

Peripheric modernism
Vittorio Corinaldi

The decade of the thirties, which closes with the fall of western world towards World War II, is also the time of apparition and climax of a revolution in the fields of Art and Architecture: a revolution designated by the general name of *Modern Movement*, of which the deep consequencer are clearly felt up to this day.

Born in this specific conditions of european reality, this revolution was established as an ethical and aesthetical address of universal validity – a fact explains its absorption by 'peripherical' cultures (By this name one would call those extra-european centers where 'Modernism' fixed roots, and its language enriched itself with the vocabulary of regional dialects).

Moreover, the modern movement – which could not be tolerated by totalitarian regimes due to its creative, open and international character – actually found in those peripheries a fact of survival and renewal, allowing it to overcome the dark years of nazi-fascist repression and the inactivity of the war years.

As known, many modern european architects at the time had to seek refuge outside the Old Continent: either because of their quality of free men who could not accept brainwashing and servilism proper of dictatorships, nor as artists could express themselves in the framework of monumental rhetorics imposed by those regimes; or simply because of their jewish origin, that put them in a position of physical persecution and menace.

Their assimilation to the professional and intellectual atmosphere of the countries they reached, could not be by way of a mechanical transfer: they had to undergo the influence of different customs and forces, and their contribution is found in the planting of a seed that would germinate into a synthesis between the essential 'inner truth' of Modern Movement principles and the particular character and tradition of art varying from place and at each one of those places.

Strangely, I would say that as far as architecture is concerned, the U.S. (the country where the majority of european intellectuals emigrated) are perhaps the place where such synthesis less shaped itself upon the values they carried in their luggage. And where – despite the presence of important pioneer names of Rationalism and Organic Architecture – one cannot point out a single and specific strong architectural tradition that might merge with the european modern language: rather, a predominance of economic and technological factors, for which the *International Style* (stripped of its philosophic charge) was an easy answer to the aspirations of growing american capitalism.

It seems me that none of the Masters of european Modern Movement can request for his american works the same qualification as documents with a renewal impact and with a moral and poetical message, as their early productions had had. They display – it is true – a correct and clear professional attitude. But ideologically they are somewhat concessive and acomodating, not polemic and challenging as before – not even when they are dedicated to elevated goals, as teaching in the case of Gropius.

And it is the architects of the followings generations who manage to create a livelier synthesis of the principles of Rationalism with the currents of Chicago School, with

the exuberant poetics of F L Wright, with the gigantic scale of building programs, with the ethnic and cultural pluralism of the american society, with the differences and variations in nature, and with the infinite variety of technical resources offered by american industry. In face of this understanding, it is particularly interesting to see what happened in the 'peripheries' we mentioned before.

The Brazilian case is perhaps the richest example of a creative transposition that Modern Movement can show: not very well known due to the shy modesty of its architects and to a stigmatic classification of 'regional' cultures according to their countries' degree of economic development, here we have a re-interpretation of rationalist postulates in the context of an independent tradition of culture and craftsmanship. It combines a spatial and planimetric clearness inherited from colonial and baroque building, with a simple and daring structural intelligence, on the background of a natural artistic vocation and popular taste.

The São Paulo branch, less divulged than its Rio counterpart with its lavish features of official impressiveness, is the one with a deeper erudite setting of architecture and a phenomenon of culture, and with an understanding care for names and works that are (for quality and historical value) indispensable landmarks in the reading of this important 'peripheric' chapter of contemporary architecture.

Another of these 'peripheries' – now starting to awaken some interest after a long period of ignorance and forgetting – is the Israeli branch: in the former Palestine of the British Mandate (later Israel, independent from 1948) there appeared one of the most significant centers of the architecture usually called 'Bauhaus' architecture.

Tel Aviv still keeps one of the biggest collections of that typical architecture; in modern parts of Jerusalem and Haifa we still find examples of that *International Style* known to Brazilian public through the works of Gregori Warchavchik and Flavio de Carvalho. We still discover today, after a selection of the original product from the later and often vulgar manipulations and additions – some anonymous examples of that architecture in the *kibbutzim* and rural centers scattered all over the country. And in Israel one finds an important portion of the work of Erich Mendelson – one of the most singular masters of Modern Movement.

Between the architects acting in Israel of those years, some were effective students of the Bauhaus. Others, graduated at more traditional academic institutions, had nevertheless absorbed at work one of the ateliers and at the cultural debate of the time, all the atmosphere of renovation in Architecture and in Art, where new and more genuine ways were being sought. There were also those coming from more remote springs of the modern movement, like the Viennese School, the german and dutch precursors, or those who had lived the russian constructivist experience.

Arriving at the Israel of those years, they found an extremely backward country, where jewish immigration began to put the bases of a modern economy, contrasting with the stagnation of centuries in which it had been kept, as a remote province of the Ottoman Empire. The British Mandate (an uncommon type of colonial dominion that followed the Turkish authority) tried to find a balance between the two poles of the population, the arab and the jewish: with a clear partiality towards the first, but with an obvious leaning on the progressive formation and on cultural and technical preparation of the second. And bringing in a well ordered routine of civil service, that

was later adopted by the independent state. The previous waves of jewish immigration, which came to the country since the beginning of the century mainly from Russia, were characterized by an obstinate faith in the jewish state and a belief in the need for a new culture and a new jewish man – a man linked to the soil and to productive work, different from the traditional and despising image of the Diaspora jew; they revived hebrew as a current language, hebrew litterature and theatre; initiated plastic arts, that had remained very much inactive and had been postponed by spiritual and abstract attitudes during centuries of exile.

Under the leadership of outstanding political and human personalities, from nothing they created academic and scientific institutions, or organisms of high social value and revolutionary structure, like the *Histadrut* (the *Jewish Workers' Union*, that before the establishment of the State undertook not only trade union tasks, but also tasks of economic and industrial development and of social welfare); or like the Kibbutz, a unique community experience based on voluntary affiliation and participatory democracy.

But as to physical development, or more specifically to architecture, very little had been done that one could consider as such: buildings that began to appear show weak attempts of imitation of the 'great world', using a somewhat primitive and mispronounced eclectic vocabulary. One sought 'oriental' origins, which – not being really belonging, expressed themselves in rather grotesque images of '1001 nights'. Or one turned to a rudimentary neo-classic lexicon, badly implemented because of lack of skills and a basic ignorance of western architectural legacy by the first jewish settlers.

Today, the remnants of this architecture that outlived demolitions caused by a development unrespectful of the past, are viewed with other criteria and with a sense of preservation. We also know from this period some cases of good architecture, and their authors are no more anonymous, forgotten as they were by 'official circles' in teaching and criticism (Alexander Baerwald, Josef Berlin, etc).

But, as said, it is in the thirties that a combination of factors takes place, whereby the arrival of a more significant immigration demands larger building programmes and provides professionals with wider and more open horizons.

International Style postulates and visual instruments were easily assimilated also for less theoretical and more prosaic reasons: they fitted better the local reality of poorness of materials and skilled manpower; and supplied the need for urgent, simple and dignified answers to housing and public service problems.

But it is interesting to notice how, from these restricting factors, an architecture of pure elementary geometric forms is born: the strong light and the impact of sun put it in contrast and vibration, and typical elements of the International Style (pilotis, free plan, continuous fenestration) integrate in the arid environment and climate, creating an associative link between the built landscape and the pioneer spirit of the country.

To have grasped this basic characteristic and to have used this natural factor as a poetic composition tool, is the great quality of israeli architects of that period: high rank artists, that poor conditions forced into, austere and moderate – though equally valid and respectful – performances. Names like Richard Kaufman, Leopold Krakauer, Shmuel Mistetchkin, Sam Barkai, Milek Bikels, Benjamin Tchenov, Joseph Neufeld, Arie Sharon, Dov Karmi, Zeev Rechter, are attached to this 'heroic' phase, inheriting us documents of talent and sensitiveness and leaving a message of faith and integrity. A message that reaches its highest point with Eric Mendelson.

Bearing a very personal record inside the Modern Movement, Mendelson had affirmed himself as an exponent of the Expressionist trend. Unlike other masters, he used contemporary technology and materials with less formal severeness, allowing himself certain liberties in simbolic and expressive directions. As much as in some of his works (the Einstein Tower in Potsdam, the Schoken Shops in Stuttgart, Columbus House in Berlin), this trend is evident in his famous black-and-white sketches, sometimes imaginary, sometimes real latterly executed architectures.

In Israel, Mendelson's speech becomes apparently less polemic, more conforming to the forecited limitations. But on a close examination we see that behind a mimetic framing into the uniform stone landscape of Jerusalem, an extremely creative handling is found. With sober gestures, using with objective rigour the basic rules of functional design and of respect to climate conditions, and with a few well balanced expressive accents, he delivers us – through the not abundant examples of his work – a lesson of correct and sensitive fitting into landscape, of coherence and professional honesty, so much missing in the confused philosophical position of architects today.

Conditions of the thirties precipitated into extreme situations in the forties, stopping all activity in the field of architecture, and putting an end to this peculiar 'peripheric' issue of Modern Movement. The tragic years of Holocaust, of the war of independence and of the Great Immigration followed. The Israel that emerged from these traumatic events was completely different, and the problems it had to face on a national level and on an immensely greater scale, pushed aside any 'secondary' arguments, in the light of more urgent and primary needs.

Even so we can witness a remarkable effort in planning and housing: an effort that basically fixed the character and the destiny of Israel's physical environment for the next two decades. Mistakes were also made, with physical and social implications that today still shape the architectural design and the planning policies and debate.

In the challenge of the complex economic, social, human, technical problems, Israel architecture – though holding a place in the context of the contemporary production – did not attain a definition with a real language of its own, and it follows the line of current and fashionable trends of great international centers.

But the ethical and aesthetical patrimony of the Bauhaus and the Modern Movement remains as an incorporate and genuine foundation, that our generation and the coming ones have a duty to learn and transmit, facing the building programmes of a country in a process of permanent renewal. If raised on this basis, the answers to this challenge will not only be practical solutions, but also cornerstones of a cultural edifice.

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Marcel Iancu and the Rumanian avantgarde. Tradition, modernity and modernism
Anca Tomaschevski Sandu

Rumania is a country that seems to have been always culturally isolated at the eastern gates of Europe. Yet in the roaring period between the two Worl Wars, several Rumenian artists made significant contributions to vanguard movements like Dadaism, that cast a spell on European culture. Apart from the poet Tristan Izara and the sculptor Constantin Brancusi, the architect and versatile artist Marcel Iancu played a major role in introducing the avantgarde in Rumania.

Iancu dedicated much of his artistic career to the integration of the Arts. His

works seem to be defined by a continuous struggle between tradition and modernity. How modern was this artist, who was so determining for the Modern Movement in Rumania?

Any artistic vanguard precedes, by definition, the appreciation by the society from which it seeks recognition. At the beginning of this century, this artistic phenomenon restructured the aesthetic categories and the objectives of architecture following the theoretical method *à la guerre comme à la guerre*. The *Fronde* was defiling insolently and ostentatiously, shocking through its aggression, calling for a general intellectual mobilization through proclamations and leaflets, because architecture had to be saved from opportunistic academism, from the sclerosis and the immobility in aesthetically dogmatic routine. *Off with the Procrustean reference to bourgeois conventionalism of styles!*

Suddenly, artistic Europe was full of animation. Great alert. Debates, polemics, negations and innovations. Disgraces and passions. The vanguard trumpeters were followed by proselytes and epigones, conservatives and opportunists, by enthusiastic Jesuits and even by irresolute moderate intellectuals. With a noisy clash of arms, they did succeed to definitely shake off the comfort of historicist certitudes.

Funny, amazing figures...

Rumania, a country that always felt isolated at the eastern gates of Europe, was then, in those crazy years, for the first and only time, synchronous with the artistic quivering flowing from the cultural centers. Three Rumanian names of international fame set up and encoded the modern language in Rumanian arts: the sculptor Constantin Brancusi, the poet Tristan Tzara and the architect Marcel Iancu — painter, poet, publisher, graphic designer, urban planner, essayist, sketcher, scene painter and sculptor.

