. The

internationalization of prefabricated architectural concrete provided mid-century architects a construction assembly with which to explore Modern solutions for diverse cultural and climatic environments ranging from tropical climate and termite infestation in Ghana to arctic Greenland. Concrete's combined structural and plastic qualities offered a design potential unavailable in any other material of that time. Due to its focus on the fundamental qualities of concrete and its development of the most advanced precasting technology of the time, Schokbeton was an important contributor to a significant body of Modernist architecture at mid-century across the globe, and thus an agent for the internationalization of Modernism.

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13. Pei Cobb Freed & Partners, Architects, LLP, available from [www.pcfandp.com/a/p/5204/s.htm](http://www.pcfandp.com/a/p/5204/s.htm), accessed 23 September 2004.
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## 1945–1970: How the Media Built Brazilian Architecture

Beatriz Santos de Oliveira

*This paper investigates the role of Brazilian specialized media in the reception, selection and dissemination of architectural theories and technologies between 1945 and 1975. Our purpose is to comprehend the development of the modern project of architecture in Brazil, in the context of the internationalization placed by the modernization process of developing countries in Latin America. We analyze the editorial politics of three respected Brazilian magazines within academic and professional fields: Acrópole (1938-1971) – the magazine that lasted longer, and therefore, the most popular; Arquitetura (1936-1942 and 1961-1969) – published by the Institute of Architects of Brazil; and Módulo (1955-1965 and 1975-1989), founded by Oscar Niemeyer. We question both the specific motivation of each group of editors in the diffusion of a way of thinking and producing architecture, that is, in the production of a critical discourse capable of forming opinion, and the exchange between national and foreign production. The data collected from the magazines included a full documentation of the leading articles, reader's letters, news section, magazines and books section, interviews, theoretical and critical articles, and published houses. The material was indexed in a database and granted us a broader view of the change in values and in the interpretation of Brazilian architecture during this period. If what we choose to promote is linked to ideological criteria placed in a historical selection, the work intends to understand how this process, in this media, influenced architecture created in Brazil.*



Figure 1: Acrópole Magazine covers (Courtesy of UFRJ Library).

### 1. Precedents

An analysis of the twentieth century panorama of Brazilian architectural publications shows that about sixteen specialized magazines entered the market in the 1950's, which was twice the number that had been published in the country until that point. This number would not be surpassed until the 1990s, when more than nineteen titles were published. In the 1950's, as a general rule, magazines did not last long; many did not survive for more than five years. The *Acrópole* Magazine was the one of the most long-lasting. This São Paulo-based magazine was published for thirty-three years, from 1938 to 1971. (Figure 1)

It is clear that the number of Brazilian publications increased proportionally in relation to the number of professionals who were joining the labor market in response to a real estate demand that was itself responding to the new state modernization efforts. Since the beginning of the 1930's, the discipline of architecture had been defined by regulations governing engineering, architecture and agronomy and had been stimulated by a number of factors, including the growing amount of available work; the existing national and international debate;

the presence in Brazil of famous foreign architects<sup>1</sup>; and the program for the construction of public buildings, including the Ministry of Education and Health and the Brazilian Pavilion at the New York World's Fair (1938). This was the context for the emergence of the magazines *Acropole*, *Modulo* and *Arquitetura e Urbanismo*, the publication of Brazil's Institute of Architects, Rio de Janeiro section.

## **2. ACROPOLE (1938–1971)**

*Acropole* magazine was founded in May 1938 in São Paulo. Initially, it concentrated on the publication of buildings and on technical articles that contributed to its readers' professional improvement. It started without a clear editorial policy, as can be seen from the makeup of its editorial committee and its collaborators, composed of both advocates of an architecture based on historic styles and those who favored modern architecture. They were all, even members of the technical committee from Brazilian states beside that of São Paulo, architects and engineers in the public sector and participants in professional associations, as well as dynamic designers and builders. As a result, the magazine had an eclectic character until 1952, when its ownership changed. The new management modernized the graphic design and became more selective about which buildings it published.

In the 1940's, the magazine constantly referred to foreign events. It frequently mentioned or published examples of urban planning, research about social housing, standardization and pre-fabrication, and the organization of the profession, holding them up as models for Brazil. Starting in 1952, the *Bibliography* section dedicated to a summary of foreign books and recently released magazines, and the *Technical Details* section, devoted to bringing up-to-date theoretical and technical procedures to the readers' attention, played didactic roles. It is clear that Brazilian architects thereby gained access to information that would inform their work. One obvious example consists of the parallels between the work of Frei Otto, whose book was mentioned by *Acropole* in

1954, and Sergio Bernardes' experiments with steel structures and suspended roofs.

The magazine was a witness to the country's industrialization process, informing its readers about the latest available technologies and equipment for the modernization of construction. The advertisement pages reveal both the strong presence of foreign firms and the proliferation of Brazilian firms, created to respond to new technical demands and to provide new design details.

Until the mid-1940s, the magazine published numerous eclectic, mostly neo-colonial residential buildings. By the 1950's, the great majority of published buildings were modern. The reason for this transformation is well known: it was due to the soon-to-be revealed worldwide visibility of Brazilian architecture. Under the Good Neighbor Policy of the administration of U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Brazilian architecture was exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1942, and the book *Brazil Builds* was published to accompany the exhibition. They constituted the point of departure for modern architecture's acceptance and popularization in Brazil and for its adoption by the specialized magazines as the primary subject of their discourse.

In 1947 as well as in 1952, *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* published special issues devoted to Brazil. The resulting prestige created a euphoric and self-confident state of mind that would culminate in the São Paulo Modern Art Biennial Exhibitions in the fifties.<sup>2</sup> Although they were unquestionably important in making Brazilian architecture receptive to the exchange of opinions and critique, their role in promoting national and international modern architecture within the country was even more important, and the specialized media provided essential support for this dissemination.

In 1963, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of *Acropole*, the editors looked back at the way they had served the magazine's subscribers across Brazil and in many Latin

American, European, Asian and African cities, as well as at their exchanges with approximately seventy similar foreign and Brazilian magazines. They claimed to have played an important role as the “herald of good architecture, especially in the states in the interior of Brazil, where the contact with new and quality work was relatively difficult.”<sup>3</sup> While *Acropole* had truly served as an important channel for disseminating architecture, it had done so mainly within Brazil, and mostly by publishing articles about the architecture produced in São Paulo. Although many of its collaborators were teachers in São Paulo’s schools of architecture, the magazine rarely published theoretical or critical articles.

*Acropole*’s limited sphere of action can be attributed to the difficulty it had obtaining news from architects who were busy with a great number of clients and overwhelmed by the rapidity of the design and building process. Their ability to provide adequate documentation for publication was therefore quite limited. The same can be said about the production of theory and criticism. However, it is clear that *Acropole* aimed at being a magazine of information and not of criticism. It took a neutral position with regard to important political events and did not even mention the military coup of 1964, or any of the subsequent developments. Therefore, it must be considered a specialized magazine primarily concerned with the commercial aspects of the profession. Nevertheless, it was very important because of its popularity and longevity. In fact, its informal language was the reason for its success in obtaining a large number of subscribers. It managed to be understood by builders and clients who were not intellectuals but who were able to assimilate the repertory of the Modern Movement and incorporate it in their work.

### **3. MODULO (1955–1965 / 1974–1985)**

When Oscar Niemeyer founded *Modulo* in 1955, he was already respected worldwide. The magazine’s editorial team was part of Rio de Janeiro’s intellectual elite.<sup>4</sup> Its members were all interested in the study of the makeup of



Figure 2: *Modulo* Magazine covers (Courtesy of UFRJ Library).

Brazilian society, and they shared a commitment to the idea of the ‘synthesis of the arts’. These interests and beliefs informed the magazine’s initial editorial project of serving those within the fields of architecture, urbanism and the plastic arts who were either sympathetic to or actively participated in the political parties on the Left. (Figure 2)

The strong plastic appeal of Niemeyer’s work was already the subject of critiques from the more orthodox segments of the international Modern Movement. The critical article by Max Bill on the occasion of the Second Biennial São Paulo Exhibition is one example. After the event, in October 1953, the British magazine the *Architectural Review* published a long article consisting of interviews with several architects about Brazilian architecture.<sup>5</sup> Most of the architects characterized it as being too exuberant and accused Brazilian architects of forgetting that architecture was a social art. This seems to have been the event that led the group from Rio de Janeiro headed by Niemeyer to see the need for a magazine that could represent them on the international scene. The first issue of the magazine to appear was translated into three different languages. In it, Niemeyer declared his affinity with Le Corbusier, as opposed to Max Bill.

His words overflow with national resentment.

We are a young nation with a cultural tradition still under development — which naturally exposes us more to the criticism of those who believe [they] represent a superior civilization. But we are also simple and confident about our work. Enough at least to appreciate the criticism, even when it comes from men who do not have the necessary professional credentials. Of course, Gropius' authority is different, although we must emphasize we have little affinity with his technique and cold sensibility.<sup>6</sup>

By the time of this statement, contemporary Brazilian architecture's accomplishments had come to be seen not only by architects but also by the entire nation as the country's one truly independent art and the first one to receive international recognition for the contribution to its field. Niemeyer, acting as the person who had redeemed Brazil from its earlier condition, made certain that the buildings published in the magazine had the folkloric qualities of the Brazilian people. Words in the magazine such as beauty, poetry, seduction, passion and generosity punctuate his writing.

Until the magazine ceased to be published in 1965, it maintained this spirit of self-assurance about Brazilian architectural and cultural production. It frequently published articles about popular culture and Brazilian vernacular architecture, encouraging the plastic and rational aspects of the nation's culture, as well as studies of historical buildings, projects, and reviews of the country's modern architecture. It allowed Niemeyer to develop an intimate relationship with his readers. In his essay "Statement,"<sup>7</sup> written upon his return from a trip to Europe (Lisbon and Moscow), he announced "the adoption of a series of disciplinary steps and measures." One of them was to establish "a series of rules for projects that would develop the simplification of plastic form and its balance with functional and constructional problems." His growing commitment to the Communist Party led

him to desire the abandonment of "the excessive tendency to originality" and a turn towards "the simplicity of construction and the sense of logic and economy that many had requested."

The importance of Niemeyer on the national and international scene made *Modulo*, as his mouthpiece, an important influence in intellectual debates within architectural culture. At the same time, the architect-reader could see the periodical as an instrument for asserting and disseminating the political and existential values that formed the context for his or her work. Unlike *Acropole*, *Modulo* remained aware of the print media's political and catalyzing dimension, since, from the beginning, it had seen itself as representing as well as serving as a platform for clearly defined ideas.

#### **4. ARQUITETURA E URBANISMO (1936–1942 / 1961–1969)**

*Arquitetura* was the official technical publication of Rio de Janeiro's Instituto de Arquitetos do Brasil (Institute of Architects). It was founded in 1936 and published until 1942, when publication was interrupted for almost twenty years. When it reemerged in 1961, it contained the National Inquiry of Architecture,<sup>8</sup> a feature devoted to inspiring architects to express their opinions about the current situation of architecture in Brazil. The answers published revealed the persistence of the humanist ideals of Le Corbusier's rationalism as well as concerns about housing and urban problems. Until its publication ceased in 1969, the subjects of the most important discussions were the country's intense industrialization and the disorganized growth it had caused, urban development, and national housing policy.

By featuring work by architects and public authorities that centered on cities, the editorial group revealed their shared commitment to the same social concerns, issues that were the themes of every national and international congress of architects at the time. An editorial of 1963 displays the magazine's collective character. The magazine

would “see Brazilian architecture inside the real picture of the Brazilian cultural complex” and avoid “turning into a mere promotional instrument for certain particular architects.”<sup>9</sup>

In the 1960s, as the result of the threat of Communism, there was a change in the United States’ Latin America policy. It created the *Alliance for Progress*, a program of economic and technical assistance. The agreement’s keyword was “development,” the kind of economic growth that would “naturally” result in political democracy. Modernity was now organized around the notion of ‘development’ adopted by the military regime that seized power in March 1964, and the building typologies favored by the large North American corporations became the model for Brazilian architecture.

Their concern about the condition of cities notwithstanding, architects had to deal with pressure from economically powerful real estate developers as much as from the government, which was building huge public projects. The modern architects who made up the magazine’s editorial group<sup>10</sup> started to defend the need to reorient the direction of architects’ concerns, as can be seen from the magazine’s final editorial of December 1968, where they diagnosed the dramatic transformation of the architectural profession brought on by the impact of industrialization.

## **5. Final Thoughts**

These magazines represented local segments of architectural culture that, starting in the first half of the 1940s, had chosen to identify with the international modern architecture that subsequently came to represent the so-called “national culture.” The material they published shows the general enthusiasm for the “new Brazilian architecture” and the centralization of communications in the hands of a few. Modern architecture was converted into a recipe and a fashion, and it was used as a slogan in a great number of advertisements. The precarious and vulnerable condition of architectural critics in the country allowed this fetishizing of architecture

to occur. However, the magazine did not ignore the social and economic condition of the country and its lack of an infrastructure capable of responding to real modernity. These were the two aspects of modernity most criticized by the professional class.

Each of the magazines I have discussed had different characteristics: *Acropole* was a specialized, commercially-oriented magazine of São Paulo, *Modulo* represented the elite of Rio de Janeiro’s architecture culture, and *Arquitetura* was the official publication of Rio de Janeiro’s IAB. Although all of them aimed at creating a critical discursive field, the still precarious state of discourse in the country made the latter dependent on imports from Europe and the United States. The magazines were not able to count on a body of historiographic knowledge that could back up their analyses. It is worth remembering that it was only in the 1930’s that university graduate faculties were founded in Brazil. This explains the relative absence of a theoretical foundation that would have allowed critics to develop. *Modulo* represented an advance thanks to the increasing maturity of its critics. Centered on Niemeyer’s and his friends’ propositions, its obvious individualism created a favorable place for the discussion of ideas and the production of rhetoric.

With regard to its architecture, Brazil experienced a desire for modernization that was typical of colonized Latin American countries. The modern world to which the country aspired to belong was represented, first, by Europe and, after the 1930’s, by the United States. Local architectural magazines, as the means of communication for the professional class of architects, were not only bearers but also receptors of expressions of this desire and of what had been achieved in the name of modernism. They reveal the gradual appropriation of the foreign model that proved to be problematic and its later rejection as Brazilian values came to be asserted. In this context, the calls for internationalization were cloaked in great ambiguity. It was simultaneously desired and refused, sometimes understood as the sharing of ideas and common ideals, and sometimes as cultural domination.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the idea of modernity had changed from one defined by the degree of Europeanization of habits and urban landscape to one defined by a relation to *Brasilidade* (Brazilian cultural characteristics). In the 1960's, Brazil's goal was development on the model of the world's leading economic powers. In the context of this transformation, the magazines played an important role in the dissemination and absorption of new techniques but, undoubtedly, they also became the place for dialogue between the different tendencies within Brazilian architecture, as well as the clear manifestation of its ambiguous relationship with modernity.

We must add that the phenomenon of a very quick assimilation of a Modernist vocabulary by the media and by certain social strata of the Brazilian population showed that the theme of cultural domination should not be conceived as an invasion; for the appropriate perception and recognition codes were already inscribed in a Brazilian culture that has historically possessed an open, heterogeneous and plural structure.

Notes

1. *Donat-Alfred Agache (1927), Le Corbusier (1929 and 1936), Frank Lloyd Wright (1931), Auguste Perret (1936) among others.*
2. *The effect of the first Exhibition was astonishing: people came "from abroad and from every state in the interior of the country in trains, special planes, caravans." The exhibition had "an average public of more than 1000 paying customers a day, in addition to the exhibitors and associates of the Museum of Modern Art, which, as known, were more than 3000." (Acropole, 1951, 161). In the jury there were two Brazilian architects, both from the Acropole team, Eduardo Kneese de Mello and Francisco Beck, who worked with Siegfried Gideon (Switzerland), Junzo Sakakura (Japan) and Mario Pani (Mexico) on the selection of the awards, which went to Le Corbusier, Pier Luigi Nervi, Lúcio Costa, Henrique Mindlin, Rino Levi, Álvaro Vital Brazil, Oscar Niemeyer, Affonso Eduardo Reidy, Joaquim Cardoso, Oswaldo Arthur Bratke, Paulo Antunes Ribeiro, Jorge Ferreira and Ícaro de Castro Mello. The results definitely show the assertion of Brazilian Modern Architecture. The number of foreign participants increased considerably in the second Exhibition (1953–1954), which took place at the same time as the celebration of São Paulo's 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary and coincided with the fourth Brazilian Architects Congress, an event that benefited from the presence of prominent international names in the jury: Walter Gropius, José Luiz Sert, Alvar Aalto, and Ernesto Rogers. The Brazilian architects were Oswaldo Bratke, Affonso Eduardo Reidy, and Lourival Gomes Machado.*
3. *Acropole, 1963, 295, 6.*
4. *Joaquim Cardozo, the structural engineer for Niemeyer's work and a poet, Rodrigo M.F. de Andrade, founder and director of the Historic and Artistic Heritage National Institute, Rubem Braga, a writer, Zenon Lotufo, an architect and assiduous collaborator for Acropole, Carlos Leão, an architect, and others.*
5. *Modulo, March, 1954, 46: "six pages of text and ten pages of pictures and drawings" under the title "Report on Brazil," with the opinion of five different architects who had been in Brazil for the the 2<sup>nd</sup> Biennial Exhibition: Walter Gropius, Hiroshi Ohye, Ernesto Rogers, Max Bill and Peter Craymer.*

6. *Modulo*, March, 1954, 46.
7. *Modulo*, July, 1957, 3.
8. *Arquitetura e Urbanismo*, May–December, 1942.
9. *Arquitetura*, December, 1963.
10. *The editorial group was formed by architects who defended modern thinking in their speeches and in their work. The editorial council in 1961 was composed of the architects Maurício Roberto, Edgar Graeff, Ermani Vasconcellos, Henrique Mindlin, Ícaro de Castro Melo, Marcelo Roberto, Marcos Konder Neto, Oscar Niemeyer, Paulo Antunes Ribeiro, Paulo Santos and Sylvio de Vasconcellos.*



## Negotiating Diversities: Passages to Modernity of Post- Independence India: 1947-1957

Kiran Joshi

*An examination of India's modernization process reveals that while "modern technologies" and "modern modes of thought" were imported from the West, it was the indigenously-generated "modernizing" ideals (democracy, secularism, egalitarian social order) that directed its post-independence task of nation-building. During the 1950s in India, "Modernism" was an attitude reflected in the attempt to break away from an "undesirable past" and build a "better future".*

*The common objective of the extensive state-sponsored constructions of this period was that of meeting the political, social and economic agenda of the new republic and, simultaneously, expressing the symbolism of a long-drawn struggle for freedom. Notwithstanding such homogenizing ideals, a sharing of the same geo-political space and a temporal simultaneity, the meanings ascribed to "modernity", as also the formal vocabulary adopted to express the overriding desire for change varied considerably in different provinces of the nation, ranging from the continuation of the Classical Revival (adoption of progressive values), Revivalism (rejection of Colonial past), to Modernism (social and technical ideals).*

*Using contemporaneous case examples of post-independence India, the paper will explore the social, political, historical and aesthetic processes causing such diverse meanings and manifestations of "Modernity." The objective is also to examine the impact of such diversities on the ongoing debate regarding an appropriate model for identification and preservation of India's Modern heritage.*

This paper seeks to understand the heterogeneous architectural narratives that unfolded in India in the post-colonial, post-Independence period following World War II. Focusing on the manifestations of varied contacts between the traditional culture and the mechanisms of modernization, it takes into account the wide variety of forms and ideologies of post-Independence Indian architecture. Further, it contends that the visual and symbolic aspects of architectural forms during these transitional years in India did not have fixed, or singular meanings, but could acquire different connotations in varying social, cultural, and regional contexts. In other words, without an appreciation of this post-colonial condition of ambivalence, any attempt at identification and classification of India's Modern heritage would remain incomplete. That said, it must be added that the existence of this curious phenomenon cannot be studied adequately if we restrict our attention solely to the postwar, post-Independence period. Instead, we must consider that period as one incorporating extensions of sociological and cultural trends within the modernization process that had originated a century earlier.

### Roots of India's Modernization

If the condition we call "modernity" is the result of fundamentally different modes of thought as well as a radical break with the past, then India's modernization can be said to have started in the middle of the nineteenth century. The instrument here is the rise of its Nationalist Movement and the search for a "national" consciousness, one which could politically unite peoples of myriad religions, ethnicities, languages, and beliefs – in brief, a search for a common denominator to create a single community, a nation-state where none had existed before.<sup>1</sup>

The Indian Nationalist Movement was not a single, revolutionary overthrowing of an established government, but a prolonged, ideological struggle.<sup>2</sup> Its British-educated middle-class leaders, besides advocating liberation of the lower castes and women from their circumscribed lives, focused on modern ideals of a "democratic, civil libertarian, and secular

India based on a self-reliant, egalitarian social order and an independent foreign policy.”<sup>3</sup> With its protagonists having imbibed such progressive ideals from their exposure to the West, the Nationalist Movement was never preponderantly inward-looking, especially during its early days, when it promoted the view that Indians, while hating British imperialism, should not hate the British people.

Many architectural examples exist to illustrate the attitudes of such selective borrowings from Western culture. Curiously enough, it is the façades of buildings that most frequently becomes the focus of such self-conscious attention. The business contacts between British and Indian entrepreneurs and the resulting change in lifestyles, for example, are reflected in the design of homes.<sup>4</sup> The inner family courts of several mansions of merchants in Calcutta, for example, retained their traditional forms and motifs. However, the Neo-Classical street fronts -- the presentation of a face to the world -- professed proximity to their Western associates. (Figure 1) On the other hand, there are the cases of several traditional institutions that were being reformed in response to the progressive, modernizing forces in society. In marked contrast to the houses, these buildings performed modern roles although often cloaked in traditional or revivalist façades.



*Figure 1: The inner family court of a late 19th century merchant's mansion in Calcutta. An eclectic mix of neo-classical and traditional forms and motifs represents a shift in cultural attitudes.*

Two curious examples here belong to the family of the famous poet and Noble Laureate, Rabindranath Tagore, one of the key figures of Indian modernization and progressive nationalism. One of these buildings is his family home, built over generations, reflecting the transition from traditional living to the adoption of Western ways. At the other end of the spectrum is “Shantiniketan,”<sup>5</sup> the model institution for national, *Swadeshi* education,<sup>6</sup> the entire concept of which was modern with similarities to the contemporaneous Bauhaus. And yet, the buildings at Shantiniketan represent a paradigm that stood in strong contrast to both the radical Modern movements in the West and the Colonial architecture of contemporary India. Here, it is also interesting to note that despite favoring Revivalist trends at Shantiniketan,<sup>7</sup> a professed nationalist like Tagore was not averse to internationalism – a fact borne out by his encouragement of an exhibition of Bauhaus art that was held in Calcutta in 1922.<sup>8</sup>

Even though the Nationalist Movement was to intensify and turn into a full-fledged struggle for independence over the next few decades, it did not seem to have any significant impact on the choice of symbols and styles for buildings. Regardless of whether the clients, or the architects, were Indian, British, or Anglo-Indian, the staggering variety of styles seen during this period seemed to respond more to the functions the buildings were to house, rather than to any other associations – whether symbolic, cultural or political.

This period, therefore, saw the continuation of the Indo-Saracenic architecture,<sup>9</sup> besides a revival of the Classical style. A large number of Classical Revival buildings were built throughout India well into the 1930s, especially in Calcutta. A “modified Classical” was pervasive in banks and other commercial buildings (e.g., the Chartered Bank Building, 1906 by Martin and Co.), while other work in Calcutta was still being done in a Gothic style (e.g., the National Bank of India). Bangalore already had a strong Classical tradition. The Indian Institute of Science (1912–13) in Banagalore, designed by Charles Frederick Stevens of Bombay and funded

through a Jamshedji Tata endowment, is close in spirit to the later work of Lutyens. One of the major Classical statements in India is Connaught Circus (1928–34) in New Delhi by Robert Tor Russell (1888–1972). The constant interplay between Revivalist trends and the emerging ideas of Modernism<sup>10</sup> during this period is also expressed in Art Deco, which had reached India in 1930s, and which continued to be the style used in most movie theaters, with the aim of catching the public imagination.<sup>11</sup>

Simultaneously, this period witnessed the work of architects allied with the *Swadeshi* Movement,<sup>12</sup> who were consciously seeking an Indian identity and encouraging the use of Revivalism as an instrument to fight for Independence.<sup>13</sup> This theme was taken up most forcefully by Sris Chandra Chatterjee (1873–1966),<sup>14</sup> whose “Modern Indian Architecture Movement” (1930s and 1940s) was supported by many of the engineers, educators and politicians, who were to become the patrons of much of the public architecture produced after independence.<sup>15</sup>

The 1930s also saw a few European architects coming to India at the behest of some members of the Indian elites. Along with a few Indian architects, this eclectic group, including Willem Marinus Dudok (1884–1974), Antonin Raymond (1888–1976), and Otto Koenigsberger (b.1909), began to explore the new Modernist idioms in varied ways.<sup>16</sup> A totally different stance, however, was taken by Walter Sykes George (1881–1962), who had come to India to work for Lutyens,<sup>17</sup> and by the Australian Arthur Gordon Shoosmith (1888–1974). Their use of unadorned brick surfaces, for example, in the Lady Irwin College (1938) and the St. Martin’s Church (1929) at New Delhi, shows a departure from the overt historicism that had characterized all architectural work until then.

Thus, modernization processes in India, as in many other parts of the non-Western world, elicited three intertwined responses -- eliminating tradition as an obstacle to modernization; resistance to a modernization seen as a threat to tradition; and

various efforts to accommodate the two. It was the last that was to find its way into independent India.

### **The First Decade of Independence**

With regard to its impact on the architectural forms produced immediately after Independence, the most significant aspect of the Nationalist Movement, however, was its effort to uphold universal values, and to unite a historically diverse, multi-cultural people and their widely varying political and economic aspirations in a common cause.<sup>18</sup> During the pre-Independence era, the common denominator that had appealed to all was the myth of a united India -- an India with room for all religions and beliefs, which had a “glorious civilization” with many lessons for the modern world, but whose march to progress had been temporarily interrupted by British rule. Post-Independence India was thus envisioned as a monolithic, socialist state, with no room for dissent against the utopian, nationalistic, and universal model of development and progress. Regionalism, in such an ideology, was surely viewed as regressive.

Although the Nationalist Movement had overcome many communal and regional differences, it never achieved a full unity of spirit throughout the population. Once independence had been achieved, the internal tussle for intellectual and political hegemony over independent India began emerging. Indian Nationalism now fragmented into several localized nationalisms or regionalisms that were merely a reassertion of the disparate aspirations that had always existed.

The goal of developing a symbolic system with a “capacity to accommodate diverse social and cultural representations with[in] the nation” was always more difficult to attain than the architects expected.<sup>19</sup> It has been observed that in several post-colonial cultures, the overt adoption of “national” styles of architecture is often an important device for enforcing political control.<sup>20</sup> However, as independence in India was constituted primarily of the transfer of political power, with most other legal and bureaucratic institutions remaining in place,

there did not seem to be any ideological grounds on which architectural transformation – whether of the Revivalist or Modernist idiom – could be sought.

It is thus not surprising that post-Independence Indian architecture, especially that of the State-sponsored variety, emits mixed messages, at times reinforcing the very disparities that some were seeking to eliminate. Should one abandon “colonial” forms completely as too representative of a humiliating past, or should one adopt them for the very obvious associations of power that they represent? Should the model of future development be the so-called *Swadeshi*, which calls for a return to India’s “traditional values,” or should the nation-state adopt, instead, the tried and tested model of Western economic development, with heavy industry and mammoth infrastructure projects? What kind of architecture should be patronized by the State? What connotations would such architecture have? How does one reconcile the fact of declaring the state to be a Republic where everyone has equal rights, with the necessity of holding together, sometimes by force, a State with diverse centers of power and vested interests? Explorations of the past century had shown a tension between various architectural options. The architecture of the first decade following independence continued to reflect several coexisting philosophies, particularly the intellectual oscillation between Modernism and Revivalism.

Yet another factor that influenced the character of this period was the manner in which design tasks were distributed. With Independence, Indian civil servants replaced British ones. With increasing nationalization, private companies were substituted by governmental agencies. Thus in post-Independence, socialist India, the most noteworthy building projects received state patronage in some form or other. Accordingly, these constitute the most relevant sources for establishing the identity of this transitional phase of India’s post-Independence architecture and the most interesting examples for studying its inherent diversity.

In most cases the state’s political leaders or the civil servants in charge of specific projects had considerable say in what was built.<sup>21</sup> The Public Works Departments (PWDs) that bore the brunt of the burden of creating a new built environment for India remained largely unaffected by Independence in their organization and continued to work within the existing paradigms. Inherited institutions, professional organizations, and regulations, therefore, continued to shape most of the built environment. Despite these two constants -- as can be seen from contemporaneous examples within the same city, or sometimes emanating from the same patron -- a considerable interplay occurred between the twin forces of “modernity” and “tradition” and the meanings ascribed to each.

Perhaps the most fascinating example that can be cited here is that of Nehru, who by no stretch of the imagination could be called a revivalist. It was Nehru who endorsed the work of Le Corbusier and his team, with its new set of unequivocally Modernist idioms and symbols for projecting a vibrant, yet progressive, socialist India. Yet, it was he who is reputed to have pressed the staunch Modernist, Habib Rahman, for the inclusion of traditional Indian motifs in the contemporaneous Ashok Hotel, New Delhi designed to house foreign dignitaries for India’s first International conference in 1952.

As for the rest of India, in general most states outside of the federal influence of New Delhi and Nehru resorted to revivalist ideologies, borrowing from their own local or regional contexts. The quality of the results is extremely varied.<sup>22</sup> In the case of Bhubaneswar, the first of the new capital cities of independent India,<sup>23</sup> Chief Minister Mahatab advocated “temple architecture,” and was supported by his Chief Architect, Julius L. Vaz, who also “wanted to duplicate the [Lingaraja] temple complex in his designs for the capital complex.”<sup>24</sup> The character of the city pleased many politicians.<sup>25</sup>

Of all the state-sponsored revivalist buildings of this era, it is the Vidhan Soudha in



*Figure 2: Using traditional features and construction systems, the Vidhan Soudha of Banagalore may be perceived as an attempt to create a distinct, regional identity as opposed to a homogenous national one.*

Bangalore which most aptly illustrates the varying regional aspirations and the role of powerful politicians (in this case, Chief Minister Kengal Hanumanthiah) in shaping the architecture of newly independent India. Designed by the Mysore State's Public Works department, the Vidhan Soudha is a massive granite structure, with neo-Dravidian decorative features adapted from the local temple architecture.<sup>26</sup> (Figure 2) The Vidhan Soudha may be perceived as an attempt to create a distinct, regional identity as opposed to a homogenous and universal national identity, albeit using the very forms and stylistic motifs that once were the source of "British-Indian" identity in the city. Indeed in Bangalore, the New Public Offices (1921) and the Municipal Corporation building (1933) by architects of the erstwhile Mysore PWD reveal the same ideological stance. This would imply that the forms do not have a singular meaning but that they are embodied with meaning and symbolism in particular contexts. Paradoxically, the same or similar forms manifest opposing ideals, and represent both colonial and post-colonial identities.

While Revivalism was gaining ground during the post-Independence era, there was once again a simultaneous questioning of the



*Figure 3: The International Style of West Bengal's New Secretariat in Calcutta, like Chandigarh, was a proclamation of the new political order of independent India.*

suitability of this approach for designing the future.<sup>27</sup> Architects were also cautioned against the danger of becoming emotionally bogged down in a sentimental celebration of one's country and producing a superficial architecture.<sup>28</sup> Among the post-Independence Indian Modernists who had preceded Le Corbusier, MIT-educated Habib Rahman (1916–1995) was one of the few to make a career with the PWDs, first in West Bengal and then with the Central PWD in New Delhi. Rahman's New Secretariat in Calcutta (Figure 3), a 15-story, heavily piled building, the tallest in India at that time, is clearly in the International Style, in contrast to the contemporaneous examples at Bhubaneswar and Bangalore.<sup>29</sup> Chief Minister Bidhan Chandra Roy gave Rahman a relatively free hand and a rather arbitrary brief for a substantial, tall building, which, like Chandigarh, would be a symbol of the new political order.

Interestingly enough, Calcutta was also constructing, at the same time, another state-sponsored structure that can be placed at the other end of the spectrum. This is the Indian Government Mint, a building in the Classical Revival idiom with a long Doric colonnade. Designed in 1952 by the CPWD, this effort is but a continuation of

the “precedents” set by the “predecessors” of the architects then in place. The existence of several similar buildings in the post-Independence era perhaps testifies to the fact that the European Classical tradition also had connotations as a symbol of progressive values; and it is an indication that certain forms were regarded as simply “good architecture” for specific building types and were free of political overtones.

### **In Conclusion**

It is obvious that the question of how best to represent India’s modern heritage has always been a complex one. There are no simple, straightforward positions available in its complex, “webbed” world. Nor is its complexity addressed in the dubious definitions of post-Independence Indian Architecture or the simplistic categories by which it is often circumscribed. The period is to be viewed as being continuously mediated in diverse ways by many regional, national, and international forces, and these forces must be reflected in any efforts involving the identification, protection, and preservation of the country’s built heritage.

### **Notes**

1. *British India was, in fact, a very heterogeneous entity. Less than 40% of its territory was under direct Imperial rule, with the rest divided among princely states and semi-autonomous provinces. Such fragmentation has been characteristic of the Indian sub-continent for centuries, with even the Mughals holding only nominal sway over much of the land that was supposedly run in their name.*
2. *Interestingly enough, its gain in strength during its early days was parallel to the rise in the might of the British Empire.*
3. *The early Nationalists such as Raja Rammohan Roy (1772–1833), Dayanand Saraswati (1824–1883), and later Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa (1834–1886) and his disciple, Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), were amongst those who stressed the need for Indians to acquire skills for negotiating the industrializing world. Roy supported the British Government’s decision to launch English education and develop western knowledge among Indians, but was, nevertheless, a staunch nationalist concerned with the rights of Indians and strengthening Hinduism.*
4. *Dwarkanath Tagore, for instance, was a director of the firm Carr, Tagore and Company, and a shareholder in the Commercial Bank and the Union Bank. Such cooperation created a substantial middle class which later provided many leaders of the nationalist movement and the Indian National Congress.*
5. *Shantiniketan – shanti meaning peace and nikan meaning abode – founded by Rabindranath Tagore, was intended to be an institution which “...would revive the memories of Taxila and Nalanda universities, and which while adopting all that was best in the Western models ...” As at the Bauhaus, there was a considerable exploration of the interrelatedness of the arts at Shantiniketan.*
6. *Swadeshi means ‘national.’*
7. *These trends were best manifested in Konaraka, Udayana, Shamali, Udichi, and Punascha -- five of Rabindranath Tagore’s houses in the Uttarayana complex at Shantiniketan.*
8. *An exhibition of Bauhaus art was held in Calcutta in 1922 at Tagore’s behest. The exhibition consisted of works by*

- internationally renowned figures such as Johannes Itten, Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky.
9. Indo-Saracenic architecture was as much favored as the Classical by the British Raj. It was also the style used by Swadeshi architects such as Sris Chandra Chatterjee in the 1930s and 1940s although the precedents chosen by them differed from those of British architecture.
  10. In 1937, the Indian Institute of Architects organized the 'Ideal Indian Home Exhibition' to promote 'Modern' design as a replacement of the heavy and antiquated furnishing of wealthy Indian homes. (See *The Journal of the Indian Institute of Architects*, January 1938)
  11. Some specific examples are *Elite*, *Roxy* and *Metro Cinemas* in Calcutta, and the *Eros* in Bombay.
  12. The Swadeshi Movement developed into an effort to revive every aspect of cultural life: education, religion, language, dress, art and architecture. This effort inevitably involved looking back to the past for inspiration rather than forward to an imagined future.
  13. Revivalism in Indian architecture has taken three forms: recreation of traditional ways of building -- revivalism of design production; revivalism of past design procedures as types to be copied; and, revivalism of an aesthetic, borrowing past stylistic devices while acknowledging contemporary technical advances. Four different themes can be identified here -- a Pan-Asian architecture as contrast to Western concepts; use of peasant themes and techniques -- the aristocratic-folk paradigm used by Tagore; physical manifestation of the spirit of simplicity associated with Mahatma Gandhi; and direct revival of past monumental patterns.
  14. Chatterjee was a member of the Congress party in the 1930s and had served on the National Planning Committee before Independence with its Chairman, Jawaharlal Nehru. His best known work is the *Lakshmi Narayan Temple of Birla* (1938) in Delhi.
  15. The movement was a hostile reaction to the work of major Anglo-Indian architectural firms, and the contemporary emergence of the Art-Deco and International Style in Bombay. Chatterjee promoted the development of the 'All India League of Indian Architecture,' -- an architecture that synthesized the internal arrangements needed for modern life with a conception of Indian architecture. However, his was architecture of façades, which never went beyond developing a series of descriptive models of historical periods, and was procedurally similar to that of the Indo-Saracenic designers.
  16. Dudok designed the *Garden Theatre* and the *Lighthouse Cinema* (1936–1938) in Calcutta. *Raymond's Golconde* (1936–1948) at the *Aurobindo Ashram* in Pondicherry is a pure Modernist building, sensitive both to its brief and the climatic context. Otto Koenigsberger was the Government architect in Mysore from 1939 to 1948. Though his early work was very much dictated by the Dewan of Mysore's image of good architecture, which meant that every building had to have a dome, his later works -- *Dining Hall of Indian Institute of Science* (1947) shows a purity of line seldom seen in India at that time.
  17. George, a Quaker, who came to India in 1915 to work with Sir Herbert Baker (1862–1946) and Sir Edwin Lutyens (1869–1944) on New Delhi, produced a considerable body of work in India. He died in Independent India at the age of eighty. His main contribution, in the idiom of international Modernism, is the *Tuberculosis Association Building* (1950–1952) built in New Delhi after Independence.
  18. National leaders from Dadabhai Naoroji (1825–1917) and Surendranath Banerjea (1848–1925) down to Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856–1920), Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948) and Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964) all recognized that India was a nation - in-making and that one of the objectives of the Nationalist Movement was to create a community from amongst disparate people and political interests.
  19. The most frequent practice is to use historical precedents as referents in the way Sris Chandra Chatterjee (1873–1966) did in the 1930s and 40s, and the several Post-Modernists are now attempting.
  20. Lawrence J. Vale, in his book *Architecture, Power, and National Identity* (New Haven, 1992), explores the complexities of post-independence architectural production, and examines the manufacture of a national style in newly created post-independence nation-states, as well as possibilities of designing ex-novo forms symbolizing national identity.

21. Jawaharlal Nehru was vitally and personally concerned in creating a future image of India. Hare Krishna Mahatab (1899–1965), Chief Minister of Orissa, was a prime mover in the building of Bhubaneswar (See Ravi Kalia, *Bhubaneswar: From Temple Town to Capital City*, Delhi: 1994). Kengal Hanumanthia (1908–1980), Chief Minister of Mysore, (later Karnataka), was responsible for selecting the architectural idiom of the Vidhana Soudha in Bangalore (See T.P. Issar, *The City Beautiful: A Celebration of the Architectural Heritage and City Aesthetics of Bangalore*, Bangalore: 1988).
22. Revivalism, as manifested in many public and government-owned buildings of post-independence India, includes replication of traditional forms, pastiche of past elements, and use of abstractions of past forms. However, most of these 'modern' buildings were faced with stucco, not traditional stone.
23. Bhubaneswar, the new Capital of Orissa was designed for a population of 40,000 and executed by the State Public Works Department. Unlike Chandigarh, Nehru took a half-hearted interest in Bhubaneswar's development.
24. Vaz saw modernist architecture as a passing fashion. "The tendency today...is to accept the glamorous experiments in architectural innovation of 'novelty' borrowed from the magazines of the European and American styles without discriminating their use and relevance in our case...Where is the waste in providing oriental turrets or chhatris on the roof tops of our public buildings... [the] public buildings [of Bhubaneswar] are built with a slightly more pronounced character of Indian architecture. In a country that created the world famous Taj, the country-wide palaces and the inspired work of art of the great temples, there is bound to be an awakening of Indian architecture". See Julius L. Vaz, "Architecture of Bhubaneswar, New Capital, Orissa" *Journal of the Indian Institute of Architects* 20, no. 2 (1954): pg.203.
25. Dr. Kailash Nath Katju, Home Minister in Nehru's cabinet, in an article politely critical of Chandigarh, wrote "Those who want to see before their eyes ancient India revive again, so to say, from its great past, will find the charm of Bhuvaneshwar [sic] irresistible." (Kailash Nath Katju, "A Tale of Two Cities" *Journal of the Indian Institute of Architects* 19, no.4 (October – December): 13–15, 22).
26. Except for the reinforced concrete columns supporting its dome, the 220x150m, 5-floor Vidhan Soudha is constructed of structural granite. The decision to build in stone was validated by the then prevailing shortages of steel and cement in the country. Also, masons trained in the Dravidian tradition were available for extremely low wages. Today, it would be both financially and politically impossible to replicate such a building using public coffers.
27. "There is...no evidence that efforts at revivalism have had any success in the past in other countries." (See D.N. Dhar, "What next in Indian Architecture" *Journal of the Indian Institute of Architects* 21, no.1 (January-March): 25–6.
28. "In the near future there is bound to be a great programme of state patronized building. Popular taste, at the moment, is at depressingly low ebb and a great deal needs to be done to educate it up to anything like a sound standard. [...] In any country newly come to political maturity, there is always a tendency to patriotic glorification of the country in its buildings. This, in itself a healthy instinct, often leads to a vulgar display in an attempt to symbolize the country's greatness through sheer bombast." (See Mulk Raj Anand, "Design and Patronage" *Marg* 1, no. 4: 16–19.
29. Rahman's engineering background enabled him to make structural innovations in his work. As Senior Architect (1953–1970) and then Chief Architect (1970–1974) of the CPWD, he was responsible for many buildings in central New Delhi.

