

# A DIFFERENT RECEPTION MODERN BRAZILIAN ARCHITECTURE AND CHILEAN ARCHITECTONIC CULTURE

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The circulation of modern Brazilian architecture in the late 40's was organized around an image of exuberance, ease and free forms. However, Chilean publications were looking to Brazil from a different angle.

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## DISTANT GEOGRAPHIES, CLOSE INTENTIONS

**R**ecognition of modern Brazilian architecture in Chile began with publications in the *Arquitectura y Construcción* (Ayc) between 1947 and 1948; in three editions four works and texts were published that could be significant in the affirmation of modern architecture in the context of the local architectonic culture<sup>1</sup>. The interest for the Brazilian production coincided clearly with the impact of the international spreads achieved in a relatively short amount of time. The Ayc magazine recognized that Brazilian architecture was being overly published for the moment, but the publication of the series of Works was due to the opportunity of a trip to Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina by the magazine director, architect Manuel Marchant Lyon. It is viable to suppose that he would have visited many projects given that an large part of the building photography was taken by him as well as the interviews with the architect and above all the compiling of plans and model photographs.

The intentions of the publication (and probably for the trip to organize it) did not lie only in the diffusion of the experience of modern Brazilian architecture. It was clear that it did not pretend to be another of the magazines that replicated works and focus, even when it was released before many of them being contemporary to some of the most relevant publications in historiografía. The declared interests went much farther than mere reproduction; they dealt with an editorial operation destined to the broadening of horizons in Chilean architectonic culture. An article present in the pages of the periodical dedicated specially to Brazil in September of 1947 clearly established that “the familiarity between the professionals of different countries through their works and opinions is as important as that between those of the same country”. This was the first sentence in the presentation of the periodical, very mindful of a possible state of enclosure that the magazine sought to break. In a way it claimed the need to look at other architecture and professional practices to strengthen the architectural culture itself; in the sense that it affirms that “experiences are transmitted and propagated, the particular cases are generalized, the tentative ones are understood and the coming and going shows a daily progress of activities along with the emotional ties it creates”.

Lacking of any complex, this operation addressed the creation of architectonical knowledge through printed media and how the study of foreign practices could carry new local transformations. But at the same time, affirmed a content always latent in modern architecture, in that it established that “there are similar problems

in all points of the globe; the differences are in the possibilities. But on many occasions those possibilities to reach a higher state, exist and are unknown. From there, the necessity to attentively observe what our neighbors are doing, to obtain practical deductions and to battle to apply rationally, without copying, exists. A good solution does not necessarily have to be recipe and, if unfortunately this interpretation is applied often in our country, it will surely not be for reasons that have to do with the true meaning of the profession.”

The presence of Brazil on the pages (as with some others from Argentina and Uruguay that were announced but never arrived) had the broad desire for knowledge, but principally sought to transcend the ties of proximity and effect the brotherhood in the acts of the architectural culture and “no by the superlative declarations nor resplendent decorations”, that can be understood as a tacit commentary on the traditional union labors of that field. The intention was based on knowledge of the built works that showed a certain identity (social and economic) to show “the satisfaction of having resolved a problem with the conjunction of geographically distant appearances but very close in intent.”

## BRAZIL PROVOKES

“It is said that the works of Brazilian architects are over-published”, the introduction of the special edition affirmed. In effect, as it is broadly known, the international impact was later produced from the repercussions of the Brazil pavilion for the International Fair of 1939 and the exposition realized in the MOMA in 1943 and, above all, to the circulation of the book organized from it, the known *Brazil Builds* by Philip Goodwin (1943/a). However, the largest diffusion was produced by the intentioned reproduction of the 900 photographs that G.E. Kidder Smith took on his trip to Brazil to prepare the exhibit. The preponderance of this registry was definitive; some of the images were published almost simultaneously with the exhibition's opening, initiating an intense circulation in specialized media that even included those that did not form part of the catalogue. The way in which Kidder Smith captured Brazilian architecture particularly extolled the formal forcefulness, the repetition of columns and elements, the grace of the ornamental structures, the contrast between artificial regularities and natural conditions as in landscape compositions and modern architecture as well as the older architecture of the Portuguese colonial period.

The succession of international publications is frankly surprising. On one hand it is due to the great amount of architecture magazines after the Second World War and the increasing expansion that registered the exchange of knowledge in a discipline ever more internationalized. But without a doubt also to the quantity and quality of Brazilian architecture that permitted an editorial treatment ever more interested in broadly showing modern architecture. There were many magazines that published Brazil and its works in a fairly brief amount of time; the impact of *Brazil Builds* was effectively impressive, initially through its itinerary (Quezado Deckker, 2001).