Marcel Iancu (Bucharest, 1895 — Ein Hod, 1984) was a first year's student at the Zürich Polytechnic when, on July 14th, 1916, the birth certificate of the Dada movement was signed in the Zur Waag Hall of the Voltaire Cabaret. Then, a first show was staged of a group including Tristan Tzara, Marcel Iancu, Hans Arp, Hugo Ball, Oppenheim... only at a short distance of the house where Lenin was just thinking of the other revolution.

In 1917 the Dada gallery was opened in Zürich and Marinetti, Kandinsky, Apollinaire and Cendrars were present when Oskar Kokoschka's play was staged — all in a fabulous scenery by Marcel Iancu. It was about this totally original scenery made of posters, masks and abstract reliefs in wood, plaster and metal, that Jean Arp wrote to him from Paris in 1957: 'My dear Iancu, why haven't you thought of more of those sculptures... funny, amazing figures? In those works you foresaw so many things! Only you, it's only you that was right, despite your architecture, as you foresaw the times of full and free falling in the Arts.'

Bringing the avantgarde to Rumania

Marcel Iancu came back in 1922, after he had refused a chair at München University and after he participated in the first Congress on Constructivism — which he joined — in Düsseldorf. This same year marks other revolutionary events in the arts' high spiritual courts: the Dadaist movement, this international roar of laughter, current of fresh air, had vanished smilingly, as clean as it was in its superb freedom. In Paris, surrealism was born from its ashes. Also in Paris, Le Corbusier was building the Ozenfant House, designing a city for 3 million inhabitants and publishing *Vers une Architecture*. Loos was publishing the collection *Ins Leere gesprochen* and building the Rufer House and the model-district of Heuberg in Vienna. And Henry Russel Hitchcock and Philip Johnson wrote another birth certificate: The International Style. Architecture since 1922.

In that same year, in Bucharest, Ion Vinea and Marcel Iancu issued the avantgarde newspaper *Contimporanul*. Immediately after their publication, the works that broke new ground for the Modern Movement were publicized. Le Corbusier, Gerrit Rietveld, Adolf Loos with his house for Tristan Tzara in Paris of 1925... all soon became known. In terms of exclusiveness, it should be mentioned that articles were published that were written by Le Corbusier, Auguste Perret and other friends of Marcel Iancu, such as Delaunay, Max Ernst, Hans Arp, Theo van Doesburg, André Breton, Jean Cocteau, Paul Eluard, Sartoris, Miguel de Unamuno... Marinetti visited the *Contimporanul* group in 1926, due to his interest in this periodical, that promoted the highest form of vanguardism: integralism — a syncretic, affirmative and constructive synthesis of the Arts.

The first to develop a critical consciousness of changes necessary within the architectural vocabulary in Rumanian vanguardism is Marcel Iancu. Horia Creanga, unanimously considered as the main figure in Rumanian modernism by critics, as well as most other prominent interWar architects, saw in Marcel Iancu a model, but at the same time integrated his works into the current they adhered to.

They understood that vanguardism, making room into the firmly rooted set of exhausted forms that had been institutionalized for long, had always to be treated in a special way. Therefore, Marcel Iancu dedicated the larger part of his energy to developing his theory on these new concepts. Only because he had paved the way, those of the second line — in terms of generations — could then create the masterpieces that would make some of them 'the greatest' or 'one of the most important'.

The Kaaba at a carnival party

Why was Marcel Iancu, together with the whole of Rumanian vanguardism, unconditionally assimilated with the modern tendencies?

First of all, in Rumania modern architecture did not develop over a long period of 'gestation'; in a way, it was forcedly born, looking like a precocious child with too well-defined features.

What contemporary literature identified as 'the first cubist dwelling in Bucharest' were a few villas designed by Marcel Iancu in 1925-27. In those days, the Rumanian towns indulged themselves in a Balcanic chaos of styles. An eclectic academic style suffering from all possible influences was omnipresent: from palaces full of dignity to modest wagonhouses in the outskirts. Yet, it has to be mentioned that among those styles also a new original Rumanian style emerged that reached an admirable level of local cultural patriotism, though many times with awkward results.

It is against this background that we have to imagine Marcel Iancu's cubist volumes, disguised as the famous *Kaaba* from Mecca at a carnival party. Despite it, just in 1931, Creanga designed the ARO building, that became emblematic for the Rumanian Modern Movement.

A second argument is based on Umberto Eco's theory, that any vanguard phenomenon comprises two stages: a first, of a rather destructive nature, that is concentrated on dissolving obsolete formalized principles. A second stage, called experimentalist, is aimed at discovering the shapes of the new, in terms of expression. Yet, only together the two stages confer vitality and ardour upon this active cultural factor: the avantgarde.

Integrating the ordinary

Marcel Iancu had his 'noisy' stage in his early years, at first in the original abstractness materialized by him in numerous new artistic forms. Then, in

blazing advertising campaigns, full of irrevocable verdicts, revelations and triumphal discoveries: 'Off with the arts, it has prostituted itself!', 'Burn the drawing boards and make models!', 'Architecture, a bunch of worn out mausoleums...', 'Styles, impotent monstrosities...', 'Eradicate individualism!'

All of these displayed the nervousness of artistic changes, simultaneously with the international vanguard movement. They probably originated in a nihilistic impulse inherent to the artist's age, but then: modernism itself lived its teens. The whole avantgarde gave the impression it wanted to have the last word.

Marcel Iancu was 'blowing up' the conventions in order to give them a new content. This effervescence of the inventor made him reveal a wealth of social valences of the new architecture, as well as the common factors to be integrated with aesthetics: the concept of functionality, sincerely acknowledged to be applied by help of new materials and techniques. But, never did his rebellious spirit degenerate into uselessness, into fury or idle demolition, his eccentricities never ended in scepticism, nor in the selfpride of an incomprehensible individualism. Marcel Iancu gave constructive solutions, he was good in spirits and optimistic: 'Architecture, art of spatial relations, of balanced volumetric rates... subject to the organic laws of sensibility and geometry...', 'urbanism, architecture's social aim...', 'Aesthetics, utilitarian sense of building...' This was Marcel Iancu's period of negation and his break with cultural conventions.

Filter of traditions

His career as a practicing architect only started with his maturity in intellectual terms. This is the distinctive, particular motivation that gives us the right to call him a cautious vanguardist, more so if we look at his buildings. But the real motivation is of a more general kind. It refers to the flexibility of a peripheral culture in the way that Rumanian culture appreciated European ideas and applied them to the most pragmatic of the Arts: architecture.

Semantically or even semiotically, in terms of content and senses, Marcel Iancu's architecture concerted with tradition, even if the architect might not have been aware of this himself. He was a necessary filter of tradition, especially with respect to urban life.

His first designs for individual houses in Bucharest show a balanced attempt to move from a traditional way of living, typical for the middle-class, to modern functional principles. For example, his first house (the Lambru house) shows, on the one hand, the intention to separate areas within a volumetric unit and, on the other, ambiguity in defining functional arrangements within the rooms, although it is one of the few constructions unconditioned by the site or other sometimes determining factors.

In aesthetics terms, the appearance of this first house if functionalist, yet it seems the result of some concessions, based on two supposed motives: it could be either an insufficient mastering of the new design vocabulary or a deliberate attempt to adapt the new lifestyle to more accepted standards, in order to facilitate reception by its users. In any case, the syntactic code of the elements making up the composition of the facades proves a thorough assimilation of the contemporary signals sent out from the cultural centers of the era.

In the same house, the orthogonal massing and facade treatment shows a dialogue between horizontal window bands and round windows, as perforations of the walls.

Modern or modernist

Following this prototype for an individual house, an obvious evolution can be seen in both the design for the Wexler Villa and the house for the chemist Chihaescu.

The first is the result of a program that included a workshop in the attic. It uses an unitary formal language from all points of view. The other, almost contemporary to the former (1932), shows an almost classical disposition of forms in plan, proportions and functional arrangements. Both correspond perfectly with the outside environment: a park behind and a promenade along the front garden. Inner spaces are visually connected, both horizontally and vertically, through mysterious vistas. And, again, the austerity of facades in outline and volume, tamed by the smart details of the form, remind us of the vanguard *fronde* struggling with formalized tradition.

If tradition is thesis and vanguardist nihilism antithesis, then Marcel Iancu's vanguardism is synthesis; a tutorial modernist spirit that stems from the Steiner house and the *Fagus Werke*, that adjusted his extreme avantgarde tendencies, and overlapping with a concept that was deeply rooted in the continuity of local cultural values.

One thing is sure: vanguardist Marcel Iancu was a modern architect. Yet, similarly, and without acknowledging it, architect Marcel Iancu was, in the better sense, a cautious modernist as well. If, in his youth, he severely criticized styles, as an architect he was feverishly looking for 'human' forms to express the new style.

'We synthesize the everlasting will of universal life and the efforts of all modern experiments!', he declared. And, in some of his works, we really find this synthesis, that was born in Weimar where the modern movements of all the arts were brought together.

Social illusion

The Gold Building, a success both as an example of Modern Movement architecture and of urban integration, has a *bas-relief* by sculptor Milita Patrascu over the entrance. It is a detail that confers the entrance a particular style. For this artist, who was a good friend of his, Marcel Iancu built a house with a workshop, that is as peculiar as its owner. Milita Patrascu was an ex-wife of Pierre Curie and a friend of all the Parisian artists of *Les Années folles*. She used to say: 'The real discoveries of our time are the light, the bathroom, the kitchen, the heating. I already congratulate myself for having all that in the new house Marcel Iancu will build for me'.

Marcel Iancu also built housing blocks but, unfortunately, most of these suffer from their environment, tortured by the crooked infrastructure of the city, or by the narrowness of their site.

This becomes obvious when studying the plans but is well hidden on an urban level of perception. Inside, the flats' surface area fittings are not in harmony with the claimed collectivist principles.

On the contrary, stained-glass windows and other pieces of furniture designed by the architect show his concern for the individual psychic comfort. In all of his works, architectural details are part of the lexical content of modern aesthetics, yet he used them in a different way. Contrasting with the social illusion of equality in a machine age, they provide intimacy and humanity.

Unattained ideals

The Reich Villa and the sanatorium for Docter Popper at Predeal are two of his later works, dating from 1937. The horizontal elements in the composition of the facade soothes the cubic, stout massing of the villa, borrowing grace and elegance to the volume. Light has a main role here, playing in the filigree of details, enhancing the composition. The horizontality of the whole volume of Popper's sanatorium has a different sense within the topography of the mountain resort Predeal. Its rhythm is also defined by light and its line seem to refer to the human silhouette and, maybe, to that of the firs and the movement of clouds.

It seems a certain thing that the ideal that Marcel lancu adhered to, remained unattained: even with a pistol against his head, his hand could never draw a 'machine to live in'.

In 1941, Marcel lancu had to stop his activities in Rumania. At the same time, violently, his creative activities as whole ceased as well. ...Aware of the similitude of forms in architecture and fine arts, in creation and composition, I struggled all my life for a new synthesis of these arts. Unfortunately I could not fulfill this struggle in the country I was born, because of forced emigration in the best years of my activity.

He moved to Israel and lived in Ein Hod, somewhere in the south part of the Carmel heights, not far from Haifa. There he founded, amongst olive and cypress trees, under the burning sun of the Mediterranean, an original vilage of artists. He built no more houses. But he rebuilt, following archeological vestiges, a small place and created an artistic campus.

There he was again a painter, sculptor, sketcher... and especially a teacher in syncretism of the Arts. Nowadays, at Ein Hod, Marcel lancu's exhibition is permanent. Since he was a vanguardist and a sentimentalist, bold and introvert, engaged and detached, sharp and tender, redeeming and sensible... fighter and man of silence... who can forget his art?