All Photos by the author

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## The Iconic and the Ordinary

Ela Kaçel

*The Istanbul Hilton Hotel (completed in 1955) is celebrated as an iconic building in contemporaneous political, popular, and professional publications alike. These endorsements reveal not only an acceptance of the “International Style,” indeed of “Internationalization,” in 1950’s Turkish architectural discourse, but also the means by which the political contents of such modernization projects are obscured.*

*In terms of both its design and financing, however, the Hilton Hotel was an anomaly, unrepresentative of ordinary modern architectural practice in Turkey. Nevertheless, even now research into the few high modern projects overshadows the numerous new towns, modern housing blocks, and offices designed by such Turkish architects as Haluk Baysal, Melih Birsal, and Maruf Önal. In constructing the duality of iconic and ordinary post-war modernism, historians in effect conflate the work of these architects with the anonymous, market-driven “build-and-sell” apartment blocks—i.e., with “vulgar” modernism—failing to recognize the critical element to their projects.*

*In light of documentation work being done by DOCOMOMO in Turkey, this paper argues for a reconsideration of these categories, and also points to the historiographical conundrum of the ‘iconization’ of the ordinary. We illuminate a more representative, critical, and indeed “ordinary” architectural practice, namely of Baysal and Birsal, which have heretofore been set aside for their anonymity, unpopularity, or mediocrity—in order to reveal the bi-fold flow of the discourse, as well as to reframe the current categories of modern architectural historiography and preservation.*

## Introduction

A provocative article published in Life magazine in October 1938 dealt with the lifestyle of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the president of the Turkish Republic and the instigator of the modernist reform of the country in 1923.<sup>1</sup> While most of the photographic images accompanying the article are simply candid shots of Atatürk’s daily life, showing him at his summer pavilion in Istanbul, Florya Köskü, the content of two images differs significantly from the rest. They are suggestive of the broader theme of modernization in Turkey, if not specifically of architectural modernism. These two images capture concepts of what historians and even contemporary critics might have labeled ‘high’ and ‘anonymous’ modernism and are indicative of the give-and-take between critical discourse about architecture and popular discourse.

The first is a picturesque image depicting Florya Köskü, completed in 1936, out on a pier off the coast of the Sea of Marmara. That the editors appreciated the architectural value of the pavilion is clear, simply from the fact that they devote space to an image of the building alone. But neither the caption, which simply reads “Atatürk’s ‘sea house’ Florya near Istanbul,” nor the article itself comments on the iconic status of the building in the discourse of Turkish architecture or Turkish modernism. Nor does the name of the pavilion’s architect appear, even though Seyfi Arkan was in his own right a significant figure of architectural high modernism in Turkey in the 1920s and 1930s.

The second image is also a story of modernism, but one which is carefully contrived. A cropped image of a multi-story apartment building is juxtaposed to a number of unkempt gravestones engraved with Arabic characters in a nearby garden. In contrast to the neutral caption of the first image, the caption to the latter gives away the intended meaning of the picture: “*Old-fashioned* Arabic gravestones in backyard of modern house at Istanbul” (emphases added). The familiar East-meets-West rhetoric is represented not through the achievements of high Turkish modernism,

but rather by monumentalizing an anonymous concrete apartment house, contrasting it with the equally anonymous traces of a past Ottoman culture already forgotten and neglected in the back gardens of private properties. The remarkable size of this second image, moreover, calls attention to this simple polemic about the 'modern' and 'old-fashioned' faces of the city rather than to the more difficult, nuanced understanding of 'East' and 'West,' 'modern' and 'traditional' that might be gleaned from the ostensibly neutral image of Florya Köskü.

What is intriguing about Life magazine's choice and composition of these images is that the visual presentation of buildings in popular discourse can decontextualize—indeed reverse—the categories assigned by the critical and historiographic discourses of architecture. The high modernism of Florya Köskü is undermined and the pavilion is turned into an "ordinary" house, i.e. not iconic. In contrast, the anonymous housing block is elevated into a contemporary "icon" of modern urban life. Indeed, these popular photographic and editorial reinterpretations challenge many binary oppositions that are taken for granted by historians and theoreticians of modern culture: high and anonymous, iconic and ordinary, East and West. Intentionally or not, the popular reinterpretations dissolve these binary constructions and thereby underline the contradictions in the discourse of Turkish modernism.

A third image, appearing on the cover of Hayat magazine—a Turkish version of Life—two decades later, in 1959, will complete my paradigmatic examples of modernism. In a composition similar to the Life image of the housing block, a fragment of the iconic Istanbul Hilton takes the place of the anonymous apartment building and three women in chic, contemporary outfits sitting on an American sedan replace the aging Arabic gravestones. But if in the choice to juxtapose altogether anonymous pieces of modern and traditional culture, the Life image may have suggested some debate or pointed out some contradictions in the construction of modernism, the image on the cover of Hayat

silenced any debate. The iconic, modern Istanbul Hilton is presented uncritically as the backdrop for modern living, and a caption identifying the immediately recognizable, modulated façade would have been unnecessary for the Turkish readers of Hayat.

Imagine for a moment that the editorial presentations of these three images in popular magazines foretell the consequences of different historiographic approaches to modern architecture. In the first case, the complex, subtle architectural importance of the Florya Köskü—both a thoroughly International Style and a distinctly Turkish modern building—is lost when the pavilion is characterized simply as the summer house of an important historical figure. In the second image, an anonymous, everyday building is made iconic, which not only changes the building's future, but the understanding of its past, as well. And in the final image, any possibility of criticism is eliminated because the building is exploited precisely for its iconic status.

These images raise three issues. The first is the slipperiness of the distinction between 'iconic' and 'ordinary' architecture and the ease with which, through well-intentioned historiographic reframing, buildings and their histories slide from one category into the other. The second is a historiographic consequence of this relationship between 'iconic' and 'ordinary' which stems from the preparation of a register of modernist buildings, such as the one being prepared locally by the Turkish section of DOCOMOMO. The third and final issue is that of the risks involved, when the ordinary becomes "iconicized" and when the ordinariness of the ordinary is not preserved.

Although categories such as 'iconic' and 'ordinary' are important tools for describing a building historically and comparatively, a dilemma occurs when the historians' categories or labels become attached to the future history of the building. It is precisely this problem that makes a discussion of iconic and ordinary architecture relevant to registers

of modernist buildings produced by local chapters of DOCOMOMO. Because the ordinary cannot be historicized and theorized and still remain ordinary, historians must consider the consequences of fitting ordinary buildings into canonical frames. This paper can only touch on this problematic, and it will do so with reference to architectural practice in Turkey in the 1950s and 1960s, along with a brief reference to two projects of one particular partnership.

### **A Changing Modernism**

The state-directed modernization that had been taking place in architecture and urban planning since the early 1930s was being transformed, as were the historical categories of architecture, which had also been closely associated with the state. The particular form of the Modern Movement, which began following the revolution in Turkey in 1923 and was to persist through the 1930s, was modeled on contemporary European modernism. Public projects such as administrative buildings, schools, hospitals etc., more so than private commissions, kept the offices of architects busy in the fledgling republic. The iconic buildings produced signaled a new beginning in Turkey, free from cultural, historicist, and nationalist links to the former Ottoman Empire. Exiles from Germany and Austria framed the terms of the discussion, and young Turkish architects were being educated by them or in Europe.

While in the beginning the modernism of the Turkish Republic may be characterized as an import from Europe, by the end of the 1930s European modernism began to be questioned and mediated by Turkish nationalism—by native architects, of course, but also even by some foreign architects practicing and teaching in Turkey, such as Paul Bonatz. The expansion of modernism developed into a cultural exchange, and a new local modernism—the Second National Style—flourished.

The career of architect Sedad Hakkı Eldem fits perfectly within the historians' story of a changing modernity, merging national and cultural elements with the languages, first, of the

Modern Movement in Europe and, later, with that of American modernism. The beginning of the "Second National Style" during the World War and the postwar emergence of the "International Style"—as these periods have come to be called—coincide with Eldem's Turkish Pavilion at the 1939 New York World's Fair and the construction of the Istanbul Hilton Hotel, respectively. The pavilion, designed in collaboration with Sedat Zincirkyran, and the hotel, in collaboration with SOM, are celebrated as 'iconic' examples of high modernism in Turkey. Both are characteristic of Eldem's distinct Turkish modernism—i.e. a culturally thematized modernism—which is far from ordinary and is easily fit into the canonical framework of the historians.

Neither the iconic Istanbul Hilton nor Eldem, however, can be taken as representative of architectural practice in general in Turkey at the time. High profile public commissions and a high profile private clientele guaranteed that his projects would be icons for the new modern architecture, and historians and critics alike have taken the 'genius' architect to be the ambassador of Turkish modernism. He is the only Turkish architect to be the subject of an English-language monograph.<sup>2</sup>

### **Towards Ordinary Architecture**

The changing modernity with which this paper is concerned is that of ordinary architecture whose makers were perhaps not so much considered geniuses as professionals—those contemporaries of Eldem who were less concerned with high modernism than with establishing an ordinary practice of architectural modernism. But before delving into a discussion of specific practices and projects, I want to be clear about the urgency of discussing the ordinary and problematizing it in its relation to the iconic at this moment in time.

The priority that N. J. Habraken gives to the ordinary over the monumental lies in his search for an "intimate knowledge" that only the ordinary can provide. In order to articulate "the unspoken ways of ordinary environments," Habraken suggests that we "observe what always has been with us—not to

discover, much less to invent, but to recognize.”<sup>3</sup> In this sense, we have to think about the “unspoken”—that is to say, the unwritten—history of ordinary modern architecture. The quandary lies in the realm of historiography. In order to discuss the unspoken and/or unwritten modernity of ordinary architecture in Turkey, we need to be concerned not only with the neglect of the ordinary in favor of the iconic in our historical accounts, but also with the sublimation of the ordinary to the iconic, i.e. making icons of the ordinary. At crucial moments, such as the present, when registers of architecture are being compiled to document the Modern Movement in Turkey and elsewhere, contemporary historians who are sensitive to the first of these concerns must now turn to the second. The discussion of “the register versus the canon” has long been a debate in DOCOMOMO working groups, but we must deal with a further concern, namely that the intimate knowledge that the ordinary can provide precisely because it is unspoken and/or unwritten may be lost when ordinary buildings are listed on a register and thereby absorbed into a canon.

To illustrate this point, I will turn to the practice of Haluk Baysal and Melih Birsal, whose partnership has challenged the prevailing model of sole proprietorship and ‘genius’ architecture. The recent focus on their work and the attempts to register one of their projects—an urban housing block in Istanbul designed in 1961—underline the ambiguous relationship between the iconic and the ordinary and remind us of the delicacy of awakening the unspoken to speak again.

### **The Iconic and the Ordinary of Hukukçular Sitesi**

My interest in Baysal and Birsal, and specifically in the housing block of 1961, is not to offer a critique of the architecture itself, but rather a critique of its historiography—in other words, of how it is positioned within architectural history and related to contemporary buildings. The value of the housing block does not lie in its ability to hold its own when compared to the typologies of



*Figure 1: Hukukçular Sitesi, Mecidiyeköy, Istanbul.*

modernism elsewhere, nor even the degree to which it transformed international modernism into a model or icon for local, Turkish modernism, but rather in the extent to which it was able to integrate international models and typologies into the ordinary fabric of the built environment. That is to say, it can be gauged by the extent to which it was able to incorporate these ideas of international modernism and still be ordinary.

Contemporary historians of architecture have long praised this housing complex, known as Hukukçular Sitesi. (Figure 1) First of all, its mass, height, and location close to the city center made it a unique, new “urban artifact”<sup>4</sup> distinct from other towers being built at the same time in parks on the periphery of Istanbul. Second, the program, which included commercial and recreational facilities within the complex, offered a new typology for housing in the city. And finally, the building had “echoes of a Corbusian idiom”<sup>5</sup> as seen in the *Unité d’habitation*. But when the project, a private commission and intended for a middle-class and upper-middle-class clientele, appeared in the Turkish architectural journal *Arkitekt* in 1962, the analysis of the building offered by the anonymous author was expressed in a very detached tone.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the article, which reads like a technical report describing the

program and construction technologies, makes no comment at all on the contribution of the building to architectural discourse. No major journal offered any discussion of the building as a new typology or as a reinterpretation of the Unité d'habitation concept. And while these ideas were certainly in the minds of aspiring architects, the later assertions of historians must be tempered by the fact that the building was absorbed into the ordinary fabric of the city in spite of its massing, extraordinary façades, and theoretical underpinning. Moreover, it has not become a model that other architects and builders have followed.

But the fact that Hukukçular Sitesi was able to become integrated into the fabric of the city rather than becoming an icon of the city is, in fact, an achievement that distinguishes it from, for instance, the Istanbul Hilton. The correlation that historians draw between Baysal and Birsel's building and the Unité d'habitation underlines both the connection and the distinction between Hukukçular Sitesi and iconic, "International Style" projects like the Hilton. On the one hand, the dialogue with international models and typologies of modernism is evident in both cases, but Baysal and Birsel proved able to transform these typologies for use in ordinary architectural practice. In equating it with Unité d'habitation, well-meaning historians lose sight of the fact that Hukukçular Sitesi is not an imitation precisely because of the way the ideas are put into practice and made ordinary.

Ironically, it is the comparisons that can be drawn with the work of Le Corbusier and the fact that the building is physically unlike those immediately adjacent to it that have led to the inclusion of Hukukçular Sitesi in Turkish architectural discourse. Consider, by way of contrast, another building by Baysal and Birsel. Two apartment blocks in Bebek, Istanbul, known as Birkan Apartmanları (Figure 2), have enjoyed none of the recent exposure of Hukukçular Sitesi, but are no less intriguing examples of transforming the International Style into ordinary modern architecture. The apartments, built in 1955, are passed over by registers and spared the process of "iconization," if only because



*Figure 2: Birkan Apartmanları, Bebek, Istanbul.*

in terms of massing and general "style," they no longer appear different from the newer buildings that have been built up around them.

The value of the ordinary in the history of modernism is unmistakable, and registers of modern architecture obviously must account for ordinary modern architecture as much as for canonic and iconic buildings. But for years Hukukçular Sitesi was an ordinary building, overlooked even in the professional discourse. And the Birkan Apartmanları continue to be ignored there. In making the argument for the documentation and preservation of these ordinary buildings, historians have to be aware of the historiographical consequences of writing their very ordinariness out of their histories. The 'iconization' of the ordinary is, indeed, one of these consequences, and it underlines the fact that the Modern Movement achieved its international dissemination not only through establishing the 'iconic' but, even more so, through invading the 'ordinary.'

Notes

1. Anon., "The greatest Turk since Suleiman disdains paradise," *Life*, October 31, 1938, 22-24. Images accompanying the article are credited to *Life* staff photographer, Julien Bryan.
2. Sibel Bozdogan, Suha Özkan and Engin Yenil, *Sedad Eldem: Architect in Turkey* (Singapore: Concept Media, 1987).
3. N.J. Habraken, *The Structure of the Ordinary: Form and Control in the Built Environment* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2000), 3.
4. Atilla Yücel, "Pluralism Takes Command: The Turkish Architectural Scene Today," in *Modern Turkish Architecture*, eds. Renata Holod and Ahmet Evin (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), 125.
5. Mete Tapan, "International Style: Liberalism in Architecture," in *Modern Turkish Architecture*, eds. Renata Holod and Ahmet Evin (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), 116.
6. Anon., "Hukukçular Sitesi," *Arkitekt* 30, no. 305 (1962): 163-172.

*All photos by the author.*

## The United Nations Headquarters in the 21<sup>ST</sup> Century: Restore or Rethink

David N. Fixler

### Introduction

The impending renovation of the United Nations Headquarters (UNHQ), will pose a unique opportunity to assess our present attitudes toward the interpretation and renewal of mid-20<sup>th</sup> century modern architecture and, simultaneously, to investigate how the future of preservation in the aftermath of Modernism will continue to inform contemporary architectural culture. Though arguably anti-monumental in conception, the UNHQ is nonetheless a unique international symbol, as well as a major tourist destination embedded in America's largest city. It is also — and because of this — a place of vast physical and political complexity, a locus of constant change, and a cultural resource of global value.

In "The Modern Cult of Monuments" Alois Riegl ascribes three categories of value pertaining to a structure — Historical, Use, and Age. To begin to calculate the potential impact that the impending renovation will have on the character of the UNHQ, it is useful to reflect on the meaning of Riegl's categories when applied to this complex, considered as an emblematic work of the Modern Movement. First, there is no question that the UNHQ has significant Historical value, in that it embodies the original vision of the founders of the UN. Moreover, one must consider what this means today to the world's population. In order to retain this Historical value, therefore, the public image and feel of the UNHQ — both spatially and materially, both in concept and in detail — must remain recognizable.

That the UNHQ retains a Use value is also beyond question, as the UN continues to house a large and diverse group of users who interact daily

with buildings that must be sustained in a manner that will enable them to continue to perform their duties to the peak of their abilities. Yet, there is a more profound aspect of Use value in that the UN, as an acknowledged symbol of Internationalization, has taken on a unique and unprecedented collective meaning in the modern world. The nature of this meaning and its attendant moral authority have given the UNHQ a form of cross-cultural significance that arguably only organized religion has previously been able to establish on a global basis.

Age value is perhaps most difficult and ambiguous in relation to both the idea and the fabric of the UNHQ. Age value is typically associated with patina and the memorialization of the culture of a building of a particular time and place; it involves the notion that the fabric of a building must "evidence the slow and inevitable disintegration of nature."<sup>1</sup> This axiom bespeaks a fundamentally Modernist notion that makes a clear distinction between historical artifacts and works of one's own time. Like many of the iconic structures of the Modern Movement, a large measure of the original success of the design of the UNHQ was its newness (another of Riegl's values) and its difference, with, in this case, its attendant promise of a break with a very troubled recent past. Whether the idea of newness as a function of progress remains significant to the symbolism of the UN, and whether to celebrate or conceal the aging process of the last 50 years, will, therefore, become critical issues to address as the renovation evolves.

Valid arguments can be advanced, on the one hand, for acknowledging the fabric of the UNHQ as a significant object of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century's cultural patrimony, and thus for treating the project, wherever possible, as an exercise in heritage conservation. This strategy is also in harmony with the mission of the UN as it has evolved, through UNESCO, as a champion of the stewardship of the world's cultural resources, while embodying, all the same, the first principle of sustainable building practice — to re-use and adapt what is already there. On the other hand, the UN is charged with advancing social, economic and environmental

progress, and the UNHQ serves a pedagogical mission in communicating this message to visitors to the complex. This supports a strategy for treating the renovation as an opportunity to create a state of the art facility that embodies the ideals of the UN as an organization dedicated to sustainability through the advancement of science and technology, and to enhancing the experience of the tourist public. The optimal approach to the renovation is one that can successfully accommodate both positions.

### **Background**

Designed in 1947, the United Nations was conceived in an atmosphere of loss, humility and, at the same time, unparalleled optimism. By loss I refer to the tragic realization that Classicism, as a vehicle for the expression of monumentality, had become tainted by association with the ideology of Fascism. This, in turn, fostered considerable debate throughout the design community about how to address the issue of monumentality in architecture – a debate whose crosscurrents are to some degree revealed in the process of designing the UNHQ. Humility bespeaks exhaustion from the upheavals of two world wars and the Great Depression, and the attendant sentiment that it was considered inappropriate for architecture in the public realm to express opulence. Conversely, however, there was tremendous optimism that the best qualities of modernity could be used to refashion the world as an enlightened democratic community of nations.

Conceived by an international Board of Design that included Le Corbusier and Oscar Niemeyer, under the direction of Wallace Harrison, the architecture of the United Nations is light, open, and only tentatively monumental. It is important to acknowledge its creators' vision of the complex as a "Workshop for Peace" – comfortable but utilitarian – calling to mind other "factory"-based institutional models of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century based on planning efficiency and the Taylorization of the workplace, such as the Beaux-Arts Main Group at MIT by William Welles Bosworth and the Bauhaus in Dessau.

While the historic and aesthetic evaluation of the UNHQ is a subject for a work on its own, it must be acknowledged here that, despite a mixed critical reception and its perceived architectural shortcomings, the UNHQ has become, by virtue of its age, use, and its place at the center of 20<sup>th</sup> century history, a modern phoenix rising from the ashes of World War II, the first and most significant symbol of a global political culture. Any strategy for the preservation and renewal of the UNHQ will have to take this into account.

### **Language**

The architectural vocabulary of the UNHQ utilizes a recognizable Modernist language associated with CIAM and particularly with Le Corbusier's Five Points of Modern Architecture (although the planned pilotis and roof gardens disappeared from the built scheme). A hint of Latin flamboyance from the influence of Niemeyer is evident in the forms and textures of the public spaces, and a Nordic sensibility dominates the primary meeting rooms.

The materials – light, flush detailed veneered wood furnishings, plastic laminate, vertical wood slat dividers and paneling, stainless steel and aluminum, terrazzo and carpet floors, painted plaster walls (with occasional strong color accents), and a variety of largely flat hung ceilings – came to define the mid-century Modern material palette. This approach softened and enriched the CIAM/rationalist language of planar white surfaces, set off by glass and metal, with a substantial dose of the then nascent 'Scandinavian Modern' design, particularly in the application of natural wood finishes, featured most prominently in the three major Council Chambers, donated and designed respectively by Denmark (Finn Juhl), Sweden (Sven Markelius) and Norway (Arnstein Arneberg).

### **Issues**

In dealing with any landmark structure, the importance of memory in determining how the

work shall continue to be read becomes critical in the formulation of an appropriate preservation philosophy. “Character-Defining Features” that are recognized as salient aspects of the building cannot be lost in the process of whatever transformations the renovation effort will engender. Since it is a paradigmatically Modernist structure, one may argue that the most critical of these features in the UNHQ are the open flow of the primary public spaces, the straightforward use of contemporary (mid-century) materials, the chromatic palette of the surfaces and furnishings, and the minimalist articulation of surface and volume through flush detailing and spatial overlay. There is also a less tangible but important experience of theatricality in the public and meeting spaces, a character that Lewis Mumford criticized as being overly theatrical or ‘Hollywood Modern,’ but that has subsequently been cited by Jane Loeffler as creating an appropriate setting for the drama of international diplomacy.<sup>2</sup>

Over the last 50 plus years, many small changes have been made throughout the public areas of the UNHQ to accommodate changes in protocol, technology, function, and security. Collectively, these have conspired to create an unsympathetic clutter that intrudes upon the spare, fluid continuity of its spaces. In the mid-1990’s, the UN began the process of formulating and implementing a Capital Master Plan (CMP) to renew the entire UNHQ and provide for its next 30 years. Given the scale, nature, and importance of this work, the development of Preservation Guidelines, both as a road map for the present renovation and for the maintenance of the complex in the decades ahead, can be seen as an opportunity to codify and articulate many of the issues that have characterized the evolving philosophy toward the renovation of works of the Modern Movement since the late 1980’s. These Guidelines should be robust, with a rigorous but flexible approach to the renovation that will simultaneously protect the historic fabric and ambience and thoughtfully guide any necessary changes.

## **Approach**

In formulating renovation strategies for buildings of the recent past, original design intent is often used as a tool in determining how the history of the work might inform its renewal. Traditional preservation approaches the historical record only when it might be useful in augmenting the analysis of the extant building fabric by determining how much the structure as it exists today remains true to the work as originally built, as opposed to the degree to which the original construction reflected the original design intent. With the emphasis of the architecture of the Modern Movement upon the building as the manifestation of an idea, including the notion that modern architecture reflected the ephemeral, transitory nature of the modern world itself, material permanence was not a dominant concern in expressing an architectural concept.

Given that the UNHQ is a complex designed by an international committee of architects, in seeking to determine the original intent of its designers, we are presented with a unique case. Their process was documented in great detail, and Harrison’s approval of the final design – despite compromises others on the team may have perceived – was considered the last word on the subject. It remains important to understand the intent of the final design and how the thoughts and efforts of the Board of Design were incorporated into the ultimate product, but it would be problematic to consider the realization of any un-built ideas as fulfilling the intent of the group. However, ideas that could improve the performance of the building without compromising the original aesthetic might be utilized as touchstones for further exploration as the renovation design evolves.

One striking possibility for the UNHQ, in the desire to optimize sustainable design, would be to revive Le Corbusier’s proposal to introduce brise-soleils into the curtain wall of the Secretariat. The program for the renovation recommends the replacement of the curtain wall in kind, but with a thermally broken, insulated system that may incorporate photovoltaic technology in the opaque spandrel panels, steps that will markedly improve

the performance of the wall. Nonetheless, while Le Corbusier's original scheme was deemed unworkable due to issues of cost and of potential problems with falling ice, evolution in curtain wall technology and the more pressing environmental concerns of our age might allow the incorporation of sun control devices should it be determined that that they will significantly enhance the sustainability quotient of the building. Unquestionably, such a move would alter the iconic image of the Secretariat, but whether this solution is less authentic than the replacement of the curtain wall in kind – as was done at Lever House – can be debated. The result might bear some resemblance to the one pre-war building that can be cited as a prototype for the UNHQ, the 1937 Ministry of Education in Rio de Janeiro by Niemeyer and Le Corbusier. The pattern, rhythm, and color of the original fenestration would not necessarily have to be changed under this scenario, and the work could be held up as a model for the sensitive updating of mid-century curtain wall buildings in accord with the most exacting contemporary standards.

### **Security and Life Safety**

If the post-1945 Pax Americana resembled the situation in the Roman world after Battle of Actium – with conflict limited to marginal areas and filtered through diplomatic processes – we are now entering a period of late imperial retrenchment, reinforcing the heart of the state through a hardening process that inhibits the interactive physicality typically found in the public realm of a democratic society. The demands of high security facilities require the imposition of physical barriers which truncate the open, flowing qualities of Modern space – and thereby define a paradigm that is fundamentally at odds with the philosophy and aesthetic of the United Nations. There is in addition, the essential symbolic concept of the UN as a public institution. Security requirements of this nature have long been a factor in the design of facilities such as embassies and banks, but these institutions do not have the pedagogical role of the UN as a place meant to welcome a global public. No one, least of all the

representatives of the member states of the UN, would desire that the UNHQ become a fortress, but, conversely, the organization cannot continue to function if its constituents do not feel safe.

Therefore, it is clear that among the concerns to be addressed in formulating a sympathetic design approach to the renovation, one of the primary tasks will be to realistically assess how much security is appropriate, and to what degree security concerns can be met with invisible or minimally intrusive means. This will be an exacting process. More than any other aspect of the renovation, the accommodation of security protocols will have to balance politics, aesthetics, and genuine concern for the well-being of all who use the building. Given the inevitability that it will be impossible to fully disguise interventions made on behalf of security, it must then be decided how these interventions will be perceived, and to what degree their design should honestly reflect both contemporary aesthetics and the present world order.

Security is not the only factor restricting the flow of space and people throughout the complex. Fire and life-safety requirements and the need to provide barrier-free access will yield another level of intervention that will be impossible to disguise, and it will be necessary to develop a sympathetic, understated language for the design of these elements as well, at least in the historic spaces, in order to enhance the original design without pretending that the additions are artifacts of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Whether these changes, which in essence will reflect the progress made in the last 50 years toward making buildings safer and more accessible, should be rendered in the same manner as the security interventions, is a fundamental question. It may be argued that such changes, made as evolutionary components of the regulatory system's recognition of its ethical responsibility to the occupants of a public building, should be distinguished from those that are a necessary, though unfortunate reaction to a culture of premeditated violence.

The former can be seen as a reinforcement of the intent of the original design, and should be integrated into the renovation as seamlessly as possible. As for the latter, one might perhaps be more circumspect. Where accommodation is possible with little disruption to the architectural character of the space, it should be rendered in a minimally intrusive manner. However, it might be argued that where security is meant as an active deterrent which will necessarily change the character of the original space, these new elements, though equally thoughtful and subtle in their design, should retain a distinctive, reversible quality of difference and impermanence, in distinct contrast to the original architecture.

### **Technology**

At the time of its construction, the UNHQ was one of the most sophisticated works of building systems engineering and integrated communications technology ever built. Given that many of these systems will be replaced and the technology updated and augmented, the philosophy guiding their physical appearance will be an integral component of the renovation approach. An argument can be made for restoring and maintaining, to the greatest degree possible, the original state-of-the-art 1950s look and feel of both the engineering systems and the displays of technology (tables, seats, displays, headsets, etc.) that are an essential component of the character of the significant spaces. This represents, in one respect, sound practice, but it is also a “knee-jerk” response favoring the unquestioned restoration of every aspect of the historic fabric. While rightly cognizant of both the importance of the detailing of every device within the major spaces and the fact that alterations should be “frankly expressed,” it is, nevertheless, reflective of an attitude that severely restricts the opportunity for change.

There is an approach, however, that recognizes the character of the United Nations both as an organization dedicated to enabling progress in science and technology and as one that embodies the transitory nature of Modernity

itself, whose headquarters should, therefore, reflect this continuing progress through an honest acknowledgment of the innovations which have occurred in building, systems, and information technologies in the course of the last 50 years. In proposing the form and language of these changes, one may argue that while there has been significant evolution in architectural theory and practice between 1950 and the world of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century,<sup>3</sup> we remain, in essence, a culture defined by many of the philosophical tenets of modernism, and that the language of modernism, therefore, remains an “honest” expression of contemporary design. Seen in this perspective, the integration of new technologies into the UNHQ would be a legitimate augmentation of the prevailing mid-century aesthetic, providing an expression of contemporary need and possibility through the best application of an internationally understood contemporary design culture. Managed with appropriate deference and respect for the scale and palette of the original components, such an overlay would also add richness and new meaning to the architecture of the building.

### **Conclusion**

The approaches outlined above are not mutually exclusive; rather, they should be considered as ends from which work can proceed toward an optimal center. As the manifestation of an organization dedicated to insuring that the world’s cultural resources are both sustained and interpreted for the enlightenment of future generations, it is highly appropriate that the preservation and renewal of the UNHQ should foster a dialogue about what meaning – relative to Age, Use and History – is really invested in the fabric and spaces of this building, and about how to strike the optimal balance between the pragmatics of enabling the efficient life of an international “Workshop for Peace” and the less tangible interpretation of the work as both a product of its time and an icon of progress.

Notes

1. *Riegl, Alois: The Modern Cult of Monuments – on Age Value, quoted in Porphyrios, Demetri, “Restoration and Value,” in Porphyrios Associates (London: Andreas Papadakis Publisher, 1999) page 203.*
2. *Loeffler, Jane: Introduction to Stoller, Ezra, The United Nations (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, n.d. [ca. 2000]), page 11.3*

## Is Modernism Un-American? Rethinking Richard Neutra's Monumental "Failure" at Gettysburg

Christine Madrid French

*"I don't like the nationalistic, untied-shoe  
Lincoln or the classic Roman-togaed Lincoln.  
This memorial should not stand for the man,  
or the war, or any side. It is for the Address.  
This place has become universal because of  
a one minute, 40-second speech."*

- Richard Neutra, 1958

*In the late 1950s, at the height of the Cold War, the National Park Service commissioned a leading modernist architect - Austrian-born immigrant Richard Neutra - to design a visitor center at Gettysburg National Military Park. Neutra envisioned the building as a "place of cultural interchange" that celebrated American values in a global context; the New York Times praised the building as representative of the federal government's post-war architectural identity. Yet Neutra's modernist statement, set within a conventional commemorative landscape, failed to resonate with the public. Tensions between the architect's internationalism and America's latent provincialism doomed Neutra's "Lincoln Memorial" at Gettysburg to failure. Since the 1970s, the Park Service has distanced itself from Neutra's design and his utopian ideologies. Park officials declared the visitor center an "intrusion" on the landscape that must be erased in order to restore the battlefield to its "original condition." Disowned, the building now awaits demolition.*

*I will argue that Neutra's building did not fail us; our stewardship failed the building. My paper explores the persistent public reluctance to acknowledge modernism's significance in America's past and seeks strategies to re-contextualize modern design within American historical themes. I ask: Do preservationists and historians need to nationalize modernism to save it?*

To some, Richard Neutra's building at Gettysburg is a failure, a Modernist miscreant destined for demolition. The National Trust for Historic Preservation advocates its demise. The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation agrees it should be razed. The National Park Service eagerly awaits its removal. These organizations wholeheartedly agree that the building must go because of a so-called "problem of common ground." The unapologetically Modernist Cyclorama Center, as it is known, designed by Neutra and Robert Alexander, which opened in 1961 during the Civil War centennial, is placed on a rise overlooking the Park Service-owned Gettysburg battlefield in Pennsylvania, a key site in American history and the place where Abraham Lincoln delivered his famous Gettysburg Address. (Figure 1) Vociferous critics maintain that this twentieth-century visitor center intrudes on the nineteenth-century commemorative landscape on which it sits. Therefore "the building must yield."<sup>1</sup>

What happened to the Cyclorama Center, a structure predicted to "become one of the showplaces of the National Park System" by the New York Times but now destined for the landfill? Why has the Park Service, the primary public agency charged with protecting significant American sites, refused to defend and preserve this



Figure 1: Overall view of the Cyclorama Center looking west across the battlefield.

building, one recognized by the National Register of Historic Places for “its exceptional historic and architectural significance?” Why is there no outcry from the public, no preservationists’ fervor as seen in the fight to rescue Victorian-era homes or Neo-Classical-style banks? After six years of campaigning to save the Cyclorama Center, I can come to only one conclusion: Neutra’s building did not fail us, our stewardship failed the building. In this paper I will argue that the inability of this structure to survive the changing times lies not in its supposedly misguided site selection or its currently deteriorated state but rather with the overall American reluctance to accept and embrace Modernism as part of our own distinctive architectural record. This reluctance is paired with a widespread misperception of Modernism as a strictly European cultural artifact of little value to our national heritage. The tepid public response towards the preservation of modern structures – both high style and vernacular, at Gettysburg, in New York, and elsewhere – demands innovative new strategies from historians and preservationists. In discussing the case of the Cyclorama Center I ask: Do we need to nationalize Modernism to save it?<sup>2</sup>

The campaign to erase our modern legacy at Gettysburg and restore the battlefield landscape to its “original” condition illustrates the many challenges of preserving America’s recent past. Superintendent John Latschar, characterized as a “shrewd and articulate campaigner” by the *L.A. Times*, has successfully tapped into a lingering public prejudice against modern design. He portrays the Cyclorama Center as an unwelcome intruder – an architectural UFO – thrust upon the pastoral environment of America’s heartland by a European architect who “ran amok” in the national park. Latschar and friends see the building’s removal as critical to the re-sanctification of this “sacred ground” where more than 50,000 men were killed, wounded, or captured during the three-day battle in the War Between the States. Their case for restoration of the nineteenth-century landscape is selectively applied, however. The century-long contextual history of the site is wholly

ignored; the gradual emergence of an historically significant multi-generational commemorative and commercial landscape is artificially truncated at the early twentieth century. Literally thousands of post-Civil War “intrusions” exist on the battleground. Monuments, statues, roads, buildings, and plaques deemed of appropriate vintage and appearance will remain under the new plan to bring order to the site. Hundreds of commercial enterprises, some located directly on battlefield land, will continue to exist. Yet the Cyclorama Center, its own historic status notwithstanding, must go. To its critics, and much of the public, the building’s spurning of tradition, its absence of ornament, its failure to conjure up images of our collective past – its sheer Modernist temerity – render it inappropriate for this consummately American historic site.<sup>3</sup>

Planning for an interpretive center at Gettysburg began in the 1930’s, when the U.S. Congress transferred the nation’s Civil War parks to the supervision of the National Park Service. For years the park staff made do in hand-me-down quarters at the post office downtown. But rapid increases in the number of visitors, fueled by post-World War II economic prosperity, overstressed facilities throughout the park system. Intense public pressure and critical media coverage convinced Congress to approve an unprecedented ten-year “improvement project” called Mission 66, a billion-dollar initiative that changed the face of America’s national parks. The architectural significance of Mission 66 lay in its exclusive use of modern design and the introduction of an innovative new building type – the visitor center. This centralized structure incorporated both employee and visitor functions and was intended to reduce the footprint of modern facilities at the national parks. Gettysburg, a crown jewel of the American park system, required a premiere building to accommodate the throngs of visitors expected for the centennial of the Civil War.

Park Service administrators chose the site of the new building, a rise overlooking the spot where Confederate general George Pickett

led 11,000 men in a final, desperate charge against entrenched Union lines on the last day of the battle of Gettysburg in July 1863. Only one in three soldiers emerged safely from that attempt, a stunning climax that became known as the "High Water Mark of the Confederacy." The central location, situated close to the National Cemetery and the town of Gettysburg, provided an official Park Service presence in an area of high visitation and a counter to the numerous private enterprises whose interpretation of the battle ranged from off-beat to downright wrong. The new building, occupying a site that had long functioned as a place to view the overall landscape, would incorporate the latest in interpretive techniques and convey up-to-date research on the Battle of Gettysburg.