From New York it spread to the east coast, Great Britain, Italy, France and even Portugal. Many projects were published more or less systematically in any architecture magazine with a

<sup>1</sup> This work is a product of the FONDECYT investigation N° 1090449 and the happy coincidence of that reading of a magnificent compilation of the paradigmatic text of Brazilian architecture realized recently by Abilio Guerra (to whom i am grateful for the opportunity to see the two volumes of the edition) whose reading has provoked the intellectual tensions necessary to join the Chilean publication with the Brazilian experience and viceversa, the Chilean experience with the Brazilian works.

modern lean, some repetitively and with the same iconographic material. The list is long: *The Architectural Record* in 1943; *Arts & Architecture* of Los Angeles in 1943 in two opportunities; *The Architectural Review* in 1944 and 1947; *Progressive Architecture* in 1946 in two opportunities and in 1947 with the monograph edition; *The Architectural Forum* in 1944 and 1947<sup>2</sup>, *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui* and the Argentinian version known as *La arquitectura de hoy* in 1947<sup>3</sup>, *Arquitectura* of Lisbon in 1948, 1949 and 1953, *Domus* in 1948. The series extended so much so that in 1947 the students of the National Architecture Faculty decided to publish a monograph of the magazine *Ante-projeto* in three languages (Portuguese, English, and Spanish) where they would present 40 works built after 1940, to disseminate within the country works that were being recognized internationally. The publication in *Ayc* was contemporary to this informative explosion.

The projects presented in *Ayc* were four: three from the Roberto brothers and one from Rino Levi. It marks a specific approximation; probably close to the vision of Marchant Lyon who had realized the photographic reports put together the presentation from his editorial. A fundamental text by Lucio Costa was also published (1934), "Reasons for the new architecture", probably the first version in Spanish<sup>4</sup>. It spoke directly to the local reader that it was not important that the Brazilian works were published so much, as long as they were studied with the same intensity, implying the promotion of an intentioned approximation. The selection of works and the Costa text proposes a presentation distanced from the canons elaborated around a formal exuberance. Sometime later, the *ProArte* magazine would be commissioned to center the paradigmatic reading and disseminate the most-recognized works, the presentation of the work of Oscar Niemeyer and an informative amplification in conceptual and formal terms. The diffusion of ideas, images and concepts were proposed to collaborate with the changes that during those years produced a local architecture. But the orientation of the diffusion did not plainly follow the canon that the international literature was building from Brazilian architecture. The identification of the principal architectonic aspect that its presentations and images promoted, and the conceptual contents arising from the texts, talk about the Brazilian architecture itself but also about the way it was being presented: more laconic and concrete, less voluptuous, less sensual and less vehement in its formal solutions; more interested in the functional applications of the formal solutions; attentive to the programs and their conceptions; to the organization of the plan, although not underestimating spatial research.

#### PUBLISHED WORKS: RADICAL FORMALIZATIONS

The first work presented in *Ayc* was the Colonia veraniega in Tijuca by the Roberto brothers with the collaboration of Roberto Burle Marx, commissioned by the Well-being department of the Instituto de Resseguros do Brasil IRB. The accompanying texts are quite descriptive and oriented to bring out the organization of the functions and the social character of the program, even when the characteristics of the main body and its relationship to the site are highlighted as well as the spaces of the reception floor as "a great void in whose central part a curved stair is found"<sup>5</sup>. Emphasis was made on the conditions of the details and finishes "similar in their specifications to Chilean works" but above all the reference to the forms of the composition is significant: "The simplicity of the treatment in relation to the structure and the joy given to the details and the harmonic colors of the surrounding landscape demand attention. The colors pink, blue and white predominate"<sup>6</sup>.

However, the drawings and photographs are much more significant at the moment of considering the compositional aspects of the project, its relationship to the site and its details. A plan of the complex indicates the position in the site, with its sinuous paths and the preponderance of the main block.

Later, the works published in September of 1947 appeared in relationship to the definitions of composition and form, especially because within the presentation some explanations about the alternatives of the symmetry and the balanced, dynamic compositions appear. Three projects were featured, in great detail: Maternidad Universitaria of São Paulo by Rino Levi, the Home for Commercial Employees and the Instituto de Resseguros do Brasil by Marcelo, Milton and Mauricio Roberto.<sup>7</sup>

The Maternidad Universitaria of São Paulo was a project by Rino Levi presented in a private competition that beat Oscar Niemeyer and Helio Duarte, among others. The images presented included model photos, circulation diagrams, a perspective with the distribution of the program and a graphic plan with dominant wind and solar patterns. There were no typical plans or sections. The texts recomposed the functionalist approach in the presentation of the work, with orientation, the separation of circulations and the organization of medical services in the building as the principal topics. Something appears to indicate that the form arises from the joining of the circulations and the function diagram, which would appear logical in the case of architecture for medical care. However, there was no explicit, formal reference.

The Home for Commercial Employees by the Roberto brothers deserved a similar treatment in the texts, however in this case it was impossible to avoid commentaries on the spatial or formal conception. The images were more suggestive: a series of model photos (always highlighting the volumetric articulation), the plans and a long-section that highlighted the relationship with the site and access from the fourth floor of the building. Two striking sketches showed the articulation of the volumes, expressing the relationship with the street. The reaffirmation of the idea of the presentation was sealed with the text: "the total volume, studied with perfect balance in its bodies and details makes this building a fine example of contemporary architecture".