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How modern is modernism in Kraków. InterWar architecture in a former Polish capital

Maria Zychowska

The architecture of our century was dominated by the Modern Movement: initially by its symptoms, then by its full-fledged form, and finally by its most decadent variety. That is why historians have primarily been interested in distinguishing the individual trends and most characteristic elements of this movement. They were interested in singling out its most representative features and elements which constituted a considerable achievement on a global scale. They also aimed at conducting syntheses which would depict all possible aspects of the origin and transformations of this 'modern' style. The innovative and formal solutions of the avantgarde came to be much repected, whereas the eclectic solutions which arose in the effect of stylistic mutations and local transformatons came to be treated with considerable reserve. An example of this type of artistic activity, based on specific local aesthetic criteria was, among others, the Kraków group of artists that, since the 19th Century, had formed its own distinctive interpretation of the so-called 'alien' phenomena. This interpretation was coloured by the specific atmosphere of the city, and it can by all means be regarded as

an event in the history of contemporary Polish architecture. Yet, apart from having been registered, it is still being treated as a marginal phenomenon.

The Kraków examples of this style, no doubt, belong to the first phase of modernism in the history of architecture. It is in this phase of Modern Movement that one observes expressionist and neo-romantic influences and local traditions. Their ancestry goes back to classicism which had gradually evolved toward simpler forms and, at the same time, was an attempt to adjust to the atmosphere of the city in order to acquire a more individualistic formal expression. One should emphasize at this point that the above-mentioned forms arose quite outside the main trends of the 20th Century European architecture. They definitely deserve to be noticed although one does not record among them any outstanding artistic achievements which could be treated as milestones or turning points in development of this aspect of life. The achievements in the sphere of architecture in Kraków during the interWar period are well worth recording and analysing for a number of reasons. Firstly, a considerable part of city architecture had come into existence at the time. This part is so vast that avoiding to mention it or conducting a superficial analysis of only the most outstanding examples of this architecture, would seem to be a totally misguided procedure.

Secondly, the specific character of the city which grew out of the 'spiritual' atmosphere of this Polish capital from the times when our country was divided among three partitioning powers and from the characteristic attachment to the national past and the beauty of the old and new architecture, had all contributed to the formation of a powerful and significant center of architecture in Kraków. Its significance had already been noticed towards the end of the last century, but it was also strongly appreciated during the entire interWar period. The character of the local architecture, quite apart from the one-sided activities aimed at striving after beauty, was being understood, above all, as being in accordance with the fashionable European trends. As the third reason of our interest in this architecture one should mention an attempt to define its real artistic values, both on a Polish and a European scale. It seems that it has too rashly been categorized as a symptom of provincialism and parochial interpretation of world phenomena. Besides, it does not seem fair to refer to the individual style of the city in the 1920's and 30's, well-merged with elements of older architecture of immense value, as an irrational procedure.

Three groups

As regards the character of the realizations in the twenty year period between the two Wars, one may divide them into three groups:

The first one comprises examples of architecture which take up historical stylistics and whose shape has been based on classical composition, referred to as academic classicism. From 1918 onwards, this trend is represented in Kraków by, among others, the Polish Savings Bank (PKO) designed by Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz, and by the Polish Bank designed by Kazimierz Wyczanski and Teodor Hoffman. Besides them, in the same group one finds the *Polish Manor*, that is a convention expressing national identity through the application of the elements characteristic of the old residences of the Polish gentry. The most representative ones in this category are to be found outside Kraków, for instance the gynaecological clinic designed by Jerzy Struzkiewicz.

Looking for inspiration in various historical trends and trying to combine their elements in a eclectic composition in visible on the facades of several buildings. Such examples of wider European phenomenon of return to tradition can be also be found

in Kraków. Its traces can, for instance, be found in the building at 17 Lea Street, by Teodor Hoffman. Another group of buildings show simplified historical forms which are also, to some extent, based on classical compositions, but whose elements are limited to the form of simple columns and pilaster strips. Within this group one may distinguish the so-called *Kraków School* which was characterized by a specific preference for a highly decorative style. For many years this type of architecture has been the city's chief visiting-card. In this context, one should mention the apartment buildings for teachers of the Jagiellonian University and the building of the Insurance Company for City Officials.

Traditionalism

Apart from tendencies towards excessive decorativeness, in accordance with the general striving towards more austere forms and details, a so-called 'verticalism' appeared, that is an updated and more simplified academic classicism. Excellent examples of this tendencies are the Jagiellonian Library by Wacław Krzyżanowski and Fryderyk Tadanier's apartment building at Inwalidow Square. In the later of the group one also finds the characteristic Kraków tenement houses erected in a traditional way, with spacious, comfortable apartments, in most cases with symmetrical simple facades with discreet vertical and horizontal decoration, mostly done in skillfull plasterwork, and also coats-of-arms in relief and stylized friezes. Examples of this style are the houses designed by Wacław Krzyżanowski, Adolf Duntuch, Jakub Spiry or Stanisław Nebenzhal. The buildings which have been mentioned so far seem to point out that there was a strong tendency towards traditionalism in Kraków which most cases relied heavily on national history, the romantic tradition and on the preserved elements of folk art. The latter had played an important role in Kraków architecture of the interWar period. It was, by no means, a unique phenomenon in Europe. Similar tendencies can be found in Scandinavia where stylized mediaeval motifs were reflected in religious architecture. An aversion from the avant-garde style was combined with an all-European assault on uniform, supra-national forms at the benning of the 1930's. These tendencies were conducive to strengthening the position of the 'architecture-of-the-middle', taking an intermediary position between tradition and leading trends.

Undecorated

The last groups comprises buildings whose forms diverge most strongly from historical tradition. Their authors search for their own forms of expression on the basis of the interpretation of the contemporary imported patterns. Quite modern buildings in reinforced concrete appear, permitting a free and unhampered shaping of the exterior, yet kept within the pattern of traditional composition. There are only some elements in their decoration that testify the onset of new stylistics. the most conspicuous examples are the Agricultural Bank by Wacław Krzyżanowski, the Polish Savings Bank at Szczepanski Square by Fryderyk Tadanier and the Feniks Buildings by Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz, Jerzy Struzkiewicz and Maksymilian Burstin.

In the 1930's one observes the construction of a group of multi-family tenement houses, to some extent modelled on functionalism, but in fact not having much in common with it, apart from the concept of small surfaced flats. Good examples are the housing complex in Pasterska Street, the house scheme for the employees of the Social Insurance Agency in Falata Street, and the housing estate near Słoneczna Street. The authors of these new complexes concentrated primarily on idea of ensuring a good standard of living for the tenants. In this context, one should also a

mention a cooperative building at 15 Parkowa Street which obtained a very simple, austere facade devoid of any decorative elements.

Industrial buildings

Asymmetry, much in the spirit of cubist architecture, was not among the most popular solutions in the Kraków. Similar conceptions appeared mainly in the realizations of industrial complexes, such as Wander's plant, by Jakub Spira, the clerks and worker's canteen in the Solway plant, by Wacław Nowakowski, and also Fryderyk Tadanier's social care building in the worker's housing estate in Czarodziejska Street. In the latter group one also finds two one-family homes in Cichy Kacik designed by Szyszko-Bohusz.

The buildings belonging to the later group are as close to avantgarde as it gets in Kraków, which does not mean, however, that they should be considered as examples of the avantgarde. While analysing the stylistics of these buildings one cannot avoid the Bauhaus' search after new cubist forms, although one observes a certain lack of consistency in the local realization of all the assumptions behind this movement. Thus, invoking compositions of mutually linked cubic shapes constitutes the greatest divergence from tradition.

An analysis of new aesthetic principles allows to conclude that it has emerged only in industrial or commercial architecture as well as in realizations involving stringent financial conditions. This phenomenon is directly linked with the option of cheaper realizations, wich almost entirely gave up the idea of decorativeness.

Outside 20th Century ideology

This lack of understanding of the new times and its predominant ideology considerably depreciates the Kraków environment, particularly as it does not participate fully in the social problems related to construction. At the same time, however, it proves that the above-mentioned environment has retained its own character. It is characterized by relatively uniform aesthetic views and does not strive after changing fashions of the moment. The term 'fashionable European trend' had gradually acquired a pejorative ring. Hence, a wish to emphasize the 'native' character of architecture arose, although sometimes it was understood as adhering to a semi-modernist convention. An important feature of this architecture was its specific decorativeness, which sometimes was the result of admistrative restrictions, this feature had been a predominant characteristic already before World War I. In spite of some transformations and simplifications in the 1920's, it was a decisive element as regards the design of the facades. It consisted, above all, of textural effects in plaster work, friezes placed over the ground and top floors as well as coats-of-arms in relief.

Contemporary Polish history

Summing up one should stress that the phenomena mentioned above are important in a Polish architectural perspective. With respect to the European tradition, standing outside the predominant 20th Century ideology, they reflect social and artistic processes which had then taken place in Kraków. They have produced their own characteristic image which is equally unique as other phenomena of this kind, like the Amsterdam School in The Netherlands or the architectural styles in some totalitarian countries. The convention accepted in Kraków at the time, had a complex origin. Stylistically, it did not go further than semi-modernism. Ideologically, it looked back nostalgically to the past, consciously rejecting the avantgarde and surrendering to spontaneous pragmatism only sporadically. In this way, a part of our contemporary history has been preserved in the form of architecture and this is its real and true value.

The history of a rupture: Latin American architecture seen from Latin America

Ramón Gutierrez

This essay may perhaps depart from traditional historical exegesis, which has explained Latin American architecture from a Eurocentric viewpoint, projecting us as dependents whose experience has been determined by decisions of the central power.

It does not ignore the persistent process of political, economic, and cultural colonization, which has left deep impressions on us, evident to this day in numerous characteristics of dependence. The intention is simply to identify one of the most typical forms of pedagogic colonialism as the denial of our right to explain ourselves in our own terms. This already constitutes a new point of departure from which to highlight the vast apparatus reinforcing our inferiority complex.

To tie ourselves to an inferior role in a foreign history fixes us into a closely linked, cumulative and inescapable system on which our hold will always be partial and fragmentary because of our peripheral position. But if we can shake off some of this predictable inertia and analyse our achievements — both successful and unsuccessful — in terms of their own time and place, we will learn that, far from being linear, history is complex and open-ended, and capable of inspiring in us a sense of our own worth and a quite different perspective on ourselves.

Architecture is a basic element in the formation of our historic memory, and hence in the definition of our identity. As a historical document a building can explain not only the complex of ideas and circumstances which gave rise to it, but also the usages and ways of life which, by a process of sedimentation, our society built into it over time. To these we may add the functions and charges of its symbolism, which enable us to understand its meaning over history and to give form to its accumulated inheritance, the vitality of which continues today and conditions our future.

To understand the context in which a building was produced is, in short, to incorporate into our own culture a fragment that can be brought to life — if the work is extant — or else documented with parallels from similar systems. So without binding ourselves too strictly to chronologies or categories of style, we shall try to grasp this broad scene with ideas that may overlap one another and even conflict: so disparate a reality can be reduced to a consistent linear vision only by the facile conception of dependence.

The transfer of culture

The American peoples 'discovered' by the Europeans at the close of the fifteenth century had a variety of levels of organization and forms of settlement. The *Conquista* would melt down the whole territory, flux-like, into a single unit, transplanting to it its political authority, its system of administering justice, its unifying language, and its new creeds.

The Iberian 'donor'-culture would undergo its own transformation. Not everything in its territory was transferred to the new continent, but only those elements retained through a process of selection and synthesis: physically, only what a ship could carry; culturally, out of the many languages spoken on Spanish territory, only the dominant Castilian (to give two examples).

Architecture was subject to a similar process. The Catalan farm house, the Valencian cottage, even the rural manor house of Castile, would give way to a synthesis. Its dominant types, forms and functions stemmed from Andalucía and the Extremadura, but many regions contributed elements from their own traditions.

We should also mention the solutions devised to problems that were novel in their circumstances or scale, where European experience was stimulated to creative response. Such was the case with the problem of founding thousands of towns, for which a standard pattern was worked out incorporating both European and American theories and experiences. Or again, the need to evangelize millions of natives involved the creation of architectural structures bringing religious ceremony into the open (open chapels, enclosed atria, 'wayside' chapels, etc).

The 'colony' was a ferment of creative and well-worked-out solutions to concrete problems. Increasing participation by native Americans led to hybridization and cultural syncretism.

Implantation

The transferral of Spanish architecture to Latin America, even to areas where the native culture had no substantial tradition, involved a process of integration and a specific synthesis.