After calling for, and rejecting, plans from its staff architects, the Park Service asked the firm of Neutra and Alexander of Los Angeles to design the visitor center. Neutra, a native of Austria who emigrated to the United States in 1919, was one of the most influential designers of his day and ours. A self-proclaimed "bio-realist," Neutra worked tirelessly for more than sixty years to create environments that enhanced basic human relationships and promoted mankind's connection to nature through the use of modern materials and design. He described himself as "walking on air" upon receiving the news of the Gettysburg commission in 1958. Here was a rare late-career opportunity to explore his theories on a monumental scale. Always the Modernist, Neutra proclaimed his impatience with the profusion of Neo-Classical style statuary and figurative monuments present on the battlefield. "I don't like the nationalistic, untied-shoe Lincoln or the classic Roman-togaed Lincoln," he wrote. "This memorial should not stand for the man, or the war, or any side. It is for the Address. This place has become universal because of a one minute, 40-second speech." Neutra dedicated his full energies to this prestigious project; he kept copious notes of his aspirations and referred to the Cyclorama Center as the building "closest to my heart."<sup>4</sup>

Designing the Cyclorama Center posed considerable challenges. On a practical level, the visitor center – one of the first of its type – had to include offices, restrooms, an auditorium, museum, and a clear-span gallery for the 1883 "circular panorama" painting by French artist Paul Philippoteaux, an enormous canvas measuring nearly forty feet high and more than 100 feet in diameter. To accommodate the artwork, Neutra departed from his more typical rectilinear composition. In plan, the building appears as a series of concentric circles created by a curved auditorium wall, a stark white rotunda containing the painting and museum exhibits, and, at the center, a darkened ramp, winding up on itself to a platform inside the painting gallery. (Figure 2) Extending to the south is a rectangular office wing topped by an observation deck intended to provide an immediate, three-dimensional view of the landscape rendered in the cyclorama painting. (Figure 3)

After a visit to Gettysburg in April 1960, Neutra found himself "more than ever devoted to this project." The visionary architect tried to transform the Civil War battlefield from a relic into an active participant in the cause for which Lincoln spoke, but writ large and placed on an international scale. The visitor center – which he dubbed the "Lincoln Memorial" – the centerpiece of Neutra's ambitious plans to address the state of humanity at midcentury. "We should invite every year one of the great statesmen of the Nations," he wrote. "It may be even a 'Cold War' enemy nation to speak before thirty thousand people about: 'What Shall Not Perish from the Earth'" the last words of the famous Gettysburg Address. He imagined that a distinguished procession of world leaders would address crowds from the elevated "Rostrum of the Prophetic Voice." Full-height windows and the adjacent auditorium wall slid away to expose the rostrum and reveal the rolling landscapes of the battlefield to the east of the building.<sup>5</sup>

More than one hundred new visitor centers were completed during the Park Service's Mission 66 campaign, but only a handful possessed the high status of the Cyclorama. Washington Post



*Figure 2. View of the circular ramp leading up to the cyclorama painting gallery.*

architectural critic Wolf Von Eckardt praised the “quietly monumental but entirely unsentimental” Neutra design. He cited the Gettysburg building as one of a set of “exceptionally distinguished and fearlessly modern” buildings in the national parks, each deserving of an architectural excellence award.<sup>6</sup>

The Cyclorama Center at Gettysburg never found its audience, however. Although Neutra’s memorial concept, set upon a premiere commemorative site, initially resonated with America’s international ambitions at midcentury, changing socio-political circumstances quickly rendered its message ineffective. The architect’s vision of the Cyclorama Center as a “Shrine of the American Nation,” never materialized. The Park Service hosted only one major event at the building – its dedication in 1962 on the 99<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Gettysburg Address – before quietly abandoning the commemorative concept. Notable features such as the movable sun louvers and reflecting pools, both hallmarks of Neutra’s work, fell quickly into disrepair.<sup>7</sup>

The anti-Modernist mindset of the 1970’s and 1980’s took its toll on this building as well. In 1977 the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation recommended removing the building in order to



*Figure 3: View of the exterior ramp and rooftop platform, looking south, with the battlefield landscape stretching out in three directions.*

restore the battlefield to its “original condition.” In 1997 National Park Service architect Richard Segars determined that the building was ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places, arguing that the Cyclorama was not representative of Neutra’s best or most influential work. He limited Neutra’s period of significance to residential commissions of the 1930’s and asserted that the “many technical shortcomings of this building ... reflect poorly on the building and its architects.” The Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office concurred with this biased assessment, thereby approving the Park Service plans to demolish this so-called “antiquated [facility]” and clear the way for a massive new visitor center to be constructed on a “less hallowed” section of the battlefield nearby. Promoters insist that this 140,000-square-foot museum – disguised as a super-sized Pennsylvania barn – will blend better into the surrounding landscape and allow the newly rehabilitated battlefield to “tell its many stories and its place in defining what our country means, and stands for, today.” Restoration or renovation of the Cyclorama Center was never seriously discussed.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the coordinated campaign against the building, a few farsighted Park Service officials dared to assert the historical significance of Neutra’s Cyclorama Center and other modern structures in the national parks. In 1998, the National Register of

Historic Places, alerted by the preservation efforts of myself and many others, overrode the initial state assessment and determined that Neutra's Cyclorama Center – and three other Mission 66-era visitor centers – was eligible for its list of significant U.S. properties. The late J. Carter Brown, then chairman of the Fine Arts Commission, George Washington University professor Richard Longstreth, and Richard Neutra's son Dion, helped to spread the word about the plight of Neutra's building. Letters supporting the cause came in from around the world from notable architects such as Robert A.M. Stern and Frank Gehry. Terence Riley, then chief curator of architecture at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, characterized the demolition "as a disturbing distortion of twentieth century history." AIA Gold Medalist Arthur Erickson argued that Neutra's Cyclorama and other important buildings of America's recent past deserved better from us. "Age is of little consequence to significance," he wrote. "Must the National Park Service, having been lauded for their wisdom in choosing a distinguished architect for a respected seminal monument now renege on that promising direction to follow old paths of mediocrity?"<sup>9</sup>

Our preservation efforts – disparaged by Park Service officials as special interest lobbying – received favorable media coverage in U.S. News & World Report and professional magazines such as *Architecture* and *Architectural Record*. *Landscape Architecture* published a compelling piece by historian John Beardsley, who defended Neutra's "eloquent exercise in historical interpretation" and praised the Center as "an unusually effective combination of architecture and landscape." In 2000, the Society of Architectural Historians nominated the building as a National Historic Landmark, the highest status available for important American buildings. The nomination was twice approved by a committee of experts. Yet a Park Service advisory board refused to forward it to the Secretary of the Interior for final approval, thus effectively denying our efforts to win clemency for the building.<sup>10</sup>

Although we have received more than 1,500 letters from the public, including DOCOMOMO and

its many members, in support of preservation, our efforts have not yet generated enough interest in the building to save it. In the process, I realized that we – historians, preservationists, interpreters, caretakers – have failed to bridge the gap between our academic understanding of this modern design and the public perception of its place in American history. Where I saw a creative and compelling mid-twentieth century contribution to a century-old commemorative landscape, others saw a foreign intruder brought to the heart of Civil War territory by a misguided Modernist. For years official reckonings of the building marginalized its importance, relying on a standardized interpretation of modern architecture as a European import rather than exploring the national and regional significance of this building on this site. An entire generation of the park-going public was never exposed to the commemorative intentions of the design, the modern architectural legacy of Pennsylvania, or the significance of Civil War centennial building campaigns at Gettysburg. Historic preservation by definition focuses on saving structures that, in the words of the Park Service, "invoke America's collective past." If we do not present modern buildings as an integral part of the American architectural lineage, how can we expect the public to embrace our case for preservation?<sup>11</sup>

The existence of a uniquely American variant of Modernism has long been recognized by architectural historians but rarely exploited by preservationists. In 1940 Dartmouth College Professor of Art Hugh Morrison pronounced the "self-conscious" International Style as "essentially un-American" in its character, with no room for adaptation to our varied topographies and climates, much less a proven ability to address "the American tradition in architecture." He predicted that "our future American architecture will be one of regional Modernisms," and referred to the already strong tradition of "California Modern" with similar trends in the South, Pennsylvania, New England, and the Atlantic Seaboard. Indeed, Neutra himself was a leader in the development of an American regional Modernist vocabulary. His late career works, often dismissed as inconsistent, represent an increasing appreciation for the interrelationship between

environmental contexts and modern design. The diverse terrain covered by the nationwide Mission 66 program provided Neutra with a wide canvas on which to explore variations in the Modernist idiom. A simple comparison between Neutra and Alexander's spare, inward facing Petrified Forest National Park visitor center in Arizona and the monumental Cyclorama Center, vividly illustrates the rich architectural vocabulary available to American Modernists at mid-century.<sup>12</sup>

My forthcoming study of Mission 66 visitor centers will make this case more definitively by highlighting the regional variations within a singular federal building program. Each building takes its design cues from the park's cultural history, natural environment, or native building traditions, displaying an approach similar to the philosophy of the Park Service architectural programs of the 1930's. In 1970, the American Institute of Architects honored Mission 66 and the Park Service for the innovative development of modern facilities "in harmony with the architectural theme" of America's national parks. Neutra, and other architects of the period, resisted the wholesale application of formulaic principles and instead pursued the freedom to experiment with materials, techniques, and forms. As a result, each building evokes the distinctive characteristics of its site and becomes a unique contributor to the history of the American architectural landscape.<sup>13</sup>

Preserving structures from the recent past is the latest, and perhaps one of the most contentious, frontiers in our field. Unfortunately, Modernism is often the loser in the public relations of historic preservation. Popular texts and documentaries of today almost universally paint modern architecture as an offshoot of early twentieth century European works by seminal architects such as Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe in order to provide a quick and simple context for their readers. The unwelcome result of this historiographical shorthand is an erosion of understanding about the development and maturation of Modernism over the last fifty years, particularly by architects working in the U.S. Subjective aesthetic arguments guide most

preliminary evaluations of a modern building's significance. Those buildings that do not appear consistent with a community's favored "look" or image of itself are marginalized, their historic context ignored, and their architects' motives questioned.

Modernism is at risk today for the very features that made it popular decades ago. The progressive, stand-alone attitude, the quirky use of materials, and the experimental methods – once celebrated as emblems of American innovation and leadership -- are now viewed as subversive of our national architectural traditions and cultural heritage. Yet, twentieth century Modernism is no more un-American than Jefferson's nineteenth century variations on neo-classical themes. My approach for "nationalizing" Modernism, therefore, centers on changing the public perception of American architecture and its origins. If we are to succeed in preserving the architectural record of our nation's recent past we must lead in the reclamation and celebration of Modernism as an integral part of America's diverse architectural legacy.

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## Polarization

*Polarization* in the strictest sense refers to the effect of the Cold War, which divided the world into two opposing camps. From that situation emerged concepts specific to this time period, such as nuclear threat and anxiety about it, strategic gains, containment, and the First, Second, and Third Worlds. The invention of architectural and planning policies, ideologies, and programs associated with one or the other of the two poles of the postwar world, and the creation of technologies, aesthetics and ideologies of Modernism by one pole as a specific response to the other pole (e.g. the search for a democratic monumentality) are topics taken up by authors of this group of papers.

*Polarization* resulted in dramatically different strategies of preservation choices. Particularly salient here are the writing of a certain kind of history to serve preservation needs; the shifting preservation policies of post-war Communist regimes; and the differences in the distribution of state resources for the education of preservation professionals in West and East and for the development of conservation techniques and technologies. Also relevant here is the much-discussed problem of the preservation of Cold War military installations.

Three papers in the session investigate the architectural and planning policies and related ideologies of particular poles of the postwar world, identify previously unsuspected points of reference to the opposing pole and argue for their preservation. Jeffrey Cody's pointed confrontation of the geopolitical dyad of postwar capitalist Hong Kong and nearby socialist Guangzhou reveals, in addition to the expected differences, surprising analogies between their respective reactions to opposing postwar global economic and architectural currents, and to the chances of preserving this "fading architecture of progress." Lars Scharnholtz shows how in Stalinstadt—a

model socialist city created ex novo by the German Democratic Republic in the immediate postwar period—an unavowed dialogue with the city planning ideals of CIAM produced housing which, far from being regressive (as is usually thought), realized CIAM's ideal of Modern housing that supported a "good quality of life." Metalkova-Markova proposes that Bulgarian architects' use in their designs for the innumerable buildings commissioned by the government of a "Modernism" that disguised its adherence to values of the officially taboo Western formalist Modernism—including the notions of "form following function" and the "synthesis of the arts"—enabled them, paradoxically, to implement the ideals of the Modern Movement on a national scale which had few parallels elsewhere. While Cody and Metalkova-Markova conclude by raising the alarm about the imperiled state of buildings now associated with fading or despised forms of progress, Scharnholtz records a case where postwar architecture is appreciated and preserved.

Four authors of the papers took up the Call for Papers' theme of the creation of technologies, aesthetics and ideologies of Modernism by one pole as a specific response to the other. For Brazil, the team of Sonia Marques and Guilah Naslavsky and, for Roumania, Carmen Popescu examine the more insidious role of the great capitalist/communist polarities concerning, respectively, professional relations, regional identities, and architectural ideologies as well as architectural discourse and historiography. Alta Steenkamp valuably reminded us of the existence of other polarizations, specifically, the institutionalized racism of South African apartheid. All the authors' deftly incorporate the work of contemporary philosophers and social theorists. Marques and Naslavsky explain that the postwar recuperation of the polarized ideologies for Modernist architectural objectives that seemed to serve personal ends were in fact derived from positions in a field of cultural production, as



*Eisenhüttenstadt 2005, buildings of the 1950s, put under monument protection as early as the 1980s.  
(Photo: Lorenz Kienzle).*

theorized by Pierre Bourdieu; Steenkamp turns to Michel Foucault to comprehend how Modernist architectural ideology for state policies could come to spatialize racial division; and Popescu uses Hannah Arendt to account for the delegitimization of Modernist ideology, aesthetics, technologies and the national history of interwar Roumania's successful embrace of Modernism.

## Fading Architecture of Progress: modernizing Hong Kong and 'liberated' China, 1945-1966

Jeffrey W. Cody

*Using Hong Kong and Guangzhou as stimulating case studies of post-World War II architectural development, this paper argues for clearer articulations of significance about salient examples of that architecture. Significance is intimately linked to preservation, as is the need for more creative financial incentives, more energetic public outreach, and the application of more refined standards in determining what should be preserved, why and how. The paper draws distinctions between the two case studies, analyzing what was unique about Hong Kong's capitalistic development boom after 1945 and Guangzhou's urban shifts under socialism after 1949, but the paper also suggests that the two cities also were influenced by global trends in architecture after mid-century. Hong Kong experienced the internationalization of modernism as a vehicle for capitalistic development, whereas Guangzhou was influenced by socialistic assumptions in architectural form and space. In the early twenty-first century, both cities are developing feverishly and they both face large and acute preservation challenges. The paper calls for greater research at both the micro and macro level, so that the significance of earlier architecture can be better understood, and so that therefore the preservation of that architecture can be more safeguarded.*

In a 1977 Hong Kong film ('The Mighty Peking Man'), a giant ape tore through city neighborhoods.<sup>1</sup> Now the human property developer has replaced the 'mighty Peking man' as city marauder. In Guangzhou recent property development has eradicated much of the city's built heritage. Hong Kong and Guangzhou are

now increasingly linked by Chinese economic imperatives. Urban architecture of the 1945 – 1975 period reflects social ideals associated with differing notions of progress, Hong Kong rebounding as a capitalistic 'free market' (and an 'un-free' British colony), and Guangzhou becoming transformed under the People's Republic. The cities are two poles in a globalizing current of post-World War II architectural activity. This paper scrutinizes the 'fading' architecture pertaining to these alternative notions of progress. By linking architecture to globalizing capitalist and socialist markets, salient examples can be better understood and preserved.

### Hong Kong's 'Modern Architecture,' 1945-1975

After World War II Hong Kong recovered socially, economically, and architecturally,<sup>2</sup> as exemplified, in the architectural realm, by:

- (a) housing programs;
- (b) other kinds of civic institutional buildings;  
and
- (c) privately financed office towers, hotels,  
factories and 'tenement blocks.'

Thus, many of Hong Kong's architectural clients became unwitting agents associated with the internationalization of 'Modern' architecture.<sup>3</sup> At times there was an architectural connection to foreign precedents.<sup>4</sup> However, Hong Kong witnessed a hybridizing of colonial and modernist ideals. Many buildings of the 1945 – 1975 period were artifacts of rebounding investments, globalizing exports, and colonial consolidation. Political institutions worked hand in glove with commercial investors.

Part of the context for these shifts concerned city planning. 'Town planning policy towards development' had been instituted by 1946, and because of wartime destruction 'the housing problem, in particular, was acute.'<sup>5</sup> In 1947 the UK town planner Sir Patrick Abercrombie was engaged to advise the colonial government, which by 1951 had established a Town Planning Board.<sup>6</sup> The creation of the People's Republic led to a flood of refugees; the population rose from 1 million in 1946 to 2 million in

1951, and squatter areas sprang up, mostly in the urban periphery.<sup>7</sup> In 1951 the Hong Kong Housing Society was created to provide better housing for middle-class families. The worsening housing situation came to a tragic climax in 1953 after a fire



*Public housing structure erected by the Hong Kong Government in the late-1950s, in response to a fire in 1953 that devastated illegal housing structures and compelled the Government to begin to provide public housing for some Hong Kong residents.*

in Shek Kip Mei left over 50,000 people homeless. This compelled the colonial government to create a Housing Authority and to finance 'resettlement estates,' using as precedents military barracks erected throughout the British Empire.<sup>8</sup>

'The earliest type of accommodation consisted of six- and seven-story H-shape (Mark I) blocks, with communal washing and toilet facilities'.<sup>9</sup> By the mid-1950s, when these blocks proliferated, the government also amended the 1935 Building Ordinance to permit higher densities, which encouraged investors to build housing estates. New typologies arose: H-blocks, cruciform towers, and Y-blocks. By the early 1970s Hong Kong was erecting high-rise buildings that literally 'concretized' some of the housing ideals of the Modern Movement.

Although these housing towers are artifacts of Hong Kong's social evolution, the government has done little to protect them. In the early 1990s the Housing Authority's Director suggested salvaging some units from the 1950s to create a public housing museum, but his recommendations were overruled.<sup>10</sup> The government also has not preserved any squatter homes, temporary housing units, or Mark I-VI housing blocks.<sup>11</sup>

A different type of Modernist-derived construction that signaled recovery concerned other kinds of civic architecture. For example, the City Hall (1962) was conceived as a tripartite scheme of a 'High Block' (12 stories) consisting of 'small [office] spaces in a modular architectural expression,' a lower-rise slab, and a garden between the two.<sup>12</sup> Other contemporary, publicly financed structures show how pervasively architects in the Public Works Department increasingly adopted architectural vocabularies associated with European Modernism. One expression of those vocabularies was the brise-soleil, inspired not only by Le Corbusier, but also by other architects who designed in tropical contexts. Two other expressions were the prevalent use of the concrete frame and a preference for sleek lines and unadorned surfaces. Exemplifying these tendencies are the Prince of Wales Building, the Murray Building, the Central Government Office Building, and the former Kai Tak airport terminal.<sup>13</sup>

In 2001 the City Hall faced demolition because it stood in the path of a new road (D6). However, after a public outcry the Planning

Department asserted that “the community is increasingly aware of [the] preservation of buildings and there’s the opinion that buildings built in the 20th century with historical value such as City Hall should be retained.” Thus, the road was re-routed and City Hall was ‘saved’.<sup>14</sup> Other structures from the early twentieth century, such as the Wanchai Market (1937), are also facing difficult battles in the face of property development pressure.<sup>15</sup> With no historic district legislation, Hong Kong’s tools for preservation are largely restricted to landmarking historic ‘monuments.’ Although there have been some recent hopeful changes (e.g., a government-sponsored Review of Built Heritage Conservation Policy in spring 2004), their implications remain unclear.

The third domain of architectural activity that reflects Hong Kong’s post-war economic progress concerns commercial structures. These include high-rise office buildings (e.g., the ‘old’



*Multi-story and multi-functional structures such as this, dating from the early 1960s, were constructed in Hong Kong by private entrepreneurs, maximizing floor-area ratio on expensive land.*

Bank of China Building, 1953, and the Hopewell Centre, 1963) and hotels (e.g., the Hilton, 1962, demolished, and the Mandarin Oriental, 1963). Other testimonials to capitalistic ‘progress’ were related to changes in Hong Kong’s building regulations (1955), which permitted ‘a much higher intensity of land use [which] resulted in a moderate surge of development,’ as well as in distinctive building types called ‘flatted factories’ or ‘tenement blocks’.<sup>16</sup> Mixed-use blocks at Ba Man, Yaumatei (ca. 1960), and Chungking Mansions (1964) were even more ‘megalithic.’<sup>17</sup> By the early 1960s planners began to downscale development. Between 1955 and 1965, therefore, ‘the urban form of Hong Kong underwent a transformation: high-rise buildings of 20 stories and more became the dominant characteristic of a city that, prior to 1956, was typified by four and five-story buildings.’<sup>18</sup>

It has been a very daunting challenge to preserve examples of this architecture. In 2003 the government announced a ‘planning vision and strategy’ for ‘Hong Kong 2030,’ part of which concerned the ‘more sustainable use of [obsolete] industrial buildings.’<sup>19</sup> In the late 1970s, as Hong Kong’s manufacturing base declined, the survival of many industrial buildings was placed in doubt. A surplus of manufacturing space led many critics to urge more creative redevelopment. However, property developers have still not been sufficiently enticed to adaptively reuse these large complexes, and thus much of this architecture is threatened.<sup>20</sup>

### **Guangzhou’s ‘Liberated’ Architecture, 1949-1976**

Guangzhou’s situation offers both a contrast to and a synergy with Hong Kong in terms of current economic realities and preservation attitudes about the architecture of the 1945--1975 period. The ‘liberation’ of China brought cataclysmic shifts to urban China, one of the most important of which was that Chinese cities came to be regarded as places for socialist production rather than for capitalist consumption.<sup>21</sup> This also implied a siphoning off of revenues from previously capitalist cities for

socialist re-distribution. Architectural 'progress' in the new state was not gauged in terms of urban building activity, but rather in terms of buildings that reflected socialist ideals.

One example of this shift concerned housing.<sup>22</sup> Whereas Hong Kong's colonial government imported solutions from both Europe and British imperial dominions, China's socialist leaders first turned to the Soviet Union for inspiration and guidance. This burgeoning friendship developed as Soviet influence expanded worldwide during the Cold War. Architecturally, Soviet guidance came in the form of 'an industrialized building system that emphasized construction speed, low cost and labor savings . . . . Basic features were design standardization, mass production and systematic construction. . . . In general, housing units took the form of three or more stories of walk-up apartments constructed in concrete and masonry as rectilinear blocks, with access along the length of the block to each group of apartments.'<sup>23</sup> In early twenty-first century Guangzhou, although no large clusters of this 1950s housing exist, some remnants survive near Renmin Road.



*Entrance to Guangzhou's wenhua gongyuan (culture park), constructed in the 1950s as a public recreational and meeting space in the center of the city.*

A second measure of socialist architectural innovation concerned large-scale exhibition halls and other spaces for mass gatherings. Cities like Beijing and Shanghai erected such places in prominent locations in their centers in direct imitation of the Soviet prototypes. This was not the case in Guangzhou, however.<sup>24</sup> Instead, in 1953 the Guangzhou authorities designed a 'Cultural Park' [wenhua gongyuan] just north of the former 'concession area' [zujie] of Shamian Island, which had been used by capitalist traders for decades. The 'Cultural Park' functioned as a place for the exhibition of socialist activities as well as an inner-city park for exercise and mass meetings. Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, and other leaders praised its ideals, forms, and spaces.<sup>25</sup> Another public venue that has survived is the 'Friendship Hall' [youyi biaoyuan] designed in the early 1960s north of the city center, which at one time was used for theater, film, and dance performances.

However, few other architectural artifacts attesting to Guangzhou's early socialist period have survived. One of the most unusual is the 'Overseas Chinese Village' [huaqiao xincun], a series of approximately forty low-rise villas along winding, shady streets. Soon after 1949 Guangzhou enticed several overseas Chinese to move back to the 'motherland.' The government planned a neighborhood in which overseas Chinese could live together. More recently the government has protected this discrete cluster of residences from development pressures; now many are being adaptively reused as offices, restaurants, and nightclubs.

If this 'village' has been preserved, why not preserve other remnants of the early socialist period? One of Guangzhou's chief planners has explained that there are five ways in which the Guangzhou municipality normally preserves its architectural heritage:<sup>26</sup>

- (1) under the aegis of a 'historic preservation unit' [wenwu baohu danwei] charged with the mission of protecting significant, historic heritage;
- (2) as a monument of 'new China' (i.e., post-1949);
- (3) as a historic landscape [yi pian];
- (4) as emblematic of traditional Chinese architecture [chuantong minzhu]; or
- (5) as part of a specially designated historic zone [lishi wenhua jiequ].

Although there are some cases concerning architecture of the 1949-1976 period where the government has exercised either option 2 or option 3, the more vernacular architecture of this period is harder to preserve.<sup>27</sup> In part this is because specific 'zones' of early socialist architecture do not exist within Guangzhou's city limits. Furthermore, there is no consensus about which examples of this architecture might 'represent' Guangzhou's early socialist experience.<sup>28</sup> This problem is especially thorny because no comprehensive survey exists of the city's architecture from the 1949-1976 period.

In this regard, Guangzhou is not unlike many other major Chinese municipalities, which largely leave the issue of how to preserve early socialist architecture to the vagaries of political power, the marketplace, whimsy, or a combination of the three. Probably the most high-profile example of how early socialist architecture can be both associated with Maoist values and 'preserved' for nostalgic reasons is the '798' electronic components factory in Beijing, which some Chinese artists transformed in 2002 into an avant-garde art gallery.<sup>29</sup> However, the future of the '798' project is far from certain, as are the survival prospects of other significant works from the 1950s in Beijing,<sup>30</sup> especially as the construction hubris related to the 2008 Olympic Games gains momentum. In a somewhat similar entrepreneurial vein, Shanghai's Xintiandi project incorporates the historic site of the first meeting of the Chinese Communist Party (1921). The Hong Kong-based developer of this vanguard project has now developed offshoot ventures in both Hangzhou (Zhejiang) and Chongqing (Sichuan).

In the Guangdong context, isolated and *ad hoc* examples of Maoist-related architecture survive, but not because of any coherent consensus validating them as historically significant remnants of an era which has now morphed into early-21st century Chinese style socialistic capitalism.

### **Conclusions: fading architecture in search of protection**

My analysis of the 'fading architecture of progress' in Hong Kong and Guangzhou suggests a need for creative financial incentives, more in-depth field research and articulations of significance, more energetic public outreach, and the application of clear standards. Otherwise, this 'fading architecture' will become 'deceased.' In the context of booming urbanization, achieving this multidimensional focus is even more of a challenge than it would be in less turbulent cities. However, China has begun to institute preservation planning mechanisms to meet that challenge, one of the most important being the Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China, ratified by China ICOMOS in 2000.<sup>31</sup> Complementing these Principles should be a richer, more internationally based understanding of imperiled historic architecture in Hong Kong and Guangzhou.

This paper has sought to establish some of the bases for that understanding. In the Hong Kong case, I have demonstrated critical links to imperial and capitalistic enterprises. The importation of forms and conceptual prototypes was modulated by local building regulations, priorities, and physical contexts. Therefore, one of the lessons suggested by Hong Kong is that although the import/export of architectural ideals was pervasive and fundamental, the distinctiveness of local variants was equally prevalent.<sup>32</sup>

In Guangzhou, early socialist architecture should be seen not only in the domestic context of Beijing's centralized authority, but also in the international nexus of Moscow's influence, particularly in the 1950s, when Stalin and Mao

shared a special friendship. The Guangzhou examples in the 'Overseas Chinese Village' suggest an even more fertile international exchange due to the comings and goings of overseas Chinese entrepreneurs who had made their fortunes before returning to a socialist Guangzhou after 'liberation.'

In both cases, the multiple threads of influence clarify and distinguish the global reach of architectural construction in the thirty years after World War II. The Hong Kong - Guangzhou dyad offers many salient examples that attest to that global reach. The histories and significance of those examples have been largely ignored, and their eradication is all-too-easily accomplished. Hong Kong and Guangzhou, then, are fruitful case studies suggesting that historical analysis can provide a fuller, more meaningful measure of contextual significance. As Chinese cities continue to develop at a feverish pace, it is imperative that those who make decisions about the architectural heritage of those cities survey that heritage more thoughtfully, assess its values more carefully, and plan for architectural conservation more creatively. Without more careful stewardship, the built heritage of the 1945 – 1975 period will likely vanish.

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*All illustrations courtesy of the author.*



## The Stalinstadt Experiment: East Germany, 1950-1961

Lars Scharnholz

*A study of the leading satellite town developed in East Germany addresses the historiographical need for greater documentation of this little-studied architecture and highlights the special challenges for preservation and re-invigoration of this important Socialist urban legacy. This study argues for a type of historical research related to practice as well as research and the specific preservation measures for one of the most important new categories of architectural conception in post-War Eastern Europe.*

*From its inception in 1950, Stalinstadt was considered a model of the new socialist city for the German Democratic Republic. While the architectural design meets the idea of neo-classical monumentality of postwar Stalinist art, the functional building typology, the rational urban layout and the construction technology reflect the socialist approach of modern architecture as a response to working class needs.*

*Today, after the radical changes brought on by the reunification of Germany in the early 1990s, Eisenhüttenstadt, as Stalinstadt was renamed in 1961, lost its economic base and became a shrinking city in the peripheral German-Polish border region. Since reunification the city has lost almost 50% of its former population.*

*Nonetheless, the urban and architectural qualities of the Stalinstadt experiment have been recently rediscovered. As early as mid-1984 the central housing area of Eisenhüttenstadt was listed as a national historic place. In 1995 preservation work began on the first 2,000 flats built in the early years of Stalinstadt—including new roofs, wooden windows and doors plus the repair and repainting of the façades.*

The postwar planning of Stalinstadt marks in an impressive way the socio-political establishment of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and thereby the early search for a socialist architecture. The planning and design capabilities of the new socialist society were to be demonstrated with this exemplary endeavor. Long perceived as regressive, the city planning of this era not only provided modern housing and a good quality of life but also an interesting response to ideas articulated by the International Congress of Modern Architecture (CIAM) during the interwar period.

The center of Stalinstadt remains remarkably intact. (Figure 1 and Figure 1a) Although the factory and the bleak, modular projects on the outskirts are being remodeled, the mid-century core of the city seems to stand its ground and to reflect a resilient planning and design concept (despite the ongoing economic crisis). A gentle mixture of Modernist principles and bourgeois longing has encouraged governmental and private conservation efforts since the end of the 1990s. The original programmatic, urban-planning considerations behind Stalinstadt—to create a Garden City-like structure with solid residential blocks and generous,



Figure 1: Eisenhüttenstadt 2005, buildings of the 1950s, put under monument protection as early as in the 1980s. (Photo: Lorenz Kienzle).



*Figure 1a: Eisenhüttenstadt 2005, buildings of the 1950s, put under monument protection as early as the 1980's. (Photo: Lorenz Kienzle).*

green courtyards—are now recognized as a good model for the future.

### **Planning Before 1945 and the Situation in 1950**

Following Germany's division after World War II, the East lost its connection to the steel industry on the Ruhr and Saar Rivers; and it became clear that such a connection was essential for economic development. When the GDR was founded in October 1949, it was effectively cut off from iron and steel production. The rapid installation of a competitive steel industry with adequate iron ore and coal imports from the Soviet Union and Poland thus became a vitally important task of the young state. Consequently, as part of the first five-year-plan, the decision was made to establish an iron industry at the mouth of the Oder-Spree canal in the midst of a cultural landscape shaped by forests and agriculture.

The initial planning for the construction of a group of industries south of the city of Frankfurt-on-the-Oder dates to the Nazi era. As early as the late 1930s a chemical plant was planned for this location and land was acquired for it. Accelerated by the relocation of munitions factories evacuated

from other areas and the development of the regional brown coal and energy industry, numerous industrial buildings were constructed. After World War II the architectural structures were disassembled or demolished under the supervision of the Soviet military administration.<sup>1</sup> The location, however, was retained as a potential site for industries and settlement areas.

At the beginning of the 1950s, plans for developing the site became more precise. The goal was to develop a complete city along with its factory zone. Based on an idealized notion of the spatial connection between work and life, the plan designated the factory and residential settlement as two separate areas, related to one another through a linear structure. With this ambitious project, the young Berlin GDR government emphasized the cooperation between the socialist partner countries in the East and signaled a new economic and political beginning. Immediately after Stalin's death in 1953, the leadership of the ruling SED party decided to name the ambitious project "Stalinstadt." Despite the shortages of the postwar era, the intention was to make Stalinstadt a showcase of early GDR socialism. Loftily described as the "first socialist city," Stalinstadt was hailed as a model project.

### **City Planning and Architecture**

An essential idea in the planning of Stalinstadt was the connection of the working and living spaces through generously laid out streets. Designed to be an ideal city for 30,000 inhabitants, it is structured clearly and symmetrically, with a fan-shaped ground plan opening towards the southern landscape. (Figure 2) The factory is the focal point of the city. Although in 1953 an attempt was made, in the form of a competition, to modify the relation of living space and factory through a more monumental design by creating a major thoroughfare and central spaces, the endeavor was never realized. An oversized factory gate as point de vue and gesture between working and living spaces was given up. Thus the view remained undisturbed between the



Figure 2: "Perspektive der Wohnstadt beim Eisenhüttenkombinat Ost (Fürstenberg)", urban design of Stalinstadt, spring 1952. (Deutsche Architektur).

factory premises and the apartment buildings, from which one can see the silhouettes of the blast furnaces to this day.

The principle of the apartment complex was developed as a model to create a separation and privacy away from the beginning construction of Stalinstadt. With the first apartment complex, the goal was to enclose the outer edge of the block by four-story apartment buildings in a pedestrian-friendly fashion and to restrict traffic to a minimum in the inner courtyard. The inner courtyard, reached through entry gates from the main street, was perceived as a generous public space. The major streets were equipped with shopping arcades and designed following a classical model.

In the context of the increasing rationalization and economic optimization of building activities, the enclosed living quarters were increasingly opened up and extended out through the construction of additional buildings in the inner courtyards, resulting in greater density. Initial ideas about the treatment of the main street were also quickly abandoned. Originally, numerous social buildings or cultural centers were planned along Leninallee, which served as the connection between the living areas and factory; however, only a few were realized.

By 1958, only one movie theatre and one cultural center, modeled after 19th-century neo-classical theatres, along with the "House of the Parties and Mass Organizations," had been constructed.

Overall, the architecture and the urban planning of Stalinstadt is difficult to place within the architectural history of the twentieth-century. The obvious yet one-sided reference to the neo-classical, monumental architecture of the Soviet Union in the Stalinist period seems insufficient. Even if the architectural design and the formal urban planning solutions give few indications of it, Stalinstadt, based as it is on the "sixteen principles of urban planning," leans noticeably towards the ideals of the International Congress of Modern Architecture (CIAM). The concept contrasts very clearly with the dispersed and unorganized cities built in the West in those years, when it was assumed that the automobile should play a central role in city planning and when the emphasis was on the primacy of private property.

### The Architect

In the quest for the fundamental design concept of Stalinstadt, the city's architect, Kurt Leucht, played an essential role. In 1934, Leucht worked in the Berlin office of Erich Mendelsohn, which was taken over by Ernst Sagebiel after Mendelsohn's emigration to Great Britain. As a young architect Leucht participated in the planning of the Nazi Air Force Ministry and the project "City of the Hermann Göring Industries Salzgitter." As early as 1945 Leucht became a member of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) and developed plans for the rebuilding of Dresden. In 1952 he wrote,

The concern for human beings, the political life and the national consciousness of the people are the basic humanist ideas of socialist urban planning, and these ideas must find their expression in the artistic concept of the first socialist city of the German Democratic Republic. The goal is to fulfill the complex individual demands of the working people and to bring these demands into harmony with the requirements of society. The unity

of the material and spiritual culture should attain its greatest fruition in the plan of the new city and its architecture.<sup>2</sup>

To realize the plan quickly and effectively, Leucht was given control over the budget, thereby avoiding significant bureaucratic hindrances. Thus, the architect could pursue the plan without tedious coordination and negotiation.

### **The End of Stalin**

At the end of the 1950s, preparation began for the expansion of Stalinstadt. Instead of the original 30,000 inhabitants, the city was now to accommodate 50,000. In addition, the urban configuration changed. The original principle of edge-of-the-block construction placing the three- to four-story apartment buildings at the perimeter was abandoned in favor of rows of more widely spaced large-scale apartment blocks. The goals were, on the one hand, to increase the density of apartments in light of the demographic and economic conditions and, on the other, to break with the previous urban concept of a “national building tradition.” This policy change occurred within the immediate context of Moscow’s changing politics and the evolution of production methods for industrial building. In 1960, following Nikita Khrushchev’s 1954 exhortation “to build better, cheaper and faster,” Kurt Liebknecht criticized the initial design criteria of Stalinstadt as reactionary and laid the foundation for the turn towards industrial building:

The new scale of these living areas will be visible in a major building project, which will lead to a generous formation of space. It has to be said, however, that many examples show how the predominant use of edge-of-the-block construction in this period has led to isolated yards and to a spatial and architectural contradiction between street and yard space, which is not able to express entirely the new element of the relation of the people to socialist life.

### **Change of Direction in 1960**

Beginning in the 1960s, the construction of apartments was determined by the need to employ economical production processes and functional design concepts. This development was not free of influence from Moscow. Whereas the early configuration of Stalinstadt was affected decisively by Soviet urban planning doctrine of the 1950s, the “big brother” model was also followed in the 1960s. Thus, Khrushchev’s considerable change of direction was reflected clearly in the urban planning of the GDR. The premises of economic pragmatism led increasingly to the development of a technical-functional direction in apartment building. Economic necessity, coupled with the political wish to displace the past, defined the future of the built utopia that once was Stalinstadt.

The new design and planning attitude can be recognized in Stalinstadt. In 1958 a competition was announced for the extension of Leninallee with the goal of increasing the density of living space along the avenue through residential towers. One-story pavilions closed the spaces in between the apartment towers along the edges of the site. The project was realized in 1962 and is regarded as one of the GDR’s most significant contributions to postwar Modernism. Aside from the apartment buildings on Leninallee, the new buildings of the department store “Magnet” and the hotel “Lunik”—both built around 1960—mark a turn towards modern architecture modeled after the architecture of the West.

### **Political Change**

The further development of Stalinstadt (called Eisenhüttenstadt since 1961) was shaped primarily by the expansion of industry. At the end of the 1970s, the political leadership in Berlin decided to expand Iron Industries East (EKO). In the 1980s, an Austrian industrial building company planned, first, the converter-steel mill and, then, the rolling mill.

The political change and then German reunification resulted in the unexpected end of the city's development. In the early 1990s, it quickly became evident that political changes had led to radical new conditions for the former Stalinstadt. Whereas the plans of the 1950s were conceived as a direct response to the country's economic isolation from the West, the city's industry found itself in an enormously competitive situation within the united Europe of the 1990s. The consequence was a catastrophic structural economic collapse. The privatization of EKO Stahl AG in 1994 and the construction of a new rolling mill led to a gradual stabilization of the situation.

### **Shrinkage and Peripheral Industrial Areas**

Following a short economic upturn, the former East Germany has undergone a continuing economic crisis since the mid-1990s. A decrease in jobs, downward demographic trends, and an evident skepticism toward investment are the determinants of current developments. As a



*Figure 3: Eisenhüttenstadt 2005, modern city extensions of the 1960s to 1980's. (Photo: Lorenz Kienzle).*

result, since the end of the 1990s many housing developments are being dismantled. This is certainly true for Eisenhüttenstadt, where today every fifth apartment is uninhabited. The high vacancy rate is concentrated in the living quarters that were built using a modular structural system. (Figure 3)

Urban planning priorities are affected by the distribution of vacancies in Eisenhüttenstadt. While the modern city extensions of the 1960s to the 1980s are being dismantled on a large scale, the early architectural projects of the 1950s, legally protected as monuments as early as in the 1980s, clearly reflect current conservation perspectives. Thus, it is not the modern socialist city of modular buildings and its crane-railroad systems that is emerging as a qualitative contribution of GDR architecture but rather the early buildings of the postwar period.

Correspondingly, recent efforts of the State of Brandenburg and its Department for the Protection of Monuments are concentrated on the apartment buildings of the 1950s. In recent years about \$100,000,000 has been spent on conservation and modernization measures for the houses of the former Stalinstadt, and the original urban ensemble has been largely restored.

Notes

1. Axel Drieschner and Barbara Schulz, "Denkmal oder Altlast?, Eine Kraftwerksruine in Eisenhüttenstadt erzählt von Rüstungswirtschaft Zwangsarbeit und Krieg", *k* 2/2002, <http://www.kunsttexte.de/download/denk/drieschner.PDF>, S. 1-2
2. Kurt Leucht, "Die sozialistische Stadt des Eisenhüttenkombinates Ost," in: *Deutsche Architektur*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Berlin: Deutsche Bauakademie, 1952) p. 102.

## Another Kind of Modernism- Trends in Postwar Architectural Ideology and Practice in Socialist Bulgaria 1944—1989

Milena Metalkova-Markova

*After its defeat in World War II, Bulgaria joined the socialist conglomerate led by the former Soviet Union. The People's Republic declared in 1947 envisioned a "socialist model" of development for the next forty-five years. This drastic change from a capitalist to a socialist socio-economic model brought significant changes—as private businesses became forbidden all architecture during that period was designed by a dozen large scale state companies, following directives of the leading communist party. Marxist-Leninist aesthetic clichés ("Architecture - national in form and socialist in content") became determinant for all architectural creations.*

*Three trends of postwar architecture in socialist Bulgaria are analyzed: modern vernacular, monumental and ordinary. The socialist model of state monopoly/ isolation from the capitalist world had a positive impact in terms of public space design at urban centers (Smolyan, Plovdiv) and conservation of whole villages/ towns (Zheravna, Koprivshitzza). On the other hand it brought the creation of public housing 'ghettos'. The elimination of all private enterprise transformed streets into desert-like monotonous townscapes all over the country.*

*In present Bulgaria people still associate socialist period architecture only with socialism (implying restriction of freedom/uniformity), thus some modern buildings of good quality are in danger to disappear. Although it is natural that people associate buildings with history, by destroying a building of good quality one cannot delete history, but only reinforce the process of urban amnesia/ cultural crisis, and such an endless repetition of similar mistakes affects the quality of our built environment.*

*We have lost many valuable buildings from the Ottoman period until gaining appreciation of architectural quality as independent from ideology. This time the process of recognition/ preservation will be not controlled by the state and the fate of socialist buildings will be a test for the actual state of our post-communist civil society.*

Despite Bulgaria's isolation from the West for nearly forty-five years (1944 – 1989), its postwar architectural ideology and practice reveal some rather remarkable parallelisms and points of contact with the principal ideas of CIAM and Le Corbusier. We might begin with the theoretical analysis of the Communist ideal, as explained in the annual publications of the University of Architecture and Civil Engineering,<sup>1</sup> where the following themes, shared by the Athens Charter, are to be read:

1. "Self-consciousness"<sup>2</sup> of architecture concerning its mission to express the spirit of the age;
2. Architecture's goal is to satisfy the material, spiritual and intellectual needs of contemporary life. (The goal of Communism is the holistic and harmonic development of human creative power and capabilities.);
3. Architects should pursue a scientific and global approach to the organization of the built environment;
4. Private interest must be subordinated to public interest;
5. Paralleling the dream of modern architecture's pioneers to satisfy the needs of every individual (CIAM), Communism's explicit goal is to foster the free development of the individual in order to make possible the free development of all society;
6. Rational methods of building: minimal housing is a priority for both CIAM and the Communist Party.

