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ABSTRACT


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In January 1943, New York’s Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) opened Brazil Builds. This exhibition has been widely credited as initiating the international appraisal and celebration of Latin America’s modern architecture. Responsive to the war context and to the museum’s engagement with the Office of the Coordinator of Inter American Affairs directed by Nelson Rockefeller, this exhibition presented a clear overlap between politics and modern architecture culture in the Americas that aimed to create a unified and defensible Western Hemisphere. This is a story that, although consistently repeated and alluded to, has never been told because studies of Brazil Builds have emphasized a singular national frame. This dissertation studies the overall trajectory of MoMA’s engagement with Latin American modern architecture and culture in the late 1930s and 1940s, and posits its endeavors as leading to the 1955 exhibition, Latin American Architecture since 1945. It argues that the promise of a better world made in 1943 with Brazil Builds was staged in 1955 as a threshold for the entire region and as demonstration of the advantages of a US-led postwar modernization.

This work articulates the historical conditions that, in 1955, allowed the British Architectural Review to talk about a “Latin American manner” in architectural modernism. Architectural historians and critics outside the region noticed the contours of a Latin American modern style on the period roughly between 1939 and 1955 and deployed historiographic strategies to include the region’s buildings within the history of Western architectural modernism. Rather than a study of an architectural style, this
dissertation presents Latin American modernism as a historical concept born out of the tensions between similarity and difference with Western culture at the time of the hegemonic rise of the United States. The need for a regional construct named “Latin America” permeated postwar modernization before the unfolding of the bi-polar world of the Cold War. This work shows that the idea of Latin American architecture was subordinated to early postwar political and cultural anxieties in the United States and highlights MoMA as a key stage in the construction of this historical concept, beyond the specifics of any single exhibition.

This study engages international modern architecture culture as refracted through the museum and the varied cast of characters and events supported by this cultural powerhouse to reveal overarching strategies that enabled the idea of Latin America. Guided by US postwar economic and political strategies, the multiple mirror images and distortions produced at MoMA made modernism in the Americas a contested ground challenged by regional Latin American powers and European cultural centers. This dissertation examines five exhibitions that involved the entire museum (Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art), the Department of Painting and Sculpture (Portinari of Brazil) and the Department of Architecture and Design (Brazil Builds, From Le Corbusier to Niemeyer: 1929-1949 and Latin American Architecture since 1945), as well as other related events that influenced architecture culture during this period. This work positions Latin American modern architecture within a Western postwar culture and delineates the forms of inclusion and exclusion—of what and who was modern—that created both physical spaces and mental maps of postwar modernity giving a transnational image of the Western World.
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Fig. 6.40. Rino Levi and Roberto Cerque, Cancer Hospital in São Paulo, 1949-54.
Source: *Latin American Architecture since 1945*

Fig. 6.41. Harrison & Abramovitz, US Embassy, Havana, as shown in the catalogue
Source: *Latin American Architecture since 1945*

Fig. 6.42 Images of pre-Hispanic architecture in the Latin America as shown in the catalogue, next to Albero Arai’s 1952 Frontones in UNAM, Mexico City.

Fig. 6.43 Images of colonial architecture as shown in *Brazil Builds* (left) and *Latin American Architecture since 1945* (right)

Fig. 6.44. De Robina and Ortiz Monasterio, Edificio Valenzuela, Mexico City, 1955. This was a last minute inclusion by Philip Johnson
Source: *Latin American Architecture since 1945*
Dedication

to my parents

Ioana Michelena
Basilio del Real

and my partner

Jerry Portwood
We are challenged to build here in this hemisphere a new culture which is neither Latin American nor North American but genuinely inter-American. Undoubtedly it is possible to build and inter-American consciousness and an inter-American culture which will transcend both its Anglo-Saxon and its Iberian origins.

Henry Wallace, Vice President of the United States, 1939

Introduction

In a moment of crisis the United States turned toward Latin America to imagine its own future. The dawn of the Second World War saw the emergence of a new Western Hemisphere, imagined in US political and cultural circles as a united American continent, a utopian vision of democratic nations and inheritor to Western civilization. Culture was mobilized to make evident a common geography of Western values, and modern architecture was enlisted in these efforts. This dissertation examines the historical conditions under which a Latin American architecture appeared in the international scene and how it helped build the idea of modern architecture as both locally recognizable and universally appropriate for a postwar world. It focuses on the architectural style that came forth through modernism in the region, roughly between the start of the Second World War and the end of the 1950s. In this period, one finds the beginning of historiographic