There is a clear example in the cathedral of Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic, the first significant work completed in America, where the architects — brought from Spain for the purpose — constructed within thirty years a building with the ground plan of a Gothic hall-church, ribbed vaulting, pillars with Isabeline decoration, and a presbytery with a neo-Mudéjar window and Renaissance façade. That is to say, a process that took centuries in European architecture was here brought together in concrete form within decades.

The same can be said in another paradigmatic case, the church of San Francisco in Quito, Ecuador, where the discovery of a treatise by Serlio (in the Spanish edition published by Villalpando) shows that it was the same Spanish master of works who had a command of the Mannerist language of the treatise who set up the guidelines for the rough carpentry hoardings.

The tasks of supporting imperial rule required the European masters of works to set aside their specialization and take on work of all kinds. At San Francisco in Quito, furthermore, we find that Bramante's design for a concave-convex staircase, which as far as I know, was never carried out in Europe but which Serlio recorded, was actually built in the courtyard of the church.

What the Europeans brought was modified by the materials available, the work-force, and the limitations of the situation. The Europeans had to blaze their own trail, to bring into full play their talents and special skills.

Superimposition

For pragmatic reasons, as well as to assert formal and symbolic dominance, the Spaniards often decided to reuse the old American buildings as the foundations for their own.

The standard examples are those of Cuzco, capital of the Inca Empire of Peru, and Mexico City, imposed on old Aztec Tenochtitlan, but one should add the many medium-sized and small urban centres, which to various degrees were treated in the same way.

Superimposition involved accepting the continued presence of sizeable physical components of the old city, both in its plan and in the organization of public spaces and the location of symbolic buildings (temples, palaces, etc).

It also meant the adaptation of the old structures to new uses. For example, the *conchas* of Inca dwellings which grouped a nucleus of four units round a central yard, gave way to a single Spanish house, transforming the density of occupation of the ground in the town centre and causing the city to expand over areas previously devoted to agriculture.

Sometimes superimposition deliberately altered the public spaces. The command of great spaces which the native had enjoyed gave way to the much more confined urban experience of the European, who was accustomed to intensive land-tenure and small public spaces. So the big Inca square at Cuzco was broken up by the construction of streets of housing, clearly marking off the Spanish Parade Ground, the civic amusement ground, the native market (or *tianguetz*), and the Plaza de San Francisco, with its spacious residential quarters.

This superimposition of spaces also led to the destruction, above all, of those buildings which expressed the political and religious power of the native empires. On the site of the main temple of Mexico City was built the cathedral, on the Inca Coricancha of Cuzco rose the church and convent of Santo Domingo; while the campaign to eradicate idolatry razed to the ground the native shrines, in many cases thereby reconstituting the sacred platforms of temples that had been destroyed earlier (Colula, Haquira, San Geronimo, etc).

Superimposition on Inca or Aztec foundations testifies to dominion: presence is the primary form of the assertion of power. But it also recognizes that 'other' which the Spanish vision aspired to integrate, whereas in the Puritan ethic of the north it was marginalized and finally destroyed.

Adaptation

The encounter of the two worlds had lessons for both cultures. The asymmetric relationship of the *Conquista* shaped new patterns of behaviour and organization to which the American native communities had to submit. Their icons, language, ways of life and scale of values underwent deep changes which, combined with the movement of the population, involved deep traumas. This was expressed in the loss of appetite for life and an alarming death-rate, arising mainly from the epidemics which they did not have the biological resources to resist.

The Spaniards who reached the forests of Paraguay and eastern Bolivia in search of El Dorado soon had to accept that this chimera did not exist, and to resign themselves to a process of settlement and a rapid mingling of races. Where stone was scarce, they had to learn from the experience of the natives the right time to cut timber in the woodlands (the latter part of the year when the sap is low). They failed in their efforts at great cost to build stone fortresses, since these were obsolete by the time they were finished — left behind by the mobility of the fronts in the wars against rebellious natives. They learnt that this fast-moving war called for flexibility, and began to develop field-fortifications in wood, whose materials could be gathered up as the lines advanced, allowing the fort to be moved quickly.

In technology the Spaniards also learnt. When their method of laying foundations was unsuccessful at Mexico cathedral, they returned to the traditional *tablero tocado* (ground raft) which suited the difficult soil-conditions in a city built on a partly-dried-up lake.

Adaptation is the process which, in the culture of conquest, generates a new reality exhibiting what some call 'Indian culture' and which others recognize as a constituent of our 'American culture'. The natives adjusted themselves to the use of large covered spaces. To come to terms with them they covered them with mural paintings, polychrome plasterwork, or sculptures in wood, paper, glued fabric or plaster. The natives adapted themselves to them, but they also transformed them decisively.

The Europeans learned to handle the monumental proportions of the open spaces. They also transformed them, so as to dominate them; alternatively, they launched out on the conquest of immense distances in search of their dreams. In both cases they relocated Utopias for which there was no room or possibility in pragmatic Europe.

America was a testing-ground, where the prophetic visions of the monk Eiximemis or the communities of Thomas More were tried out in hundreds of regular town plans, or in the hospital-villages which the indefatigable bishop Vasco de Quiroga built in the Mexican region of Michoacan.

Cultural hybridization

Adaptation was bound to lead to collaboration. From the middle of the seventeenth century, the rapid rise in the American population and the reorganization of craft-activities in the main towns made possible the greater involvement of the natives, creoles and different breeds in the creation of architecture.

This collaboration did not imply the dismantling of native social and cultural relationships, which were still effective. Thus the craft-guild (a labour organization) was matched with a system of *confradías* or lodges (an organization involving religion and social security). In many cases there was a link with the ancient Inca *ayllu* (a social organization), which was the native family unit. The last of the Inca architects of the fortress of Sacsahuaman at Cuzco lived in the late fifteenth century and was called Hualpa-Rimac (the Man who Commands with a Shout), and in the eighteenth century we find stone-cutters in the San Cristobal district, at the foot of the fortress, who called themselves Valgarimache in Castilian.

The Inca habit of grouping together artisans of similar skills merged with the medieval system of streets devoted to particular crafts. The streets of silversmiths, sword-makers, tanners and carpenters, or the age-old names of the arcades around the squares attest to the process of assimilation of like with like. The ideology of the Conquistador was, and still is, affected by daily contact with the conquered.

If the ground plans of the key buildings (churches, palaces, mansions) reflect forms that were well-tried in Europe, the spatial results were quite different, with a world of colour and profuse ornament spreading all around and allowing the artisan control of vast surfaces. This gave rise to the analysis that was very much in vogue with art historians over many decades: European architecture — American decoration.

This equation was mistakenly applied to analysing decorative elements in terms of their original and their derivatives — for example, the sirens playing American musical instruments, or the distinguishing marks of a universal abstract lion as against a European puma. This, together with attempts to see in American decoration similarities with forms of Asiatic origin kept us entertained — and entangled in sophistry.

The deductions were correct, the premise was false. Architecture is a unity, not to be dismembered for formal analysis.

To sum up, we were forgetting that conquerors and conquered learnt together from a common starting point. Durer's *rhinoceros*, of which a copy was painted in the sixteenth century at the house of the notary Juan de Vargas at Tunja (Colombia), was a new-fangled for the native who painted it as for the notary who commissioned the painting.

Of course there were architectural forms subject to a higher degree of European control, which come close to the best work of the old world. American fortifications of the sixteenth to the eighteenth century are among the finest expressions of Iberian military architecture, and there was no lack of writers of treatises like Felix Prosperi, who in 1744 published from Mexico his book *La Gran Defensa* (The Large Fortification) setting out ideas at the forefront of contemporary thought.

Latin-American Baroque

We cannot be accused of chauvinist reductivism if we analyse Spanish and American baroque comparatively. Quantitatively the movement is represented in Spain by only a handful of buildings; in many more cases there were modifications — many of them doubtless noteworthy — of existing buildings. But in Mexico alone thousands of completely new buildings brought alive this fusion of Spanish and native. This work is of astonishing quality, and goes far beyond any interpretation derived from a traditional reading of European baroque.

The presence of the 'the other' was an imposition on the ideas of historians, whose closed minds were not prepared for readings outside the accepted axioms of the central universe. No critic would think of calling the baroque of Bavaria provincial with respect to that of Rome, but they do not blanch at applying this kind of analysis to Latin-American baroque. Only from a highly ethnocentric point of view would the products of distinct cultures be considered anachronistic, or those cultures persistently be explained, without taking their own products as the starting point for analysis.

To explain ourselves through others is the surest way never to get to know ourselves, and to remain dependent on the central model assumed to be our source of inspiration. There were outstanding experiments in Latin American social and cultural integration — for example, the Jesuit missions to the Guarani Indians, which in a century-and-a-half evolved forms of high social solidarity, and produced art and architecture of a high order, clearly demonstrating the potential of the Americans once the Europeans took the risk of giving scope to their cultural potential.

Cultural hybridization (*mestizaje*) found expression in syncretism in religion, and in enriching life-styles, and in architecture in the eloquent testimony of a multitude of works of the Mexican, Guatemalan or Andean baroque. This is not to discount contradictions and class-distinctions, the continuing injustices and conflicts. It was not a question of a paradise on earth, but of a new society in gestation, with the Americans gaining significance. In about the middle of the eighteenth century the archbishop, the governor, and the judges of the powerful court of Charcas had to resort to a native and a mulatto (neither of whom could read or sign their names) to determine how to repair the lavish cathedral church of Chuquisaca, thus recognizing the authority acquired through their craft by fringe elements in colonial society.

When in the presbytery of a church — a sacred place of importance alongside the main altar — there are angels playing instruments like the organ or the violin, and suddenly we identify a figure clutching the native *maraca* (a dry gourd containing pebbles), we realize there is a new reality going far beyond the imperial dialectic of the Conquest.

Think of the façades covered with tiles, the use of local stones (the pink *tezontle* and yellow *chiluca* in Mexico, the white coral-stone in Cartagena and Havana, the volcanic ashlar in Arequipa), the Cuban timber that crossed the ocean to be used in the Royal Palace at Madrid, the plasterwork in the American *pueblos*, the indigo of Guatemala, and the cochineal covering walls and gilt redoses with red. Latin American baroque exceeds in its expressiveness the limits of European tactile experience: it appeals to the senses and to a 'cosmivision' which welds together age-old rifts, and socializes daily activity in a continual ritual of the kind found in the thought and life of the old American cultures: a syncretism in liturgy and ritual which transcends the inconsistent meanings that have been superimposed.

A century of one-hundred-and-fifty years

For us the nineteenth century begins in 1780 and ends with the crisis of 1930. This reading does not tally with the usual calendars or with stylistic periods, but it stands out clearly as significant in the formation of the new reality, which determines architectural thinking.

With the foundation of the academies of fine arts in the mid-eighteenth century, the Bourbon court set in motion the radical transformation of the conception of architecture. It gradually withdrew from mathematics and sciences of construction to enter the field of the 'three noble arts', in which it was to play a leading role. But at the same time there appeared two essential requirements — theory and drawing — which increased the content of the discipline and shattered the old craft-base of the master-masons, who dominated architecture often without being able to read or write.

Without any deliberate plan of dominance, the standards in architecture set by the Academy, with royal backing began to be applied in the Peninsula and the Canaries in the last decades of eighteenth century.

The Enlightenment devalued the expressions of popular baroque and welcomed neo-classicism openly, barbarously destroying altarpieces and façades in Spain and Latin America. But above all, the main effect of the dialectic was to establish that there was only one valid way of doing architecture, and that no one in Latin America was competent to do it. So all projects had to be sent to Spain, where royal academies, with no knowledge of the continent, had to lay down rules for how the job should be done.

Some projects took a decade of correspondence — and were already complete by the time the design finally arrived from Madrid; others were never executed; and over some there were notable arguments. Such was the case with the Cathedral of Santiago de Cuba. The bishop refused the design from Madrid, telling the academicians that there was wood but no stone in Cuba; that the estimate for their scheme far exceeded the diocese's revenues for decades; and that there were experienced master-masons there, but the highest scaffolding they had erected was 12 metres (40 feet) high, while the dome designed in Madrid was more than 64 metres (210 feet) high.