From a comparative perspective, it seems that the socialist model of development in Bulgaria can be considered an experiment on a national scale to implement some of the ideas of the Modern Movement. What were the design principles during

that period? How could Modern Movement aesthetics and rationales become an official state-sponsored style shaping cities and villages all over the country? How did the socialist state apparatus embrace the platform of the Modern Movement as its official model of architecture and city planning?

**Historical background and architectural trends before 1944**

We need to briefly review certain architectural developments before 1944. In 1876 Bulgaria became independent after nearly five-hundred years as a part of the Ottoman Empire. Isolated from the rest of Europe for so long, the country tried to catch up rapidly. European architects and artists came to rebuild Bulgaria's capital, its big cities and infrastructure.<sup>3</sup>

A building boom around the turn of the century saw an explosion of diverse stylistic expressions, ranging from Viennese Secession to neo-Baroque, Neo-gothic, Neo-Renaissance, Neo-Classicism, etc., sometimes combining elements from various sources. But by far the dominant style in prewar Bulgaria was national-romanticism; its advocates insisted that various forms from the country's rich architectural heritage should be revived in new buildings.

In the early 1930's Bulgarian architects and engineers educated in Europe brought home the ideas of the Modern Movement. Their enthusiasm for promoting the new spirit of the time with a radical change of architectural expression faced serious problems on account of the country's low economic level. New materials were lacking and the building industry had few qualified workers. Most clients were conservative and skeptical, and thus they imposed a severe pragmatism in building.<sup>4</sup>

The earthquake of 1928 led to the requirement to use ferro-concrete skeleton constructions, motivating the search for new paths in building design. Modern European ideas of better hygienic conditions (sunlight, ventilation,

and connection with nature) were discussed widely, and in the mid-1930's economic stability allowed Modernism to become a popular building practice.

Led by the Homeland Art Association (1919), a movement for 'native' art and architecture was promoted alongside the Modern Movement. In sum, three trends can be distinguished before the war: vernacularism (an interpretation of the country's Renaissance heritage), neo-romanticism, and Modernism. The Modernist style was better suited to buildings outside the scope of the state's rhetoric: apartment buildings and individual houses, hospitals, vacation homes, and some other facilities that were free from the burden of conveying a specific social message.

**Postwar period: socialist realism, historicism, and 'disguised modernism'**

After its defeat in World War II, Bulgaria - which had fought on the side of Germany, Italy and Japan - became part of the socialist bloc led by the former Soviet Union. The People's Republic, founded in 1947, envisioned the country developing on the "socialist model." This drastic move from a capitalist to a socialist socio-economic model brought significant changes at all levels; since private firms were not allowed to operate most architecture was designed by a dozen large-scale, state-owned companies. The ultimate goals were abolition of the hierarchy of labor, elimination of the differences between city and village, and abolishing the distinction between intellectual and physical labor.

Copied from the USSR, the doctrine of socialist realism was introduced in Bulgaria in the early 1950's; it was, however, short-lived. The main representative building complex was Largo in central Sofia (1951), originally housing the headquarters of the Communist Party, ministerial buildings, a department store and a projected assembly hall, and a one-hundred-meters-high Soviet hall, which was never built. This style of building was adamantly historicist, as we learn

from the analysis by architectural historian Elena Ivanova: "Historicism in a wide cultural perspective is a 'scientific' technique to create new mythologies and symbolism."<sup>5</sup> Its mission to construct identities is rather attractive, with its obvious legibility uniting past, present and future.

According to the doctrine of socialist realism, art works should not only depict socio-political problems of the age, but create the image of an ideal Communist world, thereby masking the gap between ideal and reality. Feasible in art and literature, this goal is rather difficult to implement in architecture, which cannot directly represent and propagate ideology.<sup>6</sup> The solution was found in a synthesis with other arts. Friezes, frescos and bas-reliefs proliferated so as to render the architecture understandable in terms of the Party's program. Emphasis on the total design of urban space was to remind citizens that there was but one politically correct message, namely that society was headed down the only correct path, i.e., toward Communism.

After Stalin's death, Soviet regulations were loosened, and Bulgarian architects returned to earlier ideas, leaving aside the poorly rooted and ephemeral pro-Stalinist style of architecture.

Architectural practice in a state-controlled economy imposed new rules. Architects were gathered in large offices, working with interior designers and artists on huge urban and architectural projects, and they could experiment with and fulfill new ideas about urban space without the constraints of market forces, client tastes, property questions, or budgetary limits. If a large project was to be built, the state would simply expropriate the necessary land from its owners. Architects had never before enjoyed such social status and such a welcoming outlet for their ideas; however, they had to gain the consent of Communist Party officials by proving the relevance of their design to the principal doctrines of Marxist-Leninism. Architects were given the lofty mission of creating a new type of socialist city to accommodate the "new socialist lifestyle."



*Figure 1: Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1970) strongly resembling Boston City Hall (1964—1969). (Courtesy of Marin Drinov publishing house, Sofia, 2000).*

The most influential architects were those on good terms with the ruling party, and their taste for Modernism defined the architectural style of the country. They had to convince the Party leadership that their architecture had nothing to do with the forbidden Western Modernism (the word was taboo), but relevant only to Communist ideas. The Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly resembles the Boston city hall of the 'imperialist' USA. The ministry's design was explained, however, in terms of a projecting upper portion of the building 'typical for our Renaissance architecture.' Thus 'imperialist' design became the prototype for a socialist administrative building 'residing over the new type of socialist lifestyle' (Figure 1), and many municipalities and museums were modeled after it for many years to come.

The individual professional preferences of the country's leading architects shaped a new national style of 'disguised modernism,' which could not officially be called Modernism, but instead had to be referred to by different labels such as functionalism, rationalism or realism. As a result, the often schizophrenic socialist architectural style of large public buildings seems to vacillate constantly as

a result of having to juggle monumentality, cultural heritage, historic myths and inventions, Modernist deviations, and copies of worldwide architectural trends. Once again, the most genuine and original architectural legacies can be found in buildings outside the reach of public propaganda and state rhetoric: in residential apartments, holiday villages and resorts, and culture-related facilities.

**“Chains” of cultural facilities: modern monumental versus modern vernacular**

In the late 1960's the Communist Party stressed the relationship between economic and cultural development. The stock of buildings devoted to culture was developed in parallel with the economic infrastructure. In order to improve people's welfare and cultural level, a nation-wide network of cultural facilities was to be created.<sup>7</sup> Architects will never again have this chance to design a whole 'chain' of 'cultural facilities' throughout the country. After 1956 a large cultural network was established, encompassing 61 theaters, 10 symphony orchestras, 99 galleries and exhibition halls, 76 museums, over 9000 libraries, and 4280 community centers.



Figure 2: Hotel Veliko Tarnovo, Golden Sand Resort, Black Sea, 1960. (Photo by Nikolai Trufeshev, 1975).

What architectural issues were priorities in their design? If we analyze the architectural design notes of 66 selected cultural facilities published by the Committee of Art and Culture,<sup>8</sup> we find several keywords: multi-functionality; organic connection with the environment (natural and cultural); monumentality; synthesis of all the arts; clear, functional organization (short communication lines and legible access lines); forms following functions; and clear geometrical shapes and simple details.

Multi-functionality of space meant a differentiation of various spaces that could be unified for larger audiences. Flexibility of space (as seen in the Bauhaus layout, Dessau) became an absolute value of architectural design, a kind of safe strategy to cope with any changes in the future use of buildings (usually designed for hypothetical users and based on supposedly “scientific” social prognoses). Large multifunctional foyers became a trademark of socialist period cultural design. While they were good exercises in non-commercial design



Figure 3: City Center of Smolyan: 1971—1984. (Photo by Peyo Berbenliev, 1985).

for architects, they often evoked the image of over-scaled, boring, stereotyped places in the eyes of their visitors

Organic connection with the environment (natural and cultural) implied a harmony between the newly built structure and its natural and built environment. The avoidance of mammoth rectangular buildings in favor of buildings with more complex, geometrically segmented shapes would, it was believed, bring “appropriate human scale [and continue] national building traditions.” The repetition of small, protruding facade elements (variations of the *erker* bay window of the Renaissance house), horizontally dominant volumes (Figure 2), open space on the ground floor for pedestrians, exterior/interior visual connection, and the use of raster patterns (grids, modules) in the layout and design of the façade constituted a successful formula for ‘good quality’ architectural design. (Figure 3)

On the other hand, by making compromises in order to avoid such “taboo” leanings toward “formalism,” “decoration,” “Western influence,” “bourgeois values,” and “anarchic and retrograde trends,” architects could safely experiment within the framework of a “democratic,” “function-driven,” “monumental,” “legible and well-balanced” architecture. The nature of architecture allowed its creators to experiment freely with various forms, as long as they dressed and adapted their concepts along the officially required lines.

Monumentality was a firm requirement sent down from on high – all buildings were required to express the glory of the new social order. At the same time, they had to express a design of a democratic nature, “close to the masses,” and understandable by common people, since public buildings were meant to represent “the proletariat.” This was a basic contradiction underlying a kind of “democratic monumentality” or “monumental populism” best illustrated by the design of the National Hall of Culture in Sofia. Symmetry in design, almost obligatory for state and municipal administrative buildings, implied the perfection and permanence

of the new social order, while asymmetrical layouts were confined to buildings devoted to culture or leisure, as they are characterized by relativity and changing needs.

The Bulgarian version of Modernism consistently avoided the monotony of flat facades and plain surfaces by favoring plastic, segmented, graphically contrasting facades with repetitive geometric elements. The desire to promote artistic value led to the use of an orthogonal or diagonal raster of facade elements, plastic treatment of surfaces, harmonic color coordination and expressive facade details, thereby endowing the building with a human scale. Buildings aimed to create “a unified architectural and artistic image with representational character.”

The government took a very strong stand on the preservation of historic towns and buildings, issuing strict regulations that led to the conservation of entire villages and towns (Zheravna, Koprivshitzza). This activity was under the control of the National Institute for the Preservation of Cultural Treasures. Although at first favoring buildings from the late 19th century (the so-called “Renaissance” period), it later established a system to encompass the country’s entire architectural and artistic heritage.

The modernized Renaissance style as a contemporary interpretation of the country’s architectural heritage became a popular theme for great works and speculations. “Modern vernacular” or the contemporary interpretation of local architecture was a persistent issue for many architects. “Monastery” and “Renaissance house” prototypes were interpreted again and again in a ‘tradition-as-you-like-it’ manner. The strength of this tendency was that it offered a kind of “allowed” alternative to the Stalinist style of architecture coming from Russia. The term “Renaissance house” epitomized the wish to compensate for a “Bulgarian history not yet lived” during the five centuries of Ottoman rule. It was essential in the creation of national identity after the liberation.

Bulgarian postwar architectural practice illustrates the thesis that building design can serve ideological agendas curiously unrelated to the ideas and purposes of its creators. The abstract forms and style of the International Style seem to imply what one might call a multi-suggestive silence rather than a language people can attach any specific meaning to.

**Conclusion: From Disguised Modernism to Commercial Pluralism**

In the evaluation of postwar architectural ideology and practice in Bulgaria, it is necessary to consider the specific circumstances that placed architects in a position rarely seen in history. For almost half a century a group of architects working in a dozen large, state-owned planning, design and building organizations had the “freedom” to design new cities, entire urban centers of existing cities, large-scale resorts and many large public buildings. Adhering closely at first to directives from the Soviet Union and Communist Party administrators, they later tried to establish their own “independent” professional domain, compromising with the Communist prohibitions in order to give themselves the power to establish their own rules.

As a result, there was an active professional community that was able to establish its own guidelines for a modern style of urban and building design, though with a few variations: modern monumental, modern vernacular, and modern ordinary. Some valuable contributions of this style in terms of public space and resort design can be illustrated by the urban centers of Smolyan (Figure 3) and Blagoevgrad, the seaside resorts of Albena, Zlatni pyasatzi (Figure 2), Slanchev bryag, and the ski resorts of Borovetz, Pamporovo, etc.

Hopefully, some of their design principles and solutions will be appreciated as important cultural legacies in many areas: urban amenities, space, relationship to nature, non-commercial resort design, original solutions for public buildings and resort complexes aided by industrialized

technologies, facade details and interior designs. On the other hand, the weaknesses of the style can be seen in a number of dimensions: the uniform application of the same principles throughout the country, resulting in many cities looking similar; in multiple variations of the same prototypes (e.g. the Boyana residence and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) in many places; in conventional solutions to the layout of over-scaled public squares, large and empty lifeless spaces with high maintenance costs; and in monotonous monumental streetscapes and low-cost public housing ‘ghettos’ in many cities.

The problem of what to do with the socialist period architecture is very serious, especially for a country with limited economic resources. Some buildings have rather successfully adapted to the new situation, while others will disappear due to economics and to their failure to meet present-day societal needs. Some buildings will undoubtedly become scapegoats for public hostility to the period and its buildings.

Although it is natural that people associate buildings with history, by destroying a building of good quality one cannot delete the history related to it; this only reinforces the processes of urban amnesia and cultural crisis, promoting the endless repetition of similar mistakes in the future and thus adversely affecting the quality of our built environment. We lost many valuable buildings from the Ottoman period before we gained an appreciation of architectural quality as something existing independently of ideology. This time, the process of recognition and preservation will not be controlled by the state. The fate of the socialist buildings will be a test for the ingenuity of our post-Communist civil society.

Notes

1. T. Gospodinova, "The Communist ideal as an epistemological and sociological category," *VIAS year-book, Architectural Theory*, Vol.32, (1985—1986): 207—229.
2. Jencks uses the word 'self-conscious' to define one of the six traditions in his typology of architecture during the period 1920-1970. According to his categorization, 'communist traditional' belongs to the self-conscious tradition in architecture. Charles Jencks, *Modern Movements in architecture* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), 28.
3. During Ottoman rule there were strict limitations imposed on buildings' size, scale and functions in Bulgaria. After 1876, Bulgarian students went to study at the architectural schools of Paris, Vienna, Munich, Prague, and Moscow, until the first university of architecture was opened in Sofia in 1942.
4. K. Boyadjiev, L. Stoilova, *Sofia-120 years capital* (Sofia: Marin Drinov, 2000) 498—507, 526—543
5. Elena Ivanova, "Imperial Historicism vs. Modernism," *Architecture* 5-6 (2002), 84—91
6. As has been seen many times in history, imposing buildings have acquired new uses and meanings quite often ignoring or even contradicting the original purpose, ideology or philosophy of their creators. Thus the Christian church of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul was converted into a mosque and Jesuit churches in Taiwan used native design symbolism.
7. Capacities were fixed according to population – a city of 100 000-300 000 inhabitants had to have movie theaters, an opera, a dramatic theater, a puppet theater, a circus, a concert hall, museums, an art gallery, exhibition halls, libraries, community centers, a youth center, and various clubs. According to the "scientific prognosis of the cultural satisfaction of the population until 2000," the citizens' personal time for cultural use will increase from 68 minutes to 110 minutes/day in 1990. Therefore all cities should provide appropriate infrastructure for those activities. Lyuben Tonev, *Bulgarian settlements until 2000 - present and future forms* (Sofia: BAN, 1976) 51—57, 69.
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## Ideology and Aesthetics in Brazilian-U.S. Relations 1945–60

Sonia Marques and Guilah Naslavsky

*This paper focuses on the relationship between modernist architecture in Brazil and the U.S. during the period 1945-1960. This period followed an era of mutual discoveries: Wright's visit to Brazil in 1931 and the NY International Fair in 1939 -- wherein many Brazilian architects had their first contact with European designs, such as Alvar Aalto's, thus widening their relatively strict modernist Corbuserian language -- and Brazil Builds in 1943. The post World War Two U.S. already recognized "the remarkable vitality of a modern architecture developing along lines somewhat different from our own or from that of Europe," as noted by Drexler (1955), in the preface of the book on MoMA's Exhibition, "Latin American Architecture since 1945." For Brazilians, this new relationship started with Neutra's official visit to Brazil in 1945. Neutra's social concerns touched young architects' sensibilities, particularly given their experience with the Estado Novo's aesthetics and ideological polarizations (Segawa, 1998). The diffusion of Zevi's revisionist texts in Brazil, with their organicist apology, heightened interest in Wright's works, nourishing the battle between organicists and rationalists, as noted by Lúcio Costa. The São Paulo-based engineer-architect and communist Vilanova Artigas' paradoxical *Le Corbusier e o imperialismo americano* (published in *Fundamentos*, 1951) was influenced by Wright's aesthetics (Bruand, 1981; Irigoyen, 2002). He employed this text as a weapon within his field (Bourdieu), wherein both regional (São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro) and political correctness (leftist, progressive) matters were implicated, since Rio de Janeiro's Niemeyer was a Communist as well (Marques, 1996). Artigas' aesthetic positions had repercussions on a national level, giving rise to a late local organicist sensibility. Distancing themselves from the Corbuserian/ Rio de Janeiro mainstream, regional groups flourished, such as Domingues*

*and Svensson, in the Northeastern Brazilian city, Recife. Here, Wright's influence was often ironically combined with Lefebvre's Marxist writings, in a search for a humanized modernism.*

The remarkable absence of research focusing on the relationship between Brazilian and American architects results from the widespread notion that Modern Architecture, solely under Le Corbusier's influence, quickly assumed a unique national expression in Brazil. However, this constructed version results from political, ideological, regional, and mostly professional rivalries between the "cariocas" (from Rio de Janeiro) associated with Niemeyer and Le Corbusier's group, on the one hand, and the "paulistas" (from São Paulo), associated with Artigas, on the other. This paper, which discusses some of these questions and especially their consequences for architectural design, focuses on the years between 1945 and 1960, a period following an era of mutual discoveries, beginning with Wright's visit to Brazil in 1931. The NY World's Fair of 1939—at which many Brazilian architects not only made their first contact with the American environment but also discovered other European designs beyond the Corbusian version of Modernist language—and the "Brazil Builds" exhibition in 1943 represent the next important step in the advancement of that relationship. After World War II, the U.S. already recognized "the remarkable vitality of a modern architecture developing along lines somewhat different from our own or from that of Europe," (Drexler, 1955), in the preface to the book on the MoMA Exhibition "Latin American Architecture since 1945." In Brazil, a turning point in the reception of American ideas came with the official visit in 1945 of Richard Neutra, whose social concerns touched young progressive architects, particularly given their experience with the Estado Novo's aesthetic and ideological polarizations (Segawa, 1998). The spread of Bruno Zevi's texts in Brazil, and his defense of the organic architecture movement, heightened the growing interest in Wright's works, fuelling the dispute between organicists and rationalists (Costa, 1952).

Vilanova Artigas, a São Paulo-based Communist engineer-architect, is himself the embodiment of this conflict, as can be clearly seen in his article *Le Corbusier e o imperialismo americano* (Artigas, 1951; Bruand, 1981; Irigoyen, 2002). He used this text as a weapon in the field of architecture in Brazil (Bourdieu, 1974), where both regional matters (São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro) and issues of political correctness (leftist, progressive) were involved, since the “carioca” Niemeyer was also a Communist (Marques, 1996). Artigas’ aesthetic positions had repercussions nationally, giving rise to a late-developing local organicist sensibility. Distancing themselves from the Corbusierian/Rio de Janeiro mainstream, regional groups flourished, such as those around Domingues and Svenson, in the Northeastern Brazilian city of Recife.

### **1. The Thirties: the period of the first mutual discoveries**

According to Segawa, US architectural achievements had been widely known among academics in Latin America since the 1930s.<sup>1</sup> The growth of the US-Brazil relationship throughout the decade affected the way in which the architectural milieu was structured within each Latin American country and how each came to relate to European Modernism. From a Brazilian perspective, choosing between a dialogue with the US or with Europe became a regional as well as professional matter. Thus Rio-based architects from the Beaux-Arts School were openly receptive to Europe, whereas in São Paulo, engineer-architects (especially those from the Mackenzie University) were much closer to their US colleagues.<sup>2</sup>

By 1930, European Modernism was familiar to both “carioca” and “paulista” circles by way of the 1922 *Semana de Arte Moderna* exhibition, the Warchavchik manifesto, and, above all, Le Corbusier’s first visit to Brazil in 1929, known as the event that converted Lúcio Costa to Modernism. It is within this context that Frank Lloyd Wright arrived in 1931 at the National Beaux-Arts School as a

member of the Colombo lighthouse competition panel of judges (Irigoyen 2002). Wright landed in Rio de Janeiro for a twenty-one-day stay, lasting from October second until the twenty-second. On September tenth, the School went through an upheaval when eclectic and conservative groups removed Dean Lúcio Costa (see Marques, 1983). During a strike to protest Costa’s dismissal, the students were cheered by Wright’s presence, and they presented him to the public as the torchbearer of Modernist ideals.<sup>3</sup> The real reason for Wright’s trip was overshadowed by the role he played in debates among Brazilian architects during that turbulent month. We should also draw attention to Wright’s visit to the Warchavchik Modernist house on Toneleiros Street and to his widely-publicized comment about the balcony. The widespread impact of Wright’s comment, at a time when knowledge of English was still limited in Brazilian society, suggests that Brazilian architects were paying close attention to what they might learn from their American counterparts.

In Wright’s career, 1931 was a very difficult year, marked by a crisis in his relationship with Philip Johnson, whose leading role on the American architectural scene continued to grow.<sup>4</sup> In order to undermine Wright’s importance in US architecture, Johnson publicly described him as the most important architect from the Ottocento, and inquired as to whether he was still alive. Wright, therefore, was not well placed to spread word of Brazilian architecture in the US.

Brazilian architecture became popular in North America only in 1939 with the Brazilian Pavilion at the New York World’s Fair. Three years later, in 1942, the photographers Kidder Smith and Philip Goodwin came to Brazil to document Brazilian architecture, from the Baroque to the present, i.e., Modernist period. As a consequence of this visit, that same year the Museum of Modern Art in New York mounted the now famous exhibition of Brazilian Architecture, “Brazil Builds Old and New,” which toured widely in the country and resulted in a well-known publication about Brazilian architecture in 1943.

We should note that these events probably were the result of economic and political interests (Tota, 2000). Philip Godwin, for instance, in his preface to the "Brazil Builds" exhibition, is clear about his eagerness to learn more about the architecture of "a country which will be our future ally" (Irigoyen, 2002:146). Interestingly, if World War II was to bring the two nations closer together politically, architecturally speaking, the effects of that relationship were limited.<sup>5</sup> According to Cavalcanti, however, whereas in film and the arts in general this resulted in a pastiche of Brazilian culture, the U.S. saw Brazilian architects as fruitful innovators,<sup>6</sup> and this left a lasting influence on the relationship between the nations and determined the way in which the rest of the world would see Brazil.

## **2. Case Study: the influence of Neutra and Wright, directly from the US (Artigas and Bratke), but also through Europe (L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui and Zevi's writings)**

From a Brazilian point of view, a new phase in US influence came with Neutra's official visit to the country in 1945, organized by the US State Department with the aim of researching schools and public buildings in Latin American countries with a warm climate.<sup>7</sup> Later, the publication of his book "Architecture of Social Concern in Regions of Mild Climate"<sup>8</sup> would further contribute to the wide dissemination of his ideas. According to Segawa, Neutra had become "one of the architects that most inspired Brazilian youth" and "the only foreign architect who had been published in a bilingual edition in Brazil" by 1948 (Segawa, 1997:224).

Furthermore, the special issue of "L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui" (May-June 1946) dedicated to Richard Neutra played a defining role in promoting the California-based architect, since that French architectural periodical was the most influential publication in Brazilian architectural circles,<sup>9</sup> except perhaps in São Paulo. This issue, with a preface by Marcel Lods, was a reflection

of the *Zeitgeist*, marked by its: "overload of Americanophilia" according to Gournay, reflecting a situation that would continue throughout the years from 1945 to 1960. Thus, in January 1946, the magazine dedicated three articles to American architecture, including the work of Wright and Johnson. As a missionary of "l'aménagement du territoire," Marcel Lods outlined the exemplary character of American accomplishments, such as the Tennessee Valley Authority, which, he believed, should be adopted in France. The French boom in Americanophilia, therefore, significantly contributed to the dissemination of American achievements in Brazil.

The Case Study Houses were probably one of the most influential American achievements in the eyes of both Southern<sup>10</sup> and Northeastern Brazilian architects<sup>11</sup> Indeed, since Neutra's visit, Brazilian architects had been attracted to Art & Architecture's experimental architectural program headed by John Entenza.<sup>12</sup> Oswaldo Bratke, for instance, traveled the American West Coast in 1948 to visit Neutra and Wright buildings and the Arts and Architecture office. He thus became the first Latin American to publish in this magazine (October 1948), opening the road for the later contributions of Oscar Niemeyer and Lúcio Costa.<sup>13</sup>

Carlos Eduardo Comas points out that World War II favored an inclination towards the US, as an alternative to a Europe fully preoccupied with reconstruction. Yet, for socially conscious professionals, Europe, and especially England, remained a favorite destination, as exemplified by many of the architects who followed Carmem Portinho<sup>14</sup> there. However, American architecture, as well as the American way of life publicized during the 1940's and 1950's, were increasingly attractive to Brazilians.<sup>15</sup> The left-wing Brazilian architect Artigas (in 1946) and Oswaldo Bratke (in 1948) both went to California, where they visited the buildings of Richard Neutra and Frank Lloyd Wright (Segawa, 1998).<sup>16</sup>

According to Irigoyen, the US was able to host Artigas—a member of the Communist Party—as a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation fellow only because restrictive Cold War measures were not introduced until the following year, in 1947.<sup>17</sup> Artigas planned to study American architecture, particularly the works of Frank Lloyd Wright, Walter Gropius, and Richard Neutra, and was interested in architectural education. Thus for Artigas, “the southern United States seemed the ideal region for research, given the more or less similar physical environment.... George Fred Keck’s solar houses, for example, arouse particular interest, especially when they can be produced industrially.... [T]he American carpenter has led architecture to solve certain problems in a way that differs from that of the Brazilian laborer. Whilst the latter suggests industrialization, the former has preserved craftsmanship.”<sup>18</sup>

Once in the US, Artigas stayed at MIT for a while, and later decided to change his travel plans to meet Frank Lloyd Wright in Taliesin, and Neutra<sup>19</sup> in Los Angeles instead, and to visit their work, including Wright’s Florida Southern College, in Lakeland, and the Sturges House in Los Angeles. Wright’s buildings probably attracted Artigas because of the possibility they suggested of industrializing on the basis of small-sized building elements and local materials such as brick and wood, similar to those he could find in São Paulo. In this way, the industrialization of the construction process could be carried out independently of a larger and more costly process. Similarly, the American carpenter could, perhaps, serve as a model for the Brazilian construction worker. Artigas’ concerns combined technical and social matters, probably under the influence of a certain Marxist way of thinking, and so he was interested in the labor process as it related to the class struggle in Brazil. At that time the Left believed that it had to encourage industrialization in Brazil in order to build up a strong working class capable of leading a Communist revolution.<sup>20</sup>

If Wright became known in Brazil through Artigas and Bratke, interest in his organic architecture was increased by Bruno Zevi’s critical revisionism,<sup>21</sup> particularly as presented in his 1945 *Por uma arquitetura orgânica* [Toward an Organic Architecture (1950)]. Zevi’s writings had an impact almost simultaneously in Italy and in Brazil, since migration from Italy to Brazil had been on the rise since 1900 and had included several well respected architects.<sup>22</sup> This Italian milieu became still more influential with the arrival, in 1946, of Lina Bo Bardi, who had founded, with Zevi, the weekly magazine *A - Cultura della Vita*.<sup>23</sup> Published two years later, in 1948, Zevi’s *Saper vedere l’architettura* [Architecture as Space: How to Look at Architecture (1980)], would become the book most widely read by Brazilian architects for the two next decades.

### **3. The Fifties: Organicism and rationalism. Political and aesthetic polarization: Battle strategies for the profession? Artigas and Niemeyer**

The 1950s was an era of polarization everywhere.<sup>24</sup> In Brazil, the return to democracy that followed the Estado Novo dictatorship brought about a reorganization of the left-wing parties, particularly the Communist Party, to which the two most important Brazilian architects—Oscar Niemeyer, who supported Le Corbusier’s ideals, and Artigas, who was much closer to the organicists—both belonged. On this subject, Segawa comments that:

“The polarization between the positions taken by the organicists (following Frank Lloyd Wright and the evangelistic Bruno Zevi) and the rationalists (Le Corbusier, Gropius and Mies [van der Rohe]) was the topic of most debates up to the beginning of the 1960’s.”<sup>25</sup>

Artigas appreciated both organicism and Wright in a quite contradictory way; for, according to Irigoyen, he considered that the American architect embodied Yankee imperialism. However, it is known that Wright had been persecuted by the FBI, a fact perhaps unknown to Artigas, who later

in 1951 accused even Le Corbusier of being an agent of American Imperialism.<sup>26</sup> Artigas' insistence on taking a stance against Le Corbusier in the early 1950's could also be seen as a strategy for distinguishing himself from Niemeyer, who was concerned only with form and aesthetic ideals.

Thus, both Artigas and Zevi admired Wright for aesthetic and political reasons, in spite of their different national contexts.<sup>27</sup> Zevi and Behrendt's classic accounts of the two trends within Modernism—organicism and rationalism—taken as a contemporary manifestations of recurring Apollonian and Dionysian trends in the arts, offered an alternative to both "light Modernism" and the ideological quarrels within Italian architecture after World War II. Whereas in Italy, Behrendt and Zevi's accounts served political purposes in reconciling struggling factions, in the Brazilian context they worked in a way that reinforced polarization. In any case, both Artigas and Zevi<sup>28</sup> contributed to the spread of Wright and American organicism in Brazil. Thus, in 1959, on the occasion of Wright's death, students of the Faculdade Nacional de Arquitetura in Rio de Janeiro, the IAB, the IBEU, and the MAMRJ organized an exhibition of Wright's works, which took place during Dwight D. Eisenhower's visit to Brazil. Nevertheless, only a few lines are dedicated to the matter in issue number seventeen of the prestigious magazine *Módulo*,<sup>29</sup> which even managed to make a mistake about his age. This discreet reference may indicate resistance on the part of the carioca circle, under Niemeyer's influence, to acknowledging Wright's importance along with that of American architects as a whole.

The previous year, in the December issue of *Módulo*, Niemeyer had written about the contemporary city. He humbly remarked that he feared "the danger of common sense, since it was not reasonable to expect a Brazilian architect to deal with such a complex subject when it had already been discussed by the most important European authorities." Europe was still the only point of reference for Niemeyer, as it was, perhaps, for most Brazilian architects of the time.

Ultimately, however, as the date of the inauguration of Brasília drew near, the polarized positions began to break down. In 1958, responding to Max Bill's criticism, Niemeyer wrote a critical review of his career and consolidated his international standing, while Artigas rose in prominence at home.<sup>30</sup> In 1959, Bruno Zevi came to the Congresso Internacional Extraordinário de Críticos de Arte and stayed in Brazil from September seventeenth to twenty-fifth, during which time he visited Brasília, São Paulo, and Rio de Janeiro (Bruand, 1981: 289).<sup>31</sup> The success of Brasília can be illustrated by Aline Saarinen's article for the *New York Times* in 1959. "When Niemeyer takes structural licenses to make his special buildings expressive, he has something (sic) gone outside the sacrosanct dogma of structural honesty. (...) Surely there are architectural details in Niemeyer's works that are open to argument. But to argue about details... would be quibbly. In the significant way- (...) Niemeyer's architecture triumphs."<sup>32</sup> Saarinen's article was possibly one of the last to come out on Brazilian architecture in the US, since, in the 1960s, criticism of Modernism began to grow,<sup>33</sup> resulting in a decline in interest in Brazil.

#### **4. The Brazilian Region under the influence of Wright, again via Zevi**

There were also contacts between Brazil and the United States which were independent of the political polarization, such as Mindlin's *Modern Architecture in Brazil*. Published in English in 1956, this book addressed an American audience following the Brazil Builds standards.<sup>34</sup> Three years later, Mindlin went to MIT (the Massachusetts Institute of Technology) to learn how to use computer technology in architectural design.

At that time, there was also a growing interest in organicism on the part of young regional architects who were distant from both the carioca and paulista groups. They took a particular interest in Wright's work, which was more accessible than that of, say, Alvar Aalto. Marcos Domingues da Silva,<sup>35</sup> for instance, acknowledges the role



Figure 1: José Carlos Pena Residence, 1965, project by Acácio Gil Borsoi. . Detail of Main Entrance.



Figure 2: Paulo Meirelles Residence, project by Marcos Domingues da Silva, 1968. 1. Exterior; 2. Shed (skylight); 3. Interior with air brick panel (cobogó, hollowed out element pre-molded in plaster cement); 4. Pivoted doors with Venetian blinds.

played by Bruno Zevi's writings in converting him to organicism and to admiration of Wright's work, as well as to Scandinavian neo-empiricism.<sup>36</sup> As he notes, in the 1960s: "Artigas' work was widely respected and discussed, it was one source of inspiration". He adds, however, that "Artigas was much talked about, but Niemeyer even more so." Domingues acknowledged Artigas' influence on his work mainly because "he wasn't a rationalist of the purist school."<sup>37</sup> These affinities place him close to Frank Svencion,<sup>38</sup> a Communist architect based in Pernambuco at the time. Here, Wright's influence was often ironically combined with Lefebvre's Marxist writings, in the search for a humanized Modernism.

Zevi would also influence the carioca architect Sérgio Bernardes,<sup>39</sup> who designed several buildings in the Northeastern region and greatly influenced young architects who were looking for a different path, distinct from the tradition of Le Corbusier and Niemeyer. It must have been the search for a different aesthetic tendency, rather than political motives, that lead Delfim Amorim and Acácio Gil Borsoi, the two greatest Northeastern architects of the 1950s and 1960s, to an interest in Wright,<sup>40</sup> independently of any contact they had with Artigas. In the case of Borsoi, it was only after attending one of Wright's last lectures that he became familiar with the latter. He thus discovered American architecture only in the 1960's, when he attended a lecture that the famous architect delivered shortly before his death. It should be noted, however, that had no aesthetic affinity whatsoever either with the brutalism of the paulistas or with Artigas.

## 5. Brazilian domestic polarization

The political events of 1963 mark a turning point leading to even greater national polarization. Two major events brought left-wing Brazilian architects together that year: the international UIA congress in Cuba and the National Seminar on Housing and Urban Reform in Petrópolis, Rio de Janeiro. The Russian ship *Nadiedja Krupskaja* came to Santos and Recife to transport the 114 Brazilian

participants to Havana. Housing was their main theme, and the “Cajueiro Seco” experiment<sup>41</sup> was presented in Cuba by the group from Recife. While the visitors were disappointed by the Bulgarian architecture imported by Fidel Castro, Ernesto Che Guevara’s closing speech left them mesmerized. The British president of the UIA, nonetheless, criticized the emphasis given to political matters at the meeting.<sup>42</sup>

In a highly charged political environment, marked by growing politicization, some attitudes emerged which exaggerated the combination of aesthetics and ideology, as described by Joaquim Guedes. According to this paulista architect, at that time, a team of architects had been chosen by the Dean of the University of São Paulo to design some buildings, and the name of Communist Artigas had been removed from the list. Nevertheless, the youngest members of the selected group—including Guedes himself—demanded that Artigas be included, a request that was ultimately granted. Once he became part of the group, Artigas vetoed the proposed design for Guedes’ Instituto de Matemática, as it did not have “the clear, bare, and expressive architectural language of the Brazilian Revolution, easily identified by the masses.” Guedes’ design, according to Artigas, did not fit in with the FAU building, designed by Artigas himself.<sup>43</sup> It is impossible not to wonder whether Artigas’ opinion was truly based on aesthetic rather than ideological concerns.

The Left was silenced by the military dictatorship established in 1964. On the one hand, several architects were persecuted and had to leave the country, including Artigas and Niemeyer, and thus many of the disputes of those times have remained unknown up to the present time. On the other hand, a number of architects continued to visit the US and, in the late 1960s, some of them developed a predilection for Louis Kahn’s architecture. By then, however, dialogue between the architectural groups of the two countries had come to an end. While Postmodernism blossomed in the US, in Brazil throughout the 1960s and

1970s Modernism remained not only the hegemonic architectural language but also a symbol of left-wing resistance.

## **Conclusion**

The relationship between Brazilian and US architectural groups had been established before the polarization that followed the Cold War, and, although affected by political events, it evolved to some extent independently of them. An effort should be made to avoid pointing to mechanical correspondences between political choices and aesthetic inclinations as a determining factor in that relationship. In other words, politically speaking, pro- or anti-Americanism, did not necessarily go hand-in-hand with acceptance or rejection of American architecture by Brazilian architects. Rather than polarization, the Cold War environment favored the development of a very complicated network, involving different players from the two countries, whose discourses expressed various combinations of professional strategies and aesthetic and ideological choices, very often in incoherent ways.

Notes

1. The authors mention this issue in the Bolivian and Chilean context, but the matter deserves further consideration in so far as it applies to Brazil. See Segawa and Dourado, 1997.
2. We should remember that one of the two architectural schools in São Paulo was founded in 1917 within the Protestant Mackenzie University by Christiano Stocklet das Neves, who graduated from Pennsylvania University in 1911, and followed the typical Anglo-American model, adopting the pragmatic and technical notion of design rather than that of a "project", as is the case nowadays.
3. According to Segawa "fate brought together the panel of judges of the competition during the upheaval caused the students' protests against the dismissal of Lúcio Costa from the National Beaux-Arts School.". Segawa, 2002:13.
4. See Schulze, 1994
5. During World War II, the changes in everyday life for the inhabitants of the city of Natal—site of a US army base—were numerous. Nevertheless the Brazilian elites of Natal, as elsewhere, remained at that time more open to European cultural influences.
6. Cavalcanti, 2001.
7. By 1923 Neutra had begun his studies of the European city. In the following years he expanded these to cover US, Asian and African cities, looking for sources for his one million-inhabitant Rush City Reformed design. POLI, 1993: 233.
8. Neutra, 1948:46.
9. This was due, first, to its status as the publication of Le Corbusier and the Modernist group around him in Rio (including a Brazilian presence on its editorial board), and, second, to the fact that French was still the second language of the Brazilian elites at the time.
10. Segawa and Dourado. Op. cit. and Segawa, 1998. Sérgio Bernardes worked with new materials, particularly industrialized components such as metals and wood structures, and tiles in fiber-concrete. Arts and Architecture, the now defunct magazine that made the Case Study project possible also inspired Acácio Gil Borsoi, when, at the outset of his career, he designed objects such as lamps and automobile components.
11. Amorim, 2001.
12. John Entenza's magazine Arts & Architecture sponsored the so-called Case Study House Program, established in 1945. It advocated production of architectural components, furnishings, and accessories as the ideal way to spread low-cost, high-quality modern design throughout America. The program sponsored the design and construction of a series of modern residences as prototypes for mass-produced housing, and many prestigious architects participated, such as the Eameses. See Smith, 1989.
13. Segawa and Dourado. Op. cit.
14. Shortly before the end of WW II (1944), she received a scholarship to study British housing experiments, and after the War she traveled to Paris to meet Le Corbusier.
15. See Comas, 2003.
16. Oswaldo Bratke had been in close contact with American culture since his graduation from Mackenzie University where international influence came principally from North America, with periodicals such as Architectural Record and Pencil Points in circulation. See Segawa and Dourado. Op.cit.
17. Irigoyen. Op. cit.
18. Irigoyen, Op. cit. p. 148.
19. Ibid. Pp.155-8.
20. This interest can be felt in several writings influenced by Artigas, such as those of Sérgio Ferro and Paulo Bicca.
21. In post-World War II Italy, critical revisionism was associated with disputes between the neo-liberty and neo-realist factions. This prolonged the debate over the association between architecture and politics, in this case between Modernism and fascism.
22. Several Italian architects have migrated to Brazil since the beginning of the 20th century, such as Giacomo Palumbo and Rino Levi.
23. On Lina Bo Bardi's career see Anelli, 2001: 40-49.