The Instituto de Resseguros do Brasil, also by the same architects, was presented with the photographs of the construction site. The shots are indicative of a will to show the mass and composition of the facades. One specific frame shows the articulation of the building entrance with the *pilotis* and the slab of the transparent mezzanine. The graphics show only the succession of the plans. The photos of the terrace present the wonderful composition of the garden designed by Burle Marx, complemented with a sketch indicative of the solution of the access at the same time. A group of sketches and photos shows the solution of the *brise-soleil* in detail, complemented by an explanation of its position in relation to the façade. Again, the text is a description of the program and the formal conception has been omitted.

The orientation of the reception or works in Chile is centered on programmatic characteristics and the possibilities implied: if the built work is interesting, so is the social conception of the initiative of the Instituto de Resseguros do Brasil. It is an example to be followed: our population has the same needs; our institutions also have Departments of Personal Well being; our territories has beautiful, healthy places and Chilean architects are disposed to creating".

THEORY AND CHARACTER: REASONS FOR THE NEW ARCHITECTURE *Razones de la nueva arquitectura* was written by Lucio Costa in 1934,

as part of the Graduate Program of the Instituto de Arte de la Universidad del Distrito Federal. In it, he defended the acceptance of modern architecture, the product of technology, necessary to overcome the current crisis situation. On one part, he showed the state of the construction situations (“that complete lack of direction and roots”) and, on the other, the possibilities of “new building technology still waiting for the society to which it should logically belong”. He argued that the crisis of architecture arose from the advent of the machine, and that, as such, the new architecture should be different in meaning and form from all precedents, “but (this fact) doesn’t prevent us from following the same principles and laws, considering their permanent part”. Highlighting the new structural system, he marked the independence of the wall with respect to the support, that “free of the rigid act of holding up, they slide together with the impassive columns, the pause at any distance, undulate accompanying the normal movement of internal transit, allowing another performance of the built volume: concentrating the space where necessary, reducing it to the minimum in those places where superfluous.” According to Costa, these technical possibilities permitted an intensity of expression to architecture ignored up until then, but they were annulled by the academic preconceptions on modern architecture, that disarmed it little by little: annulations of the symmetry, monotony of the modern form, its industrial appearance, the absence of ornament. The last and most radical answer to the preconceptions of those that attacked modern architecture corresponded to internationalism, showing that it was not an exceptional but a “rigorously traditional” fact. It culminates associating clarity and objectivity of the new architecture to the “purest Mediterranean traditions.” He consequently affirmed that, although trying to oppose creations of the same origin and although denying their plastic value, “although the forms vary, the spirit is the same and the same fundamental laws remain”. So, in various opportunities throughout the text (composition, lyricism, and social sense), Costa arguably appeals to the tradition to affirm modern architecture.

Lucio Costa’s text was published in two parts in numbers 10 and 12 of *Arquitectura y Construcción*, during September of 1947 and February of 1948 (appearing the first time in Spanish)<sup>8</sup> translated by Luis Vera. It came from collaboration with the “Brazil Academic Directory of the National Faculty of Architecture, an entity that corresponds to our Center for Students”, that had authorized the publication. Luis Vera, at the time an architecture student, had also written a brief introduction on the figure of Lucio Costa, in which he highlights his deeds in the Nation School of Fine Arts, first as a student and later director, “where he sowed the seeds of deep reform” that had been frustrated by “the vicissitudes of the public administration and university traditionalism.”

But most importantly the introduction notes Costa’s capacity to understand the relationships with the past, the evolution of the new times and “the legitimacy and skill of that renovation that corresponded to an inevitable necessity”. He situated Costa in an antagonism with the “untimely creation of neo-colonial style”, that would be relativized but, in effect, for the times, his position was already clear. He stated that “the detailed observation and admiration of the monuments of the past, instead of inducing the reproduction or imitation of forms and elements within works that should be undertaken to solve current problems and attend to the necessities and programs of the moment, they encouraged the enthusiastic assimilation and adoption of the general and specific concepts with which Corbusier had promoted the revision and renovation of the values of contemporary architecture and urban-

ism”. Costa’s text deserves the greater analysis than is possible in these pages. Here we can but refine that the ideas in relation to art for art and the social art, or the modern architecture ability to point out certain national character, must have marked the mentality of the readers.

The images published accompanying the text belonged to two projects, the Museu das Missoes and the Vila de Monlevade, both by the author. The first was an intervention to the Jesuit complex of San Miguel, in which Costa configured a corner of the plaza with a museum and the caretaker’s house based on the typology of the old houses, reusing remains in the gallery and creating a pavilion transparent to the interior. At the same time, Monlevade was a competition project for a working-class housing complex, in which the pavilions of joined dwellings were elevated from the ground over *pilotis*, but were built in reinforced adobe with lightweight roofing.