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1 For a history of the emergence of the idea of the Western Hemisphere caught in the wake of the ideology of the unity of Western civilization in the Americas see: Arthur Preston Whitaker, The Western Hemisphere Idea: Its Rise and Decline (Ithaca N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1954). For a narrative from Latin America in agreement with views deployed form the United States during this period see: Ezequiel Padilla, "The Meaning of Pan-Americanism," Foreign Affairs 32, no. 2 (Jan) (1954). For a counter proposal on Latin American unity developed from Mexico and a critique of hemispheric unity as developed in the United States see: José Vasconcelos, Bolivarismo y Monroísmo; Temas Iberoamericanos, (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Ercilla, 1937). For a key text that established the irreconcilable difference and confrontational stance between the United States and Latin America see: Roberto Fermández Retamar, "Caliban: Notes Towards a Discussion of Culture in Our America," The Massachusetts Review XV, no. Winter-Spring 1, 2 (1974).
strategies to include the region’s buildings within the history of Western architectural
modernism.\textsuperscript{2}

The rise of totalitarianism in Europe and the outbreak of war galvanized US society as a whole. This was not the first time that the United States had turned its gaze south; the fate of the North American Republic had been tied to that of the American continent since its revolutionary birth, in a mixture of isolationism and expansion with sporadic bursts of interest and intense engagement accompanied by a deep contempt towards the other America.\textsuperscript{3} In 1823, President James Monroe and his Secretary of State John Quincy Adams formalized the foreign policy of a fledgling country by tying it to the nascent independent states of the former Spanish and Portuguese empires in the Americas, in what became known as the Monroe Doctrine. It was not, however, until 1889, under the continued economic and territorial expansion of the “Coloso del Norte—Colossus of the North”—an expression that gained currency in the early twentieth century—that the mechanisms of Pan Americanism under US hegemony were born with the First International Conference of American States and the creation in 1910 of the Pan American Union in Washington DC.\textsuperscript{4} By the end of the 1930s a new form of Pan


\textsuperscript{4} An important first counter proposal to US initiatives on Pan Americanism came from Argentina under what became known as the Drago Doctrine. Luis María Drago was the Argentina’s Foreign Minister at the
Americanism had emerged. What had fundamentally been a unilateral relationship marked by military intervention in the circum Caribbean area, transformed into the reciprocal relationship of the Good Neighbor Policy. This new imagined geography of equal American nations found a champion in Nelson A. Rockefeller and in the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA), which he directed since its creation in August 1940.

In the OCIAA the celebration of an American continent of equal nations went beyond the ritualized political rhetoric of Pan Americanism. Culture became a key tool that helped draw the contours of the region and the features of its principles actors. Cultural projects at multiple levels found institutional support within the OCIAA’s Division of Cultural and Educational Activities, headed by US architect Wallace K. Harrison, and the State Department’s Division of Cultural Relations. The key concept guiding official OCIAA cultural initiatives was that of reconocimiento, the need to know and to acknowledge in the United States the achievements of the “other American Republics.” The OCIAA set the foundations of Inter-American understanding and

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collaboration as well as the identification and celebration of a “Latin American civilization.”

New York’s Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) was brought into the fold of official Pan Americanism within Harrison’s OCIAA cultural division. MoMA had engaged the artistic culture of Mexico, primarily painting and sculpture, in the early 1930s. With the help of the OCIAA, the museum was able to extend beyond Mexico, bringing forth a new cultural geography in which “Latin America” served as a new image with which to complete and orient the cultural dynamics between the region, its individual countries, and the United States.

With the OCIAA, a clear hierarchy in the “family of nations” that made up the Western Hemisphere appeared. Brazil, with its immense size, apparently inexhaustible natural resources and strategic military importance came to the forefront of US economic and political interests as well of the imagination of its citizens through initiatives aimed at a general US public like Disney’s creation of Zé Carioca, Donald Duck’s South American friend. The historic relationships with Mexico, its natural resources and labor force so close to the United States, brought that nation in close friendship with its northern neighbor. Although larger Latin American nations such as Venezuela, with its rich oil fields, demanded the attention of US political and economic circles, smaller nations— specially those in Central America close to the strategic Panama Canal—could not be disregarded. Through its various departments, the OCIAA engaged a vast hemispheric geography with programs in every independent Latin American nation. The

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6 Zé Carioca had other Latin American friends, such as Panchito Pistolas, representing Mexico, and Gaucho Goofy, representing Argentina.
Museum of Modern Art, working primarily within the field of culture, had to be more selective and focus its resources on initiatives that could operate at multiple levels, within national, Inter-American and international registers.