24. On the British context, Frampton (2003) has remarked: "One of the things that now seems quaint is that in the 1950's, within a relatively small school like the AA, there were student associations aligned with three political parties: communist, socialist, and conservative". *October* 106, fall 2003:35-58. On the US context see Schwarzer, 1997.
  25. Segawa, 1998:149.
  26. His social concerns, his liberal lifestyle in Taliesin, his trip to Russia in 1937, his marriage to a woman born in Montenegro, his love of Tolstoy, Dostoievsky, Gogol, and Pushkin, all combined to raise the suspicions of the McCarthyists. Irigoyen. 2002:99.
  27. In Italy, Zevi's approach emerged to legitimize an alternative Modernism, distinct from that of Giuseppe Terragni's Casa del Fascio, in Como.
  28. Zevi founded the magazine "L'architettura - cronache e storia", 1955, which had a large audience in Brazil
  29. The review run by the Niemeyer team
  30. In Artigas' Itanhaém School, which is typical of his new phase, the influence of the work of Wright is evident.
  31. The repercussions of Zevi's work were so great up to the 1960s that in most Architecture Schools he was often the only author read. In Recife, in Northeast Brazil, the Italian architect Mario Russo spread Bruno Zevi's work. Zevi was the most popular author at the University of Recife after World War II.
  32. First published in the *New York Times* 18-10-1959. See Módulo, 17.
  33. On the crisis in Modernism in the US see Larson, 1993, Ghirardo, 1996, Tzonis, Lefaivre and Diamond, 1995.
  34. Irigoyen, 2002: 149.
  35. Graduating in 1954 and a student of Mario Russo and Evaldo Coutinho, this architect was the main follower of Bruno Zevi's work in Recife, in the Northeast of Brazil.
  36. Interview given by the architect Marcos Domingues da Silva to Guilah Naslavsky 04/07/2003.
  37. Idem.
  38. Frank Svenson, an architect of Scandinavian descent, graduated from the University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) in 1962. He lived in Recife from 1963 until 1970, when he moved to Brasília and was expelled from the University of Brasília by the dictatorship, in 1973.
  39. Bruand, 1981: 289-292.
  40. According to Geraldo Santana, professor at the University of Pernambuco.
  41. See Borsoi, 1980; *Arquitetura*, 1963; and also Marques and Amaral, 2001.
  42. Interview given by Geraldo Gomes da Silva, a student and a member of the Communist Party at that time, to the authors on 25/04/2004.
  43. Geraldo Santana, interview given to the authors in June 2004, when he described a text by Joaquim Guedes from an Instituto Ricardo Brennand exhibition in Recife, in November 2003.
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## Deconstructing Formalism: Socialist Realism versus Modernist Architecture

Carmen Popescu

*Socialist Realist architecture was developed as explicitly opposed to “capitalist” architecture. I argue that “humanism” was the key concept of this opposition, responsible for the fundamental contradiction between “old” (read bourgeois) and “new” (read communist) society.*

*The attachment to Art values, a major component of its humanism, placed Socialist Realism in an atemporal perspective ruled by Truth and Beauty: Classical vocabulary allied to the national artistic heritage legitimated this approach. Opposed to it, Modernist architecture was “formalist” and functionalist”, otherwise said anti-humanist. Its “hostility”, its “nudity”, and above all, its despise for artistic values demonstrated its lack of interest for the human being.*

*Casa Scînteii (House of Sparkle; Bucharest, 1949–1953), and the several projects designed for it, serves as a case study. Intended to be a palace of the communist culture, it became an emblematic building for the Romanian Socialist Architecture. While the first projects (1949) adopted a Modernist vision, the final version cloned, under the pressure of a vigorous critic from ideological positions, the famous “tall buildings” in Moscow. In my analysis, I consider the empathy between theory and form, as well as the translation of the political discourse into an architectural expression. The analysis leads to the conclusion that the ideology of the Socialist Realist architecture was founded on a polarized vision doubled by a powerful rhetoric. As the materialization of the communist mythology, Socialist Realism needed a Manichean construction to impose its truth.*

Socialist Realist architecture was, above all, an ideological construct, developed in explicit opposition to what was called “capitalist” or “imperialist” architecture. The idiosyncrasy of its ideology was founded on a polarized rhetoric, which engendered a distortion of architectural discourse (as well as of its historiography). In the light of this specific rhetoric, architecture was seen as a crucial instrument in building a Communist society. Due to its public impact – especially in a context where the limits between private and public were purposely erased – architecture represented an efficient means for shaping the New Man promised by Communist doctrine, a man able to revolutionize all mankind. While creating the new architecture, the masses would be creating themselves as a conscious entity. This purgative image, almost mystical if it weren’t dialectical, in which ideas shape the maker and the maker shapes the ideas, became a perfect metaphor for Communist society. The image of a happy but determined builder, displayed by posters all over the Communist countries, embodied this new world: Socialist Realism was conceived as a doctrinal tool able to both depict this world and produce it. As Hannah Arendt remarked, totalitarian societies claim that, in due time, the force of their ideology will rule over the totality of the human race.<sup>1</sup>

I argue that “humanism” was the key concept justifying this demiurgic aspiration of Communist doctrine. It was humanism that made the difference between the “old” (read capitalist) and the “new” (read Communist) world. As a corollary, the architecture produced by the two worlds was supposed to reflect their respective attitudes towards mankind: whereas Modernism, with its “nudity” and “formalist” schemes, despised the human being, Socialist Realist architecture praised it, through the “optimism” of its compositions and the beauty of its decoration. However, in the postwar years, “humanism” represented a key concept in the Western world too, which, in the architectural realm, focused the debates around the renewal of the architectural language. By purposely ignoring these debates, Soviet ideologues not only dismissed them, but also claimed that the concept of “humanism” was solely legitimated by the Communist doctrine.

I also argue that the ideological rhetoric of Socialist Realism, founded on this polarized vision, both dominated architectural discourse and sought to justify it. I will support my argument with a case study from Bucharest, Romania: Casa Scînteii (1949–1953), which was designed to embody the Communist doctrine. Its name, The House of Sparkle, refers to the five-pointed star (erected on top of the building) that serves as the symbol of the Communist Party, and its architecture reflected this commitment.

In January 1951, the journal *Arhitectura RPR* ("The Architecture of the Romanian Popular Republic") published an extensive article about the final project of Casa Scînteii.<sup>2</sup> (Figure 1) Originally conceived in 1948 as a printing house for the Party (newspaper, propaganda brochures, etc.), the "cultural revolution" declared one year later turned it into a Palace of Culture and Arts. Not only did the project become very complex (offices for art and culture commissions, a printing house, and a residential subdivision for the printers, with all the infrastructure necessary); it also became highly symbolic, requiring perfect control of its architectural expression, especially on the aesthetic and ideological level. Thus, even if the pre-final version was ready in August 1949 – probably in order to celebrate five years of the "liberation of the country from the fascist yoke" – it took a year and a half to establish the final project.<sup>3</sup> During this period,



Figure 1: The (1951), published in Horia Maicu, "Despre proiectarea Casei Scînteii" (On designing the House of Sparkle), *Arhitectura RPR*, 1, 1951.

the chief architect of the project, Horia Maicu, was subjected to an intense process of indoctrination. The "vigorous criticisms" (to use the political jargon of the time) made by the Romanian Communist Party and by two Soviet specialists – the president of the Academy of Architecture of the USSR and the vice-minister of Urban Buildings – turned the original Modernist architecture of the project into a paradigm of Socialist Realism.

The four solutions proposed by the chief architect Horia Maicu in 1949 were evocative of the modern architecture practiced in Romania at

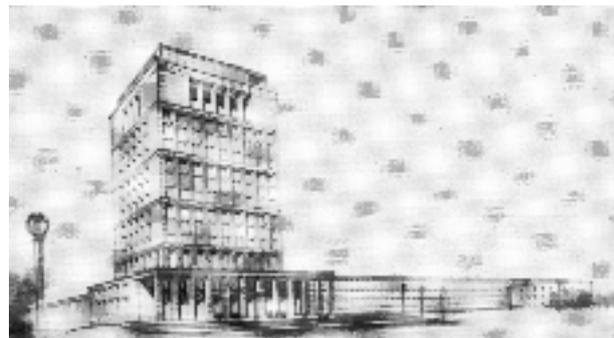


Figure 2: Pre-final project of Casa Scînteii (1949), published in Horia Maicu, "Despre proiectarea Casei Scînteii" (On designing the House of Sparkle), *Arhitectura RPR*, 1, 1951.



Figure 3: Pre-final project of Casa Scînteii (1949), published in Horia Maicu, "Despre proiectarea Casei Scînteii" (On designing the House of Sparkle), *Arhitectura RPR*, 1, 1951.

the end of 1940s. Two of them (Figure 3) displayed a tempered modernity, reminding one of the so-called “King Carol the 2nd Style,”<sup>4</sup> the local version of *retour à l'ordre* architecture with its robust neo-classic scheme, built all over the world during the 1930s. The other two solutions (Figure 2) were close to the Modern Movement (related both to the Bauhaus and to Le Corbusier's approach), reflecting the latest tendencies practiced by the Romanian architects. Modernism was already successful in Romania before 1940, but it showed a general preference for more classical schemes. The years after the war brought new impetus to its development, introducing a more radically modern vision, connected with the latest production in Western Europe. During this period of transition – between the end of the war and the consolidation of the Communist regime (1949 representing a threshold in establishing socialist bases for the architectural creation)<sup>5</sup> – Modernism cohabited with the first attempts to create a socialist architecture. This complex situation was responsible for the heavy indoctrination engaged in by all the East bloc satellite countries.

In Romania, the project for Casa Scînteii represented the cornerstone in establishing a specific rhetoric and an emblematic image for Socialist Realist architecture. This was not a mere appropriation of certain ideological rules, but a carefully controlled imposition, as is proved by the presence of the two important Soviet specialists and the role they played in the evolution of the project. The two Soviet architects intervened in all the aspects of the design: they decided on the site, on the urban perspective, and – last but not least – on the architectural expression of the edifice. Their comments on the four pre-final projects were symptomatic of the rhetoric of Socialist Realism: an emotional criticism, interpreting architecture as a moral attitude. The most Modernist (Figure 2) of the four versions proposed by Horia Maicu met the sharpest rejection: “The (...) solution (...) is individualistic, cold, isolated and without connection to the masses. It affirms the domination of the master; a technical representation without any warmth.”<sup>6</sup>

The other Modernist version was criticized for its “constructivism” and for its “errors of a machine-like construction, with a bare and schematic expression.” It is obvious that the “machine-like construction” was a reference to Le Corbusier's approach, and the central building, in fact, reminded one of the famous *Unité d'habitation*. The version inspired by the “King Carol the 2nd style” (Figure 3) was dismissed for being “heavy, Italian Fascist neo-classical-like” and for “lacking enthusiasm for the future.” Less than two decades before, when its aesthetics was fashionable, the same massive composition would have been regarded, on the contrary, as a materialization of faith in the future, and praised for its solidity.<sup>7</sup> This proves how versatile the rhetoric was.

The version eventually retained adopted a neo-classical scheme – almost copying one of the most emblematic “Carol the 2nd” buildings, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, designed by Duiliu Marcu (late 1930s). The Soviet representatives, however, appreciated its symmetrical structure as well as its classical composition: “the solution (...) presents certain qualities concerning the mass proportions. It grows progressively from the ground by harmonious successive volumes; unfortunately, this growth stops abruptly and the upper-part looks cut off, reminding [one of] a suitcase. It lacks the coronation, the final triumph which (...) would luminously open the path to future.”<sup>8</sup> This solution constituted the starting point for the final project.

The critical comments of the two Soviet jurors implicitly defined the Socialist Realist aesthetics through a series of negations and oppositions. The new architecture should not be individualistic, cold, isolated, bare, and schematic. On the contrary, it should express warmth, enthusiasm for the future, energy, and ultimate triumph. In other words, Socialist Realist architecture ought to be the opposite of Modernism. Logically speaking, a building embodying Communist doctrine – as Casa Scînteii was expected to – could not embrace a Modernist vision, since the latter's “matchbox-like appearance” and its “Americanized disproportion,” was seen as an emanation of the capitalist system. “This edifice

should express the triumph of the liberated man against nature and against the social forces that had chained him; it should express his trust in the future, his certain progress on the path opened by the Party," as one of the Soviet experts put it.<sup>9</sup>

As a result, Casa Scînteii became a local replica of the Soviet *vysokii*, the tall buildings reputed to have been inspired by Stalin himself. Yet, it was more than just a mere replica echoing similar projects in the other satellite countries – it represented the paradigm for all the buildings to be erected in Socialist Romania. Its role as an exemplary building is essential for understanding the theoretical impact of the project.

Like its Soviet models and the paradigmatic buildings in the other satellite countries, Casa Scînteii was meant to symbolize Communist doctrine through monumentality and beauty. These two concepts were crucial for Socialist Realist ideology, which found in them both a moral and an aesthetic justification. In metaphoric terms, monumentality was to reflect the grandeur of the doctrine, while beauty was a visible sign of its humanism: an architecture conceived by the people and for the people could not have been but grandiose (monumental compositions) and beautiful (appropriately adorned). Thus, monumentality and beauty translated the Stalinist adage "socialist in content and national in form" (the latter was to be understood as an appropriate adornment).

On a practical level, monumentality and beauty were instruments enabling Socialist Realism to compete with (and to surpass) capitalist architecture. While monumentality was a term of comparison (if communist ideologues often related to the size of the capitalist buildings, they seemed to ignore the issues raised by the concept of "new monumentality" so much discussed in the Western world), beauty was a term of differentiation (an architecture praising art and its values more than technicality and cold functionalism). Thus, not only was Socialist Realist architecture as competitive as the capitalist one, if not more technically

advanced,<sup>10</sup> it was also better in terms of ethics, since it was beautiful. Beauty was presented as a form of respect towards the people: an architecture dedicated to the masses ought to appear beautiful in their eyes.

Undoubtedly inspired by the 'capitalist' skyscrapers, Soviet *vysokii* were depicted in the architectural press of the Communist bloc as the positive version of this anti-humanist architecture. Horia Maicu, the chief-architect of Casa Scînteii, published an explanatory article on the topic, contrasting virtues (found in the Soviet example) and mistakes (found in the American case). While Soviet tall buildings created a respectful and livable environment, being "connected, through their artistic and architectural composition, to the historic architecture of the city," American skyscrapers denied its urbanity, "ris[ing] brutally with their heavy mass (...) directly from the sidewalks."<sup>11</sup> Maicu's description of New York offers a Communist version of Walter Benjamin's image of Paris: "The streets of New York, bordered by these huge walls of concrete and glass, appear like dark dens (...) The facades [of the skyscrapers] (...) have no variations and volume contrast (...) no architectural details."<sup>12</sup> Maxim Gorki's writings on the American skyscrapers are quoted as an ultimate reference: "square, stupid, heavy buildings, lacking the desire to be beautiful, rise gloomily and tediously... no flowers nor children at their windows." Flowers and children, synonyms in Communist jargon of hope and future, were to be understood as an embodiment of the humanism of the doctrine.

If the monumentality of capitalist architecture was seen as "arrogant" and "dull," Soviet tall buildings were saved from these negative connotations due to the treatment of their volumes. The progressive ascendance of the upper part of the buildings represented the appropriate aesthetic solution for expressing the "optimism," the "energy," and the "vibrant enthusiasm" required by their "socialist content." Thus, the emotional dimension found a visual translation. In a fertile period for the psychology of the image – Rudolf

Arnheim published his influential study, *Art and Visual Perception: a psychology of the creative eye*, in 1956<sup>13</sup> – Communist doctrine delivered its own contribution to the field.

As mentioned above, beauty represented a differential term, contrasting Communist and capitalist architectural production. The two Soviet experts invited to discuss the project for Casa Scînteii clearly stated this difference: the general decadence of bourgeois art made Western specialists forget that architecture meant art and, particularly, sculpture.<sup>14</sup> Their representation of architecture – with “rough”, “sharp” and “technical” lines – was closer to industrial design than to art. That was a clear reference to functionalist architecture, heavily criticized by the Soviet doctrine. In contrast, Socialist Realist architecture aimed to be “warm, human, close to the people’s tradition, conscious of the conquests of the present moment, able to luminously show the path for the future.”

Adornment brought to the Socialist Realist architecture a double legitimacy, on both the aesthetic and the ideological level. Not only did it satisfy the human need for beauty, but it also made art available to the masses. Rendered accessible to the working class, art was thus purposely designed for its edification. Commenting on the poverty of the Modernist pre-final projects for Casa Scînteii, the Soviet architects deplored their bareness: “it is as if we are afraid or ashamed of adornment and of embellishment in general – as if we were Dominicans.”<sup>15</sup> As they explained, “the difference between Soviet and Western architecture is represented by the content of ideas. As an art, Soviet architecture should express the grand ideas and sentiments of Soviet man and the Soviet regime. There is no grandeur of ideas and sentiments among the dominant classes of America and Western Europe.” That was a dialectical answer to a metaphysical question: how to materialize ideology? Decoration, through the narrative it implied, appeared to be the appropriate solution.

In stylistic terms, the dialectic was rendered possible through the alliance between classical art and local heritage. The two were combined to give meaning to the “content of ideas.” As Arendt remarked, totalitarian regimes founded themselves on the very sources of the authority.<sup>16</sup> Embodying aesthetic authority, classical art offered Socialist Realism legitimacy. It also enhanced its humanist dimension, since it was destined to gratify the masses: using the most prestigious artistic reference was meant to testify to the betterment of the human condition in the Communist era. Under Soviet guidance, Horia Maicu designed a monumental porch decorated with sculptural figures for the workers entry in the printing house at Casa Scînteii. Experimented in this emblematic building, classical language became, like throughout the Communist bloc, a mark of the new architecture, associated with public buildings as well as with the residential kvartals.

Symmetry and unity were the key words of the compositional scheme, thus completing, along with the decorative vocabulary, the classical language of the new architecture. Asymmetry was to be banished as an aesthetic failure – “all the masterpieces truly important in the history of architecture are symmetrical” affirmed the Soviet jurors of the Casa Scînteii project<sup>17</sup> – but also as an ideological sin, being a discernable sign of Modernist (read capitalist) architecture. Symmetry was to be completed by a unified vision of the whole composition – as a symphony would reflect a harmonic conception, as Soviet specialists put it.<sup>18</sup>

Another important element of Socialist Realist rhetoric was local heritage, understood as the common vector of both high and folk culture. Local heritage added a narrative dimension to the emotional charge of the composition. Familiar, and thus easily readable by the masses, local heritage was a perfect ideological instrument, thus reinforcing the “optimistic,” “gay,” and “luminous” character of the new architecture. Its use brought another kind of legitimacy: the legitimacy of mass approval. Able to “speak” to the masses, Communist architecture gained a popular dimension, hence truly becoming

an “architecture designed for the people.” But local heritage was also the instrument that fought capitalist temptation, as the Soviet experts explained to their Romanian colleagues: “Why copy from the Westerners? Seek in the art of your people and you will find things that will charm you.”<sup>19</sup>

At Casa Scînteii, the “national form” from the Stalinist adage was expressed through a decoration inspired by the most prestigious local monuments and bolstered by socialist motifs (red stars, seed-spikes of wheat, the hammer and sickle), which enhanced the ideological message. Incongruously enough, the local monuments which served as models were religious edifices – a fact that did not seem to bother the political representatives. Religious medieval architecture was seen, since the foundation of the discipline of art history in Romania, as the most accomplished artistic expression – though reconsidered in the Communist years, the assessment remained true due to a rhetoric shift. Presented as “sincerely expressing the genius of the people”<sup>20</sup>, all ornamental motive from the Romanian old art became thus acceptable, since the spiritual connotation was wiped by a “class” argument.

The necessity to create an architecture which was to be “national in form” engendered a predicament: Romanian architects had already, since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, intensively exploited the interpretation of the local heritage – why then not adapting these formulas, with a high popular success, to the Communist demands? Especially that in postwar Communist Romania there were still defenders of a “Romanian architecture,” understood as an alliance between Modernist principles and the local spirit. But their buildings, as well as the former “National Style” were severely criticized by the new regime, being dismissed as “formalist” or “archaic.” But the real reason neither the “regionalist” nor the “nationalist” approach did not inform the need for a “national form” implied by Socialist Realist doctrine was their assimilation to the capitalist order. This reason was strengthened by the position gained, in the Western world, by “new regionalism” (coined by Siegfried Giedion in 1954),<sup>21</sup> which appeared as a possible alternative to Modernism.

While the decorative schemes created by the former Romanian “National Style” were decadent, because they revealed a bourgeois conception, when used by the Socialist Realist architecture, the same motives were presented as progressive, since they reflected “the genius of the people.” This dialectical rhetoric shift was representative for the power of discourse in the Communist doctrine. Vladimir Paperny affirmed that Stalinist culture was “extremely deferential toward the name,”<sup>22</sup> that is the label was accorded more importance than the content. Stalinist ideology was dominated by rhetoric, in the sense that incongruous facts or images were justified by ideological assertions.

The ideology of Socialist Realism was founded by a polarized vision paralleled by a powerful rhetoric. As the historian Lucian Boia put it,<sup>23</sup> Communism was more than a mere socio-political concept: it represented a “materialized” mythology. Socialist Realist architecture was one of the forms of this materialization. As a mythology, Socialist Realism was placed in a non-temporal perspective, unifying past, present and future under the banner of Universal Truth. As the materialization of this mythology, however, it needed a Manichean construction to impose its truth.

Notes

1. Hannah Arendt, *The origins of totalitarianism* (San Diego ; New York ; London : Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), 323.
2. Horia Maicu, "Despre proiectarea Casei Scânteii" (On designing the House of Sparkle), *Arhitectura RPR*, 1, 1951, 3–13.
3. All the versions of the Casa Scânteii project were published in Anders Aman, *Architecture and Ideology in Eastern Europe during the Stalin Era*, (Cambridge, Ma: MIT Press 1992), 137. Aman delivered a brief analysis of the case.
4. Named after king Carol the 2<sup>nd</sup> (1930–1940), who promoted it, this architecture was mainly adopted for the public buildings in the capital and all over the country. Its aesthetic was very much influenced by the Italian fascist architecture, which was largely admired by the Romanian architects in 1930s.
5. See Marcel Locar, "Pe drumul unei noi arhitecturi" (On the way of a new architecture), *Arhitectura R.P.R.*, 1952, 1-2, 3-16.
6. Maicu, "Despre proiectarea Casei Scânteii", 5.
7. See Carmen Popescu, *Le style national roumain. Construire une nation à travers l'architecture 1881-1945* (Rennes/ Bucharest, Presses Universitaires de Rennes/ Simetria, 2004), 329-348.
8. Maicu, "Despre proiectarea Casei Scânteii", 6.
9. Maicu, "Despre proiectarea Casei Scânteii", 6.
10. Competitiveness seemed to be measured by the height of the buildings, as proved by the articles published in the press of the time: "In Moscow, the construction of 16-32 storey buildings is about to be completed (...); they represent the most advanced realizations of world architecture, truly embodying Communist construction"; "Marea revolutie din Octombrie", *Arhitectura R.P.R.*, 10-11, 1951, 3-4.
11. Horia Maicu, "Arhitectura sovietica. Cladirile înalte din Moscova" (Soviet Architecture. The tall buildings in Moscow), *Arhitectura RPR*, 10-11, 1951, 9–15.
12. Maicu, "Arhitectura sovietica. Cladirile înalte din Moscova", 12.
13. Rudolf Arnheim, *Art and visual perception: a psychology of the creative eye* (London: Faber and faber, 1956).
14. Maicu, "Despre proiectarea Casei Scânteii", 6.
15. Maicu, "Despre proiectarea Casei Scânteii", 6.
16. Arendt, 462.
17. Maicu, "Despre proiectarea Casei Scânteii", 4.
18. Maicu, "Despre proiectarea Casei Scânteii", 6.
19. Maicu, "Despre proiectarea Casei Scânteii", 6.
20. Maicu, "Despre proiectarea Casei Scânteii", 6.
21. Siegfried Giedion, "New regionalism", in *Architecture you and me* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 1958), 138-151.
22. Vladimir Paperny, *Architecture in the Age of Stalin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 141.
23. Lucian Boia, "Introductory word", in Lucian Boia (ed.), *Miturile comunismului românesc (The Myths of Romanian Communism)* (Bucuresti: Humanitas, 1998), 5.



## Postwar Low-cost Housing in South Africa: Ideal and Reality

Alta Steenkamp<sup>1</sup>

*Rapid industrialization of the South African economy after the Second World War required an extensive labor force as an imperative for economic development. At the same time the Nationalist Government's ideology of apartheid found its most direct reflection in postwar urban low-cost housing for the African. Good housing was seen as important in the formation of a stable and efficient labor force and it was believed that a European styled environment might shape the African into a complement of the (more civilized) European. The "Minimum Standards of Housing Accommodation for non-Europeans" became the guide for low-cost housing for Africans. Modernism was interpreted by practicing architects through a range of low-cost housing competitions in the 1950's. An example is presented through the work of the architect Hellmut Stauch. Educated in the Bauhaus tradition, he combined functionalist principles with regionalist concerns to produce subeconomic housing of a high aesthetic standard. However, in reality, aesthetics was disregarded for a range of house types developed by the National Building Research Institute. Of these the NE51/9 (Non-European, 1951, model 9) three-roomed house became the preferred type for the Model Township. The Group Areas Act of 1950 established racially exclusive African townships motivated by political and economic considerations advantageous to the white population. The Model Township was presented as the Africans "place in the sun", as a utopian place for growth and development towards a European standard but in reality it was engineered as areas of functional inclusion, spatial separation and political exclusion – keeping the labor force close by but separated in demarcated areas.*

In the call for papers, the keyword "polarization" was presented as referring to the effect of the Cold War that divided the world into two camps. I grew up in a country of two camps – apartheid South Africa of the white people and non-whites – "the other", people of color. In this society one was either white or not and this fact determined the degree of privilege one was afforded. In my teens, a battle, in reality a war, was fought along the borders of the Republic of South Africa. Many male figures of my white middle-class youth were conscripted to fight for the fatherland, the enemy being the rooi gevaar ("red danger" referring to Communist aid for a black population fighting for their rights). While this is the only connection this paper has with the Cold War, it is, nevertheless, a significant one. Its focus is internal polarization, and it examines the architectural and planning policies, ideologies, and programs associated with the polarization of the urban black population in the decade after the National Party (NP) Government came to power in 1948. The paper investigates the creation of technologies, aesthetics and ideologies of modernism by one pole (urbanised whites) as a specific response to the other pole (urbanising blacks). Two diverse approaches to housing for the urban black population will be presented: an architect's response and the State's response. In conclusion, the manifold themes and levels of polarization woven into this subject will be discussed.

Before the discovery of mineral wealth, South Africa had an agrarian economy with wool as its major export. The country became industrialized only at the end of the nineteenth century, thanks to diamond mining. Alluvial diamonds could easily be mined manually, but in 1871, when an immensely rich deposit in the form of a volcanic pipe was discovered, machines to extract these diamonds became necessary. Around this deposit, the first industrial town, Kimberley, was established in 1873. Blacks did not have direct access to the wealth generated by the diamond mining industry. Their entry into the new industrial realm was through fulfilling the demand for cheap labour, but they were, as much as the white population, socially and economically affected by the events of industrialization.

The riches generated by the subsequent discovery of gold magnified the social upheaval and economic boom associated with the discovery of diamonds. The gold deposits discovered on the Witwatersrand in 1886 were of a low grade but existed on a tremendous scale. Its conversion into an asset required capital and a much higher quantity of labour. The diamond mines had generated the necessary capital and mining organization for deep-level gold extraction, and the black (predominantly male) population became an essential source of labor. The urbanization of black people occurred on a scale not experienced before, later, also due to the Native's Land Act of 1913 which deprived them of their land in rural areas. Initially this labor force served the mining industry, but it soon became crucial for the developing secondary industries and commerce.

The slum became the typical neighborhood of the urbanized black population whose access to a flourishing economy and property ownership rights was progressively more restricted. This group within South African society was increasingly marginalized through the political ideology of racial segregation that originated from an imperialist sentiment. In 1945, the Native (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 was more tightly codified. The Act prescribed to local authorities where in the urban areas black people could live. It made the removal of slums and the general improvement of the living conditions of black urban dwellers the responsibility of local authorities. These authorities, generally responsible for towns and cities, were mandated to establish and regulate "locations"—separate residential areas for the black urban population. These projects were rarely successful, due to a lack of regulation and focus. To address this, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) set up the National Building Research Institute (NBRI) in 1946 to investigate how to provide low-cost urban housing in response to the postwar shortages. Following the lead of CIAM, the NBRI produced a proposal for the Minimum Standards of Accommodation in South Africa. Accepted in 1949, these standards focused on three fundamental requirements,

namely, conditions concerning health, comfort and amenities, with the ideal being to promote good citizenship. When the NP Government came to power in 1948, the ideology of complete separation and segregation between whites and non-whites was more strictly formalized, and the politics and practices of apartheid were established. The Group Areas Act of 1950 became the decisive law that lay down the principle of racial division and isolation. The Minimum Standards of Accommodation were accordingly "racialized" when, in 1951, it was modified for "non-European" housing, thereby establishing that different minimum standards applied to the white and black populations. The assumption that black people aspired to emulate a European lifestyle became a key concept in the approach to housing schemes for blacks. In 1947, P. H. Connell, a key planner for the NBRI, summed up this approach with reference to two considerations:

First, the tendency of the Native to imitate the white man's form of dwelling when he comes into permanent proximity with European settlements. A general trend such as this would seem to indicate a distinct preference on the Native's part for the type of house characteristic of the more advanced culture. .... Second, there remains the old tradition of the separate hut which is the typical Native form of building .... From the foregoing it will be seen that the action of the local authorities in casting the location in the same mould as the European suburb is reasonably in accordance with the observed tendencies and preferences of the urban Native in his present transitional stage.<sup>2</sup>

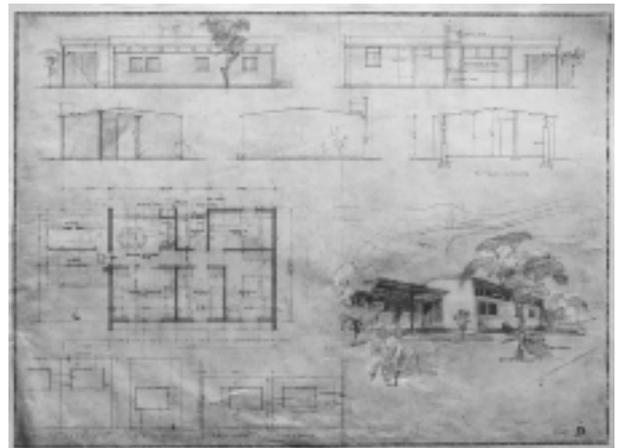
The housing policy of the NP Government, initiated in the 1950's, was driven by the following discriminatory beliefs and assumptions:

- That a different minimum standard applied in housing for urban blacks and whites, the standard for blacks being lower.
- That the poor white was of a better "class" than the poor black.
- That urban blacks aspired to a "European" lifestyle and therefore a "European" house type.

- That the European (read whites) was “culturally more advanced.”
- That urbanized blacks equated a European lifestyle with “progress.”
- That good housing would shape the urban black population into a complement of the (white) European society.

The challenge that faced designers was to give form and shape to this project from the scale of town planning down to the design of the houses themselves, the project being defined as “the urban native housing problem.” Architects were called upon to produce creative, innovative, aesthetically pleasing, and functional responses to this national problem. Alas, as is still the case, few architects responded to the challenge, which was generally presented in the form of various housing competitions. One architect’s work was consistently featured, and it often took first prize.

This architect, Hellmut Stauch, was a German who had studied design at the Ittenschule and thereafter at the Technische Hochschule, Berlin, before emigrating to South Africa in 1935. Stauch’s buildings were based on the principles of functionalism, expressed in his work and teaching through a philosophy that focused on economy in design, in particular the design of space. This translated into buildings that were tailor-made to a specific function. His fascination with the Southern African climate and landscape added a distinct and rich regionalist flavor to his work, and a unique vernacular interpretation to Modern Movement architecture in South Africa. Stauch’s work responded to a general shortage of building materials after World War II. He preferred standardized building elements, and to this end he employed a module generated from the width of a standard steel window frame. This module guided careful planning and resulted in an economy of space that in turn generated a simple, uncomplicated plan. He also favored a shallow plan and a low pitch roof to eliminate material wasted in creating unusable roof space. Northern and southern strip windows below the roofline guaranteed sufficient ventilation.



*Figure 1: Stauch’s winning entry for African housing submitted to the Institute of South African Architects, 1953 (Stauch Family Collection, Pretoria).*

He applied these principles to all his work, size being the only distinguishing factor between houses for wealthier white clients and low-cost proposals for “black housing.” His winning entry for a Non-European Housing Competition, run by the Institute of South African Architects in 1953, is presented here as an example. (Figure 1) It shows sensitivity in creating a place of habitation, a clever economy of space, and the modernist character typical of his work.

Rather than executing designs developed through various low-cost housing competitions, the National Housing Office (NHO) developed its own range of standard types of housing and made them available to local authorities. Twenty types were developed, ranging from three-room freestanding houses to one-room row houses; all of them became known by the prefix “NE51” indicating “Non-European” and the year in which they were developed, 1951. The NE51/9<sup>3</sup>, a four-room free-standing family unit, became the preferred type. Its plan was influenced by an earlier design by Stauch, similar to his winning entry for the Non-European Housing Competition referred to earlier.<sup>4</sup> However, it was reduced to its absolute minimum size and stripped of elements deemed unnecessary. Furthermore, unlike Stauch’s work with its modernist character, it

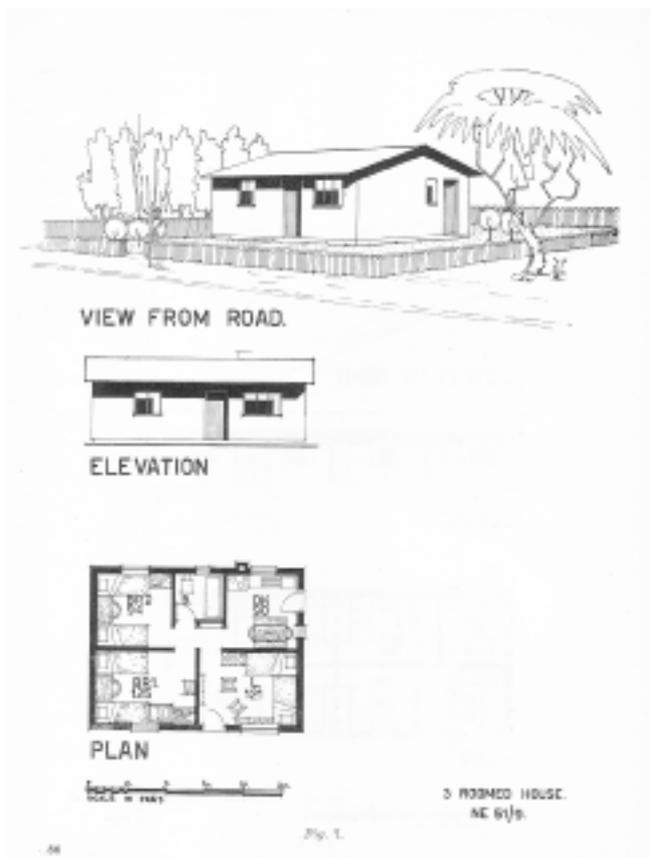


Figure 2: The NE51/9 (from D. M. Calderwood, "Native Housing in South Africa", Ph.D. diss., University of the Witwatersrand, 1953, 31).

had a stark façade with a central front door flanked by two small windows—a naïve childlike expression of a house. (Figure 2) The NE51/9 was supposed to project the underlying ideal that a stable family is the foundation of a stable community, an idea also expressed in larger scale planning principles. Paradoxically, the furniture lay-outs of these houses rarely included a double bed... The NP Government made it clear that in the development of the model types aesthetic considerations were necessarily subordinate to financial constraints, as the then Minister of Native Affairs, Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd, had fixed the cost of a "non-white house" at £250. Although cost was proposed as the real reason for its bleak and Spartan character, science, it was argued, would supposedly demonstrate its value.



Figure 3: Artist's impression of the Model Township Kwa-Thema (from D. M. Calderwood, "Native Housing in South Africa", Ph.D. diss., University of the Witwatersrand, 1953, 94).

A research program was initiated by the NBRI to provide the State with technical data in support of the appropriateness of the NE51/9, the underlying presumption being that scientific evidence would substantiate and support the validity and suitability of their solution to the housing crisis. Thus this modest dwelling became the focus of a dizzying array of extensive research projects aimed at demonstrating the validity of the minimum standards; these studies focused on furniture arrangement, natural lighting, ventilation, circulation, structural stability, rain resistance, thermal environment, etc.<sup>5</sup> It was argued that this, the model generated from the hard facts of scientific investigation, really derived from a functionalist approach to architecture.

At the same time, planners were formulating the principles of separation and control on a larger scale through the project of the Model Township<sup>6</sup>, which was presented as black people's own social space and place, and as an alternative to existing slums and "locations." One of the first such Model Townships, Kwa-Thema, was developed by the Municipality of Springs, a small town east of Johannesburg. (Figure 3) In this environment, with all the necessary amenities, such as a school, a day-care center, and a church, a social, communal and recreational life resembling the ideal pursued by the (white) European family could be developed. On 24 March 1961, Kwa-Thema was officially opened

by the then Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration and Development. The Mayor of Springs, Councilor J. A. Ellis, interviewed at this ceremony, proudly stated:

This, in my opinion, is symbolic of South Africa itself, or, shall I say, of the ultimate aim of every loyal South African – to help build and provide a home and a place in the sun for the Bantu – to give them the opportunity for separate development, to enable them, too, to become responsible citizens, and to advance gradually under the able guidance and control of the European.<sup>7</sup>

The South African Municipal Magazine proudly stated in a similar fashion that “here is a promise of what can be done to help in the solution of the biggest problem in this sub-continent—the so-called Native problem, on which the eyes of the world are focused.”<sup>8</sup>

Kwa-Thema was developed to house 37,000 inhabitants; the main housing type constructed was the NE51/9. The township was provided with sewerage, electricity and running water, had tarred roads and was supposedly “better lit than many large European towns.”<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, it was the product of black labor. The Native Building Workers Act, introduced in 1951, had set out regulations, conditions and controls under which black builders could work; and, in order to keep costs down, it had been determined that Model Townships should be constructed with black labor, albeit always under the able supervision of European artisans. This was to be the place in which blacks could get their first taste of the advantages of a European lifestyle, and the Model Township was presented as their urban utopia. But in reality it was a hugely effective and successful project with spatial segregation as its aim. A frequent problem for municipalities in setting up Model Townships was in procuring an area that was large enough to locate the township on. The law required the township to be surrounded by a “buffer strip”—a strip of five hundred meters in width between the built-up area of the township and white residential, business and industrial

areas. As summed up by a planner for the NBRI, the buffer strip was needed because “the attitude of the average European householder is that however necessary and welcome non-Europeans may be during working hours, they should nevertheless be housed at some distant spot where they will neither be seen or heard at other times.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, of the final 1728 acres bought up for the township of Kwa-Thema, 530 acres comprised the buffer strip, representing a loss of ground of approximately 30%. Finally, the issue of control led to the determination that a township should have only one main access road. In reality, the Model Township was therefore an island isolated by a no-man’s land.

Apartheid polarized the whites and non-whites, the “other,” by limiting the latter’s access to power, wealth and knowledge, and the housing and township model became the means to translate this inequality into a material reality. The Model Township became the mechanism for racial exclusion, residential separation and political and psychological segregation of the urban black population. Within the political and social order of apartheid, townships became a space and place of inequality and discrimination through a specific strategy of physical, social and economic isolation. In the contemporary material that served the propaganda machine of apartheid, the Model Township was presented as a utopian social place generated from the logic of scientific investigation. But rather than being a eutopia, a good place, it became an ou-topia, a no-place, derived from ideas about what is good for a specific society but founded on principles of separation and segregation.<sup>11</sup> The township became a heterotopia, to use a concept borrowed from Michel Foucault<sup>12</sup>; and it is used here to refer to this part of the South African social landscape, which, on the surface, resembled the familiar but was really engineered to isolate and set apart. This alternate ordering, within the political ideology of apartheid, marked the township as a place not only of otherness, but also of deferral—thus it became an effective mechanism of spatial polarization. In turn, it became the place of political resistance, spawned and fuelled by ideals of democracy and equality.