The drawings of the Museu das Missoes accompanied the publication of the first part of the text, with a plan that intensify the lightness and regular composition and a perspective that showed the opposition between the large roof (with the regular sequence of the large pilars) with the slight, rotund lateral volume. The second part was accompanied by a series of images of the dwellings for the Vila de Monlevade, with its minimal plan, the pavilions scheme, its elemental sections and a small sketch keenly showing the freedom of the lower plan. Again, the first theoretical approximations and the representations of Costa’s practice, in this case refer more to a fairly reserved configuration with respect to the formal liberty advocated by the international media. The meeting of tradition and modernity, the value of place, the concrete configuration and the sobriety of the form stood as fundamental conceptions.

#### INTERTEXTS

Carlos Ferreira Martins (1999) has noted that Goodwin’s work inaugurated an interpretative frame that appeared recurrently in the historiography; it was based on the originality of the experience and in its identification with a project that united tradition and modernity. More traditional readings have echoed the idea of originality, the use of free and abstract forms, the imaginative use of materials and manifestations of a certain exoticism; however, that did not seem to be the focus developed within the spreading that took place initially in Chile.

The differences in the approaches between that which was published in the international medias and the Chilean ones are significant; thus it is possible to trace the hypothesis that the meaning could have acquired in the local meaning was also different. A revision of the works presented allows one to determine the main formal topics that marked the differences, but also the context of its publication and the built and published contemporary works in

2 The edition dedicated to Brazil a coverage that it occupied from p. 65 to p. 112.

3 The French version was titled *Bresil* and correspondes to the Vol. 18 N° 13-14 from September.

4 Costa’s text, written in 1934, was initially published in the *Revista da Diretoria de Engenharia da Prefeitura do Distrito Federal*, January 1936, pp. 3-9. In Spanish, it was published in Lima in 1986, with translation by Alonso Cueto, in the selection realized by Arnaldo Carrillo and prologue by José García Bryce. See: *Lucio Costa, Razones de la nueva arquitectura -1934- y otros ensayos*, Brazilian Embassy, Lima, 1986.

5 It was published under the title “Realizaciones. Colonia veraniega en Brasil” in the edition N° 9 of 1947. The quote is from p. 49.

6 Consigned on p. 51 of the same publication.

7 The three projects were included in the edition N° 10 of *Arquitectura y Construcción*, published in September of 1947, occupying pp. 34 to 48.

8 It would later be published in Spain in 1949 in *Informes de la Construcción* N° 12.

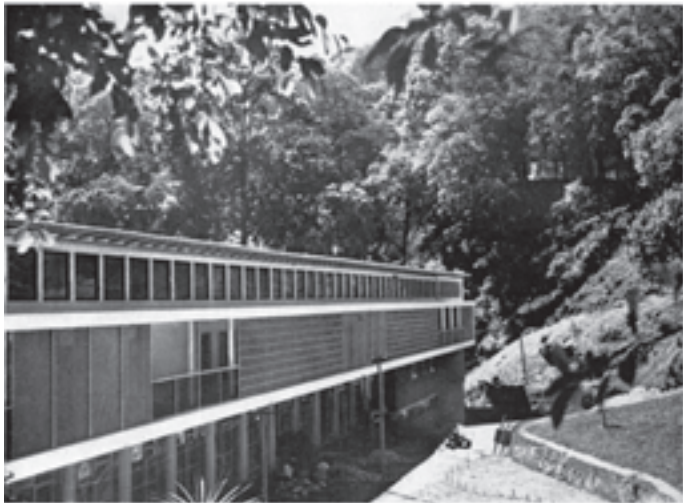
#### 4. COLONIA VERANIEGA EN BRASIL

Antes de esta obra son los arquitectos Roberto, Wilson y Mauricio Roberto. Los autores al arquitecto paraguayo Brade Marz.

Otros colaboradores de los hermanos Roberto son:

El Rio de Janeiro utilizado para la Asociación Brasileña de la Prensa, para el Instituto del Seguro Industrial, el Colegio RT y para el Departamento de Estudios para el Instituto de Investigación, Residencial para Estudiantes de Comercio, Departamento, etc., algunos de los cuales pertenecen en sus terrenos a otros propietarios.

En São Paulo el Estímulo Industrial.



A unos veinte metros de Rio de Janeiro, hacia el interior, en los primeros terrenos de la zona virgen, está emplazado Tijuca, ciudad-jardín en la que viven especialmente empleados y profesionales.

En sus alrededores se levanta la Colonia Veraniega que para los arquitectos del Instituto de Investigaciones del Brasil, propiamente el Departamento de Maestros. El paisaje es de suma belleza natural y el clima es más fresco que el de Rio debido a la mayor altitud de su emplazamiento.