Contrary to the image advanced by Pan Americanism, this was not a frictionless geography, but rather a charged and contested political and cultural field in which regional powers produced their own local and Inter-American cultural politics. Argentina’s government, for example, defended its right to remain neutral in the world conflict, and mobilized an alternative vision of regional unity that challenged US-led Pan Americanism through initiatives that celebrated not only cultural ties with other Latin American nations but also political relations with Fascist Spain, as in the 1942 Primer Congreso de la Cultura Hispano-Americana (First Congress on Hispano-American Culture). In Latin America, the field was highly charged with political and cultural debates over the nature of a national and “Latin American” culture. Architecture, both as practice and discipline, was not immune to these forces, and framed within the confrontation between colonial architecture and functionalism, it was mobilized and interpreted as a key manifestation of a common Latin and/or Hispanic American culture.

With MoMA, modern architecture was first brought into the fold of cultural relations between Latin America and the United States. The notion of a Latin American modernism is fundamental to understanding how modern architecture in the region appeared in the international stage. Between 1939 and 1955 architectural historians and critics outside the region noticed not only specific buildings but also the contours of a

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7 Primer Congreso de la Cultura Hispano-Americana (Buenos Aires: Optimus, 1942). See in particular Angel Guido’s “La arquitectura Hispano-americana” in which he drew the contours of a transnational historical style that sprung from a mestizo ethos rooted in pre-Colombian architecture.
Latin American modern “manner,” not necessarily as homogeneous but certainly as an identifiable style. The historiographic presence and absence of the region’s modern architecture is undergirded by this ambiguous and complex idea of a Latin American style. The notion of style, explicitly named or implicitly assembled through published examples, was critical for it allowed architecture to transcend a national frame and rhetorically construct a “region” through a “Latin American manner.”

Style enabled a metonymic reading of singular buildings. This metonymic capacity—one country, building or architect to represent the whole region—is a fundamental, if complex, condition that explains the presence and absence of the region’s buildings in architecture history. But this has rarely been acknowledged. Leonardo Benevolo’s inclusion of Brazil in his 1960 *Storia dell’architettura moderna* as the sole instance of the development of modernism in the region was predicated on Brazil’s ability to represent the entire region, specifically on Brazilian modernism’s ability to be “Latin American.”

Metonym, both as a historical necessity under Pan Americanism and as the capacity of architecture to represent a larger ethos, is the key assumption of this work. My study does not aim to unravel the contours of a Latin American style as it manifested in the 1950s; it does not seek to define what made modernism in Latin America Latin-American. Rather, I understand Latin American architecture as a historical concept deployed from the United States and born out of the tensions between similarity and difference with Western architectural culture in a particular time period.

The ability for the part to represent the whole is tied to modern architecture in its variant as the International Style. The construction of a modern world necessitated strategies of inclusion and exclusion—of what and who was modern—that created both

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physical spaces and mental maps subjected to cultural hierarchies. Sigfried Giedion, for one, saw the development of modernism in Brazil and Finland as being at the “rims of Western Civilization.”9 Was modernism in these frontier lands in danger of falling from the edge of a modern world? As Edward Said points out, cultural formations presume a world map that has been drawn by imperial power.10 The changing geography of modern architecture and the mode in which this geography has been imagined and re-imagined in the scholarship and also in media and curatorial practices has long escaped analysis. After all, architecture historiography has only recently started to examine the inheritance of imperialism.

For a brief period, Latin American modernism enabled the recoding of old imaginaries that, tied to early phases of colonization and European imperialism, saw the region not only as backward but more important as peripheral to (Western) civilization. Modern architecture of the region received recognition in the United States not simply by being published—since it was also published early on in Europe—but, moreover, of this architecture serving as a model for postwar Western culture. This visionary stance and intersection of common Western values was not absent of tensions and contradictions.

In architecture, what was perceived as shared historical, social and material conditions in the region was translated and transformed into a common spirit, an ethos that could be identified in a Latin American style as both similarity and difference with Western culture under the growing aegis of the United States. My point here is not to unravel the essential characteristics of a Latin American modernism as different or similar to other architectural expressions developed under the pressures of modernization,

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but rather to articulate the historical conditions under which the category itself was made possible in the discourse. It was these very conditions that, in 1955, allowed the British *Architectural Review*, for example, to talk about a “Latin American manner” in architectural modernism.

My work positions MoMA’s endeavors in the early 1940s, with the highly celebrated 1943 *Brazil Builds* as a lead up to the 1955 *Latin American Architecture since 1945* exhibition. I examine three additional exhibitions (*Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art, Portinari of Brazil* and *From Le Corbusier to Niemeyer: 1929-1949*), as well as other related events in the United States relative to these two pivotal shows. These five exhibitions, however, are not to be seen as a series of building blocks that support each other, culminating in the discovery of a Latin American style. Rather they are part of a complex and, at times, contradictory discussion in international modern architecture culture refracted through the museum and the varied cast of characters that this cultural site empowered.