The dialectic between plan and reality had started to operate. The American cultural project, the fruit of hybridization, was called into question by the Court, whose enlightened despotism gradually led it to the destruction of the guilds, entailing loss of the social bases, and launching Latin Americans (for the most part natives and creoles) on a supposed liberalization of the exercise of their art; but it also moved them to the sidelines in the social and cultural role which they had acquired in colonial society.

The few academic architects who reached America (basically Mexico, Guatemala, and Chile) left important works resembling metropolitan models (the Mint at Santiago, the Palace of Mining at Mexico, etc) but which, while manifesting the spirit of the time, fail to express the spirit of the place.

The Rupture

The principal new feature of the academic Enlightenment was the Rupture, marking the collapse of the process of cultural integration and the beginning of Latin American moves towards independence, with their varied consequences.

In reality, our independence meant a change of model. Spain was replaced by the new dominant European powers — principally England and France — while a fiction of political and economic autonomy was maintained.

The Rupture called for loss of memory, Morelos, at the Congress of Chilpancingo on

13 September 1813, said: 'After the 12th of August 1521 comes the 14th of September 1813' (Sarmiento to 1845). This was a fanciful blotting out of selected passages of history that were distasteful.

This anti-historical attitude of the Enlightenment exhibits one constant feature of the Rupture: the negation of reality and the substitution of the arbitrary and of foreign models. Denying one's own history led to denying one's own people. So Sarmiento coined the antithesis: 'civilization (Europe) or barbarism (America)', and as a deduction advised 'no sparing of gaucho blood!'

Exterminating 'in Saxon style' the native and the creole was the new model for these civilizers, who at the same time promoted the mass migration of the impoverished European peasantry to 'improve the stock'.

Contempt for our reality led to an inferiority complex and efforts by the elites to mimic European culture in its eclectic and cosmopolitan version. There was nothing innocent about this operation: it was a clear policy of displacing the Hispanic presence in our culture.

In 1817, even before much of South America had achieved independence, the French engineer Jacob Boudier, under contract to the 'Enlightened' Rivadavia, stated in a report on the Market of the Plaza Mayor in Buenos Aires that:

'When the institutions of the country are moving to eliminate the last traces of Spanish subjection, the public buildings should be in a style other than that of *los godos* (sci. 'the Dagooes'), because as monuments they have to reflect the public attitude at the time of their erection. This is not at the dictate simply of good taste, which may err, but of what is appropriate, which is perhaps more certain.' (Boudier, cited in Píllado 1910: 106)

In Brazil, the Napoleonic invasion of Portugal transformed the colony into a centre to which the Lusitanian court moved. Here too the French artistic mission, contracted to set up the School of Fine Arts under the direction of Grandjean de Montigny, imposed classical academic assumptions. The excellent baroque was set aside in favour of a doctrine based on Graeco-Roman models.

In the rest of America, the wars of independence were followed by internal struggles, stubborn regional conflicts stimulated by assiduous businessmen offering loans, and ideologists from Britain who were in a position to create states and 'Balkanize' the continent as a basis for their domination. Here they continued to hold a mirror to European architecture. Thus the professionals imported by our Enlightened governments adopted the historic 'revivals' of the history of others. There were vogues for neo-Gothic and neo-Greek, while the academicism of the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris reinforced its position as the most respected model.

A popular neo-classicism, the work of the Italian *cucharas* (literally 'trowels') recreated the townscapes of the cities that were progressively consolidating themselves in the second half of the century. A regular vocabulary of plinths, columns, friezes, cornices, rectangular openings, and a variety of balustrades, was now de rigueur for prestige façades on houses that otherwise were not much different from the colonial house with its patio.

Buenos Aires, european city

The steps taken to transform our capital cities into little third-world Paris were based on the notions of 'prefectural aesthetics' made fashionable by Baron Haussmann, on the hygienist premises of the German functionalist and positivist school, on studies of traffic flows and, more than anything, on the whims of changing governments.

Economic liberalism, hand in hand with political authoritarianism, made possible the dizzy enrichment of social sectors linked with British interests or investments from elsewhere, while on the fringe the workers on the land, imported from Europe (preferably Spain or Italy), were grouped in new types of 'slums', communal houses with shared facilities, or settlements.

At the same time industrial workers' housing schemes appeared — exhibiting another form of dependence, since these had been conceived to solve a problem we lacked, not having industries but only cheap labour amassed through the failure to deliver the land that had been promised.

Alienation from their own reality showed up in the training of the first Latin-American architects. Those who did not go to Europe received instruction here from imported teachers. Even in 1934 the School of Architecture entrusted the Argentine ambassador with securing a winner of the Gran Prix de Rome to take charge of the studio in Buenos Aires. In 1919 the final-year architecture students at Montevideo designed a 'tourist centre for a battlefield' for a victorious country.

The outcome of the crisis of the Academy at the end of the nineteenth century was, eclecticism: the incompatibility between the routine of the standard and particularist individualism was resolved in an escape into the past, including the picturesque. In 1890 Barbero, writer of academic treatises, included some exotic 'Peruvian and Mexican' styles, rescuing pre-Columbian decoration from oblivion, while a year earlier Viollet-le-Duc had roused us with his Aztec and Mayan houses at the Paris Universal Exhibition.

At the beginning of this century we got on our feet and began producing a 'modernist' architecture simultaneously with that being created in Europe. It was of no concern that our Catalan Modernism or our Secession style did not answer to any specific cultural context that would justify it, and was no more than an uncritical copy lacking logical basis. When Clemenceau in 1911 spoke of 'Buenos Aires, this great European city', fiction had been made fact.

But underneath this brilliant stage-set lay the real America, ignored, decimated, withdrawn into impotence, attached to its traditions and ways of life, and with the conviction of a historic sense of age-old wisdom which did not bank on the ephemeral fireworks of those who looked only abroad.

The turning point

The foundations began to move in the first decades of the twentieth century with the Mexican agrarian revolution, the rise of the native movements in Peru, social tensions in the south, and university reform throughout the continent.

In the field of literature, Martí, Ruben Dario, and Ricardo Rojas, with their **National Restoration** (1909) raised the question of the neglect of Latin American issues by the elites then in power.

The First World War signalled a crisis for Europe as a model of civilization, and opened the way to reflection on what was one's own. This happened in a confused and casual way, without clarity of ideas but with a bursting impulse to shake off the heavy yoke of spiritual dependency.

The reindication of the Hispanic heritage went hand in hand with that of its native alternative. Spanish culture had been vilified as mainly responsible for 'barbarism', and so had appeared only occasionally among the picturesque exoticism (principally in the form of 'Neo-Mudéjar') or among the 'modernisms'.

Now for the first time there was talk of Hispano-American architecture as having its own values, and as worth study. Architects mused about 'the Nation and national architecture' (like Mariscal in Mexico in 1915), or on 'the Hispano-native fusion' (like Angel Guido in Argentina in 1925). Alongside them some Europeans succumbed to the 'seduction of barbarism' and carried

out important studies of our colonial architecture. This marked the turning-point in attitude and consciousness, but could not destroy the conceptual assumptions of the rupture.

Being caught in their own academic and social contradictions, the architects of the 'neo-colonial' only managed to propose a change in the repertory of forms and architectural language so as to incorporate the decorative and compositional elements of the old colonial architecture.

Some opted for Americanist tendencies, others – openly Hispanophile – made an intellectual return to the Peninsula in quest of their models, while yet others (many fewer) quarried the Pre-Hispanic. All were adopting an academic historicism, if under a different skin. In 1920 a prize was won at an architectural competition in Buenos Aires by a 'neo-Aztec' house. The designers explained that they had arrived at it by tilting the outside face of the walls of a French *petit hotel* the co-ordinates of their own space and their own time meant that this movement would be side-tracked into the picturesque of another kind, without contributing any new direction.

There was a positive legacy in the shape of the discussion of theory – the first to take root in Latin America – and in the documentation and reevaluation of its architecture. This gave rise to systematic studies and a concern with protecting the architectural and urban heritage.

The 'worried introspection', which Arnold Toynbee detected during the 1860s, recognized this turning point which, in spite of failure in the short term, showed up unmistakably what was unreal.

But the unreal continued. In 1926 we were doing Art Deco imposed on us by the previous year's Exhibition of Decorative Arts in Paris. From then on, close on each other's heels, came the International Style, the *barco* (ship) style, and the first rationalism.

The nineteenth century blotted out the eighteenth, and we are now engaged in blotting out the nineteenth in the drive for historic loss of memory, and in hot pursuit of change, which we take for the inexorable engine of that elusive 'progress'.

The Modern Movement was introduced into the city by property speculation and by planning based on models, and consequently contributed further to the Rupture. It bore witness to its time and was determined to ignore its space, being seen in due course as just one further style in the series presented by feverish foreign modernity.

It was all the more destructive because it altered irreversibly the scale of the city, swamping the old colonial town-plans which had stood up to the impact of the academics right up to the first decades of this century.

The crisis of 1930 and the switch of tutelage to the north presently brought in those new models of the Rupture which seem themselves now to be in a state of crisis. It is a crisis which, if we can learn from history, shows us that there does exist a space for our space, and a task for those who want to be equal to the situation facing us: to mend the Rupture; to recognize our history as a whole, with its successes and mistakes; and to realize an architecture that can find its identity in the equation of time and place – in short, to marry the popular wisdom of our Latin America with the science we command as 'modern' human beings.

That is, modernity made our own.

Esta versão em inglês foi publicada no livro Companion to Contemporary Architectural Thought, de Ben Farmer e Hentie Louw (editores), Routledge, London and New York, 1933, pp 189-197. O copyright integral da tradução para o inglês pertence aos editores e ao tradutor e a eles agradecemos pela gentil concessão.

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Daniele Calabi
Guido Zucconi

Few contemporary Italian architects can boast a curriculum vitae as richly punctuated by such different environmental situations as those in which Daniele Calabi worked and lived. After a period in Paris (1932-33), he was active in his native Veneto until racist laws forced him, in 1939, to emigrate to Brazil. He returned in 1949, settling first in Milan, then Padua and finally Venice.

In every circumstance Calabi had to reinvent the bases of his professional *raison d'être*. As an architect for Padua University, as a building contractor and expert on one-family homes in São Paulo, as an architect designing hospitals after the war. Only in the 1950s do we find some degree of homogeneity in the type of clients and project themes encountered... And yet his architecture, as we shall see, does show strong signs of continuity despite the dramatic leaps in his professional biography.

Any trite classification as a "wandering Jew" would be wide of the mark. On the contrary, Calabi seems to have been spurred by the need to put down roots denied him by circumstances. He presents for example the unusual case of an architect who, three times in fifteen years, designed and very carefully built his own studio-home, in São Paulo in 1945-46, in Padua in 1951-52, and in Venice in 1961-63.

Leaving aside such matters as function, location and style, perhaps the theorists of a link between psyche and architecture (Sedlmayr, Baudrillard) might help us to understand an idea of space around which Calabi worked continuously: a square or rectangular space to distribute a building with a consequently introverted character.

This is, for instance, the approach adopted for the *Casa degli italiani* in Paris, which Calabi designed in 1933 with Giovanni Vedres. And the same archetype recurs in other projects for public buildings, such as the Government Building at Rovigo (1938) and the *Colonia agli Alberoni* (1936-37) (1) – in this case however the courtyard being purely a question of ground planning.

The pattern was refined in São Paulo in Brazil, in contact with a community of Italian architects guided by Rino Levi (2) and his sober architectural ideals. The first opportunity came from a local industrial magnate, Luis Medici. Totally inward-looking, the Medici residence, with only one floor above ground, is set around two squares of identical dimensions which, through a portico, detach all of the house's functions from its interior.

In a succession of smaller one-family villas, Calabi then set about perfecting the model. Ascarelli House (1946), Cremsini House (1947) and most of all, his own (1945-46), all have a central square

enclosed on two sides by the house. Only thanks to partition elements (the solid wall, the colonnade, the perforated wall), the courtyard appears completely circumscribed. But from the outside villa Calabi appears to be a closed volume, where only the four supporting arches enable the emptiness within to be perceived. Villa Foà, the house built nextdoor for his in-laws, heightens the feeling of a composition conceived as sequence of full volumes.