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El edificio y sus anexos están distribuidos, en parte, para los recreos de temporada y, en parte, para los viviendas de fin de semana. La obra se inició en 1945 y se terminó en el presente año. La gran decoración está naturalmente, y las plantaciones nuevas ya están hechas, como también las instalaciones aéreas.

El campo principal consta de tres pisos, con acceso por caminos desde el primero y segundo piso, lo que es posible por la topografía del terreno.



Al nivel del suelo se hallan el garaje, el acceso principal con la escalera al piso de recepción, la gerencia, papetería, un vestíbulo para niños, las dependencias de servicio y lavandería.

El piso de recepción está tratado como un solo gran espacio, en cuya parte central se halla la escalera curva de acceso al piso de dormitorios. Este está dividido en dos secciones principales: la destinada al weekend, con capacidad para 90 personas y la destinada a vacaciones,

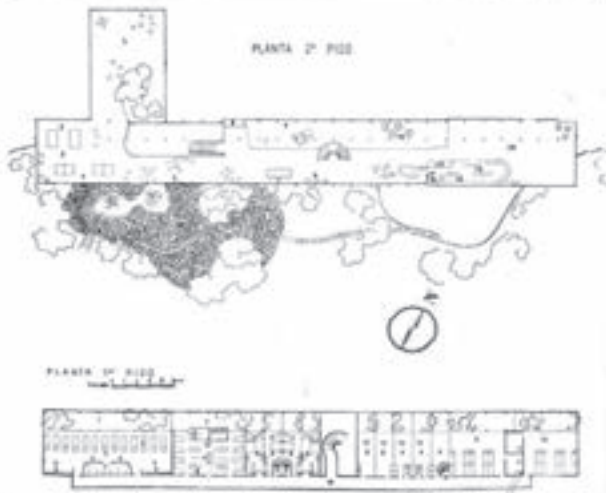
donde pueden alojarse 31 personas. Ambas secciones están divididas en salas para hombres y mujeres; estas últimas en un solo espacio, subdividido por unidades, salas, mesas, bancos, de recepción diario. En el Departamento de Weekend, los dormitorios cuentan desde cuatro dormitorios.

La estructura es de hormigón armado, con columnas de alfilería y maderas, destacándose el empleo de piedra de la zona. Las ventanas son de corredores, completa-

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"Colonia veraniega en Brasil" de los hermanos Roberto publicada en *Arquitectura y Construcción* N° 9. Santiago, junio de 1947, pp. 48, 49

"Colonia veraniega en Brasil" by the Roberto brothers. *Arquitectura y Construcción* N° 9. Santiago, June 1947, pp. 48, 49



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metidos con quinientas y protecciones contra el sol, la cubierta es de gresolito. Las terminaciones son simples en superposición a las chiflonas.

Libera la atención en el conjunto de la obra: la simplicidad del tratamiento en relación a la estructura y la elegancia dada por los detalles y por el colorido armonioso del paisaje circundante. Predominan los colores rojos, azul y blanco.

Si la realización arquitectónica es interesante, no lo es menos la concepción social de la iniciativa del Instituto de Investigaciones. Es un ejemplo que hay que seguir: muestra perfectamente cómo las mismas necesidades, cuando instituciones también tienen sus Departamentos de Maestros del Personal, nuestro territorio tiene hermosas y saludables parcelas y los arquitectos chilenos están dispuestos a realizar...



#### LECTURA PARA LOS PLANOS

Segundo piso	Tercer piso	24. Escalera de servicio
1. Pasillos	1. Pasillos cubiertos	23. Galería
2. Billares	2. Pasillos cubiertos	24. Mesa social
3. Juegan	3. Dependencias auxiliares	25. Mesa de juego
4. Ping-pong	4. Vestibulo	26. Los dormitorios para el mantenimiento de la casa
5. Estímulo	5. Colgadero	27. Sala de recepción
6. Música	6. Lavatorio	28. Sala de recepción de acceso a la plaza
7. Lectura	7. Baños	
8. Pasillos cubiertos	8. Cama y armario	
9. Escritorios	9. W. C.	
10. Juegan	10. Dependencias auxiliares	
11. Bar	11. Dependencias auxiliares	
12. Pasillos	12. Dormitorios	
13. Papetería	13. Dormitorios auxiliares	
14. Cocina	14. Dormitorios auxiliares	
15. Almacén	15. Pasillos	
		29. Pasillos cubiertos
		30. Dependencias
		31. Galería
		32. Sala de estar
		33. Almacén
		34. Gerencia



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Fotografía exterior del edificio y plantas del 2° y 3° piso, corte E-F, croquis dormitorio niñas, "Colonia veraniega en Brasil" *Arquitectura y Construcción* N° 9, pp. 50, 51

"Colonia veraniega en Brasil". Exterior photo, 2° - 3° floor plans, section E-F, girls bedroom sketch. *Arquitectura y Construcción* N° 9, pp. 50, 51

Chile. It is in the consideration of the position of the works in the group of editorial decisions with which one can see, as an approximation to the *intertextuality*, also the sense in which that can be read. The *intertextual* relationships that refer to the position of the works in relation to the others presented in the same magazine can also indicate the sense with which they were published.