Kwa-Thema has changed very little in its fifty years of existence. At the original entrance a large Coca-Cola billboard welcomes one today. The buffer strip has been punctured in places by informal settlement, but it is still prominent, marked by the industries on its edge. The NE51/9, popularly called the “amafourroom” – meaning the house with the four rooms – is considered to be built to a higher standard than those erected under the present Government’s Reconstruction and Development Program, the RDP House. In three year’s time the NE51/9 will become protected under the Heritage Resources Act. Housing for the urban black population is still one of the biggest challenges facing South Africa and more than a decade into democracy it has become clear that the process of addressing past imbalances will be a long one. The spatial consequences of politics are unfortunately more enduring than its ideologies.

Notes

1. *The author is currently a Senior Lecturer, School of Architecture, Planning & Geomatics, University of Cape Town, South Africa*
2. *P H Connell, Sub-Economic Housing Practice in South Africa (Pretoria: CSIR National Building Research Institute, 1947): 30.*
3. *Thus the type 9.*
4. *The influence of Stauch’s work on the development of the plans of the NE51 housing types is confirmed by Shiela Nation, who worked closely with Stauch and the CSIR at this time (Shiela Nation, personal communication to the author).*
5. *Between 1948–1959, a substantial amount of the research projects undertaken by the NBRI (24 Bulletin articles, 3 reports) focused on aspects related to low-cost African housing.*
6. *For a comprehensive description of the Model Township see D M Calderwood, “Native Housing in South Africa” (Ph.D. diss., University of the Witwatersrand, 1953) and J E Mathewson, The Establishment of an Urban Bantu Township (Pretoria: J L van Schaik, 1957).*
7. *Anonymous, “Kwa-Thema – A Magnificent Enterprise”, The South African Municipal Magazine, April, 1961, 10.*
8. *Ibid., 9.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. *R Mitchell, “Kwa-Thema – The Construction of Native Housing by Native Building Workers”, The Institute of Municipal Engineers Annual Journal 1 (1954): 87.*
11. *This reading is inspired by K Hetherington, The Badlands of Modernity - Heterotopia and Social Ordering (London: Routledge, 1997), viii.*
12. *“Of other spaces: utopias and heterotopias” in Rethinking Architecture – A Reader in Cultural Theory, ed. N Leach (London: Routledge, 1997), 350 – 356.*

## Reconstruction and Rebuilding

Reconstruction after World War II typically refers to the literal rebuilding of countries and regions ravaged by combat before 1945. In a broader sense, the term encompasses interventions made in response to postwar poverty or prosperity: electrification; urban, rural and regional renewal; creation of campuses and office parks; mass suburbanization; planning and design for mass leisure on both the capitalist and socialist models; international exchange and the movement of individuals across national borders for purposes of reconstruction; responses to postwar social, economic, and cultural conditions such as changes in the place of women in the home or workplace; and the conversion of materials and construction methods from military to civilian purposes. Finally, reconstruction can refer to the postwar situation and programs of the avant-garde, which now found itself facing a concrete reality that could not but change its avant-garde character.

Reconstruction also triggered destruction, including that of historic buildings. The razing of historic buildings and city centers in the name of Modernism; Modernist strategies for the stabilization of ruins for the purposes of commemoration; the treatment of the preservable past by Modernist architects, including international campaigns to save canonical Modernist buildings (the Villa Savoye, the Imperial Hotel) in the context of reconstruction; and the preservation/rehabilitation problems raised by the closing of industrial or military sites developed for the purpose of reconstruction are all being addressed here.

The determining role of specific pragmatic physical and social considerations in the generation of Modernist postwar reconstruction and the part played by models and legacies of the interwar period is the thread that runs through

our seven studies of European and Asian postwar reconstruction.

The seemingly eclectic architecture designed for postwar Dunkirk by the team of reconstruction architects headed by Grand Prix winner Jean Niermans, is, according to Phillipe Longuet, a “brand” of typological, architectural modernity that is closer to the interwar architecture of the “utopia of the signified” than to that of postwar “technical neutrality” (Tafuri and Dal Co) and far superior to the latter. Its unsuspected and sometimes radical Modernism was derived from the model of interwar social-democratic housing in Amsterdam and Vienna and an extremely pragmatic response to conditions on the ground, one whose only principle was the total rejection of Corbusian principles.

Yvan Delemontey challenges conventional wisdom by demonstrating that Auguste Perret’s use of industrialized techniques for the reconstruction of the city of Le Havre was not the “ultimate demonstration” of the compatibility of his construction technique of the concrete frame with postwar notions of normalization, standardization and prefabrication (Peter Collins), but rather its undoing. Although Perret’s readiness to allow his prewar system to stand the test of postwar conditions validated his position that the building site and not –as Modernists believed– the factory was the place for the industrialization of construction, it also led to the revelation of the system’s inherently traditionalist character, specifically its monolithism and its dependence on craftsmanship, unintentionally paving the way for the concrete frame’s diametric structural opposite, the ubiquitous load-bearing panel of the 1960’s.

Proposals for the postwar reconstruction of Paris from its initial occupation by the Germans in 1940 to the era of President Mitterrand’s Grand Projets of the 1980’s and 1990’s have, Tami Hausman argues, shared a common vision of “national renovation.” Because national renovation twinned modernization with patrimony and destruction with

reconstruction, it imbued all realized reconstructions of Paris with a troubling ambiguity.

Charissa Terranova argues that the “irredentist urbanism” –the negotiated cross-border city rebuilding and economic transformations in the French and German parts of Alsace-Lorraine that were the spatial expression of their postwar rapprochement—served as the laboratory of a truly revolutionary housing type, the architectural and urban combination that would later be called the “grand ensemble,” and an equally revolutionary redefinition of the notion of the “nation-state,” the European Community. The new housing type created by the Beaux-Arts architect Eugène Beaudoin for the projected housing development of the “City of Rotterdam” in Strasbourg became not only the instrument of the physical rebuilding of France and “greater Europe,” but a constituent element of the concept of European reconstruction itself.

In his study of the postwar production of the Public Works Department in the colony of Singapore, Wong Yunn Chi identifies a fundamental shift from interwar “symbolic modernity” to “welfare modernity” which was the result/due to the postwar Department inheritance of its prewar historical function and to specific pragmatic considerations, and not to any intentional Modernist program. Ironically, today, this Modernism’s success as an architecture of postwar identity means that it resembles earlier “symbolic modernity,” a status that endangers its preservation.

Postwar Modernism as the continuation of interwar Modernism is the central theme of Kenji Watanabe’s study of Hideo Kosaka’s important contribution to the development of postwar Japan. By maintaining the Modernist doctrines of rationalization, functionalism, and internalization that were the legacy of his interwar mentor, Tetsuro Yoshida, Kosaka avoided both the excesses of interwar nationalism and, simultaneously, the self-imposed impoverishing constraints of postwar “bureaucratic architecture.”

Hielkje Zijstra shows that the cooperative organization of Rotterdam’s Groothandelsgebouw (Wholesale Building) not only made it possible to construct Europe’s largest building at a time of immediate postwar scarcity and in the midst of an almost totally destroyed city; it also created the possibility of internal design flexibility that made it home to the city’s most important design firms. Today, while landmarking is preserving what remains of the building’s original physical and aesthetic qualities, it has brought the cooperative organization to an end, with the resulting loss of the building’s original social and cultural character as well as of its design clientele—who are leaving it for the still unrenovated parts (in 2004) of the interwar Van Nelle factory.

Two papers neatly dovetail the subjects of Poland’s postwar reconstruction of its prewar historic architecture and the current preservation of its postwar Modernism. David Snyder demonstrates that the reconstruction of historic Warsaw — which involved as much destruction as reconstruction—employed an image-based “old/new” and “before/after” model whose ultimate purpose was the “management of meaning” (David Crowley) in such a manner that the socialist state appears to be the logical destiny of Polish history. For Grazyna Hryncewicz-Lamber, the old/new dialectic was used to introduce sharp dividing lines between modern structures and historic areas to the former’s disadvantage, making the preservation of pre-1975 buildings unlikely without major efforts of historical reevaluation and innovative proposals for suitable preservation criteria.

Two papers demonstrated that the challenges reconstruction poses can engender successful solutions.

Paola Ascione and Marisa Zuccaro describe the resolution of the many challenges—physical, planning, curatorial and ideological—posed by the reconstruction of the Fascist Mostra d’Oltremare, the permanent “Exhibition of Italian Overseas Territories,” in Naples. For the authors, the ongoing rebuilding of



*Reconstruction of Le Havre. Traditional construction of one of the ISAI towers, Place de l'Hôtel-de-Ville. (Fonds André Le Donné, Archives municipales du Havre).*

this compendium of buildings by both “academics” and “rationalist” architects and the restoration of its in situ work of art and artistically crafted decorative detailing devoted to the celebration of the Fascist colonial empire represents a “uniquely significant episode of postwar building policy and architectural culture.”

Britt Wisth retraces the history of the once “model” Stockholm suburb of Vällingby from its creation in 1952, through a period of deterioration due to unplanned modifications and a decline of its inhabitants satisfaction with its Modernism, to the emergence of a new consensus that is driving its current conservation and reconstruction. The

suburb’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary was the catalyst for a combined conservation and modernization plan that, in 2004, had every promise of successfully preserving the remaining plans and exterior detailing, while assuring the viability of its commercial center and the comfort of the suburb’s inhabitants.

This Swedish success is counterbalanced by considerable difficulties, according to Sonja Vijden. She surveys the challenges posed by the aging of Swedish postwar Modern housing. This comes at a time when there is a real need of their rehabilitation but when their undergirding Modernist ideals are the object of severe criticism and their “fastidious and plain architecture” is unappreciated by residents and the general public, alike. Her history of the rebuilding of housing estates in accordance with current architectural trends from Postmodernism to Neo-Modernism and ‘Sustainability’ is only one of several features that makes this paper a model for studies of other national situations.



## The Reconstruction of Dunkirk

Philippe Louguet

*The reconstruction of Dunkirk following the Second World War was particularly extensive, covering 80% of the urban fabric. It took place under the direction of a coordinating town planner, Leveau, and a chief architect, Jean Niermans, working with a team of thirty young architects.*

*Leveau implemented a programme, essentially based on the pre-war structure, to modernise the town without breaking away too far from its history. At the same time, he also paid close attention to urban land use and completely transformed its status: the land on which blocks were built became collective and developed as gardens.*

*Niermans gave instructions that were implemented by his assistants: the open block structure, a generally low outline, a distribution placing utility rooms onto the street side, with living rooms and bedrooms giving onto the gardens (he believed that orientation was less important than providing a level of intimacy); as well as a few elements of vocabulary which were interpreted in a fairly flexible manner: concrete screen walls, framings to openings, roof terraces, vaulted passageways, etc.*

*Although Leveau and Niermans agreed on the garden approach, they disagreed deeply as to the urban structure, with Niermans defending a classical Beaux Arts composition and Leveau imposing a rational but more flexible layout.*

*Nonetheless, despite these difficulties, the reconstruction of Dunkirk reveals a remarkable level of unity, a fairly innovative and modern character and, above all, a quality of urban spaces and architectural detail that was rare at the time. They also made use of unusual materials: glazed red terra-cotta tiles, varnished ceramics, blue quartzite, etc....*

## Organizing the Rebuilding of French Towns

In France, teams of architects and town planners directly appointed and paid by the Ministry of Reconstruction and Town Planning (MRU) were set up after the Second World War. Represented locally by a "délégué départemental à la reconstruction," their members had civil servant status during the reconstruction activities, with the position of head town planner and head architect usually held by two different individuals. This was the case in Dunkirk, but not in Maubeuge, where Andre Lurçat filled both roles alone.

The head town planner was in charge of the overall reconstruction project and determined the street plan, alignments and block guidelines. The MRU had recommended not rebuilding according to the prewar lots, and it published a brochure intended for town planners and architects that advocated a sweeping modernization of the rebuilt towns.

The head town planner was also responsible for regrouping a city's land parcels, a power needed to be able to implement the ministry's directives, which required a system bordering on co-ownership of property. This principle was applied in Dunkirk. To understand why the idea of land co-ownership made such advances, it is necessary to look back at the context of the period. In the war's aftermath, a consensus arose in France around the idea of solidarity, an "all-for-one, one-for-all" concept of society, as reflected, for example, in the implementation of universal health insurance. The consensus grew out from the urgent situation to hand, especially the housing crisis. It brought together Communists and Gaullists, and the dissident Christian Democrats who had joined the Resistance, in a provisional government led by De Gaulle following his triumphant return to France after the Germans left in 1944.

The period was marked by the growth of cooperative systems stemming directly from what Tafuri and Dal Co have called "the ideology of social-democratic cooperativism."<sup>1</sup> The alliance with

the Communists was ambiguous, however, and collapsed in early 1946. On the specific issue of city land ownership, conflicts were likely between a city's head town planner and its head architect, who would each be following the ministry's directives. The MRU viewed the division of urban land into a pattern of private lots bequeathed by history as an impediment to the modernization of towns. The change in land status, which some people felt was a forced "collectivization" even though it did not involve housing units, later had a very negative effect on how inhabitants viewed reconstruction. Wealthier citizens wanted their private gardens back; in some people's minds, solidarity only went so far.

The head architects set the design guidelines that the group leaders had to follow. They monitored the projects of the group leaders, who were the real artisans of the operations. The group leaders actually designed the buildings, which were built by a few construction architects. The idea was for all city architects, recognized by the Order of Architects (founded in France in 1941), to take part in the reconstruction in various capacities. For practical reasons, one or two assistants often aided the head architects.

### **Organizing the Reconstruction of Dunkirk**

In Dunkirk the head town planner was Théo Leveau, and the head architect was Jean Niermans. The two men had met before the war—they graduated in the same year from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris—but it could not be said that they held one another in high regard. Leveau was basically a town planner; he also had an interest in gardens and had studied horticulture. He designed the plan to ring Lille with a belt of gardens, somewhat in the spirit of Scharoun in Berlin. The architect Jean Niermans was already known before the war; he had won the Grand Prix de Rome in 1929 and become "Architecte en Chef des Bâtiments Civils et des Palais Nationaux" in 1933. He and his brother, Edouard, designed the Théâtre du Trocadéro and made names for themselves with the Puteaux town hall.

In Dunkirk, Jean Niermans had two assistants and oversaw ten group leaders, each of whom supervised three construction architects on average, making around thirty architects altogether. The head architect appointed the assistant architects and group leaders, who were often young Parisian practitioners known for their talent. The construction architects, on the other hand, were older, local architects. Among them, two men stand out. The first is Bruno Elkouken, a group leader who was older than the young practitioners. He had already made a name for himself before the war with the Paris cinema "Le Raspail," and was the only relatively well-known figure involved in the project other than Jean Niermans. He seems to have ended his career in Dunkirk. The second is Jean Roussel, Niermans' young assistant, whom the ministry had initially sent to Dunkirk to set up temporary emergency shelters after he returned from a German POW camp in 1945. Roussel was a student at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts before the war. With only his final project left to do, he was about to graduate when war broke out, but in the Ecole system the degree project had to be a masterpiece, requiring several years of work. Roussel actually finished his degree in captivity because a "Patron" (as professors in the Ecole des Beaux-Arts architecture section were called) who was also a prisoner in the camp directed his studies. The Ecole validated his degree on his return and Roussel subsequently graduated.

### **Town Planning: A Source of Conflict Between Town Planner and Head Architect**

The differences of opinion between head planner Leveau and head architect Niermans are a matter of record, and even prompted Niermans' resignation. The conflict sheds light on the two men's diverging views of architectural modernity: Niermans articulated what he believed was a modern language using the principles of neo-classical composition taught at the Beaux-Arts, whereas Leveau, by emphasizing town planning to the detriment of composition, was profoundly modern. Incorporating a degree of pragmatism, his

work takes into account the town's specific needs within the metropolitan area's new postwar scale. He had a more flexible view of the relationship between architecture and town planning, stressing the issues of traffic circulation and urban management.

Leveau's plans focused mainly on the functional organization and urban connections in the form of road networks that linked all the towns in the greater urban area to one another, thereby serving the urban fabric. As far as the scale of the blocks was concerned, Leveau widened the streets and imposed an open-block structure. Such planning seems to have been beyond Niermans' understanding. "My colleague Leveau's conception of town planning deliberately moves away from any concern with alignments, perspectives and monumental landscapes," Niermans said. "He recommended winding streets, no distant perspectives, highly concentrated effects, in short a conception that is very different from everything we learned at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts." It is certain that Niermans could not understand Leveau's ideas, and that he probably unintentionally distorted them. Even at the scale of the block, the comb-shaped plan that he designed for the Carnot block, and which Niermans had to follow, contradicted Niermans' backward-looking assessment of Leveau's town planning. In reality what separated the two men was Leveau's functionalist vision of the modern town and Niermans' stylistic vision of a composed town.

### **Niermans' Architectural Principles**

The principles Niermans laid down can be seen in the two housing developments he directly designed: the Sainte Barbe (Figure 1) and Carnot blocks, which were built on government-owned, decommissioned army property. The French government funded them directly, independently of war damage; Le Corbusier had used the same procedure to build the Cité Radieuse in Marseille. This form of operation gave a free hand for experimentation, because, unlike the reconstruction of destroyed buildings, they required no dialogue



*Figure 1 : Jean Niermans' passageway porch of the Sainte Barbe Blocks, 1998.*

with the inhabitants displaced by the bombing. Niermans therefore had free rein to express his ideas.

The principles that Niermans set forth are a low general skyline, open-block structure, layouts that located the service rooms on the street side and living areas and bedrooms on the garden side, and the implementation of a relatively simple vocabulary: terrace roofs, tall vertical lines marked by screen walls and drying areas, masonry bay frames with a stucco finish acting as a counterpoint to the brickwork of the façades, passageway porches, and terra cotta keystone sculptures.

These principles were fairly limited in scope, not too restrictive, and, above all, innovative; they reflected the architectural style of most early 1950's housing, with tall vertical lines of screen walls masking the drying areas and concrete-rendered masonry bay frames. The Sainte-Barbe sketches show how Niermans tried to develop various roof solutions before giving up. In an interview long afterward, he said that it was not a dogmatic position that prompted him to reject pitched roofs. "Most people would have liked to see roofs that looked like the ones they had before," the architect commented. "But reconstruction money was tight, so we had to find a compromise to put up buildings that did not

look rundown right from the start. I set aside funds to put pitched roofs on the buildings around the bell tower, the city hall and, to a lesser extent, near Place Jean Bart to ensure that the area blended in with the older structures. The buildings next to the church were also in that area and I pictured them with pitched roofs as well. But for the rest of the city, especially the rebuilt sections, flat roofs were the only solution.” The architect’s stand seemed pragmatic but probably masked cultural choices. Indeed, Roussel contradicted his version. “What was Niermans doing in all that? First, he applied terrace-roof architecture. He came in for some criticism at first, but that was the only way he pictured it. For example, for Jean Bart High School, which we designed together, he ran into trouble with the Ministry of Education because of the flat roof. So he built a pitched one, but hidden behind an acroterion so that you could hardly see it.”

The rejection of pitched roofs is a trademark of modern architecture, but Niermans’ reference is not especially avant-garde. This episode recalls the Italian style fashionable in the eighteenth century, reflected in the Palais Royal, the only reference that the architect explicitly made in Dunkirk’s reconstruction. The organization of blocks consciously imposed by Niermans was based on the Palais Royal. “If you imagine a city ... where you have all the exteriors, shops and utilitarian spaces open to circulation and exposed to noise on one side,” he wrote, “and where on the contrary indoor life is centered on gardens, and if, moreover, those gardens connect one block to another by passageways under the apartments, it is reasonable to assume that a reconstruction might have an appearance, and especially an inner life, supporting shops, businesses and noise on one side, and the coziness of life and green spaces for children on the other.”

### **Niermans’ Architectural Language**

The modernity of Niermans’ architectural language in Dunkirk’s reconstruction is more closely related to interwar social-democratic architecture

than to the avant-gardes or CIAM. References include a continuous connection between the horizontal and vertical rhythms inherited from the North and South extensions of Amsterdam and Viennese “Höfe,” backed up by a vocabulary borrowed from those buildings, such as rhythmic balconies (Amsterdam), walls with concrete bands running across them (Karl Marx Hof), large urban porches (Karl Marx Hof, Karl Seitz Hof), and a system of standard-size door and window frames that the Amsterdam architects had devised well before the issue officially arose in France. Moreover, the idea of collective land ownership was similar to that of Vienna’s “Höfe,” though with some differences. Garages usually replaced common-use facilities such as laundrettes, for example.

We know from Roussel’s account that in the late 1940’s the architects who rebuilt Dunkirk had traveled together to the Netherlands to see housing in the interwar extensions of Berlage’s plan in North and South Amsterdam. Niermans must have been impressed by these apartment buildings, which bore some stylistic resemblance to the 1934 Marius Jacotot School that he and his brother had designed in Puteaux.

Niermans’ architectural language could also be partially imagined as continuing the eclectic vocabulary of the interwar period, when horizontal rhythms replaced vertical ones, but the relationship between concrete and brick played a role similar to that of brick and stone in eclectic architecture. Niermans appears to have interpreted the modernity imposed by the MRU as a balance between horizontal and vertical lines marked by features such as corner windows. This vision is probably what led him to use brick, despite that fact that, contrary to what he believed, the material was seldom seen in prewar Dunkirk, where most of the buildings were given a stucco finish: “I wanted a very unified city with a single color,” he wrote. “Brick being the customary material in the North, I pictured the whole city of Dunkirk rebuilt of brick, exposed brick, without any stucco, which denatures buildings, soils easily and at the end of the day makes the buildings look grim.”

But there is a paradox in wanting to pursue an eclectic approach through modern symbolism by rejecting the idea of the “beautiful street façade.” As we have already mentioned, Niermans defended his position by recalling the “closed character of the street side and the openness to the garden” at the Palais Royal.

However, even the minister, Claudius Petit, despite being a supporter of Le Corbusier’s radicalism, was shocked when visiting Dunkirk. On February twenty-second 1951, the press reported dissatisfaction with the façades, which were likened to “stamp albums.” Niermans himself recounted the episode; Petit, he wrote, “...reached Avenue Sainte-Barbe, took one look at the buildings, shook his head, and said to me, ‘Your architecture, sir, is stamp collection architecture.’” Niermans did not dwell on the incident, but Roussel said he started over again from scratch (Sainte-Barbe Nord). “He was a little embarrassed by being criticized in the middle of the construction site,” his assistant wrote. “He stopped the building work, had the façades covered up with tarpaulin, tore everything down and started all over again with much more open architecture and large balconies.”

By and large, except for hostility to Le Corbusier’s theories, the Niermans brothers’ architecture did not follow a specific doctrine. “I refused to design and construct tall Le Corbusier-type buildings,” Jean Niermans wrote. “The gardens between the houses would have been dead, empty spaces and... the streets would not have been lively enough.” Characterized by a modern style, which by and large co-existed in their work with the French style of the 1930’s, a cross between Art Deco and neo-classical trends, their architecture bore the trademark of this eclectic doctrine. Their body of work shows that, unlike Le Corbusier and many of their fellow Beaux-Arts graduates, they respected the eclectic idea of varying stylistic differences to match a building’s use and purpose: a town hall would be designed to look like a palace; a school’s entrance façade would have the institutional character imparted by classical symmetry; while

the classroom section would feature a modern, asymmetrical composition.

Although Jean Niermans focused on domestic architecture during his studies in Rome, he did not design any prewar housing. In addition to the consensus around open blocks, what remains most genuinely modern about his work at Dunkirk is the view that the comfort of the housing units mattered more than anything else. This brand of modernity was a departure from the ideas of the CIAM, which emphasized a layout around a garden rather than orientation.

### **The Red and Blue Blocks**

The projects built by Niermans’ assistants and the architect group leaders are probably the most original aspects of Dunkirk’s reconstruction. Their features include “hanging sidewalks” (external gangways) (Figure 2), “individual buildings” (garden houses with a separate apartment on the upper floor), “vaulted passageways” (connecting two blocks), and, especially, a rather remarkable balance in the



*Figure 2: Jean Roussel’s “hanging sidewalks” (external gangways) in the red blocks, 1998.*



Figure 3: Bruno Elkouken's red block, 1998.

transitions between public, common, and private spaces. These undertakings emphasized urban and architectural experimentation by differentiating between the private and public areas. Some compromises had to be found with the bombed-out inhabitants: for example in one block, in a departure from the general system of co-ownership, private gardens line the central common area at the foot of the buildings.

The architecture of those blocks seeks to move away from the eclectic trend, and especially from the classicism of 1930's French Art Deco, by using transitions of scale, awnings and curvilinear floor plans where the buildings follow the street network's fluidity, while, at the same time, using sophisticated detail based on modern architectural language. (Figure 3) Here, the architecture sometimes tends towards Expressionistic experimentation, especially in the use of nautical motifs, drawing on the Amsterdam school more than Niermans had.

Moreover, certain specific features became widespread in the area known as the "red blocks." The rectangular terra cotta slab is the basis of their entire system of dimensions, alongside the glass brick that Elkouken had already used in the same spirit in 1934: in any event, the material was already commonly employed by that time.

By and large this architecture also flowed from the prewar debate by taking sides with what Tafuri and Dal Co call a "utopia of the signified," which they oppose to "the utopia of technical neutrality"<sup>2</sup> that was to dominate the postwar period. The "blue blocks" built on the beach are characterized by a lack of decoration, a favorable east-west orientation, and a staggered arrangement, giving every unit a view of the North Sea. Only this late development evinces a more radical modernity, thanks to its relatively original typology.

Today, over and beyond the debates about modernity, one can immediately sense the architect's pleasure in the typological richness and detail, as well as an integration of urban elements that provided areas for walking around. The urban experience is enhanced by the façades lining the streets, and by the possibilities available to stroll under covered galleries, cross blocks, and enjoy the treatment of ground-floor exteriors, measured public-private contrasts between passageways, outdoor stairways, and the overall scale. But Dunkirk's reconstruction is a victim of its history: the detail is fragile because of the reinforced concrete cornice outline, and co-ownership acts as an impediment to its conservation, for now all the owners must reach an agreement before any work can be done on the common areas.

Notes

1. TAFURI Manfredo DAL CO Francesco,  
*Architecture contemporaine, Histoire mondiale  
de l'architecture*, ed. Berger-Levrault, Paris  
1981
2. *Ibidem*

*All photos by the author.*



## The Reconstruction of Le Havre (1945–59): Perret Confronts Industrialized Construction, or the Demise of the Frame

Yvan Delemontey

*The reconstruction of Le Havre in France by Auguste Perret and his team was without doubt one of the most pioneering building programmes in Europe in the immediate post-war period. The many technical and constructional innovations tested there will foreshadow the future industrialization of the Building. Notions of normalization, standardization and prefabrication extolled at the time by the French authorities appear to find, in Perret's modular architecture, their ideal formal expression. But is structural rationalism in such perfect accord with industrial process in the second half of the twentieth century?*

*Our first hypothesis is that, on the contrary, the confrontation with industrialization poses something of a direct challenge to the architecture of the French master, an episode which will upset the very basis of his doctrine.*

*Our second hypothesis is that the denial of this challenge heralds the final disappearance, under pressure from technology, of the reinforced concrete frame, the fundamental expression of his architecture in a constructional sense and until that time the paragon of architectural modernity among the international avant-garde.*

*The climax of a long career as well as an architectural testament, the reconstruction of Le Havre is first and foremost a pivotal work, announcing the end of an epoch and the beginning of a new era. In considering the technical question, one may go some way in helping to deal with the current problem of the conservation of entire towns which, by virtue of their historic importance can*

*claim entitlement, like Le Havre today, to probable Unesco world heritage status.*

The reconstruction of Le Havre in France by Auguste Perret and his team was one of the most pioneering building programs in Europe in the immediate postwar period. The many technical and constructional innovations tested there foreshadow the future industrialization of the building trades. Notions of normalization, standardization, and prefabrication extolled at the time by the French authorities appear to find in Perret's modular architecture their ideal formal expression. Yet, is the rebuilding of Le Havre, as Peter Collins argues in *Concrete*, his famous work devoted to Perret, truly "[...] the ultimate demonstration of the applicability of Rational Classicism to twentieth-century building techniques?"<sup>1</sup>

Analysis of the three great projects undertaken successively by Perret and his team in the rebuilt city – the state-funded housing development in the Place de l'Hôtel-de-Ville, the Porte Océane, and the South Seafront – will allow us to show that, on the contrary, the confrontation with industrialization poses something of a direct challenge to his architecture and his doctrine. In fact, the rebuilding of Le Havre, Perret's greatest work, heralds the final disappearance, in the face of advancing technology, of the reinforced concrete frame, the fundamental expression of his architecture in a constructional sense and until that time the paragon of architectural modernity.

### **The State Housing Development in the Place de l'Hôtel-de-Ville: Innovation Within Technical Continuity.**

Designed and built between 1945 and 1953, the state housing development in Place de l'Hôtel-de-Ville is the first of the architectural projects realized by the "Le Havre reconstruction studio."

The design, occupying six symmetrically arranged blocks, is based on the idea of a low-rise frontage of three-stories extending along three sides of a vast rectangular plaza. At the back of each block stands a nine-storey tower connected by a shopping arcade on one level, while in the center there are gardens under which are situated underground garages. The 560 dwelling units were meant as “pilot projects,” both in terms of the rationalization of building, and in terms of new standards of comfort. Hence the design as a whole – the dimensions of the block, the lengths and widths of the buildings and roadways – was to be organized around a single 6.24 meter grid and thereafter extended right across the city. In this way, the rhythm of the grid, determining that of the reinforced concrete framework with its uniform span, allows the normalization, standardization, and prefabrication of the building components.

If such concerns with economy and construction were new to the majority of French architects at the time, for Perret they were fundamental to his architectural doctrine. Indeed, since the end of the 1920's he had been setting out clearly and according to the rules of classical grammar the principles of his structural rationalism, a modern synthesis of nineteenth century rationalist trends – Viollet-le-Duc's neo-Gothic and Guadet's neo-classicism. Based on the material disassociation of structure and envelope, construction is to be made up of an imposing, strongly expressed frame. This skeleton encloses the infilling, comprising varied elements adapted to the individual functions that they perform: window openings, glazed panels, concrete slabs. If the former must necessarily be massive, durable, and unchanging, the infillings are the opposite: “partitions made of light, detachable materials.”<sup>2</sup> Whereas the skeleton, an expression of the basic modular grid of the building as well as of concrete's monolithic quality, can only be cast in situ, the frames of the openings, the façade elements inserted in slots, the cornices, are eminently suited to prefabrication and assembly. Perret's architecture, while establishing a genuine Gestalt of prefabrication and heralding the more flexible modular systems of the 1950's

and 1960s, is as much about “monolithism” and structural continuity as it is about attachment and assembly.

Although a precursor of prefabrication in France, Perret did not become an advocate of industrialization. Unlike Le Corbusier, Marcel Lods, or even Walter Gropius, who all urge the adoption of an industrialization modelled on hi-tech manufacturing such as that found in the automobile and aviation industries, Perret remains strongly attached to traditional methods of construction. He anchors the process of prefabrication in ancestral practice and in the manual traditions of the building trades, as evidenced, for example, by his persistent use of infillings made up of small size components that can be handled by highly skilled workers. The building site, which some would like to see transformed solely into a place of assembly, clean and orderly in the image of the modern factory, remains for Perret the real field of experiment, a place busy with that chaotic, feverish, muddy activity in which architecture takes shape.

Work on the state-sponsored housing blocks began in 1947. The local press immediately paid tribute to the boldness of the means of production. In fact, careful study of photographs of the site yields a different picture from that presented in the newspapers of the time, since the site differs very little from those of the pre-war period.<sup>3</sup> If the skeleton is cast in situ in the traditional way using timber formwork, the ceilings and the various infilling elements are prefabricated on site before being individually installed by the workmen. Nor is the use of equipment on site any more modern: there are neither large mobile cranes mounted on trucks, nor batch plants, nor metal scaffolding such as one generally finds on public works sites of the period. (Figure 1)

In fact, the innovative aspect is found primarily in the general use in these dwelling units of construction techniques associated with comfort – techniques tried and tested by Perret since the 1920's – and in the appearance of a variety of



*Figure 1: Traditional construction of one of the ISAI towers, Place de l'Hôtel-de-Ville. (Fonds André Le Donné, Archives municipales du Havre).*

modern conveniences. Particular care is conferred on the thermal and soundproofing qualities of the buildings. Thus, the windows are double-glazed and the infill panels in bush-hammered concrete are manufactured using a three-layer system incorporating clinker blocks and a plaster panel separated by cavities. Soundproofing of the ceilings is assured using a bed of sand laid on the concrete slab, over which parquet is placed on a layer of bitumen. The buildings incorporate novel features that in later decades will be found in all housing, such as waste disposal chutes and prefabricated kitchen units.

The fact that industrialization was praised as an important feature of the project reveals more

about the theoretical discourse of the time than it does about the reality on the ground. In truth, the situation reflects the general scarcity of materials and labor that continued in France up until the early 1950's, a situation that encouraged the use of well-tried solutions that tended to be cheaper and more efficient. Ultimately, building costs remained high and building times lengthy: although construction began in 1947, the first inhabitants moved in only at the end of 1950.

#### **The Porte Océane: A Unique Experiment in Total Prefabrication.**

The second great project of Perret's team is the imposing Porte Océane. Situated at the intersection of two major urban axes, the 273 dwellings were designed and built between 1949 and 1956. Forming a monumental gateway between city and ocean, the volumes of the composition are symmetrically arranged: at the front, two five-story blocks advance towards the sea before turning sharply towards one another to form a windbreak. At the rear, twin towers of fourteen stories arising from a plaza complete the ensemble.

But it is the constructional aspect of the work which is particularly interesting.<sup>4</sup> While the whole comprises a single composition, the blocks at the north end differ in execution from those at the south. While the latter are built in the traditional way, the treatment of the north end employs a new procedure of total prefabrication, with structural components and infill panels made in the factory. Here the "Portiques" process developed by the Paris firm Monod is employed, the principle of which is to prefabricate entirely the various parts of the superstructure: vertical and horizontal supports, string courses, façade pieces, cornices, etc.

After curing the various elements were brought from the factory, five kilometers from Le Havre, to the site, where they were mounted and assembled. Vertical supports, prefabricated in one piece measuring the full height of the story, are first raised up using a crane and then set in place. The

bottom end of each post incorporates a steel tenon designed to lock securely into a tube fitted into the top end of the post below. It is then possible to insert the infilling units. Then the beams of the façade and horizontal dividing members, which have built-in armatures that anchor them to the posts at either end, are placed in position. Once in place, the façade and interior beams receive the smaller prefabricated joists, and between these are inserted the infill blocks. Finally, the concrete slab is cast in place on top of the prefabricated elements forming the topping of the floor, stabilizing the entire assembly. The process then starts again for subsequent stories all the way up to the roof. (Figure 2)

In addition to the fact that Perret employs here these heavy duty prefabrication techniques for the first time, there are two reasons why this work breaks open the constructional and conceptual logic of his architecture. The first concerns monolithism. Even if the architectural vocabulary is unchanged in the two towers of Porte Océane, which remain perfectly identical, the monolithism of structure to which this vocabulary lays claim is no longer guaranteed, because of the use of separate, assembled components rather than continuous casting. If the things that attract Perret to reinforced concrete are its incombustibility, its inertness,



*Figure 2 : Erection of the prefabricated framework in situ, Porte Océane Nord. (Photo F. Fernez, Fonds André Hermant, Archives municipales du Havre).*

and the economy of execution that it suggests, he is also attracted by the means of production. Indeed, in a work of architecture structure must be expressed through form. But its essence must also be expressed. The essence of reinforced concrete is its monolithism. Even if the protruding armatures are tied together to produce a statically monolithic whole, this is not an expression of the intrinsic properties of the material.

The second reason pertains to the order in which the different elements of the construction are carried out; and this order is overturned during the successive phases of construction. In traditional reinforced concrete construction, the framework – Perret’s “sovereign shelter” – is an indivisible unit, something that has to be built first in order to house the infilling components. But here the framework no longer has this status because the load bearing and non-load bearing members are erected at the same time. This new logic of production at the building site defies the fundamental notion that the structure should exist before the envelope; the latter, now assembled during the same sequence, actually loses its role as “infilling.” Henceforth, the need to assemble all the elements of structure and envelope story by story becomes the factor that dictates how the building site, with the crane now as the crucial element, evolves. The clarity and truth of its working methods that architecture formerly expressed are here sacrificed to the more prosaic demands of productivity.

For these reasons, the building at the north end of Porte Océane is an important sign of an early challenge to Perret’s language, even if, for the time being, the readability of that language is preserved.

### **The South Seafront: Technical Refinements and Serial Architecture.**

The final project of the Perret team at Le Havre, the South Seafront, was designed and built between 1951 and 1959. With over 1000 dwelling units it was the largest of the reconstruction sites and,

by virtue of its position at the entrance to the port, needed to constitute a spectacular architectural ensemble stretching to the southern end of the city. From the beginning, the project also had to satisfy the demands of economy and speed set forth by the "Secteur industrialisé" of the national construction program, established by the Ministry of Reconstruction and Town Planning. To achieve this goal, it was necessary to impose a system of collective discipline in which the conception and standardization of the design was developed from the start through a close association of the architects, the engineers, and the contractors, who proposed their own methods of construction.

As for the methods of construction, it could be said that they combine traditional techniques with new tools.<sup>5</sup> If the components of the frame are cast in situ in the traditional way, substantive improvements are required in the equipment used. Everything is given over to the single aim of improving productivity with the maximum use of repetition in the tasks carried out on site. Thus, posts are cast in one-piece metal forms to their full length and hoisted into place using a crane. Beams are also cast using metal formwork which, by virtue of its rigidity, ensures an almost perfect contour and finish for each concrete element. Finally, the reinforced concrete ceilings are cast in a new type of metal form. Derived from the "Rubbertoll" system, these comprise adjustable self-supporting forms in sheet metal for the casting of the base and ribs of the slab. The arrangement, in which load-bearing elements of the formwork itself are independent of those elements that support the rib during setting of the concrete, makes it possible to remove the greater part of the metalwork just two to three days after the concrete is cast so that it can quickly be reused elsewhere. For the infilling of the façades, the "Agglogiro" system is employed. (Figure 3) Developed by the firm of Ossude, this system uses large, one-piece panels manufactured to the dimension of the projected height up to the cross beams and running the total width across the bay, between the posts of the frame. Each element, comprising the piers and openings that make up the

façade and weighing between four and five tons, is prefabricated in a horizontal position in a supporting framework directly opposite the place where it will be fitted. It is then hoisted up and pivoted into position using a mobile jib that brings it into a slot behind the T-shaped vertical posts of the frame and under the transverse member above.

In fact, this final work is noticeably ambivalent. It heralds the serial architecture that will launch the era of the grand ensemble in France, yet, compared to the prefabrication used at Porte Océane, it returns to constructional methods not very different from those that Perret traditionally used: in situ casting of the framework and prefabricated infill sections. The modality of this return lies, paradoxically, in technical refinements stemming from the use of a new plant which, light and mobile, permits the rapid production of repeated architectural elements, and does so at a reduced cost. While an undeniably high quality of execution is the end result, the working methods, which guarantee a near perfect finish, are in contradiction with Perret's earlier, extremely sophisticated treatment of concrete, which is characterized by the use of quasi craft techniques.

In contrast to industrial prefabrication, this level of investment in site equipment here facilitates the use of methods that require neither factories, nor special transportation, nor powerful lifting machinery. The latter, which remains the paradigm of industrialization in building, entails numerous difficulties that the still modest scale of operations is not able to eliminate entirely. Such is the case with the "Portiques" system, a system that has proven ultimately to be less economical than first thought. The numerous difficulties encountered during execution, the substantial cost of depreciation at the prefabrication factory, coupled with those of transportation of the components, prohibited the replication of the experiment at the South Seafront, where other options were preferred. It should be pointed out that this was a propitious moment for research and speculation in the field of construction and that no single path was yet mapped out for achieving the goal so desired by all – by the State,

construction companies, and the architects—namely the industrialization of building. But in reinstating the building site as the sole manufacturing center for architecture, the South Seafront announces, paradoxically, the end of the structural frame. If the latter is once more cast on site, before the infilling elements as in earlier construction sites, the use of refined equipment that allows for larger-scale casting of surfaces and the systematization of tasks foreshadows the techniques that will dominate building production starting in the 1960s, with the use of sectional formwork favoring as the primary structural system of the interior bearing walls.