New York’s Museum of Modern Art was a key site in the construction of a Latin American style during this period because the museum was an international stage in which architectural questions developing in the region and emerging in the United States could be focused to help guide a synthetic modern culture. MoMA’s cultural capital was recognized early on by political and cultural leaders such as Brazilian culture minister Gustavo Capanema, and even by Latin American architects themselves. A month after

the closing of the New York showing of *Brazil Builds*, Mexican architect Carlos Obregón Santacilia expressed his desire for MoMA to “do something similar about Mexico if it can be possible.” In 1940, *mexicanidad* (Mexicanness) confronted *brasilidade* (Brazilianness)

Obregón Santacilia was one of the most influential modern architects in Mexico practicing in a still developing modern architecture culture. Aware that MoMA had engaged Mexican muralism in the 1930s, he wrote Rockefeller on the need to include modern architecture in the 1940 *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art*. This exhibition did not include modern architecture. The culture wars in Mexico that saw the development of muralism in the early 1920s had left a fragmented cultural field in which fiefdoms had developed. By the late 1930s architectural modernism in Mexico had abandoned its earlier radical functionalist experimental phase and was developing a new language incorporating the signs of Mexican building tradition within a growing capitalist market.

Obregón Santacilia’s 1936 Reforma Hotel, which incorporated *tezontle* stone in its main façade as a vertical counterpoint to the horizontal concrete bands of the floor slabs, keenly highlighted and literally wove together tradition and modernity. Late 1930s architectural experiments in Mexico developed in the wake of the debates over modern architecture, captured in the very public 1933 Pláticas de Arquitectura (Arquitectural Conversations) organized by the Mexican Society of Architects (SAM). Although by 1940 radical confrontations had subsumed, the architectural profession was still

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fragmented. The use of the neocolonial style in the 1938 Petróleos Mexicanos (Mexican Oil) Building, a building that celebrated the oil nationalization under President Lázaro Cárdenas, revealed that the problem of *mexicanidad* in modern architecture was still unresolved. At the same time, Cárdenas’ support of the Polytechnic University, and his 1938 invitation to former Bauhaus director Hannes Mayer to teach, were clear evidence of the consolidation of the government’s emerging administrative bureaucracy that challenged the figure of the artist-architect supported by the National University and the SAM. The attempts by Mexican modern architects to produce a synthetic *mexicanidad* in architecture did not receive international acclaim until the 1950-53 Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) campus.

When in 1940 Obregón Santacilia wrote Rockefeller complaining of the absence of modern architecture in the MoMA show and proposing a follow-up exhibition to be called *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Architecture*, it was clear that not only the museum had closed its chapter on Mexican modern culture but, more importantly that *mexicanidad* had been constructed as a closed image; held together by a convulsive national history deeply woven with violence—as Alfred Barr himself noted—it was too specific to work within the regional dynamics of Pan Americanism.

By the early 1940s, *mexicanidad* had adapted to the growing rhythms of Pan Americanism, shedding its earlier confrontational stance with the United States. *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* was the poster child for a new era of collaboration. The demands of Pan Americanism, however, went beyond political collaboration with a well-known close friend. As the reception of the Brazilian pavilion in the 1939 World’s Fair revealed, a new center of gravity in Latin American culture had appeared—complete with
a synthetic modernism that could be mobilized to manifest a transnational region called “Latin America” as part of a defensible Western hemispheric geography. Amidst the celebrations of Brazil’s national pavilion imbued by foreign critics with a “Latin American spirit,” the image of mexicanidad became more limiting. By 1940 it was clear that Mexico Builds was an impractical enterprise. Mexican modern culture was too particular and exclusionary, grafted to a relentless and too visible national discourse founded on the Revolution; mexicanidad could not be ambiguous enough to represent both Mexico and Latin America.