The Tijuca Colony appeared in the context of a monograph edition dedicated to recreation and obviously corresponded with the thematic slant; but the editorial choice to include this work appears to also be influenced by a certain architectural identity with the other three projects included in the special edition that constitute clear examples of the architectural option in Chile. It was accompanied by the Hogar Hipodromo Chile by Enrique Gebhard and Jorge Aguirre, the Hogar Parque Cousiño by Gabriel Rodriguez and Jorge Aguirre and the casino in the coastal town of Rocas de Santo Domingo by Valdes, Castillo and Huidobro, all excellent projects and of great worth for modern patrimony. Works that were sufficiently suggestive and in some way, exuberant in the use of the points of modern architecture: *pilotis*, free plan, free forms slabs, volume articulation, transparencies, materializations drawn between the visual and the tactile; conditioned by the dynamic compositional systems yet still with a traditional compositional weight but also strictly and formally contained in its volumetric configurations.

In *Ayc* 10, the Brazilian examples appear accompanied by an extensive presentation of the project by Uruguayan architect Gomez Gavazzo for the competition for the Legislative Palace of Ecuador. The didactic presentation, integrated with graphics and an elabo-

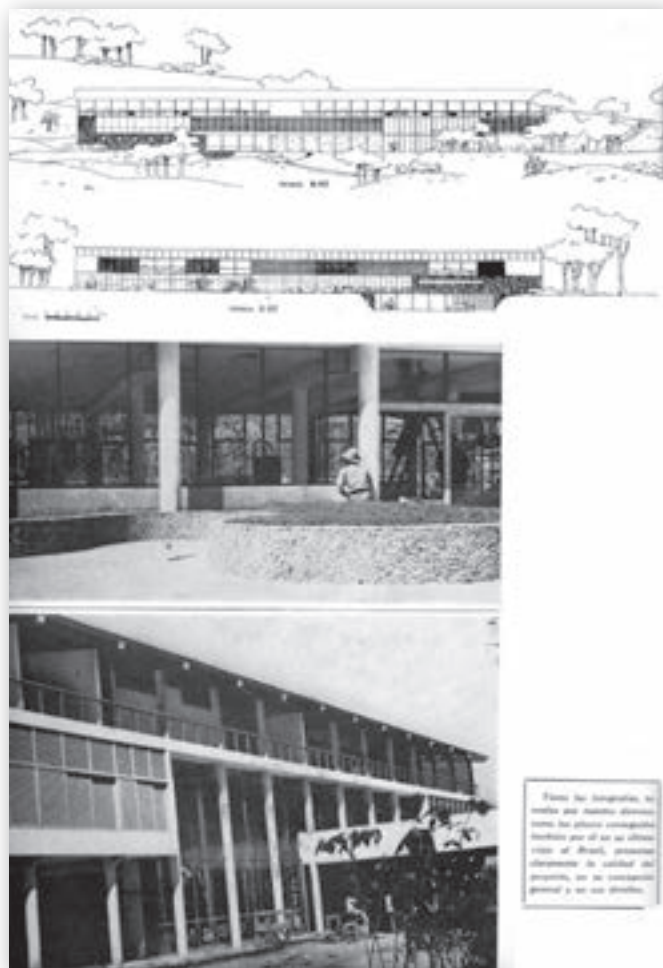
rate text make up a lesson on composition and the relationships with the place. "Form cannot change a defined functional structure, but it can bring out its potential as the expression of living well" (Gavazzo, 1947); this was an elaborated statement (that surely deserves a more specific analysis) that presented a substantial approximation between theory and architectural practice.

The publication appears in relation to a way of making architecture based on the predominance of a contained composition while still articulated with the tradition of local teachings and in whose approximations the importance of geometry, the inductive relationships of the composition and the proportion in relation with the formal criteria of modern architecture can be read.

#### INTERPRETIVE PARADIGMS

Bruand (1991) identified some characteristics in the modern Brazilian architecture associated with its materiality of reinforced concrete, the predominance of the inventive personality of the architect, the imagination yielding to the regulation of logic whose order and balance is visible in the "more daring creations as well as the more contained", the break with initial functionalism for symbolism, monumentality, plasticity and formal investigation, simplicity, lightness and decorative richness. It is an approach whose validity is obviously generic and panoramic. However, it accurately sums up the interpretive paradigms that circulated from the 40's and through the following three decades.