In conclusion, one could say that, with regard to the means of production in architecture, the rebuilding of Le Havre over a ten-year period was a place of experiment and transmutation. In accepting this commission, Perret, who over the course of several decades had devised a coherent, structured architectural doctrine, implicitly accepted the idea of testing it in the context of industrialization. The three great projects at Le Havre described above are significant events in this development as well as harbingers of the imminent demise of the structural frame system on which Perret's entire theory is built.

His doctrine, based on technical innovation while maintaining a critical distance from industrialization, attained such a high degree of coherence that for the first time it became what Pierre Francastel called an "obstacle to invention."<sup>6</sup> Unable to adapt itself to new building methods, it is the methods that will be forced to adapt themselves to the doctrine, a doctrine whose outcome in terms of structural principles can no longer be called into question. At Le Havre the substitution of old methods by new industrialized building techniques could not fail to produce profound changes in the general approach to the design of buildings. The frame, whether prefabricated in a factory and assembled or cast on site using special formwork, ultimately survives as an archaism. Soon afterward, however, growing economic concerns will stimulate other, more efficient constructional systems that

will supersede the frame, systems that even Perret's followers will be unable to impose on the building site, and this will mark the end of structural rationalism.

## Notes

1. Peter Collins, *Concrete. The Vision of a New Architecture: A Study of Auguste Perret and his precursors* (London: Faber and Faber, 1959): 272.
2. Emmanuel De Thubert, "Auguste G. Perret (à propos du Service Technique des Constructions Navales)", *La Construction moderne* (2 October 1932): 14.
3. Several archives containing photographs of the Le Havre sites can be consulted at the Archives de l'Institut français d'architecture in Paris, in the Perret collection (535 AP 661/1), and at the Archives municipales du Havre, Hermant, Lambert, Le Donné and Tourmant collections.
4. On the building of Porte Océane, see "Reconstruction du Havre - Porte océane (273 appartements)", *Annales de l'ITBTP* 65 (1953): 438–468 ; "Le Havre. La Porte Océane", *Techniques et Architecture* 11-12 (1953): 46–51.
5. On the building of this project, see L. Velter, C. Chargrassé, "Reconstruction du Front de mer Sud au Havre", *Cahiers du CSTB*, 190 (1954): 1–26.
6. Pierre Francastel, *Art et technique aux XIX<sup>e</sup> et XX<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Paris: Gallimard, 1956): 70.



## Something Old, Something New: Postwar Planning and Preservation in Paris

Tami Hausman

*Changes in Paris that occurred after the Second World War can be discussed in terms of reconstruction even though Paris was not physically destroyed. Following the war, the French government began to reshape Paris into an international metropolis, a process that was instigated by the practical need for improvements and the political initiatives of Charles de Gaulle. The Vichy period provided the impetus for this transformation because the war created a political and cultural break that set the stage for strategies that were both visionary and bold.*

*From Vichy, the post-war government inherited the policy of “national renovation” which restructured Paris according to two confluent visions of the urban environment: “Paris moderne,” or large, rectilinear insertions in the city, and “Paris ancien,” or the capital’s historic locales. A hybrid system that emerged in the context of modernization and internationalization, the “national renovation” allowed the government to insert sites of global capital while preserving the city’s physical past.*

*Such an approach selectively saved parts of Paris from destruction but also allowed for aggressive redevelopments. American-style modernism intersected with the French interest in transportation and infrastructure, such as La Défense. At the same time, dramatic interventions were tempered by a specific interest in preservation as a cultural, social, and sometimes political response to economic change. Recent projects like the grands projets illustrate how the post-war government has insisted on civic beauty and culture as expressed through monumental icons to modernism that simultaneously uphold and belie French traditions as the capital city becomes increasingly globalized.*

Starting in the early 1940’s, French officials initiated plans for the postwar reconstruction of Paris. This rebirth – which I call the “national renovation” – restructured the French capital according to two confluent urban visions. The Minister of the Interior wrote in 1942: “... it seems necessary to consider that ... two Parises coexist, one old, one modern, separated in time by the approximate date of 1800. To continue applying uniform regulations concerning roads, rail systems and waterways to both cities respectively would be an error causing grave and irrevocable consequences.”<sup>1</sup>

Although the Vichy government immediately began reconstructing the areas of the provinces that were destroyed by the Germans, officials made the reconstitution of Paris a priority. In fact, they pursued this capital project with zeal, despite the fact that the city suffered scant physical damages, limited primarily to suburban factories and peripheral sites. Officials imbued the rebuilding of Paris, in contrast to that of rural towns, with the symbolic purpose of reclaiming the French patrimony. One reason was the Nazi occupation of the capital, which had been as demoralizing as it was swift. When the Germans invaded France in 1940, the French government fled the capital, leaving Paris in their hands. To publicize their authority, the Germans decorated buildings with swastikas, staged daily parades down the Champs-Élysées, and German reconnaissance planes celebrated the victory with landings on the Place de la Concorde.

The second reason was the city’s traditional role as the physical and spiritual heart of France. By 1940, however, Paris had been suffering from political and social problems for several decades, including a severe housing crisis and unplanned expansion. When Paris was threatened by the Germans, therefore, the stones and mortar of the capital were perceived as a weapon against the invaders, as much as they were considered a rusted suit of armor in dire need of repair. In this sense, the invasion acted as a catalyst for major change, just as throughout history large-scale crises such as fires and epidemics had drastically altered the

city.<sup>2</sup> The French government quickly stripped the power of local authorities and took charge of the city's development, creating a precedent for the state to intervene in Paris for years to come. Over time, postwar governments recast Paris as a world center by radically reorganizing its urban assets.

The capital was divided into two parts: "Paris moderne" or modernized areas which purported to solve the competing demands of improvement and growth, and "Paris ancien" which comprised historical areas such as Saint-Germain-des-Près.<sup>3</sup> As this strategy was implemented, it selectively saved parts of Paris from destruction but also allowed for the insertion of aggressively transformative projects. I will focus on two sites that best exemplify this process: the preservation of the Marais in central Paris, and the ambitious development of La Défense in the near suburbs.

Nationalism, modernization, and urbanization were stimulants and effects of this policy. French technocrats proposed large-scale changes to sites and infrastructure as a way to inscribe political concepts such as order, unity, and discipline upon the urban landscape. Initially, the government attempted to mitigate the growth of Paris in order to decrease the saturation of people and services. This provisional approach was later replaced by proactive, government-sponsored development.

Patrimony also played an essential role. Originally defined as historic monuments and other cultural artifacts, this concept was broadened after the war to include the present and future production of French heritage. This tradition has carried over into projects in postwar Paris that balance architecture and history, culture and conservation. Major areas targeted for development during the war created the settings and the stage for subsequent decades. These included seventeen "insalubrious" slum blocks, as well as the military zone, a strip of land beyond the former fortifications, which had been dismantled after World War I. Between the wars, the zone was settled by indigents living in

unsanitary, makeshift dwellings between Paris and the immediate suburbs.<sup>4</sup>

Vichy officials hastened to remove these urban blights, a process that dovetailed with the government's cultural agenda or "national revolution," which promoted the repatriation of rural areas for the moral, social, and hygienic benefits that they could confer. Provincial values were posited as the antidote to overpopulated, disease-ridden cities like Paris. Lurking behind this policy was a desire to stem the tide of emigration to the capital and to redistribute its concentration of economic power to regional centers.

Among all of the perceived problems of Paris, the slums were castigated as the most conspicuous manifestations of physical decay. A portion of the Marais, called slum number 16, was considered to be one of the worst. Local engineers resolved to fight its insalubrious character by reducing the density of the slums so drastically that half of these sites would be refashioned as open space and the combined footprint of all buildings would not exceed 20% of their total area.<sup>5</sup> In reality, this strategy implied total demolition and reconstruction. Unlike many of the other slums, conservation was a major issue in the Marais, where three-quarters of its buildings pre-dated 1871. The Marais attracted



Figure 1: Sports facility at the porte de Versailles, Paris, early 1940's. (All rights reserved Bibliothèque administrative de la ville de Paris).

infamy not only because it was the oldest part of Paris – dating from the eleventh century -- but also because it was a ghetto for Jews and immigrants. In the early 1940's, purging physical properties and certain populations fused with French racism, which was accented by xenophobia and highly influenced by the "study" of eugenics.<sup>6</sup> Officials attempted to label urban sites like the Marais as depraved, to declare them dangerous, and thus to correct moral and physical weakness through widespread reform.

The military zone was also part of the government's cultural strategy. Here, officials planned to convert a former no-man's land into a green belt consisting of a continuous network of open spaces and sports facilities. (Figure 1) The French defeat provided much of the impetus for the Vichy government to encourage physical training in order to revitalize French youth. Public agencies quickly engaged in the task of planning more than 30 centers of physical education in the zone, surrounded by gardens and public promenades. Due to a shortage of materials, the temporary facilities constructed were rather crude. (Figures 2 and 3)

These social programs found their way into the government's 1944 plan to modernize the Marais using an approach called *curetage*, a policy for renovating building interiors to accommodate the needs of hygiene, air, and light while preserving historic facades. The plan called for replacing decrepit buildings with generous courtyards and gardens. Emerging from conservation efforts and a vision of rational social progress, this policy purported to bridge the gap between them. The redevelopment of the Marais opened the door for the application of zoning principles that were slowly adapted to core areas and historic sites, and later extended to underutilized and larger districts. The government also identified other zones, such as a university zone and an administrative zone for government offices.<sup>7</sup>

These redevelopment efforts coincided with the execution of new roads and the redistribution of services, concepts that were lifted from dormancy to currency in the early 1940's. Le Corbusier's 1941 treatise, *Destin de Paris*, best encapsulated these ideas. He proffered his plan for the reconstruction of slum area 6, based on a system of large housing blocks surrounded by open spaces. Yet, unlike Le Corbusier, officials sought a model for cohabitation,



*Figure 2: Rendering of sports facility designed for the rue de Picpus, Paris, early 1940's. (All rights reserved Bibliothèque administrative de la ville de Paris).*



*Figure 3: Rendering of sports facility designed for the rue Barbette, Paris, early 1940's. (All rights reserved Bibliothèque administrative de la ville de Paris).*

not contrast, between the old and the new. On other points, the two approaches were not at odds. The centerpiece of Le Corbusier's scheme was an east-west axis that sliced through Paris. Likewise, the local government planned a "grande transversale" to run from the avenue de la Défense in the west to the Cours de Vincennes in the east. The "transversale" was connected to the redevelopment of four slum areas that it bordered.<sup>8</sup>

Plans for highways through Paris, which anticipated the express roads along the Right Bank and that were built in the 1960s, indicated the need to plan for expansion after the city's fortified wall was dismantled. La Défense was one site that had been identified for development, particularly because it was situated along the "grand axis of Paris" that stretched between the Louvre and the Arc de Triomphe, and which both Le Corbusier and local officials wanted to extend. Before the war, planners focused on La Défense as a way to investigate how new road systems could manage the urbanization of Paris along linear sites. Among others, Henri Prost had even suggested the construction of government buildings or a "Washington de la France."

Such efforts coalesced in projects for the zone which, unlike the slums, was a virgin geographical territory suspended between Paris and the suburbs. Although the construction of the "green belt" was prioritized, the zone was considered to be a lynchpin in early studies for the high-speed ring road around Paris, known today as the périphérique. Studies for the road system were also in keeping with the desire to impose "order" in the Communist-dominated suburbs, a goal that was political as well as urbanistic.

Working on these peripheral properties, planners experimented with modern buildings, which in Paris were still rather sparse. In fact, many of the sports facilities were designed to resolve technical issues associated with the presence of transportation networks and other public services that intersected in the zone. When the government began to build the périphérique in the 1950's, the

green belt was sacrificed for an American-style highway lined by tall, modern buildings, and this decision instigated one of the first major changes in the traditional urban scale of Paris. Thereafter, similar types of development started to creep into the city, first in the former slums.

Within Paris proper, the national renovation translated into two different approaches to development: "restoration" for historic areas and "urban renewal" for sites that were less centrally located. Exemplifying the latter approach is the redevelopment of a slum block near the Place d'Italie. Huge towers overwhelmed the typically low-scale neighborhood around the Avenue d'Italie. They also changed the economy of the area by replacing industrial sites with tall residential buildings, offices, commercial space, and parking. To some degree, the emergence of such large-scale interventions heightened preservation efforts in the Marais. Conservation laws were strengthened in 1962 by the Minister of Cultural Affairs, André Malraux, who supported popular arts and culture as important urban amenities. The so-called Malraux Law was first applied in Paris to the Marais, which was formally designated an historic area in 1965.

This legislation defined "secteurs sauvegardés" or groups of buildings and public spaces that were deemed worthy of conservation, thus balancing the need to preserve both urban environments and French patrimony.<sup>9</sup> The Malraux Law was the outcome of French conservation policies, which had historically extended protection beyond just buildings to encompass surrounding areas, based on the premise that monuments were intrinsically connected to their distinct milieu. The Vichy government had enforced and expanded French preservation laws during the Second World War. The government instituted a comprehensive plan for the Marais that leveraged its historic assets in order to elevate the city's international appeal.<sup>10</sup> More than just a conservation strategy, the plan also allowed for the redevelopment and rezoning of certain blocks, as well as for new roads and open spaces. In this sense, it was the direct outcome of

urban legislation that was put into effect by the Vichy government.

Aside from restoration and selective demolition, this policy enabled the conversion of former aristocratic residences into museums and the development of new buildings, even some that were decidedly modern. The transformation of the Marais into a cultural enclave had been anticipated by local officials as early as 1940's. In the 1960s, this transformation was merged with larger planning goals such as the shift of the city's business center to the west and the desire to create magnets for tourism. As planners had anticipated in the 1940's, implementing this plan greatly reduced building and population densities; many buildings were demolished and large courtyards were carved into the middle of blocks.<sup>11</sup>

With certain sites in Paris considered off limits for major development, urbanization and growth were issues that continued to plague the capital up until the early 1960s. In the absence of an official plan for Paris and its environs, private architects suggested ways of accommodating modernization in the context of the city's urban history. One architect recommended building new megastructures atop the existing city to allow greater density and better circulation. Conversely, another suggested that expansion plunge underground, or even that the land under the Seine be used for roads and infrastructure. Creating a substitute for Paris was another suggestion, put forth by the editors of *l'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* to solve the problem of expansion. This schematic project implied the creation of an entirely new "Paris" that would be located 20 to 30 kilometers from historic Paris. Built to accommodate one million inhabitants in tall, modern apartment buildings, this "Paris Parallèle" would be connected to Paris by mass transportation systems.

Charles de Gaulle's return to power in 1959 ushered in a new plan for Paris under the control of the head of state, a legacy that was later continued by subsequent French presidents.

Officials began the process of reconstructing Paris as a world-class metropolis in a more global way that merged modernization and preservation into a single process. As Malraux explained, "We do not only have sites to protect, we also have sites to create."<sup>12</sup> These projects also marked a shift that had begun to occur during Vichy from the development of specific parcels to the transformation of entire neighborhoods. Rather than recreating the traditional functions of Paris, the central government implemented new projects that redistributed the capital's services. Just as new zoning legislation transformed the Marais into a cultural hub, the city's urban functions were consolidated into administrative, university, and manufacturing zones with residential areas scattered throughout. To these zones were added "poles" of commercial development in Paris proper and new large-scale projects in the suburbs such as La Défense.

Like the redevelopment of the Marais, the creation of La Défense corresponded to the new, tighter state control over zoning, density, and building codes. Unlike the Marais, La Défense showed how the government imposed ambitious redevelopment in non-historical areas. This project was specifically designed to attract commerce that would allow France to compete internationally. The founding of the Common Market in 1957 gave this project momentum, and new laws, which allowed the government to seize and redevelop large sites, made the project feasible.<sup>13</sup> La Défense acted as a sort of Paris Parallèle by providing a substitute for the city, especially for its traditional business district in western Paris, although it did incorporate some housing and modern services. Major investments in infrastructure were needed – including the new suburban train system, the RER – to recast an inaccessible industrial area as a modern business center. These systems were contained under the pedestrian deck, concealing the roads, transportation, and parking. The entire site was circumscribed by a new highway system that represented the triumph of Vichy's technocratic policies.

La Défense also illustrates how the government implemented modernization policies while shielding parts of the city's historic core. Although La Défense has been widely criticized on aesthetic grounds, it allowed much of central Paris to remain untouched. In terms of urbanism, the site was connected to Paris as part of the plan to extend the city's development along the grand axis. As a nod to contemporary expressions of patrimony, the Grande Arche shadowed the form of the Arc de Triomphe and its mass was actually canted several degrees off of the axis, mirroring the slightly skewed position of the Louvre.

Other sites in Paris demonstrate how the legacy of national renovation provided the mechanisms to modify inner city areas and former slums in keeping with economic and political goals. For example, the government turned its attention to the renovation of slum block no. 1, which had been partially demolished in the 1930's. When the project was finally actualized in the 1970's, the site had doubled in size to include Les Halles, as well as surrounding residential areas. The decision to move the markets out of Paris around 1960 dovetailed with the construction of the RER, thereby improving connections with the suburbs. Unlike the Marais, this project depended on the destruction of the city's central markets, a major nineteenth-century complex designed by Victor Baltard. As a kind of compensation for their destruction, they were later replaced with a park when the idea for a business center was dropped from the program. The eradication of the pavilions also marked a turning point that rallied support for preservation.<sup>14</sup>

As a result, outdated functions (here, the central markets) were replaced with new uses including a shopping center and residential buildings at a scale that harmonized with the character of central Paris. The redevelopment was completed by the construction of a modern art museum, the Centre Georges Pompidou, on the eastern part of the site that bolstered the cultural functions of the Marais. In a sense, the Centre Pompidou and Les Halles represent two visions of the city that characterized

the late 1960s and 1970's: the Centre Pompidou is a symbol of French artistic superiority and a progressive image of patrimony in both its exterior form and contents, whereas the anti-monumental, sunken form of Les Halles refers, quite literally, to the preoccupation with the need for a vast infrastructure to manage the city's modernization and growth. The redevelopment of Les Halles also indicates how the legacy of Vichy has matured into a comprehensive approach in which architecture and urbanism, and conservation and development all collaborate in an effort to reinvent the French patrimony in Paris.

Still, the issue is complex. In the 1980's, the Code de l'Urbanisme stated that "the French territory is the shared patrimony of the nation," a motto that President François Mitterrand seems to have taken to heart.<sup>15</sup> I call this the system of "tours et trous" or towers and holes, which is best illustrated by the void of the Grande Arche and the glazed towers and sunken garden of the Grande Bibliothèque. Although grand, as the names and scales of the grands projets suggest, they are intrinsically self-effacing. Unquestionably ambitious as the national renovation has been, a trace of ambiguity has tempered even the most obvious symbols of postwar modernization in the French capital.

Notes

1. Letter from Pierre Pucheu to Henry du Moulin la Labarthète, 29 January 1942, F2/3208, National Archives, Paris. Pucheu was minister of the interior and du Moulin was Marshal Philippe Pétain's chief of cabinet. In 1940, Pétain became head of the French state, which was known as the "Vichy government" because it was headquartered in that city in south-central France during the war.
2. Alain Cottureau, "L'apparition de l'urbanisme comme action collective: l'agglomération parisienne au début du siècle," *Sociologie du Travail* 4 (1969): 351. For more information about this topic, see Anthony M. Tung, *Preserving the World's Great Cities: The Destruction and Renewal of the Historic Metropolis* (New York: Clarkson Potter, 2001).
3. Letter from Pucheu to du Moulin.
4. Jean Bastié, *La Croissance de la banlieue parisienne* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1964), 264-74. Although officially decommissioned in 1919, the fortifications were not completely demolished until 1932. Members of some professional and philanthropic organizations had hoped to use the land of the fortifications for green space and public services. By 1937, parts of the fortifications had been developed for schools, sports facilities, hospitals, a few parks and squares, and housing.
5. This information was exhibited at the Salon des Urbanistes and reprinted in *L'Architecture française* 17-18 (March-April 1942): 5-24.
6. During the war, the French government deported large numbers of Jews from the Marais, expropriated their homes, and confiscated their property. This aspect of the Occupation has been investigated in Brigitte Vital-Durand, *Domaine privé* (Paris: Éditions Générales First, 1996).
7. Guy Périer de Féral, "Trois conférences sur l'aménagement de Paris et du département de la Seine. Introduction," *L'Architecture française* 34 (August 1943): 4; Pierre Pucheu, "Note No. 1 sur les remarques et suggestions formulées par M. du Moulin," 28 March 1942, F2/3208, National Archives, Paris.
8. Robert Chevenier, "M. Charles Magny, préfet de la Seine," *L'Illustration*, August 23, 1941, 529-30.
9. Pierre Merlin and Françoise Choay, eds., *Dictionnaire de l'urbanisme et de l'aménagement* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1988), 725-26.
10. G. J. Ashworth, "Managing the Cultural Tourist," in *Tourism and Spatial Transformations*, ed. G. J. Ashworth and A. G. J. Dietvorst (Wallingford: CAB International, 1995), 278.
11. Roger Kain, "Conservation Planning in France: Policy and Practice in the Marais, Paris," in *Planning for Conservation*, ed. Roger Kain (London: Mansell, 1981), 201-2, 212-14; Paul Chatelain, "Quartiers historiques et centre ville: l'exemple du quartier du Marais," in *Urban Core and Inner City: Proceedings of the International Study Week, Amsterdam, 11-17 September, 1966* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967), 340.
12. "Paris: L'opération Maine-Montparnasse," *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* (April-May 1959): 4.
13. Jean-Paul Lacaze, *Paris, Urbanisme d'État et destin d'une ville* (Paris: Flammarion, 1994), 11.
14. Joseph Abram, "Political Will and the Cultural Identity Crisis in Late-Twentieth Century French Architecture," in *Premises: Invested Spaces in Visual Arts, Architecture, & Design from France: 1958-1998* (New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1998), 341-42.
15. Code de l'urbanisme, art. LL110.



## Irredentist Urbanism: Border Dispute, Rapprochement and Modern Architecture in Alsace-Lorraine, 1945-1965

Charissa Terranova

*Looking to the border region of formerly ancestral enemies France and Germany, I argue that the twenty-year period of reconstruction after World War II marks a time of irredentist urbanism: a period in which architectural and city development were part of a means to negotiate wartime territorial breaches and restitution during peacetime. The modern architectural development in the Alsace-Lorraine region at mid-century made legible a rising new relationship among European nation-states in the form of the European Union. The architectural and urban projects by Georges-Henri Pingusson in the Saare, Marcel Lods at Mainz, Emile Aillaud at Creutzwald and Eugène Beaudouin at Strasbourg evolved simultaneously and in conjunction with the rise of the European Coal and Steel Community, the institution that was the core element of the Schuman Plan. In turn, this plan was the organizational blueprint that gave rise to the European Union in the years directly after WWII. Constructed under the guidance and funding of the French Minister of Reconstruction and Urbanism, these projects were part of a new balance of power between nations rooted in the regulation and renewal of European industry after the war. The essay is a historical investigation. I have used books, articles, maps and archival evidence to support my argument.*

### **Introduction: Defining Irredentist Urbanism**

Postwar Franco-German accords and rapprochement, as registered in real space in the form of what I call an “irredentist urbanism” –

border negotiation, city rebuilding, and economic transformation – produced a redefinition of the terms national participation and participant. The redevelopment of cities after the war in Alsace-Lorraine restored a balance of power between France and Germany through the return of national lands and regulation of natural resources. In this manner, the idea of “national lands” became something fundamentally different from what it had previously been, since the restitution produced an alliance between the two nations which became the core of a new supra-national order, namely the European Union [EU].

Rooted in the Italian word *irredenta*, meaning “unredeemed,” the word “irredentist” refers to anyone calling for the recovery of unredeemed land that is historically or culturally related to his or her nation but is currently subject to a foreign government.<sup>1</sup> An irredentist urbanism thus develops according to a dialectic of land appropriation and recovery. At the heart of irredentist urbanism are border disputes and arguments over territorial ownership. It is a term that is ostensibly useful in the description of various forms of colonial urbanization, from Henri Prost’s master plan for Algiers in the 1930’s to the ongoing urban development along the West Bank and the Gaza strip in the Israeli-Palestinian borderland.<sup>2</sup> However, in this essay I use the concept to describe a different set of relationships: the final negotiations of a protracted territorial disagreement between two developed Western European countries, France and Germany, bound by history, geography, and age-old territorial conflicts, rather than an imperial hierarchy of civilizer and civilized. Irredentist urbanism as used here describes an economy of power based upon coterminous national survival, that is, two neighboring European nation-states in pursuit of a balance of power as they faced a new world order dominated by two rising superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. In particular, the decade of development from 1940 to 1950, from German wartime building to French peacetime rebuilding, marks a period in which architectural and city development became part of an interstate

negotiation of past, wartime territorial breaches and peacetime restitution.

Less idealistic and more a matter of functional pragmatism, the formation of the EU in the years directly after the war nevertheless marks a significant restructuring of the European nation-state. While the historically rooted European nation-states maintained allegiances to individual cultural pasts, commerce became a collective effort uniting countries. The modern architecture of postwar reconstruction in Alsace-Lorraine must be seen in this light, as it was part of a collective economic renewal rather than an individual national representation. The buildings in question were part of infrastructural regeneration. The projects of Georges-Henri Pingusson in the Saare, Emile Aillaud at Creutzwald, Marcel Lods at Mainz, and Eugène Beaudouin at Strasbourg constituted, in part, the force of national renewal and, in part, supranational federation in Europe. The materialization of the Schuman Plan in modern architectural form and urban planning, and a new sense of national diplomacy were, above all, matters of necessity; they were representational only inasmuch as any purely technological development necessarily bears some symbolic charge. The French architectural and urban development in the occupied zone of Germany in the decade after the war marked, at first, the final moment of irredentist antagonism between France and Germany in the region, and it was soon followed by the rapprochement necessary for the coming new national and international order of the European nation-states.

**Reconciliation and Rebuilding:  
Modern Architecture in Saarebrücken,  
Creutzwald, Mainz and Strasbourg**

Led by the Minister of Reconstruction and Urbanism (MRU), and taking form in the work of Beaux-Arts-trained architects, the campaign to rebuild the region steadily unfolded starting in 1945 and continued into the early 1960s. The fact that the architects involved in reconstruction in the Saare, at Creutzwald, Mainz, and Strasbourg had been

trained in the hoary but venerable tradition of the French classicism of the *École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts* [ENSBA] in no way discouraged invention in the design of the individual projects. Far from being “old-hat,” the projects offered new and innovative approaches to city and regional planning. Experimentation in urban concept and architectural form took place in two ways: first, in the form of a new approach to planning based on what Marc Desportes and Antoine Picon have called a shift in planning and development “from space to territory” (“de l’espace au territoire”) and, second, in the form of a new housing type called *le grand ensemble*.<sup>3</sup>

We will look first at the advent of territorial planning and redevelopment in the region. Here the term “territorial” is meant to evoke the shift from the centralized city to a more regional planning concept, reticulated urbanism. That is, following Desportes and Picon, it marks the shift in France from a country characterized by traditional city space with definitive lines between city and country to a regional condition in which all space is, to varying degrees, urban. The shift from “space to territory” thus signals an urbanism defined according to its relationship to large-scale transportation infrastructure. Territorial urbanism, as opposed to the city traditionally conceived and ordered, is based on the interconnectedness of nodes situated across the landscape, the increased development of transportation networks, both rail and automobile, and a concomitant increase in urban migration.

George-Henri Pingusson’s scheme for urban redevelopment in the Saare is best understood in terms of the evolution of such a territorial landscape. Perhaps most famous for an earlier project, the resort hotel *Latitude 43* in Saint-Tropez [1932], and the later monument to the 200,000 deported during World War II, the *Mémorial des Martyrs de la Déportation* [1961], in Paris, the Beaux-Arts-trained Pingusson revealed his talent and expertise as a planner with his schemes for the Saare.<sup>4</sup> Located in the heart of one of the richest coal-producing sectors of Alsace-Lorraine and what was the French occupied zone from 1945 to 1954, the greater project of

"l'urbanisme en Saare" included the interconnection and refurbishment of several cities running along the Saar River within the Saare region.<sup>5</sup> At the heart of these cities was Saarelouis, a fortified town designed by the seventeenth-century French court engineer Sébastien le Prestre de Vauban. To the north lay Luxembourg and Sarrebourg and to the south Sarrebrücken, Strasbourg and Mulhouse. As part of Louis XIV's larger plan to fortify the borders of the French nation, the star-shaped footprint of Saarelouis is symbolic of a past era of territorial protection, claims, and battles. Pingusson's urban planning schemes for the Saare were characteristic of a newly emerging phase in the history of France, one in which borders had become by necessity porous and more passable than in the past. The primary concern for Pingusson was water management and the regional highway system. Since Pingusson's study was mainly concerned with questions of infrastructure and the expansive urban system along the Saar River, it presented a France more interested in interconnecting separate territories than in separating and bolstering them.

Located just to the south of Saarelouis, Pingusson's French Embassy in Saarebrücken is less infrastructural, more architectural in scale and, by the nature of its program, the bearer of a more direct symbolism. Since it was conceived for an embassy, the architectural program was meant to encourage reconciliation. Its *raison d'être* was diplomacy, and its goal the building of a prominent but peaceful presence for France in the German border region. As for modern architecture and what might be suggestive of its "meaning," Pingusson found a rather singular form of continuity and tradition in the process of construction at Saarebrücken. The reconstruction of the centre of Saarebrücken gave Pingusson the opportunity to realize the union of "l'esprit classique" and Modernism that he saw inherent in "la normalisation."<sup>6</sup> One of the many French Modernists working in a hybrid vocabulary of classicism and Modernism, Pingusson looked upon the mass-production of architecture and the use of prefabricated modules – a logic of architectural production loosely referred to in

French as "la normalisation" – with both candor and optimism, seeing in its repetition of mass-produced components a continuation of the long tradition of French classicism rather than its end. The embassy project provides an outstanding example of French classicizing Modernism. An overall articulation of what is called "la ville-parc," the general parti of the embassy is divided into four sub-partis: a reception area located in the most prominent volume, to the south, behind which stands a volume dedicated to services, flanked to the southeast by residential space and to the northwest by administration.<sup>7</sup> With a process more sculptural than one might have expected, the construction of the embassy was primarily of reinforced concrete poured on-site. Whether classical or Modern, the final product is one in which repetitive form takes expressive prominence over everything else.<sup>8</sup>

In shifting our attention to Creutzwald, Mainz and Strasbourg we will look at housing instead of the strictly civic space of a building like Pingusson's embassy. The region presents itself not only as a place in which new international relationships and territorial conditions have come about but also as the seedbed of a new housing type. As such, these cities of Alsace-Lorraine collectively became part of the greater alembic chamber for the distillation of *le grand ensemble*: the housing type developed regionally throughout French and characterized by swaths of open green space syncopated by towers, slabs and bars. This process of formal and functional distillation began before the war, in 1935, and in the realm of words, with what became an eponymous article for the housing type, "Les grands ensembles," written by Maurice Rotival.<sup>9</sup> Appearing in an issue of *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui* especially devoted to the question of low-cost housing, the *Habitation à Bon Marché* [HBM, which would later become the *Habitation à Loyer Modéré* or HLM], Rotival's essay was part of a forward-looking investigation of "le logement ouvrier contemporain."<sup>10</sup> It was forward-looking in that this issue of the journal made plans for the immediate future, one in which a "new class of citizens, the workers," whose

number was remarkably on the rise, would be provided with a more hygienic, modern, and efficient living environment.<sup>11</sup> In short, le grand ensemble was a practical solution to the existing housing problem. Rotival preached a tabula-rasa-style urbanism, one of small and completely new urban pockets, or les grands ensembles, built along and interconnected by the highway. In his call for a new type of urbanization, Rotival's primary concern was the organization of space within the new cities and the network of circulation, that of both large inter-connective highways and small internal roadways. Housing developments were to be sited in proximity to industrial and urban centres and adjacent to transportation. With such emphasis on the automobile and road networks it should come as no surprise that Rotival's essay was forward-looking in another very important way. To invoke Desportes and Picon once again, the grand ensemble forecast the transition "de l'espace au territoire."<sup>12</sup>

Foreshadowing the lyrical and romantic Modernism of les grands ensembles that Émile Aillaud would design in the coming decades, in the years directly after the war Aillaud designed housing for coal miners and engineers at Creutzwald based on the English Garden City ideal. A graduate of the ENSBA, Aillaud was a Modernist who, although he was the author of several urban schemes realized largely according to the tenets of Modernism (Pantin la Courtilière [1959] and Grigny la Grand Borne [1965] to name two), presented himself as a critic of Modernism. His architecture was based on "neither function, nor form" but on that which is "poetic" [ni fonction, ni forme, mais poetique].<sup>13</sup> While he intended his undulating housing masses of later years to offer an alternative to what he deemed a cruder form of functionalism, namely that espoused by CIAM, the enormous scale, tight zoning, and compositional quality of his projects made them Modern. Ultimately, rather than subverting Modernist functionalism, Aillaud created his own version of it: a functionalism that manifested itself in a signature type of spiralling, twisting and, above all, monumental formalism.

Yet, his early work, in particular the project at Creutzwald, reveals Aillaud's design inclinations to be more in tune with the Garden City picturesque than De Stijl composition.

By contrast, the unrealized project for the reconstruction of the German town of Mainz (in French, Mayence) by Marcel Lods follows unequivocally the precepts of the Athens Charter. Like the other architects involved in the rebuilding of the region, Lods was a graduate of the ENSBA. Yet, of all the architects discussed here, the architectural vocabulary of Lods' work was perhaps the least classicist; he was also the most doctrinaire in his functionalism, a member of CIAM who abided by Le Corbusier's ideals while putting his talents to work for the less dogmatic French state. Lods' plan for a housing development "pour le gouvernement militaire de la zone française d'occupation" in the German town of Mainz was very similar to two other plans for reconstruction by Le Corbusier that similarly went unrealized – his plans for the reconstruction of La Pallice-Rochelle and his work at St. Dié.<sup>14</sup> Similar to the plans by Le Corbusier, the master plan of Lods offers space rationalized according to abstraction: five bars or residential towers standing roughly parallel in an open green space amid mixed low-rise buildings. In keeping with Le Corbusier's ideals as set forth in his plan for the "Radiant City," Lods has radically rethought the city. The driving force of the project was a carefully calculated ratio of density. Setting in relief the most acute elements of the greater urban parti, the five residential towers, modelled in part after Le Corbusier's housing and urban prototype, the Unité d'habitation, were to provide 1,200 units for 5,000 to 6,000 residents. Two of them were to be nineteen stories high and the remaining three, ten stories. The rest of the programming at ground level was to include two schools, a crèche, two pools (one covered and one open), a restaurant, two types of playing fields, community centers for young and old, administrative offices, and a covered market.<sup>15</sup>

The fourth and final project, the City of Rotterdam at Strasbourg, designed by another

Beaux-Arts-trained architect, Eugène Beaudouin, marks in many ways the fusion of these two extremes in Modern urban design, giving us an example of le grand ensemble in full and rarefied form. Yet, while its form mediated between these two poles, the City of Rotterdam announced more poignantly the emergence of what was a wholly new architecture and urbanism combined. This, coupled with the fact that the competition preceding it was so highly publicized, made the project well-nigh revolutionary. The City of Rotterdam at Strasbourg marked a fundamental shift in the way French planners conceived the city after the war. As the historian Charles Bachofen explains, the reconstruction project at

Strasbourg was the occasion for a ground-shaking confrontation in which, moving beyond the problem of the individual building, planning reached a new level of understanding open to the possibilities of extended urban development.<sup>16</sup>

That the City of Rotterdam was meant to be an economic and social rejuvenator is clear from the publicity that surrounded it. As an appeal to the public for greater support of state-led projects, the MRU sponsored a series of competitions. By 1949, the process of the competition had become an active manner of advertizing the state's investment in local architectural development, with the promotion of the "chantiers d'expériences," roughly translated as "experimental construction sites." The reasons behind the choice of Strasbourg as a "chantier d'expérience" go back to the long-contested question of French territorial boundaries and national control over the Alsace-Lorraine region. However, more immediate reasons for the choice of Strasbourg concern, once again, issues of sheer need in that the site was bombarded heavily during the war and was in grave need of reconstruction.<sup>17</sup>

The competition was, uniquely, open to architectural teams made up of architects chosen by the MRU, with representatives of the Vichy-era Order of Architects being limited in number. The master plan of the winning project, by Beaudouin,

who, in this case, was working independently of his former architecture partner Marcel Lods, shows a massive project for new housing with several differently-scaled high-rise buildings, the programs of which were devoted solely to housing. Transforming the master plan into an abstract composition of linear marks within a field of fluid form, these bars and slabs open out onto a verdant landscape with winding paths cutting through it. Most of the buildings were not to rise more than four stories, with the exception of three, two of which would reach nine stories and one, thirteen. There are two qualities which make this project remarkable – that make it so quintessentially un grand ensemble. First, there is the project's marked focus on residential programming to the detriment of all other types. In later years, after the massive expansion and development of le grand ensemble across the French landscape, its status as a "dormitory city" – an urban pocket with housing alone – would be consistently cited as one of its greatest deficiencies as a new urban typology. Second, and, speaking in more compositional terms, there is a peculiar distillation of form within the master plan which sets it apart from its predecessors: the project's innovative and experimental sensibility that, in its essence, is neither purely a Garden City nor purely a Radiant City but something at once in between, beyond and other. While these two precedents may have been formative in the design of le grand ensemble, the context in which the housing type developed – the fact that it was instrumental in, and constitutive of, reconstruction in France and, in this instance, greater Europe – made it something entirely different, if not entirely new.

### **Conclusion: Architecture and Urbanism in Alsace-Lorraine from Irredentism to Realpolitik**

In conclusion, I would like to return our attention to the Realpolitik behind the overall French building campaign in Alsace-Lorraine. As discussed above, the ideological contents of this particular turn of the cycle of irredentism and rapprochement became important only to the degree in which they

served pragmatic goals. Modern form appears the landscape of the French-German border is an allegory of rationalization and, indeed, of wartime technology redirected for peacetime. But it is an allegory with a purely pragmatic content: an allegory of reconstruction, housing provisions, and, beyond simple local need, of a shift in the balance of power within Europe and beyond. With respect to the latter, not only do we look upon the development of the Alsace-Lorraine region as an instrument of healing age-old wounds and of rapprochement; we also see it as a means of balancing power in the face of two rising superpowers, the Soviet Union and the United States. The territory thus functions as a double alembic, a laboratory for the development of le grand ensemble as well as an ever-mutating economy of power and the nation-state. The decade-long experiment of the immediate postwar era within Alsace-Lorraine turned out to be essential in the creation not only of a new housing type but also of a new sense of the term "nation-state." The experiment yielded a new political economy for Europe, one in which the two terms "nation" and "state" would be forever bifurcated. Leaving a large number of nations in its wake as the necessary fragments of history, the experiment generated the State anew in a greater, more powerful form, namely the EU.