In publishing these Brazilian projects, both *Domus* and *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* (3) were to insist on the classical character, enlivened by the curiosity of "patio" arrangements that seem to belong to the Mediterranean tradition. On the subject of Villa Medici, the French journal spoke of an "habitation avec atrium", to stress its link with antiquity. In reality, in the São Paulo houses, Calabi mixes classical nostalgias with explicit references to the international style.

The same ambivalence is found in the elevations. The pillars of the peristyle are clad in travertine, but sticking out from the gutter line are sheets of corrugated asbestos cement. A patent contrast is created between an aristocratic material and a poor one, almost as if to play down the elegance of the reference. The matching of "contradictory" materials and technologies became an unmistakable feature of Calabi's architecture. Both in the two-years period in Paris and during his first five years in Brazil, he operated mainly in the guise of a builder. In both circumstances he had occasion to experiment with avant-garde techniques and, especially in São Paulo, to combine them with processes of primitive simplicity.

First in Brazil and later in Italy after the war, he developed this trait into a personal mood for conjugating a subtle taste for abstraction with a solid building constructor's knowledge, in a combination not frequently found in this country.

Long before earning him the post of teacher of Construction in 1960, his absolute command of building components was to play an essential role in the relation between interior and exterior, in rendering it permeable and transparent. In its turn this aspect was decisive in defining the "poetry of introversion" which in Calabi's architecture contrasts an almost impenetrable shell with a wide open inner *facies*. (4) A master of detail, he succeeded, in his house at São Paulo and in the one at Padua, in decontextualizing the building from its surroundings, bringing the architecture to life in the intensity of the relation between the central space (garden or paved courtyard) and the wings surrounding it. If in the Brazil house the link is mediated by the peristyle, in the studio-home in via Alicorno the *hortus conclusus* 'enters' directly into the living-room thanks to the transparency of the glazed partition and to the continuity of the wall.

The attention to constructional elements is evident again in the residences built in Padua between 1951 and '59. (5) Reappearing in them are the same features so brilliantly displayed in his own home: the bare brick, combined in delicate wall textures and matched with broad glazed surfaces, as well as traditional facings such as tiles and broken stone. In these cases it was not possible, due to obvious planning and volume restraints, to reiterate the concept of spatial introspection that he had impressed on the one-family dwellings.

Similarly, in the third studio-home, on the Venice Lido, (6) conditions did not allow him to rearticulate a volume present in compact forms. This was in fact an early 20th century mansion which Calabi, after moving into it in 1959, restored and raised by one store. And here, in the added part which he elected to live in, he reintroduced a close dialogue between exterior and interior. In this case the exterior is represented by the view of the sea, towards

which the whole flat looks out through continuous glazing (and in particular, the sloping staves of the wooden ceiling seem to fly out towards the horizon).

Among the dunes and pine-trees of the Adriatic coast, Calabi had found in 1958 what he needed to recreate an outlook congenial to him. In villa Falck at Jesolo (7) he was able to abridge the constructional parts (the brick wall associated with glass and tiles) in a building which, as in the Brazilian examples, was composed of two wings set around a central space.

At that time the theme of private houses, particularly the one-family kind, was no longer so central to Calabi as it had been in his Brazilian period and in the early Fifties. His attention as an architect and theorist was by then prevalently addressed to themes of quite another nature and scale.

1
The colonia was published by *Domus* in February 1938 and by *Architecture* in April of the same year

2
Cf. the references to Calabi in G. Zucconi **Rino Levi: images of great architecture in São Paulo** in *Domus* n° 728, 1991

3
Habitations individuelles au Brésil, in *Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* n° 18-19, 1948; L. C. Olivieri **Casa a San Paolo** in *Domus* n° 232, 1949; id. **Gusto del sottile** in *Domus* n° 233, 1949

4
Cf. a timely analysis was made of villa Ascarelli, about which see the essay by M. Milan Acayaba in AA.VV. **Residência em São Paulo** São Paulo, 1986.

5
Concerning the Paduan works see C. Bianchi, V. Dal Piaz, E. Pietrogrande **Daniele Calabi, Progetti per Padova, 1951-1959** Padua 1988

6
The project and its realization were published in 1963 by *Abitare*; cf. **Architetto Daniele Calabi, la sua abitazione: un attico a Venezia Lido**, n° 22

7
See G. Scattolin, **Villa Falk (sic) dell'architetto Daniele Calabi** in *Architettura, cronaca e storia*, n° 54, 1980

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Berlin – Troy in reverse
Pedro Moreira

The thinking around the theme periphery implies, a priori but not exclusively, to thematize on the marginal, literally. As those formulations spring from the centre, that for its own nature entitles itself to do so, a tendency is to be noted in regarding to relating the periphery as he relegated, on a second plane. This reason of dominance has been the tonic of the western perspective, on which the positivistic ordination was imposed in various respects, having effects until the structuralist vision of the city in the 1960's. Briefly saying, the normative rationality of the Western World brutally magnified the range of possibilities from the first industrial revolution onwards, so that this fact in itself came to determine the collapse of its initial coherence. The Words of the day are now pluralism and multiculturalism, even that those terms remain so vague to define in the beginning of the new age.

Curiously, one observes the demarcation of intercommunicating cultural domains that do not easily allow miscigenation but instead an intensive exchange of information, which is the guideline for the new times. Paul Virilio mentions two orders as parameters of this change, when considering this disappearance of the city as a concentric manifestation: the idea of place, or the stability of form, and of velocity, that de-stabilizes the first one. An extreme example of this interaction between the two orders are the recent developments in Berlin, that took me to write this article.

The year of 1989 brought the most important change of the post-war era, the fall of the Berlin Wall as a symbol of the bankruptcy of the Stately Control in face of the Liberalism, and its symbolic value came to emphasize the roles of villain and hero. The defeat of the Germans in 1945 determined for Berlin the loss of its ancient status of Centre, as the city became a hybrid. West Berlin was defined as the zone of tension per excellence, a place of maximum interest and of no interest, embraced by John F. Kennedy when pronouncing 'Ich bin ein Berliner' and refuted by most of the Germans as a place for living and mostly, as a place for investments. It was a centre-city in a world perspective for its iconic character, on the other hand it was an isled bastion, a paradoxical city encircled by a wall that was erected by the ones who surrounded it, not by its inhabitants for defense.

This city could be one of the *invisible cities* from Italo Calvino. The Old Capital of Prussia, once candidate to Capital of the World in the mind of an Austrian postcard painter, became periphery in the daily praxis. In this case, the status of Periphery determined the configuration of a highly specific socio-cultural setting. The neglected city was the magnet for so called marginal groups that founded here its capital. Remember the geometric definition of a circle, place of all the points equidistant to the centre. Each one of these points can potentially generate a new circle. Turkish immigrants, radical ecologists, homosexuals activists, opponents to the military services, artists of all kinds established themselves particularly in the degenerated areas next to the Wall and turned to formulate a new identity for the city. A few meters away, on the East Side, the theme was not periphery but the opposite, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Germany, a city whose only borders were its Alter-Ego. East Berlin was a fruit of desire, it was erected as the display of a new system. Its urbanistic ambitions can be compared with the Plan Haussman or with Brasília, and to concretize them it was necessary to destroy more than the war itself did.

Some of us had the opportunity of experiencing the ritual of passage from one city to the other, as Alice entering the mirror. The acclaimed border were in fact two walls separated by a strip that varied between 20 and 200 meters. *The Wall* was said to have a thousand faces, sometimes being made of pre-cast concrete and dilacerating the urban organism, sometimes making use of it, of its houses emptied by the State, of its railways, of its canals.

Seven gates in different places of the controlled territories permitted the transit between the both sides, meaning long waiting hours. A visit to one side would inevitably imply a comparison with the other.

The Wall does not exist anymore. Signs of its existence have been quickly erased and its few remains were turned into Heritage in a city that did not decide whether it wills to forget or to remember. Other of its fragments have been relocated, are plundered pieces placed in the entrance lobby of some New York skyscraper, or are even taken as souvenirs by the fugacious tourists. In the street markets this commercialization is institutionalized. On the other hand, the changes in the landscape succeed in a alarming speed, under the apparent control of the city planners. The trafficworks envisage the reestablishment of the connections and the reformulation of the infrastructure of the new metropolis, but aims also the embellishment of the greyish streets in the East, whose conditions are almost unacceptable for the western standards. It is a judgement of values. *The Palast der Republik* for instance, highest moment of the socialistic building technology, will be demolished as well as many others of his similars, and the *fassades*

of the housing blocks with its thousands of units will be remodelled. Any reminiscences of the previous power are undesirable and its not simple fate that Lenin statues are already mouldy in the municipal storages. Cultural Heritage? *Zeitgeist*? All depends upon the selective criteria. In urbanistic terms, the so called Critical Reconstruction is celebrated, and is based on the reshaping of the tum-of-the-century block-city, symbol of the prosperous imperialistic Germany. Axis, simmetry, monumentality, representativity, romanticism are the centre of a thought that, allied with the maximum profit configure a scenario from which very few good surprises are to be expected. I talk of a Troy in reverse, where the Greeks come out of the walls to deliver the horse as a present. From its interior emerge avid investors whose appetite is satiated in the pathetic shadow of the reunification. They bring with them the Court architects and the new old vision of the city, a city supposed to be proud of its Prussian past of power and glory, of the Germanic tradition of *order*. Therefore it is not difficult to understand the absolute supremacy of the self-called Racionalists in the planning of the New Berlin. The questions relative to the contemporary production in those specific circumstances are far too complex to be discussed within this chronicle, but it is expected that the contribution of other lines of architectural thoughts will come to radicalize the discussion, specially in concerning to foreign architects. The situation is such that in the 20th of July the architect Daniel Libeskind announced that he will be leaving town even before the completion of his polemic *Jüdisches Museum*. In a memorable article in the magazine *Archplus* with the title **The Banality of Order** he presents his arguments in favour of an Architecture that considers the 'diverse', the 'other', as synthesis of the contemporary questions.

Returning to Virillo's proposition, I would say that this city is under the impact of velocity. Paradoxically, the architecture until now resulting of such a process tries to deal with exactly the opposite themes that the idea of velocity suggest. What is being built is a monolithic city, too much controlled, too much rationalized, where the stability of form can with difficulties be disconnected to the stability of power. The New Berlin is under risk of being defeated by the weight of its own history. Like Troy.

Did you know?

1 That in Berlin there is just one building from a Brazilian architect? In 1957, in the good times of international transit of our masters, Oscar Niemeyer built for the building exhibition Interbau his housing block in the Hansaviertel. It is expected the realisation of Burle Marx's landscape planning for the surroundings of the Theatre Volksbühne in East Berlin.

2 That more than 1200 offices from all over the world took part in the recent international competition for the historical centre of Berlin, and among them were just 5 Brazilians?

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Passagen-werk Eduardo Aquino

'Language is the place where one meets dialectical images' – or the experience of the street as a resource of investigation

Ur-Philosophy

Walter Benjamin left unfinished his last project, which would eventually be his most significant contribution. **Passagen-Werk** (*The Arcades Project*) is a montage of ideas with its internal articulation left open, like a puzzle without a defined image, even after endless attempts to associate the deferent pieces. Based on the Parisian arcades of the

19th century, it was constituted of citations (with the exception of few commentaries by the author) representing a re-verification of Modernity through the lens of someone who observes the city from the sidewalk, from the arcades or from the subway. The process by which he developed his filing system does not follow any existing rule of formal organization. His entries, called *Konvoluts*, were recorded as Dream House, The Flâneur, Prostitution, Methods of Display, Mirror, The Collector, Marx, Doll, Technologies of Reproduction, Anthropological Nihilism, Demolitions, Boredom, Panorama and others. He may have had the intention to redefine the language of the essay, or even to invent a new literary genre, as some suggest, but his genuine contribution to contemporary thought may lie in the fact that he recognized the urban debris of mass culture as a foundation for philosophical investigations. The gaps in his *Konvoluts* make the reader responsible for the articulation between its parts.