The publication in *Ayc* is still prior to the debates on formalism and the controversy initiated by Max Bill and Rogers or the accusations of extravagance and wastefulness (Rigotti, 1999) but



Fachadas norponiente y sureste y fotografías del edificio, "Colonia veraniega en Brasil" *Arquitectura y Construcción* N° 9, p. 52  
"Colonia veraniega en Brasil". Northwest and Southeast façades and photos featured in *Arquitectura y Construcción* N° 9, p. 52



Portada de *Arquitectura y Construcción* N° 9. Santiago, junio de 1947  
*Arquitectura y Construcción* N° 9 cover. Santiago, June 1947

it is undeniable that the free and expressive tension was already present in the first interpretive paradigms. Particularly for the diffusion of the work of Niemeyer en Pampulha, especially the chapel, that was considered for “the natural extension of the earth, the symbolic use of the structure and the skill for the use of ceramics and the mural that blurred its form with the landscape” as shown in *Progressive Architecture* in December 1946; also for “the extravagant ramps of the casino” or the “organic curves of the dance hall or the treatment of fluid space and the elegant lightness of the pavilion” or the “romantic effect of the garden” in the interventions of Burle Marx (Goodwin, 1943/a). The same initial promoter also stated a canon identical to that in *The Architectural Record*: “Brilliant contrasts give character to Brazilian life and its architecture (light and shade, great sea and rocky mountains, idle siestas and intense activity) and, in architecture, picturesque, traditional, colonial, Portuguese and the most modern design of the 20<sup>th</sup> century” (Goodwin, 1943/b).

It appears that, in 1941, Wiener had utilized the category “rhythmic functionalism” to refer to the Brazilian Pavilion of the 1939 fair (Liernur, 2010), while Sitwell (1944) used the idea of the existence of a “Brazilian style”: in general in the magazines the perception was that of a formal freedom, a broad use of forms and an easygoing composition. The words of Oliveri in *Domus* are illustrative of the feeling of exuberance it evoked: “it could be said that modern architecture flourished there with the tropical improvised arrogance of non-native plant species planted there and that found in the warm, wet environment of the tropics the conditions for an unexpected development” (Oliveri, 1948). The accents of the multitude of publications in the period were similar. Revising the publications presenting the same works, one can verify that the context of interpretation was similar, probably because of large groups of works featured. Perhaps the only magazine that can compare to *Ayc* regarding its editorial approach would be *Progressive Architecture* of April 1946; the editors knew of the North American publication and lamented its almost simultaneous publication. Similar works were published, some the same, as is the case with the Hogar para Empleadas de Comercio project that was featured along with the office building by Reidy and Moreira Machado in Porto Alegre and also Oscar Niemeyer with the Botafogo Yacht Club. It is significant that the editor’s note makes reference to the highly rationalized forms and elements of the better-known cases such as the Ministry, the ABI or the Instituto Vital Brazil: their origins were related to many old and humble structures in Brazil and the Mediterranean countries. The new examples with which the magazine sought to demonstrate “illustrate the vitality and continuity of the development of the new tradition”.

In *The Architectural Forum* of November 1947 the Colonia de Tijuca and the Maternidad de São Paulo and another forty works were published; the magazine had already published the IRB in 1944. Now the images showed the richness and formal profusion of the works of Reidy, Niemeyer, Bolonha, Mindlin and the Burle Marx gardens, among others. The interpretation of the initial texts was based on a tacit correspondence between modern architecture and geographic, historical and cultural contexts, referring to the recognition of the same Brazilian architects of their works as a result due more to the “cultural maturity and not technological wealth”; the predominance of organic continuity over imitation, promoted by the Servicio de Patrimonio Histórico Artístico Nacional (SPHAN) in the interventions in traditional environments was highlighted as in the case of Ouro Preto (Woodward-Smith, 1947).

In *La arquitectura de hoy* the Colonia de Tijuca and IRB were

also published but the presence of Niemeyer was strongly meaningful and his postulations on “an architecture made without conventions” and the need for a new “plastic conception, more free in its form and movement” (Niemeyer, 1947), were also exposed in the plans and photographs.

However, in the works published in *Arquitectura y Construcción* (the only ones published in Chile until the appearance of other news in *Pro-Arte*) it is evident that in the iconography the correspondence between geometry and the layout of the plan stands out as with the rational structuring of the plans. Emphasis is placed on the balance of the bodies and volumes and above all in the resolution of envelopes, with emphasis on the *brise-soleil*, in the case of the IRB by the Roberto brothers.

#### LOCAL RECEPTIONS: ORTHODOXY AND OPENNESS

The historiography of the international reception of the Brazilian modern architecture experience has been connected to the *Brazil Builds* operation, with an interpretive canon mediated by a political component such as the intervention of the Office of Inter-American Affairs (Liernur, 1999); that assumed a reception in Latin-American mode, although few have returned to the sources to verify how it actually occurred. This episode of the reception in Chile appears early and coincides only relatively with more common opinions of the moment. Later and more recent developments in the history of modern architecture in Brazil allow for a closer interpretation.