Notes

1. See the entry "irredentist" at *Oxford English Dictionary (Online)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). See <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hul.eresource:oedict3e>
2. On the question of urbanism and colonialism see Zeynep Çelik, *Urban Forms and Colonial Confrontations: Algiers under French Rule* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997); Jean-Louis Cohen, Nabila Oulebsir and Youcif Kanoun eds., *Alger: paysage urbain et architectures, 1800-2000* (Besançon: Les Éditions de l'Imprimeur, 2002); and J.J. Deluz, *L'urbanisme et l'architecture d'Alger* (Liège: Mardaga, 1988). On the Israeli-Palestinian borderland, see Rafi Segal and David Tartakover, eds., *A Civilian Occupation: The Politics of Israeli Architecture* (New York: Verso, 2003).
3. Marc Desportes and Antoine Picon, *De l'espace au territoire: l'aménagement en France XVIe-XXe siècles* (Paris: Presses de l'École Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées, 1997), 110.
4. Texier, Simon, "Georges-Henri Pingusson, 1894-1978," *Moniteur AMC* 96 (Mar., 1999): 66; Simon Texier, "Une monastère laïque, sans ordre ni doctrine," *Cahiers de la recherche architecturale et urbaine* 8 (May, 2001): 81-90.
5. Roy F. Willis. *The French in Germany* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1962), 14-15; 100-101.
6. Georges-Henri Pingusson, "La normalisation et le progrès," *Techniques et architecture*, Third Year, No. 1-2 (Jan., 1943) cited in Jacques Lucan, *Architecture en France: 1940-2000* (Paris: Moniteur, 2001) 32.
7. "Ambassade de France en Sarre Saarebruck," *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* 26 (1955): 46.
8. *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* 24 (Apr-May 1953): 82.
9. Rotival, Maurice, "Les grands ensembles," *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui*, Special issue devoted to the Habitation à Bon Marché [HBM], number 6 (June, 1936): 57-72. See also the following articles for the evolution of the definition of le grand ensemble: "Le grand ensemble facteur de progrès social et de progrès humain," *Urbanisme*, nos. 62-63 (1959): 6-7; Pierre Dalloz, "Grands ensembles ébauche d'un théorie d'urbanisme," *Techniques &*

- Architecture*, vol. 21, no.4 (May 1961) 76-79; "Les diverses conceptions à l'origine d'un grand ensemble," *Urbanisme* nos. 75-76 (1962) 18-20; Gérard Abadia, "Grands ensembles: le fond et la forme," in *Première biennale des villes et des urbanistes d'Europe: document préparatoire, Proceedings from a Colloquium in Lyon*, 4-6, December 1995. 51-56; and "Le grand ensemble, histoire et devenir," *Special Issue of Urbanisme*, Annie Fourcaut, ed., no. 322 (January-February, 2002).
10. Sellier, Henri, "Le logement ouvrier contemporain," "L'architecture d'aujourd'hui, Special issue devoted to the Habitation à Bon Marché [HBM], number 6 (June, 1936): 7-10. See also Marie-Jeanne Dumont, *Le logement social à Paris 1850-1930: les Habitations à Bon Marché* (Liège: Pierre Mardaga Editeur, 1991).
  11. *Rotival*, 57.
  12. *Desportes and Picon*, 127-131.
  13. Dhuis, Jean-François, *L'architecture selon Emile Aillaud* (Paris: Dunod, 1983): 15-46. See also Emile Aillaud with the collaboration of Sophie Lannes, *Désordre apparent, ordre caché* (Paris: Fayard, 1975).
  14. Lods, Marcel, "Unité d'habitation à Mayence," *Techniques et architecture* 7: 5-6 (1947): 275.
  15. Lods, Marcel, "Le plan pour Mayence," *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* 19 (Jan., 1948): 12-15.
  16. Bachofen, Charles, "La Reconstruction," *Strasbourg: chroniques d'urbanisme*, Francis Cuillier, ed. (Paris: Editions de l'Aube, 1994), 31.
  17. Voldman, *La reconstruction des villes françaises de 1940 à 1954*, 382.



## The Postwar Productions of the Public Works Department of Singapore (PWD)

Wong Yunn Chii

*The Public Works Department (PWD) was a premier state instrument in advancing colonial interests of the British administration in Singapore. From its inception in the mid-nineteenth century to the inter-war years, its programs and projects, though reflexive rather than original, advanced an order of modernism that was instrumental as well as symbolic.*

*The post-war productions of PWD saw a significant ideological turn in the agenda and projects of architectural modernism in the British Colony of Singapore, as it further absorbed the scope of work of the Municipality. This expansion and ideological transformation was premised upon the urgency to maintain the legitimacy of colonial rule as long as it was tenable, and the prospects of economic influence after political independence. Thus, rather than being limited to rendering architectural forms to strategic initiatives and policies which originated from the other colonial instruments, PWD participated actively as an innovator of post-war modern life. Its activities became more visible and influential in the social and public circles.*

*Two aspects of post-war PWD productions are examined in this paper. The first is the emergence of a type of "welfare modernity" that displaced the symbolic and instrumental varieties of the pre-war years. The second point of discussion is the paradoxical attempt by the British administration to forge a Malayan identity in architecture under the ambit of the tropical discourse, and under the exigencies and adversities of post-war economic conditions. Both issues arose at the nexus of the economic and political colonial objectives in the post-war era of "reconstruction" and "rebuilding."*

## Background

Up to 1965 the Public Works Department of Singapore (PWD) was the colony's prime instrument of physical development. Its historical legacy and tradition began with its establishment in 1867 and continued on through the late 1990's, when in post-independence Singapore the organization was finally dissolved, reconstituted as a private corporation, and sold off to an Australian transnational, multi-disciplinary firm. Even as Singapore's landscapes are transformed daily, the emblematic objects and environments produced by the PWD continue to frame the everyday experiences of many Singaporeans. More significantly, the legacies of these urban interventions and creations, as practices and as public infrastructures, also continue to structurally influence many strategic planning decisions. The totality of their spatial effects is cleverly yet accurately encompassed under such jingles as "(Roads) along," "(Bridges) across," "(Road Related Facilities) alongside," "(Buildings) above," and finally "(Airports) aloft." Tan Soon Beng, one of the Director-Generals of the post-independence PWD, surmised that the institution's legacy unfolds "almost like reading the history of Singapore" – a bombastic statement perhaps, but an unmistakably accurate one.<sup>1</sup>

All over the British Empire, entities broadly termed "Public Works" departments were the technical instrument of various colonial administrations, with some of them being more elaborate than others. Yet, working separately, they structured spaces and erected buildings in their respective locales that enabled and perpetuated the broad workings of British rule. Peter Scriver's detailed study of the PWD in India provides an understanding of that organization's historical production as a developmental process, one that shifted from "tam(ing)" and "temper(ing)" hostile territories of the "excluded 'Other'" to one of internal professional competition within the "hermetic" space of the colonized.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, he argued that this shift paralleled another, perhaps more significant

one: from an “initially flexible and heuristic” design process to one that was rigid and ossified.

Similar patterns are recognizable in the modus operandi of the Singapore PWD, given its particular history as part of the Presidency of Bengal until 1867. In addition, as this paper will show, the PWD offers a fine-grained example of how postwar conditions transformed the nature of colonial public works. A substantive difference, for one, is that British India was not lost in the war to Japan; rather, it crumpled under the weight of a burgeoning nationalist fervor and the moral uprising initiated and led by Gandhi. On the other hand, in post-war Singapore, British rule, because of its devastating military and psychological defeat, was shamed in local memories. Thus, reconstruction in this case was spurred by the need to regain prestige and reestablish the purpose of colonial rule, rather than by a protracted process of consolidation.

### **A New Order of Modernity**

In the history of modern architecture in Singapore, the postwar years truly marked a fundamental shift in the colony’s public architecture. An earlier study by the author of the organization in the interwar years proposed a chronology based on its distinctive aspects and productions. (Wong, 2003). Broadly speaking, this schema consists of the Coleman years, which, up until the eve of World War I, forged the first symbolic emblems of colonial identity. Under those emblems, symbolic modernity developed as an assertion of political “autonomy,” separate from Indian rule. (Figure 1) During the interwar years, the rising wealth of the colony solidified its standing as one of the Empire’s jewels, creating in its wake institutions that perpetuated instrumental modernity. (Figure 2) The postwar years, characterized by the streamlining and bureaucratization of government services, transformed the appearance of the PWD’s undertakings with respect to their nature as “public architecture.” In this sense, the works began to bear the marks of decentralized governance; as the effects of modernization expanded to new areas of



*Figure 1: Government House-Singapore, representative of the symbolic modernity. Courtesy, “Seow Eu-Jin Collection”, VICO-NUS). (Courtesy, Digital Repository, VICO-NUS).*



*Figure 2: Supreme Court–Singapore, representative of the instrumental modernity. (Courtesy, “Seow Eu-Jin Collection”, VICO-NUS).*



*Figure 3: Lorong Lalat Dispensary-Singapore, representative of welfare Modernity. (Courtesy, “Seow Eu-Jin Collection”, VICO-NUS).*

the colony, welfare modernity arose. The scope, nature, and ideology of this welfare modernity are outlined here, primarily through three of the service sectors that supported it: education, health, and the construction of infrastructures. (Figure 3)

### **The Context of Welfare Modernity**

Welfare modernity is distinguishable from the colonial benevolence of the prewar years. Ideologically, both approaches issued from the same sources of control, dominance, and paternalism. The difference between them lay in the degree, scope, and depth of contacts with the colonized population. Paradoxically, though it was recognized that colonial political dominance could no longer be total, its administrative tentacles and effects nevertheless reached more insidiously into the lives of colonial subjects than ever before. "Pressures" had mounted from within for the gradual divestment of power and for greater local representation, following the Malayanization fervor in British Malaya. For this reason, development of welfare modernity was also a matter of political prudence, a necessary element in sustaining the colonial presence. But, as much as the PWD programs appeared to be "decentralized," they remained structurally centralized, with commands for their actions issuing from within the newly restructured government. The PWD, it should be noted, was not the only agent of postwar modernity, although in the realm of public architecture its work remained of primary importance.

It has been argued that in the racial enclaves, modernizing subaltern groups arose, in some cases through the objects of mass consumption such as urban amusement parks.<sup>3</sup> On another front, the spillover from social problems associated with crowding and public health prompted investigations into rationalist-modernist solutions for housing, a field outside the operational scope of the PWD. This necessitated the emergence of new bureaucratic entities, such as the Singapore Improvement Trust (SIT), which in the ensuing decades established a large number

of resettlement areas in and around the city. Further, until the absorption of the Municipality's Engineering Department into the PWD in 1961, the former initiated and administered bylaws that affected buildings in the colony. Nonetheless, the services that the PWD inherited by default through its historical constitution enabled it to carry out a broad expansion of modern architecture, which took the form of expanded and decentralized programs.

### **Modern Style and the Politics of Stylistic Preference**

Postwar PWD public architecture is characterized by a formal austerity, in marked contrast to the grandiose emblems of empire from the interwar years. In a social-political climate increasingly hostile to British dominance, the austerity of the modern style and program is understandable. Kenneth A. Brundle, an insider who later assumed the post of Government Architect in the PWD, said as much when he criticized the prestige and distinctions accorded to the various colonial services, which were most pronounced in the design of officer's quarters. There were, for example, ten separate classes of accommodation for white collar officers and additional categories for manual workers. To support his criticism of the excesses in such housing provisions, Brundle exposed a myth in the tacit architectural knowledge of prewar planners: contrary to popular belief, the excessive plans and roof-forms regularly employed, he argued, "never produced a really cool house."<sup>4</sup> The success of PWD Housing, he conceded, was confined to the bungalow types, and he noted that in the urban context a thorough re-examination of the "one-room-thick" plan as a planning principle needed to be undertaken. This, he reasoned, was a way to shift the architectural style from "colonial monumental" to an "architecture of economy."<sup>5</sup>

The condition Brundle identified was one exacerbated by an increasingly unsettled political future of colonial governance, presenting the "economics" of architecture and building in the tropics with a new crisis: how to deploy material

resources rationally in and around the Central Area business district, where the environment was badly degraded by dense urban build-up. There were also the practical problems of a housing shortage and a scarcity of skilled labor.

The modern style of public architecture, therefore, was not born of experimentation or through conflicts with academically trained architects, but rather from specific pragmatic considerations. Architects in the colony, in both the private and public sectors, were practical people. For the latter group, their tour of duty, even with the advent of modern aviation, remained short. Thus, although every five years a new group of architects brought new ideas, these ideas were quickly moderated by the dire conditions and practical demands they came up against. In addition, it is a little-known fact that despite its increasing volume of work the PWD operated with a lean staff. [PWD Annual Reports 1948-1965] As late as 1962 it numbered just three people: only one permanent architect and two on temporary appointments.

Furthermore, for the most part, the transformation of the typologies of PWD public architecture proceeded along the well-rehearsed and rational lines of the weather, in particular, rain, sunshade, drainage, and ventilation. In matters of construction, the impetus for standardization was twofold: a lack of skilled labor in the building trades and the existence of ready-made standards drawn from the home country. For example, the standardized procedures for estimation or the "bills of quantities" (in British technical parlance), initiated before World War II and formalized under the exigencies of the postwar years by the War Office in 1956, were quickly adopted with minor modifications, especially those involving labor.<sup>6</sup>

### **Programs and Profiles of Work**

The most instructive evidence for understanding PWD public architecture as a type of welfare modernity lies in the details of colonial expenditures and the scope of the works that the

department undertook. The presence of the PWD was singularly felt, though largely invisible, through its infrastructural endeavors, of which roads and sewerage were the most vital. Between 1945 and 1965, 148 miles of new roads were completed, and twice as many reached into new village and agricultural areas. The conversion of private roads into public ones was less known or recognized. In 1961, for example, more than half of the budget of the "Road Section" was expended on the adoption of roads. As a whole, the public roads effectively structured all subsequent land developments and rights of access, and extended the "territorial" influence of the organization. Even the surveying, laying out, and accessing of cemeteries fell under the purview of the PWD. One of the primary facets of PWD road development was the creation of the colony's first industrial corridors, such as Alexandra and Redhill. Another was the decongestion of the city. These early projects influenced the subsequent physical planning and land-use policy in the 1955 master plan

However, it is through the services of modern buildings and spaces such as schools, medical clinics, postal and other communal amenities that welfare modernity established the most extensive network of contact points with the colonial populations outside the reaches of the Central Area business district. Such services became the *modus operandi* of the postwar colonial government. In political terms, this enabled a certain level of public accounting and allowed for a transparent assessment of whatever remained of the colonial vision, i.e., to show that the Empire was still a legitimate power. In practical terms, welfare modernity pressured the technical institutions, including the PWD, to exhibit a higher degree of professionalism in the delivery and scheduling of its promises. However, the scale of the tasks envisaged outstripped the capacity of the PWD, thereby highlighting its historic, 19<sup>th</sup> century constitution, which was limited to fulfilling symbolic and emblematic projects, and hence it was ill-prepared to handle the scale of truly "public" work it now faced.<sup>7</sup> So severe was the need for technical manpower, that the colonial government mobilized

all facets of vocational training and apprenticeships in both the public and private sectors.<sup>8</sup>

### **Transformation of the Medical Service**

While the prime objective of colonial medicine was to ensure a secure and healthy commercial port, by isolating and containing acute diseases, the postwar concerns articulated, for the first time, the need to plan for the “well-being of every man, woman and child” in the colony.<sup>9</sup> In 1948, the colonial government, through the Colony’s Legislative Council, recognized that the elite nature of the hospitals, which mainly treated the European population, had to “evolve,” and it promptly approved a Ten-year Medical Plan. In professional circles, too, arguments echoed the decision to move health policy from concentrating on diseases to focusing on the patient.<sup>10</sup>

The ten-year plan included the decentralization of the health delivery system through outpatient clinics, polyclinics, and dispensaries. In contrast to the centralized projects such as Singapore General Hospital (1923–1926), Woodbridge Mental Hospital (1925–1928), and Kandang Kerbau Maternity Hospital (1931–1933), which were isolated physically and functionally, the modern clinics were distributed nearer to the places people lived and worked, thereby giving a “face” to colonial welfare modernity. In contrast to the panoptical and formal plans such as those of the pre-war Tanjong Pagar Tuberculosis Clinic, a by-product of the then centralized health monitoring, the postwar clinics exuded a refreshing aura of care. The new beneficiaries of this move were the rural areas, where, according to a survey done in 1956, up to one third of the colony’s population lived. These became the places of front-line surveillance, as “environmental hygiene,” adequate care, and safety replaced curative concerns.<sup>11</sup>

The economic boom of the interwar years created new demands for services and pressures on the administration, in turn pressing the colonial government to pay more attention to primary

education for the local populations. Ostensibly, the initial motivation was to train competent Asiatic colonial subjects to fill the subordinate ranks of the rapidly expanding colonial civil service, which included British Malaya and the Straits Settlements. Due to the nature of the labor market, it would be historically inaccurate to suggest that in matters of education policy, the colonial intent in the interwar years was to systematically forge, in Foucauldian parlance, “the foundation of disciplinary methods to produce obedient, docile, and useful bodies.”<sup>12</sup> For, with the surplus of migrant laborers, mainly Indian and Chinese, whose bodies were of course monitored by the health services, there was no pressure or urgency to reproduce labor through education—when it faltered, it would be readily and quickly replaced.

Instead of the government, during the interwar era Chinese clan associations and Christian missions undertook most of the pioneering work in education. In 1941, there were seventy-eight government-aided English schools and trade schools: this figure was but a fifth of the number of Chinese vernacular schools.<sup>13</sup> Colonial efforts in education were remedial and apologetic, directed at the “indigenous” sectors of the colonial population, particularly the Malays, a sector otherwise marginalized by the colony’s administrative practices. The pedagogical philosophy of government schools invariably echoed the Edwardian and Georgian ethics of the period.

The war transformed the demographic patterns of the colony substantially, with post-war immigrants opting to stay permanently to raise a new generation of young Asiatic subjects. A decade after the war, half of the colonial subjects were under the age of twenty-one. And it was for this group, born into a recent immigrant society newly-housed in the colony, that the cultivation of “national consciousness” became a vital agenda for the reconstruction and liberalization of educational policy.<sup>14</sup> The discipline and training of the new subjects thus became a formidable task,

as evidenced by the unprecedented school building programs.

The presentation of colonial Singapore as a “new self-shaping Asian Singapore,” as it has been argued, also meant an education system that was “more self-centered.”<sup>15</sup> This was motivated by a host of political intentions. The first was to end communalism by the integration of English and vernacular schools into a “single harmonious whole.”<sup>16</sup> The schools were engines for “turning children into loyal citizens of a cosmopolitan Singapore” in order to diffuse political and trade union activism in the Chinese schools. One such effort was the initiation of technical education, which aimed specifically at curbing the influence of the Chinese schools. Besides directly addressing the skills and training needed to fuel the new industries, the program of technical education directly confronted the competition by creating a multi-racial setting promising career opportunities beyond the confines of the traditional communal enclaves. The modern physical environment of these PWD schools, formally simple as they were, provided new perspectives on work, with spaces rationally apportioned and arranged. Alongside the “new suburbs” such as Queenstown, the school was the imagined landscape of emergent nationhood integrated with community centers, playing fields, health clinics, post offices, and police stations. The ambitions harbored by these communal welfare projects conveniently coincided with the views from London; visiting conservative Minister of Parliament Geoffrey Lloyd qualified the education agenda as a “fundamental basis of a nation...moving towards self-government.”<sup>17</sup>

### **The Modern Legacy of the Postwar PWD**

Through bureaucracy, welfare modernity created a new level of legitimacy and authority for the colonial government. In all instances, it directly and actively forged a condition of dependence around the politics of the body. This increasingly displaced older practices in Asiatic societies, previously circumscribed by traditional links through self-help

systems. Thus, as the subaltern groups of Asiatic society, in response to their exposure to modernity, were driven into the recesses of their respective radical or conservative polities, welfare modernity increasingly drew the new colonial subjects into new relationships of dependence, albeit propagated and received as freedom. Seen in a dialectical frame, welfare modernity was an imposition, while for the colonial power, it was tacitly a matter of self-preservation.

The effectiveness of welfare modernity as dispensed by the PWD exceeded the politics of dependence. It also fueled the program of the London Colonial Office directly, the goal being to ideologically align public architecture, through a policy of rational authority, with the space of civil society in order to counter rising radical political activism in the colonies. Sir Gerald Templer, the High Commissioner at the time, was charged with the task of curbing Communist insurrection in the British Federation of Malaya. Significantly, it was he who first recognized the political and propagandistic dimension of the cultural project in architecture. Alongside his massive resettlement program that created the “New Villages” in the forested fringe areas of Malaya, his efforts were directed to forging the semblance of a civil society through architecture. In the wider orbit of the urban areas, the enlistment of welfare modernity as a vanguard for self-government was proposed and accepted as an effective way of realizing “active” democracy to fend off Communism. In the first place, it showed that the modern services were accessible to the general public, and were helpful in the attainment of the good life without adverse political actions. Second, through the spaces of modern welfare services, individual needs were harmoniously met within the larger society. Finally, through this program, it was argued, the governed could “actively and intelligently associate with government” rather than accept the “form of government by officials and nominated members associated with a colonial government.”<sup>18</sup>

This is the factor that structured both the

modern subjectivity of British Malaya as well as of post-independence Singapore. Paradoxically, it was only with the appropriation of these programs and projects in the post-colonial setting that Modernism arose as a supreme ideological tool in architecture. The naturalization of welfare modernity into the core of national politics, then, ironically transformed modern architecture and infrastructure into a symbolic order, albeit directly connected to colonial governance. Ultimately, this has worked against their conservation or preservation over the longer run. More clearly, these modern typologies, conceived under the guise of progress and change, contained the seeds of their own destruction, as more effective programs and technology emerged on the horizon.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The restructuring of PWD activities in Singapore toward “welfare-type” projects can be explained only partially in psychological terms as a desire to regain “British prestige in the Far East,” which, as its harshest war critic observed, was “destroyed possibly for all time.”<sup>19</sup> For one thing, the recovery of prestige was but a mere passing moment of colonial vanity. More accurately, the postwar years represented a critical transformation in the ways, forms, and dynamics of power. Against a background of political and social activism, mounting evidence of armed terrorism, and subversive Communist infiltration into the Federation’s unions and schools, public architecture, now transformed into a pragmatic modern form as welfare modernity, acted as the most effective, and final surrogate of colonial power in response to the emerging political situation. The welfare modernity of PWD public architecture fit nicely into the “national democracy” project in the mid-1950’s on the colony’s path toward self-government. For the first time, a new, more pragmatic and austere Modern style entered into the national ethos, creating an architecture, which, thanks to its apparent neutrality and capacity to realign the collective vision toward a broadly national project, became an architecture of identity.

### **Notes**

1. *Cheong, 1992: 15*
2. *Scriver, 2000*
3. *Wong & Tan, 2004*
4. *Brundle, 1951: 17*
5. *Brundle, 1955: 3*
6. *SMM 1959: 1*
7. *CO940/Vickers 1948*
8. *CO940/\_:Frisby 1950; CO852/556/4\_: c.1943/44*
9. *CO 940/1*
10. *SNS 30/04/57: 3*
11. *SNS 15/05/56: 5*
12. *Nalbantoglu, 1996:41*
13. *Dept. of Education Annual Report, 1946*
14. *SNS 15/09/54: 4*
15. *SNS 30/5/57*
16. *SNS 15/02/56: 5*
17. *SNS 15/03/56 - :4*
18. *SNS 1957: 7*
19. *Simpson 1970: 21*

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- CO 850/192/26 (c. June 1942) *Annexure 3D in Ltr. Clement Hindley (Chairman, Post-War Development Committee) to Harold MacMillan (Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies)* in PRO-KEW.

To Rationalize, Functionalize, and Internationalize Japan:  
The Role of the Architects  
in the Ministry of Posts and  
Telecommunications in the  
Post-war Period – The Case of  
Hideo Kosaka

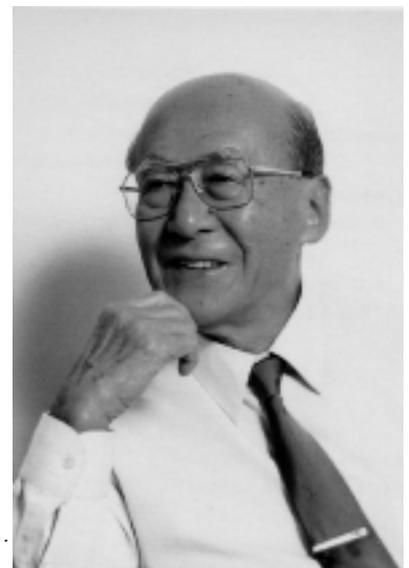
Kenji Watanabe and Yoshiyuki Yamana

*The purpose of this paper is to investigate an architect, Hideo Kosaka (1912-2000) and his works of the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications in the post-war period in Japan. Main topic is to demonstrate that his activities contributed modern movement in architecture in terms of rationalizing, functionalizing and internationalizing which he proclaimed in the introduction of the volume, 'Architecture of Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications' (published in 1958). He succeeded these notions from pre-war movement initialized by the same Ministry architect, Tetsuro Yoshida (1894-1956). Kosaka developed and practiced them in order to rebuild and reconstruct post-war Japan. He defined rationalizing as methods of construction, functionalizing as integration between form and function, and internationalizing as expression of modern aesthetic. We would like to examine three aspects in the several buildings designed by Kosaka as chief architect, including Tokyo Teishin Hospital Senior Nurses Training School (built in 1951, demolished) and Government Office for Ministry of Foreign Affairs (built in 1960) and to make clear that Kosaka could put three concepts into the practical issues, i.e. standardization, modulation, system of team design, and technical details around opening. It is concluded three concepts based on the design of the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunication, simultaneously, modernization Japan by constructing post-offices and other relating buildings.*

**Introduction**

This paper is a study of the architect Hideo Kosaka (1912-2000) and his projects at the Ministry of Postal Services in postwar Japan. Its main objective is to demonstrate that his activities contributed to the Modern Movement in architecture in terms of rationalizing, functionalizing and internationalizing his country's architecture, as he proclaimed in the introduction of his 1958 book *Architecture of the Ministry of Postal Services*. He adopted these notions from the pre-war movement initiated by another Ministry architect, Tetsuro Yoshida (1894-1956).

The Ministry of Postal Services' concepts of design were an extension of those from the prewar period, in which the Japanese sought to modernize their nation by constructing civic buildings, among them post offices. Kosaka considerably adapted and extended them, in order to rebuild and reconstruct postwar Japan. He defined "rationalizing" in terms of methods of construction, "functionalizing" through integration of form and content or structure, and "internationalizing" through the expression of a modern aesthetic as a means to criticize the easy tendency to adopt a Japanese traditional style amid the conflicts of the so-called "Dento-Ronso" (Arguments on Tradition).



Portrait of  
Hideo Kosaka in 1980 .

We will examine these aspects in the several buildings Kosaka designed as chief architect, including the 1951 Teishin Hospital Senior Nurses Training School in Tokyo and the 1960 Government Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in order to make clear that Kosaka was able to put these three concepts into practice, ultimately encompassing standardization, modular design, a system of team design, and in the technical details involved in openings, door fittings, and structural organization.

### **Prewar as the Introduction of Modernism**

Buildings for postal, telephone and telegraph services have significance for the Modern Movement in architecture internationally because of their programmatic association with the progressive, inventive and rationalizing goals of that movement. These characteristics, it can be argued, crystallized in the architecture of the Fascist regime in 1930's Italy.

In Japan, the process of modernizing society after the Meiji period (1867-1912) influenced the changing styles of these buildings, as did the particular leanings of architects at the time. In the 1920's, a new generation of architects, including Sutemi Horiguchi (1895-1983), Mamoru Yamada (1894-1966), and Tetsuro Yoshida (1894-1956), began to criticize the adoption of Western historical styles of architecture in Japan. Horiguchi and others eventually published a manifesto establishing the "Nippon Bunriha Kenchiku" (Japan Secessional Architecture), based on their passion for a new, utopian style. Both Yamada and Yoshida worked for the Ministry of Posts, Telephone and Telegraph as professional architects in its efforts to modernize the postal and telephone systems.

Yoshida designed the Tokyo Central Post Office in 1931, which the German émigré architect Bruno Taut praised in his diary as being a work of real modern architecture combined with Japanese traditional style. Taut asserted that the tectonics of modern architecture, particularly post-and-beam

construction as an expression of structure, merged with the ways of Japanese traditional construction and their aesthetic value. Taut praised the modern qualities inherent in the Ise Shrine and Katsura Villa. By pointing out the similarity between Modernism and Japanese tradition, and the absence of any major conflict between aspects of the Modern aesthetic (such as simplicity and honesty) and those of traditional practices, modern Japanese architects who followed functionalism and rationalism as they spread through Europe were prompted to modernize architecture in Japan without having to deal with the issue of tradition. This was perhaps the primary reason Modernism could be accepted so readily in Japan.

Yoshida played an important role in introducing Japanese architecture to Taut. He also helped in the design of Hyuga Villa in 1936, and had written a book titled *Das Japanische Wohnhaus* (The Japanese House) published in Germany by Wasmuth a year earlier. It was the first publication by a Japanese architect to introduce the Japanese house to Europeans. Yoshida's understanding of the Japanese house, including both its architecture and garden, differed from that of most architectural historians. He asserted that the basic idea and philosophy of architectural design must relate to the work of a practicing architect. This was especially expressed by the German word "Sauberkeit" (integrity, purity), which for him implied unity through the use of modules, flexibility of plan, and harmony with nature. His architectural philosophy was based on the three principles that Kosaka would develop during the postwar period.

### **The High Point of Timber-frame Construction**

Kosaka graduated from the Department of Architecture of Tokyo Imperial University (precursor of the University of Tokyo) in 1935, one year before Kenzo Tange. He then served in the Ministry of Postal Services, where many talented architects were already working, such as Yoshida, Yamada, and Roku Iwamoto (1893-1922). Kosaka's first work at the Ministry was a timber-frame construction, the

Electrical Experiment Station in Shibaura in 1940. At the same time, he assisted Yoshida, one of chief architects then working on the design of the Senior Marine Training School in 1943. Almost all of the works undertaken at the Ministry in that period were built in timber-frame construction, because laws restricting the use of steel materials started to be enforced in 1937 in preparation for the war effort. Regrettably, both of these works were bombed and destroyed during the war, but the essential aspects of their design were incorporated in postwar works by Kosaka, who inherited Yoshida's position as chief architect.

During the decade following the war, there was chronic lack of building materials in Japan, coupled with the requirement to follow methods of mass production and prefabrication. Consequently, architects had no choice but to adopt timber-frame construction in the post offices built throughout Japan. Kosaka had undertaken interesting experiments before he began designing post offices, such as the production of Telephone Boxes in the Tokyo area, a project commissioned by the US Occupation Forces (GHQ). The resulting designs emphasized prefabrication, which would become the basis for the construction of postwar houses. Kosaka constructed them by using vertical timber panels and sloped tin roofs, elements from which various prototypes developed. Meanwhile, in 1949, the Ministry of Posts, Telephone and Telegraph was split into two ministries: the Postal Service and Electrical Telecommunications. Kosaka remained with the Postal Services as a chief architect of the building and maintenance section.

The underlying social conditions encouraged both Ministries to emphasize standardization of structure, material and finishes in their buildings, and this approach eventually spread to other public facilities, such as schools and regional government offices.

Tokyo Teishin Hospital Nurses Training School was completed in 1951, on a site adjacent to the Tokyo Teishin Hospital designed by Yamada in 1937. The Nurses Training School was awarded the



*Tokyo Teishin Hospital Nurse Training School in 1951 AIJ Award, demolished in 1985.*

Architectural Institute of Japan (AIJ) Prize the year it was finished. In his response to the award in the AIJ Journal, Kosaka wrote: "It is very unfortunate that Mr. Yoshida's works, like the Senior Marine Training School and Lighthouse Dormitory in Tsurumi, lost a chance to be cited, and no one knows such wonderful works, since they fell into ruin without notice. If they were still standing now, I think, our work at this time would not nearly be as good as them. Although they were ruined and demolished, their design and qualities have been incorporated without change in the works of the Ministry of Postal Services in the postwar period."

There are three main distinctive features of the Nurse Training School:

1. Window Proportions.

The first notable aspect is the equal size of upper fanlight and lower windows. There are several reasons for this treatment. Kosaka's design required the transom bar and entrance top rail to be at the same height because of the arrangement of the façade lines. Traditionally, the proportion of a window is such that the transom is small and the area below is large. Kosaka equalized the proportions of each of the parts, yielding a scheme with uniform wind pressure, with the added convenience of being able

to slide the windows; it also enabled the use of efficient ready-made sheets of glass, as the panels were identical. Consequently, almost all of the timber-frame buildings of the Postal Services had vertically proportioned windows, which obviously influenced the works of other architects at that time, such as Yoshiro Taniguchi. Kosaka adopted this proportional scheme for the windows to economize and to keep ceiling heights appropriate for classrooms.

## 2. Finishing Details.

Special note must be made of the treatment of the gable ends and the size of materials. Because of Japan's climate, timber-frame buildings require pitched roofs and deep eaves. Protection from rain and sufficient ventilation are essential in Japanese architecture, particularly for the roof, window openings, and basement floor. Kosaka naturally adopted a sloping roof for most of his designs, particularly a hipped roof for the Nurses Training School, and, in general, gabled roofs for other facilities. It is important in a sloped roof to detail the gable end, because the normal treatment of this side requires a thick panel concealing the structural timber (*moya*). Many projects having gable ends were treated with triangle in-fill panels under the gable line, in a manner reminiscent of houses in Germany. The reason why Kosaka chose a hipped roof was that he wanted to detail it like a flat roof of reinforced concrete with mortar finishing, mainly because of its scale and proportion. The inside wall finishing, however, consisted of vertical panels laid out along the width of the windows. Each panel had a shiplap joint and the width of the joint was 6mm (including 3mm chamfering) because of the elasticity of materials. The width of the window frame was 24mm and the difference (*chiri*) between the surface of the post or window frame and wall was 15mm, due to the need for clear articulation. The design principles of the Nurses Training School, which employed these details, were inherited from Yoshida, who believed that Japanese architecture must be harmonized with nature, express materiality and its own pureness –

although all of this is now based on standardization. Kosaka believed standardization was rational and economical rationality should be realized through the most conventional methods. This type of detailing was quickly extended to other post offices being built in Japan.

## 3. The Ministry of Postal Services Design Organization.

Kosaka was in charge of the design of this building, as well as of organizing the maintenance section of the Ministry, which entailed administration, design and construction. He put in place a system whereby each staff member could concentrate on his work because the chief architect and engineer took responsibility for the design and construction of each work from the beginning to completion. It was comparable to the Department of Architecture of the London County Council under Robert Matthew, in postwar Britain. In addition, general meetings for each project were initiated by the chief architects and engineers of the Ministry of Postal Services, and held twice, once for the basic design and once when the practical design commenced. They discussed and reviewed every project as much as possible.

The Nurses Training School was the highpoint of timber-frame construction – in terms of details, materiality, and standardization; it inherited pre-war practices while at the same time greatly influencing other buildings in postwar in Japan.

## Overcoming the Expression of Traditional Japanese Architecture

Kosaka had entered several architectural competitions, both open and closed, since the prewar period. His first award was third prize for a project for the "Great Asia Memorial Construction Plan," submitted by several members of the Ministry of Postal Services. The first prize in this competition was given to Kenzo Tange, who proposed a symbolic plan reminiscent of Japanese traditional architecture, specifically of the Ise Shrine. It remained an

unrealized project, however, because of the war. At this point, Kosaka and Tange, who were of precisely the same generation, began to seek an authentic style of Japanese architecture, poised between modernism and tradition. Another significant aspect of Kosaka's competition submission was that the Ministry of Postal Services allowed him to work independently as an architect. Before the design of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which was not even for the Ministry of Postal Services, Kosaka had received only one commission from a local government.

The building for the Foreign Ministry, as we mentioned, was established by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Construction in 1952, and completed in 1960. It was the result of a closed competition in which 8 architects were invited to participate: Hideo Kosaka, Takeo Sato, Kenzo Tange, Eikichi Hasebe, Togo Murano, Toshiro Yamanshita, Mamoru Yamada, and Tetsuro Yoshida. The nomination of the three architects Kosaka, Tange, and Yoshida, although perhaps accidental, was reminiscent of efforts within the prewar Modern Movement to arbitrate between modernism and tradition; for the Foreign Ministry building was, in a sense, a symbolic gesture Japan made towards foreign countries. Tange, meanwhile, was asked to participate in the competition for the Tokyo Government Office in 1952, whose dates precisely correspond to those of the Foreign Ministry's building, and, curiously, he devoted greater attention to the design of the Tokyo Government Office than to the Foreign Ministry project. Perhaps, he wanted to build the Tokyo Government Office as a prototype for local government buildings in postwar Japan that would be representative of Japanese modern architecture, an interest that could also be seen in his design of the Kagawa Prefecture Government Office in 1958.

As soon as Kosaka was selected by the Foreign Ministry as its architect, he requested Yoshida as a preliminary design consultant. Yoshida ultimately assumed the post of professor of architectural design at Nihon University, after retiring

from his work for the Ministry of Postal Services. Kosaka's idea for the competition, especially the composition of the façade with vertical louvers, was modified to become the clear expression of the very same post-and-beam construction that Yoshida had proposed in the competition. The building plan and volume, as well as the service systems, were also changed, but they remained within the range of the preliminary design. However, the façade was so greatly altered that people doubted it was still the competition entry, pointing to an essential problem in the competition system itself in Japan, i.e., its veracity.

There are probably two reasons why Kosaka requested Yoshida's assistance. First, Kosaka had intended to work with Yoshida; and very probably, he wanted to let Yoshida continue to work on such a large-scale and significant commission. Yoshida was engaged in architectural education, but his health was growing worse (he finally died of brain cancer in 1956). Kosaka understood Yoshida's situation and remained in contact with him; however, Kosaka had seen Yoshida's project for the competition at the public exhibition after the competition. In addition, Yoshida proposed a project for the competition to build the Tokyo Government Office that was basically in the same style as his proposal for the Foreign Ministry, inasmuch as it emphasized post-and-beam structural expression. There was a deep sympathy on Kosaka's part toward Yoshida's work, which went back to the latter's design work for the Ministry of Postal Services in the postwar period.

Secondly, as stated above, Kosaka perceived Tange's views as rivaling Yoshida's efforts to combine Modernism and Japanese tradition. Kosaka attempted to identify his own style, one that borrowed from both Modernism and Japanese tradition. Tange would debut dramatically, and internationally, with his design for the Hiroshima Peace Center in 1952, which sparked the "Arguments on Tradition" in the mid-1950's. Significant arguments also appeared in the art reviews *Bijyutsu Hihyo* and *Shinken-chiku*,

both in 1953. Tange's strategy was to establish monumentality for the theme of eternal peace in the project in Hiroshima, using Corbusian elements like pilotis and a structural core that intentionally concealed a visible Japanese traditional style, unlike his prewar project. Following Hiroshima, he tended to apply Western Modernism explicitly to Japanese traditional style with regard to the relationship between functionalism and aesthetics. He claimed that a beautiful thing was functional. This meant that he prioritized aesthetic concerns over function in the design of architecture.

Tange designed the Tokyo Government Office and Kagawa Government Office, and in both projects he was thoroughly aware that Japanese traditional style implied an emphasis on structural rationality. On the other hand, in 1958, Kosaka strongly criticized the tendency to use Japanese traditional style in the design of public buildings, such as easily designed verandas or additional structures that were based on timber constructional proportion but failed to make this explicit. Kosaka persisted in his advocacy of function born of the union of form and content with form and structure.

The Office for the Foreign Ministry was designed using post-and-beam construction with large frame windows and 1.3m long eaves. He stated that the reason he attached eaves above the windows was so as not to represent Japanese traditional style but rather to provide protection from rain and sunlight, which was the same reason for Japanese traditional houses having pure overhangs. Kosaka thus deferred to Yoshida's idea of *Sauberkeit* (integrity, purity), implying a unity achieved through the use of a module, flexibility of plan, and harmony with nature when applying contemporary technology.

During the construction of the Office for the Foreign Ministry, Kosaka contributed an introduction on the works of the Ministry of Postal Services to the 1958 volume *Architecture of the Ministry of Postal Services*. He compressed the principles of the works by the Ministry into three words: rationalizing,



*The Office for Foreign Ministry in 1958, completed reinforced renovation for anti-earthquake in 2004.*

functionalizing, and internationalizing. This could be rephrased as to construct architecture rationally, to plan architecture functionally, and to express architecture with a view not toward nationalism but rather internationalism.

Kosaka continued and developed his designs for other buildings such as the Tokyo Post Office and Hotel Okura in 1962 (as one of the design consultants), Teishin Building in 1964, Meitetsu Grand Hotel in 1965, and as a chief architect of the Ministry of the Postal Services, where he maintained Yoshida's principles. His works certainly do not give us dramatic or impressive space, in the way that Tange's works manifest his identity in space. Kosaka persistently avoided trying to reveal his personal identity in his work, choosing instead to design architecture honestly and sincerely as a public servant.

### **Conclusion**

The architect of the Ministry of Postal Services, Hideo Kosaka, played an important role in the development of postwar Japan by maintaining the three concepts for modernization that he derived from his senior architect and mentor, Tetsuro Yoshida during the prewar era: rationalization through standardization of construction and team-work design; functionalization through a balance

between form and content (forms follow function) or form and structure; and internationalization as the creation of humanistic and democratic modern space for public services within the framework of expressing traditional values such as simplicity and honesty – going beyond aestheticism or nationalism in the prewar period. Kosaka's postwar works exemplified the progress of the Modern Movement in Japan, without, however, adopting the constraints characteristic of architecture designed for bureaucracies.

*All photos are from Kosaka Hideo no Kenchiku (Architecture of Hideo Kosaka), published in 2001.*