Ur-Experience

The utopian project of the modern city inspired by the progressive technological ideal of a better and functional space has created forced perceptive spatial behaviours in the pedestrian. **Projeto Chão de Estrelas** (*Starry Ground Project*) is an ongoing intervention constituted of mirror insertions to be strategically placed in several downtown spots of different cities. Installed in the urban guerrilla tradition, they are camouflaged in the surviving architecture of the city center. These elements, attached to the existing construction, make the passersby suddenly look or perceive themselves for a short moment during the act of walking. As a section of the building is dematerialized, the piece conceals itself in the local urban landscape, denying its own importance as an *object*, creating a psycho-sensorial gap in the visually crowded environment of the metropolitan downtown. The urban walker *penetrates* the physicality of the building through the reflection of his/her own image, disclosing an opportunity to establish a sensible relationship with the constructed world in the fragmented and half-destroyed end-of-the-century cityscape.

Metrobody

Almost a relic, the body is exercised and sanitized to glorification. It is the last refuge of identity. Like the vanishing city, the body remains as the only concrete proof of existence. Yet, scattered and fragmented under the weight of technology, body and city can't be recovered by means other than those that displace them: they must be recorded or registered anew. Video replaces the personal diary. Made up of images, urban culture is like a hall of mirrors, its reflections reproduced to infinity. Confronted with their own technological images, the city and the body become ruins. Even technology is attacked by an obsolescence that renders it old instantly. We are faced with a transitory landscape, where new ruins continually pile up on each other. It is amid these ruins that we look for ourselves. (1)

The analogy between Projeto Chão de Estrelas and Passagen-Werk was inspired by Susan Buck-Morss' work on Benjamin and the Arcades Project, The Dialectics of Seeing Cambridge, Mass, The MIT Press, 1989.

1 Celeste Olalquiaga **Megalopolis: Contemporary Cultural Sensibilities** Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992

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Modernism and tradition. Conservation in Brazil Paul Meurs

Brazil's cultural heritage was not 'discovered' by historians or archaeologists, but by writers, architects and visual artists of the modern movement. They were moreover, the first to press for the conservation of monuments from the colonial past. In Brazil, the interaction between conservation and the avant-garde acted as a contributory factor in making of their modern architecture something irrefutably Brazilian. It also meant that conservation became an important element within the modern city. Lúcio Costa (1902) embodies the synthesis of tradition and modernity. He designed the city of Brasília (1957) and is considered the mastermind of modern Brazilian architecture. (1) Whos is less well known, however, is that he also left his mark on conservation.

In 1924 a group of modern artists travelled to the Baroque cities of Minas Gerais, the former gold mining district. This journey, organized by the writers Mário de Andrade and Oswald de Andrade, was prompted by the visit to Brazil of their Swiss-French colleague Blaise Cendrars. It seems curious that these artists who were looking towards the future should suddenly take an interest in a district which consisted only of a dead past. Yet, that journey to the forgotten places of colonial history formed an important source of inspiration for the avant-garde. Those gold cities were not perceived as provincial or picturesque, but as examples of pure primitivism in the form of eighteenth-century Baroque. (2) This interest in the past and the exotic which had been fostered by Europeans brought the Brazilians face to face with their own unknown. The colonial past provided the missing link between the 'Brazilianess' of Indian peoples who were still rooted in the Stone Age, and the modernity of migrant cities such as São Paulo. The discovery of tradition in Brazil had the same alienating effect that the break with tradition had produced in Europe. (3)

After independence in 1822, Brazil remained fixated on Europe for nearly a century. The emperors came from Portugal, art from France, prefab buildings and merchandise from England. The Brazilians looked on their country as a land of barbarians and felt dependent on Europe for civilization. As early as 1816, a group of French artists were brought over to Rio de Janeiro. The architect Auguste Grandjean de Montigny, who formed part of this cultural mission, designed the Escola Nacional de Belas Artes and was the first to hold the chair of architecture. The ludicrous extent to which European customs were slavishly copied is well illustrated by the chalets – so utterly out of place in the tropics – which made their appearance with the introduction of the various neostyles. The denial of indigenous riches reached its most extreme form in the landscaping of paradise gardens such as the Botanical Gardens in Rio de Janeiro. Perhaps it was simply fear of the overpowering rainforest that induced them to import trees and plants from Europe, Africa, the Antilles and Australia. (4) Even the imperial palm (palmeira imperial), the pre-eminent example of the Garden of Eden, did not form part of the original vegetation. The oases of imported human civilization in and around Brazilian cities were swallowed up by the equally parasitical, but suffocating, nature of that endlessly vast country. (5)

Even Brazilian Modernism owed its origins to Europe. And the interest shown by the European avant-garde in African and South American Indian art automatically engendered a focus on indigenous Brazilian

art, encouraging people to seek out Brazil's own national strength. Countless Brazilian artists working in Paris after the First World War 'Brazilianized' themselves. The pressure of nationalism was so great that Mário de Andrade dismissed those of his compatriots who still associated themselves with foreign or international art as ludicrous. (6) In his opinion the people in Belo Horizonte or São Paulo who aped French or German culture were less civilized than the Tupi Indians who had once inhabited the Brazilian coastal lands. In a reference to those same Indians, Oswald de Andrade summed up the problem of Brazilian identity as 'Tupy or not Tupy'. (7) By interpreting the disadvantage as a triumph, Oswald hoped to stimulate a blossoming of the primitive roots of Brazilian culture, while at the same time injecting life from the New World into the japed arts of Europe. (8) The craving for European recognition indicates that Brazilian art was not yet able to stand on its own two feet.

Of course, the contribution to the national identity from Indian peoples who had long-since been eradicated remained limited; the influence from Europe and Africa was much stronger. With the discovery of colonial history the debt to those origins was acknowledged. And because of the country's long-standing obsession with Europe, the impact of Brazil's past on the modernists was just as new and original as the Indian cultures. For each it had a particular significance and they saw the gold cities as the symbol of national wealth, cultural cross-fertilization and independence. The works of the mulatto sculptor and architect Aleijadinho (1730-1814), who became a national legend, brought together all the threads. Colonial 'Brazilianess' stood as model for modern music, literature and painting. This prompted the painter Tarsila do Amaral to bring this untouched world to life in her canvases.

Alexandre Eulálio equated *Negra Mítica* with Léger's *La Création du Monde* and the African ballet by Milhaud and Cendrars. (9) At the same time, the modernists were strongly dismayed by the disrepair of the art treasures in Minas Gerais. In Ouro Preto, Tarsila even sadly declared that she wanted to go back to Paris: not to work with Fernand Léger, this time, but to learn the art of restoration in order to help to restore paintings. (10)

In the twenties, the interest shown by architects in the past did not extend beyond stylistic imitation. Neo-colonial architecture was particularly popular in Rio de Janeiro where it was stimulated by the incentive prizes set up by José Mariano Filho. Lúcio Costa aligned himself with this movement while he was still studying, and designed several neo-colonial houses. But after a trip to the remote gold and diamond town of Diamantina in 1922 he gradually came to the conclusion that neo-colonialism was, in fact, just assuasive as the much-despised eclecticism. (11) Later on Costa was to seek the true strength of tradition not in outward appearances but in functionality, rational building and a sensitivity towards local circumstances. Costa felt that the beauty of colonial architecture was determined by perfect simplicity. (12) The type of architecture that he advocated should reflect that aspect without losing sight of the changes in society and the production process. In the end an analogous contemporary and regional architecture emerged, influenced by modern European architecture which had found its way into Brazil through various channels.

Modernism, nationalism and paternalism

It was not until the modernists gained political influence that architecture began to play a prominent role in the Brazilian Modern Movement. Once that had happened, architecture quickly developed into one of the pillars of the national culture. The man who brought this about

was Gustavo Capanema. Minister for Education and Health from 1934 to 1945 under Getúlio Vargas. This lawyer from Minas Gerais had close ties with the modernists. The writer Carlos Drummond de Andrade, whom he had appointed Principal Private Secretary, was a childhood friend Vargas had seized power during the revolution of 1930, and had established a dictatorship — the 'Estado Novo' (New State) — in 1937. The government's policy was directed towards a form of conservative modernization of the country whereby industry, culture and technology would be developed under the aegis of a centralized authority (13) Capanema's exploits reveal the ambivalent nature of the authoritarian regime. On the one hand he was responsible for stimulating modern art, as well as for the construction of universities and the instigation of revolutionary programmes in the field of health and education. While on the debit side, he brought in censorship, propaganda broadcasts and nationalist youth movements, and banned opposition organizations.

The first thing Capanema did for architecture was to hold a competition for the design of a new building for his own ministry. His second move, under pressure from the modernists, was to disregard the results. The statutory obligation to use open competitions to determine the choice of architects for public buildings was overruled, and Lúcio Costa was commissioned to design the final project. Since his short-lived and tumultuous directorship of the Escola Nacional de Belas Artes in 1930. Costa had become known as one of the leading lights of the modernists in Rio de Janeiro. He employed a team of five young architects on the design and in 1936 he managed to persuade Capanema and Vargas to bring Le Corbusier over to Brazil as consultant on the project. In fact this kind of work was not allowed to be granted to a foreigner. However, it was during the realization of this project that Oscar Niemeyer's talent emerged. Capanema was later to play an important part in Niemeyer's breakthrough by bringing him into contact with Kubitschek, the mayor of Belo Horizonte. This started a collaboration between the two which was to have one repercussion during the following decades in countless projects in Minas Gerais as well as in the building of Brasília.

Capanema was convinced that Brazil could not be modern without having its own national identity. (14) In so far as this already existed, it was undermined by a stream of immigrants from countries such as Italy, Germany, Spain and Japan. At that time, cultural multiformity was considered unacceptable and dangerous; integration was a matter of national security. The result of this way of thinking was that Brazilian nationalism became based on a culturalo rather than a racist foundation. This was underlined by Capanema's cultural and educational policies which were focused on stimulating historiography, folklore, primitive art, geography, the Portuguese language and the myths of independence, natural wealth, and a utopian future (Brasília). Modernism lent itself perfectly to the development of the desired mentality. Naturally there was no shortage of Indian stories from the primitivists to suit Capanema's purpose, but within the Modern Movement it was also possible to construe 'Brazilianess' as Catholic or Portuguese. Thus modernist projects such as the discovery of the past or the search for a Brazilian art became part of nationalist politics. Architecture acquired a prominent role not only because it brought visible signs of progress to the cities, but also because it was quick to gain international recognition, thanks to Capanema's Ministry Building and the Brazilian Pavilion at the 1939 World Fair in New York. (15)

The exemplary past

Shortly after he assumed office in 1934 Capanema asked Mário de Andrade to draw up a plan for the conservation of Brazilian art. As yet no legal framework existed for this, although the city of Ouro Preto had been declared a national monument by presidential decree the year before. Mário's proposals for cultural conservation embraced a broad spectrum including non-material aspects such as song, language and folklore. The Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act of 1937, however, defined artistic and historical heritage more practically as 'all matters either moveable or immovable whose conservation is in the general interest due to historical events or exceptional archaeological, ethnographic, bibliographic, or artistic value'. (16) No one in Brazil had the intention of preserving the discarded past exactly as it was. The object was to incorporate images and representations into modern society. And architectural conservation proved to be an effective way of achieving this. Colonial buildings and cities literally provided the space to house the national history as well as serving to legitimize it. (17) In his projects for cultural conservation in the state of São Paulo, Mário de Andrade focused principally on the tangibility of architecture. After 1937, this line was embraced by Rodrigo Melo Franco de Andrade, the director of SPHAN, the national organization for the conservation of historic buildings. (18)

According to Rodrigo, the Brazilian heritage justified the claim on the national territory. (19) Collective identity would make a nation of the inhabitants, and a country of the terrain. But before being able to conserve a national past, SPHAN first had to conceive it. Brazil differed from Europe in that it was virgin nature rather than history which provided the background against which human affairs were shaped. But for Rodrigo, the poverty of Brazilian monuments was certainly no reason for not conserving them. To him it signified that the culture was not yet fully crystallized. Brazil still had to discover itself; it was a country where history formed a territory just as unknown as the rainforest. For future generations, conservation could serve as a mirror of their origins, and besides would stand as a symbol of civilization to the rest of the world.