Why present Costa’s text? Benzaquen de Araújo (2004), like many other authors, has read the relationship of new architecture with Mediterranean tradition in the text as an affirmation of the ideas of sobriety, simplicity and proportion. Why illustrate it with the Missions Museum or the Monlevade project, when the Health and Education Ministry already had established Costa? Probably, because both projects coincide with the text in terms of dates, but also because it meant a different and intentioned approximation. In both Aliata and Schmidt (1999) and Wisnik (2001) have shown the connections with Costa and Perret’s searches for the Monlevade case, ratifying the tension between tradition and modernity.

Why preferentially present the work of Levy and the Roberto brothers? The work of Rino Levi is oriented around a precise volumetric formalization, with a geometric stamp of plans and orthogonal lines. Goodwin (1943/a) had already recognized the Italian influence in the São Paulo buildings “of a more heavy and pretentious modernism”. Anelli (2001) has highlighted the academic, compositional base and the rationalist orientation where “the element and volumes of composition become abstract geometric forms and endeavor to express functional principles, whether intrinsic to the proposed uses or derived from the role of the building in the configuration of the city”. Verde Zein has pointed out that Levy had already developed his own language at the moment of the expansion of the Rio de Janeiro school.

Regarding the Roberto brothers, Goodwin has marked the difference between solidity and strength of the ABI versus the lightness of the Health and Education Ministry, as well as highlighted the use of blocks in the Sao Paulo School. The impressive force of the simple and massive block of the ABI building, with its marble cladding and repetitive *brise-soleil* sheets, make the work a radical example albeit a serene one, with a successive order: on a plinth (hollow), a regular and repetitive development and a singularly modern crowning. Calovi Pereira (2002 and 2003) had highlighted the classical tensions in their works, particularly considering their porticos and the span between columns.

Both in Levi as in the Roberto brothers, the importance of the program and their similar formalizations appear predominant compared to formal freedom or the search for fluidity and movement. On the other hand, even in their radicalness, they appear more conventional in relation to the formal configuration, more orthodox in their acceptance of modern principles. Why choose these works? Why exclude the figures of Niemeyer or Reidy from the panorama? Although Brazilian architecture had not yet assumed the mythic characters or the canonical dimensions that it would acquire by the end of the 50's and after Brasilia, the prominence of the more expressive trends was clear. In the corresponding edition of 1947, the editors of *Progressive Architecture* highlighted the daring in the focus and process for the architectural creation and mainly the skill, freedom and imagination put in action in the use of the structure.

Comas (1994) has shown that the academic matrix configuration was permeating the Brazilian experience, within a repertory of schemes, subtractive or sub-dividable volumetric compositions (from inside out) as valid as the additive or multiplicative compositions (from outside in). On the other hand, the new compositional principles of the open plan and free facades carried the centrifugal dispersion of focal interests that Rowe called "peripheral composition" (Guerra, 2010). He also highlights that these conceptual instruments did not deny the traditional compositional principles, but confirmed them to some degree. The exuberance possible in Brazilian architecture is not "evidenced only in the multiplication of formal solutions for the same elements of architecture nor in the multiplication of claddings that contrast with the Franciscan purity of the white villas, nor in the notorious curves that counteract the orthogonal and oblique lines on almost equal foot. It is a quality that appears in the deliberate predilection for a composition that multiplies volumes even when the program and the situation permit or favor a pure prism" (Guerra, 2010).

The publication of these works indicates an affirmation of some particular paths of the expression of architectural form; these are tree works, more or less orthodox in their formalization, in the layout of volumes and formal configuration. They tell not only about the mere repercussion of Brazilian architecture, but mostly about the options that a group of local architects promoted in the context of their local architectural culture. It is in this sense that the architecture of Brazil would have influenced the Chilean realm. The selection made by the editors appears to confirm a major compositional orthodoxy rather than the exuberance praised in so many other contemporary publications. The artistic values disseminated by the magazines in the culture of the time attended mainly to the idea of art as creation instead of imitation; the expression yields to formal generation processes and to the existence of a plastic structure that gives unity to the work and is realized by plastic mediums, from the composition to the construction details<sup>9</sup>. Those works presented in *Arquitectura y Construcción* about Brazil affirmed this tendency and shun the conditions seen by other editors and authors; they affirmed a frugality of the volume over the extroversion and formal liberty that was being appreciated on the international stage. Without a doubt, this was a different reception. **ARQ**

<sup>9</sup> Those were values that remained consigned contemporarily with much clarity in some of the formative programs in the universities. In the case of the Universidad de Chile, evidence remains in the successive presentations of the "Grupo Plástico"; in the case of the Universidad Católica, the courses of pre-architectonic composition of Alberto Cruz. See: "Grupo Plástico de la Escuela de Arquitectura (U. de Chile)" in *Arquitectura y Construcción* N° 13 (June 1948), p. 18. Cruz, Alberto. "Composición pre-architectónica" in *Plinto* N° 1 (October, 1947) pp. 10-11. Cruz, Alberto and Piwonka, Alberto. "Proyectos de la Escuela de Arquitectura de la Universidad Católica de Chile. Curso de Composición Pura" in *Arquitectura y Construcción* N° 16 (1950) p. 20.

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