Despite their simplicity, the monuments boosted the feeling of self-respect. As Rodrigo put it: 'The poetry of a small church from the colonial era means more to us than the Parthenon'. (20)

National history as created by SPHAN focused on the relatively short period which coincided with the discoveries of gold in the state of Minas Gerais. José Reinaldo Gonçalves speaks of the creation of an 'exemplary past'. (21) SPHAN regularly defended the heritage by pointing to the threat of an 'irretrievable loss'. Evidently there existed such a thing as an ancient collection that was being endangered. This reasoning seems curious since it was they themselves who invented this so-called honourable past. In fact SPHAN's version of the national identity stemmed from nothing more than the idea that this could be lost. (22) The emphasis on Minas was the direct result of political considerations. An uprising against the Portuguese had taken place in Minas at the end of the eighteenth century which was later seen as a decisive moment for Brazil. The gold cities were preserved as silent witnesses of this 'inconfidência mineira'. Other arguments for treasuring the monuments in Minas were the symbolic significance of gold, and the fact that influential politicians, including Capanema, came from there. In 1982 seventy per cent of the items on the list of national monuments were located in Minas. For similar reasons, religious architecture was strongly represented and constituted forty per cent of the total number of monuments. Thanks to the modernists, SPHAN was neither a romantic nor a conservative organization. On the contrary, conservation

aimed to contribute to the modern city. Architects such as Lúcio Costa, Afonso Eduardo Reidy, Carlos Leão or José Reis used SPHAN to enhance their positions. Commitment to the past legitimized Modernism and made it more intrinsically Brazilian than the rival Beaux Arts movement. Costa compared the mud buildings of Diamantina (pau-a-pique) with reinforced concrete, and described the insignificant colonial houses in lyrical terms as a kind of modern architecture '*avant la lettre*'. (23) Traditional elements such as painted tiled walls (by Portinari among others) or wooden gauze-work turned up in new projects. Oscar Niemeyer was preferably presented as a contemporary Aleijadinho. Their kindred obsession with the sensuality of the curved line was only too readily seen by Brazilians as being something authentically national.

The search for a synthesis of past and present, particularly by Lúcio Costa, can be traced back to the conclusions of the CIAM Athens congress of 1933. After the four primary functions of a city — residential, recreation, work and traffic — the historic quarters formed the fifth point of this manifesto. CIAM declared itself in favour of the conservation of historical objects when these formed a 'pure expression of an earlier form of life which was of public interest' (24) Of course, the requirement of (hygienic) public housing took precedence, and conservation was not allowed to inhibit development by obstructing the increase in traffic or the shifting of key elements in urban life. The congress decreed that redevelopment in historic urban quarters was never to be simply an aesthetic adaptation, and it advised on hygienic grounds that slums which had grown up around historic monuments should be demolished and replaced by green structures. This paragraph of the CIAM manifesto dovetailed perfectly with the regional stamp of Modernism in Brazil. For decades to come, it was these views, under Costa's influence, which determined SPHAN's interventions.

Projects

Lúcio Costa's advice to SPHAN shows that he interpreted the role of protected monuments in modern life in three different ways. First of all, he sought an adequate way of expressing the symbolic significance of ruined monuments or even ones that had disappeared. Secondly, he held the view that a monument is a work of art rather than a historical document, and consequently that it is able to tolerate the presence of other (contemporary) works of art, but not those of historicizing new building. And thirdly, he made a distinction between purely historical cities and history in modern cities. In the one case, modern objects could be added to the old structure, while in the other, historical elements should be incorporated into a new context. Costa was not actually arguing the case for the conservation of the historic city-centre in itself, he was more concerned to see which elements could be used in a modern city. What is remarkable however, is that from the very beginning he pressed for the conservation of even the most primitive dwellings, while considering the imported styles from the previous century unimportant. (25) As a result windows, ridge pieces and ornamentation which had been altered later were invariably brought back to their original state during restoration work. In his design for a museum near the ruins of São Miguel das Missões (1937) Costa recalled the Jesuits' attempt to civilize the Indians. (26) A long time ago, the missionary villages in the region which borders on Argentina and Paraguay were laid waste and the fathers had to flee the colony, virtually the only thing to remain was the ruined church of São Miguel. Nowadays the place symbolizes the peaceful coexistence of Europeans and

Indians, and the museum stands as the artistic result of this symbiosis. The building reflects the blocks of dwellings and the organizational layout of the village. In one simple volume Costa reveals what has been lost, without recourse to a literal rebuilding. The museum is built on the original plan of the Indian dwelling blocks, and contains four rooms each with the dimensions of a dwelling. The front and rear elevations have been replaced by glazed lower fronts. The building occupies one corner of the square that was in front of the church thereby tangibly recreating the dimensions of the settlement. From a distance the museum looks historical with its tiled roof and arcade which was rebuilt using old columns. But from close to, the modern glazed lower fronts stand out. A striking feature is the administrator's patio house which, from the outside, simply looks like a closed stone volume.

Another of Costa's proposals to display the lost past involved a fragment of the Escola Nacional de Belas Artes in Rio de Janeiro, which was demolished in 1938. SPHAN saved the facade's central portico and stored it away with a view to re-using it elsewhere in the city. On Costa's suggestion it was placed in the Botanical Gardens on the axis of a palm-lined avenue against a background of rising green. In placing the fragment of the facade in the park rather than in an urban fabric, 'facade conservation' as such was avoided. The remains of the Neo-Classical school have found an appropriate place in the paradise garden since both belong to the cultural heritage of King Dom João IV. There is, however, an ironic undertone to this project: the Beaux Arts School which had been so vilified by the modernists was literally relegated to the forest. During the same period, the Ministry of Education — that symbol of Modernism designed for Capanema by a team of Brazilian architects in collaboration with Le Corbusier — was declared a listed building only three years after its inauguration. Speaking on behalf of SPHAN, Rodrigo said this was because the building was considered world-wide as a 'decisive step in the history of universal architecture'. (27) Luis Nunes's Water Tower at Olinda (1937) and the Ouro Preto Hotel designed by Oscar Niemeyer (1942) stand as examples of the characteristic new 'works of art' which were created in small historic cities under Costa's advice. The Water Tower, like a taut white disc in between a dozen white church towers, slots into the silhouette of Olinda at the highest point of this small town.

Similarly the Hotel, with its 'colonial' tiled roof and traditional materials, fits into Ouro Preto's panoramic cityscape without appearing historical. The spatial articulation is contemporary and the building displays countless modern details. According to Costa, it was surprising that Niemeyer was given this commission since he was not really known for the subtle integration of history into his buildings. The friendship between Rodrigo and Niemeyer, however, explains why Niemeyer was approached by SPHAN. The design was adapted to the historical context under Costa's directions.

Rio de Janeiro serves as an example of what conservation can and cannot achieve in a metropolis. As the colonial, royal, imperial and republican capital, the city has a rich past. But in the course of urban regeneration and the inevitable redevelopment as Rio de Janeiro grew into a metropolis, no one was overly concerned with the fate of a few monuments. Many historic buildings and neighbourhoods were demolished with SPHAN's approval. Nevertheless, monuments were incorporated into each new urban scheme; and in this way, items which had been salvaged could end up in entirely different surroundings. This was particularly the case with churches which became landmarks in the modern city. The church of Santa Luzia, for instance, takes its place among the skyscrapers, one of which is the Ministry of Education. And

SPHAN architect Ceça de Guimarães feels that the building shows up better in its present situation because it no longer gets lost against the background of mountains. The Candelária church was also given a new context. All the surrounding blocks of buildings were pulled down to make way for the construction of a wide thoroughfare. The church stands, now back-to-front, on the axis of this avenue which is several kilometres long. The traffic on the Parkway, which runs alongside the Guanabara Bay, has the peak with the small church of Glória as its landmark. At the time of the highway's construction SPHAN bought the adjacent houses and had them pulled down so that the monument could stand out clearly. Lúcio Costa and Roberto Burle Marx redesigned the layout of the surrounding area and made use of the old walls of the quay for a stairway complex.

In Affonso Eduardo Reidy's 1948 design for the Esplanada de Santo Antônio conservation and Modernism confront each other in a spectacular way. (28) Reidy wanted to give the enormous stretch of terrain created by the removal of a hill a Corbusian design with elevated highways, a pedestrian walkway and a concentration of high-rise buildings. And in this large-scale urban centre Le Corbusier used to design the City Museum. The existing monuments were pontifically displayed along the walkway: the aqueduct (Arcos da Lapa), the monastery of Santo Antônio, the church of Lapa and the Passeio Público. Reidy even wanted to extend the walkway on into the nearby colonial streets. In this way a piece of the historic street scene would be maintained with favourable economic perspectives. Very little came of the project, and the area still lacks definition. The monuments, however, were retained and in the confusing context of demolition and high-rise building they still manage to impart to the area a sense of direction and an element of historical depth.

Conservation and power

The influence of the modernists on Brazilian conservation decreased in the sixties. Their role in SPHAN was criticized. (29) The Modernists were blamed for the fact that conservation had been limited to the 'glorious past' while aspects such as voodoo temples and nineteenth-century architecture were neglected. They were also accused of removing all later additions to colonial buildings during the restoration process. What was happening in Europe at that time hardly differed. Even the traditionalists were only preserving a small selection of monuments and were also correcting history. The Brazilians, however, stand out through their attitude to harmony which meant that additions were made in an unaffected way so that the old was not devalued. The strategy of involving conservation in urban regeneration projects constituted yet another difference with Europe, and resulted in a surprising number of ensembles of historic buildings being retained in Rio de Janeiro and incorporated into the metropolitan centre. Brazilian conservation proved to be effective because renewal and conservation went hand in hand.

This staging of objects in a modern space meant, however, that SPHAN disregarded historic spaces. In Rio de Janeiro this is particularly evident at Praça XV which is perhaps the most historic square in Brazil. The important monuments — the Imperial Palace and the Carmo church — are still standing but little remains of the actual square itself after the construction of two boulevards, an elevated highway, and an (unnecessary) footbridge. The perimeter walls of the square have been destroyed and any relationship with Guanabara Bay has been lost from view. The Edifício Cândido Mendes was built directly behind the Palace with SPHAN's approval. It is difficult to see the black tower as an artistic complement to the Palace. And the fact that Costa justified the building of this monstrosity within the context of conservation illustrates the 'improper' use of the

authorized past. SPHAN was empowered to decide where demolition and building could and could not take place. But although the organization might seem idealistic it was caught in the middle of the political and economic power game.

The modernists served conservation, the modern city, and their own personal interests all at the same time. Sites which SPHAN allowed to be demolished were often replaced by projects designed by architects who themselves acted as advisers to SPHAN. Costa the son of a general, Niemeyer the grandson of a minister, and all the other members of the avant-garde stemmed from the establishment. Naturally it suited the established order to leave the colonial churches standing and turn its back on the nineteenth century, even though the latter is arguably a truer reflection of cultural cross-fertilization. Now that conservation in Brazil is trying to break away from Modernism more attention is being paid to African and eclectic art, and interest in the recent past is diminishing. In so doing one of the most important periods of the national culture is being passed over. Brazil is suffering from a typical New World problem: although the culture has universal roots, the country lacks a civilized past. 'Brazilianess' is therefore condemned to the future and that was precisely the modernists' message.

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13 Schwartzman S et al **Tempos de Capanema** Rio de Janeiro, ed Paz e Terra, 1984, p 19

14 Ortiz, R **A moderna tradição brasileira** São Paulo, ed. Brasiliense, 1988, p 35

15 The New York Pavilion was designed by Costa and Niemeyer. The international breakthrough of Brazilian architecture came with an exhibition in the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1943 and the accompanying publication Goodwin, P **Brazil builds architecture new and old** New York, ed MoMA, 1943

16 Decreto-Lei nº 25, 30 November 1937 **Organização e proteção do patrimônio histórico e artístico nacional**

17 Rubino, S B **Gilberto Freyre e Lúcio Costa, ou a boa tradição in Óculum** nº 2, Campinas, Puccamp, 1992, p 78

18 SPHAN, its full name being *Secretaria do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional*, was founded in 1937 to implement the *Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act*

19 Quoted in Leite, J S (ed) **Rodrigo e o SPHAN** Rio de Janeiro (MinC-SPHAN), 1987, p 21

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