The Second World War fueled the need in the United States to construct a regional category capable of negotiating cultural differences within a unified Pan American geography. Advanced first by isolationists’ circles in the United States, this rhetoric of a united hemisphere of peace separated from the war-tossed world developed into the complex regionalism of the postwar. This period manifested what I call a metonymic drive, a hermeneutical reading of images that facilitated dual and ambiguous interpretations and eventually allowed Brazil to represent Latin America in the 1940s and 1950s. This was possible because Brazilian modernism had the capacity to be ambiguous, to operate both as a national and a regional marker.¹⁴ Brazil Builds manifested a metonymic drive that had started with the Brazilian pavilion in the 1939 World’s Fair. The narratives around the Brazilian pavilion were guided by a hermeneutic impulse, a

¹⁴ The tropes and mental images upon which such interpretations rested had been deployed in the nineteenth century, the tropical being perhaps the most recurring. Alexander von Humboldt was the key figure in the construction of the modern idea of the tropics. It is important to stress that Humboldt’s views were laudatory of the tropics. See: Felix Driver, “Imagining the Tropics: Views and Visions of the Tropical World,” Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography 25, no. 1 (2004). See also: Fredrick B. Pike, The United States and Latin America: Myths and Stereotypes of Civilization and Nature, 1st ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992).
complex dynamic imaginary that went beyond the simple name substitution between Brazil and Latin America, erasing boundaries and articulating a soft geography based on centuries of discursive and visual tropes on the nature of the tropics and a Latin American ethos. What I call the metonymic drive found its full potential in Brazil because the images of its architecture offered an idealized space and time. The agreeable condition of Brazilian culture and its personalities—presented by Brazilians themselves—made Brazil operate not only as representative of Latin America as a whole but, moreover, as an ideal Latin American country and, furthermore, as an ideal toward which all Western nations should aspire. This metonymic drive operated beyond the Brazil–Latin America dichotomy, blurring the boundaries between Latin America and a Western Hemisphere, and in this way, the image of a Pan American United States was brought into this dynamic and projected back to the region transformed into a common standard of living as the key criterion for modernity.

The Latin American geocultural imaginary that unfolded at the New York World’s Fair went beyond linguistic representations and Pan American rhetoric. The Brazilian pavilion formulated a new synthetic spatial construct capable of mediating the tensions between organic and geometric abstractions in art and architecture. This capacity to mediate contradictory forces went beyond pure formalism; the pavilion was able to address larger social questions, as clearly noted by critics, such as the excessive influence of commercialism that had galvanized cultural conversations in the United States. This new spatial language operated within a critical present time, offering a positive view and a clear humanistic path towards the future. The imaginary created around the Brazilian pavilion operated as both a territorial and a temporal mental construct: an ideal place and
time. This complex alignment of culture with politics that manifested a temporal and territorial utopic imaginary was replayed and empowered at MoMA’s *Brazil Builds*.

It took more than the dramatic emergence of Brazilian modernism into the international scene to make it speak “Latin American.” *Brazil Builds* brought tradition to the forefront of architectural modernism with a section dedicated to the “old architecture” of Brazil. Tradition became a pressing question in the United States and Europe after the trauma of the war. Modernism in Brazil offered a new language of modern architecture that incorporated tradition and offered a clear and distinctive roadmap beyond both functionalism and rationalism; this at a time that architectural production in Europe had come to a complete stop in the midst of the Second World War. The growing influence and continued life during the postwar period of the exhibition as evidenced by the mounting circulation of Brazilian architecture through international journals and magazines signaled the complex temporalities—the tensions between the past, the present and the future, between tradition and the changing times of modernity.

The ambiguity of Brazilian modernism went beyond its capacity to represent Latin America. The Cariocan modernist school, the modern architecture developed in Rio de Janeiro, achieved a national condition—*brasilidade*—through its ability to represent a general Latin American ethos. MoMA’s *Brazil Builds* helped create both a national Brazilian architecture and the prototype of a Latin American manner. These two forces, or ideas—the national and the regional—cannot be separated; both promised an ideal future and the completion of the project of modernity. The realization of this promise was staged at MoMA in 1955 with *Latin American Architecture since 1945*. 
The almost complete lack of knowledge of Brazil, and of South America as a whole, in the United States at the time, invested the images and forms of this country with a degree of ambiguity that countered the closed signs of *mexicanidad*. The national discourse of *brasilidade*, mobilized within Brazil to highlight that country’s difference with the rest of Spanish (Latin) America, served in the United States to highlight precisely the opposite: the country’s similarity with Latin (Spanish) America. The rhetoric of Pan Americanism demanded a unified economic and cultural geography: a Western Hemisphere. The imagery of tropical landscapes and natural settings—a discourse already well established in the US in the early twentieth century—helped surmount political national markers. At the same time, the imagined unified cultural geography of Latin America did not need to be simplistic and homogeneous; national identities did not need to be dissolved, but rather operate within a Pan American discourse that emphasized unity and similarity, enabling both positive national idiosyncrasies and constructive regional commonalities. This complex imaginary was constructed through both narrative and visual forms.

In the 1940s these images and stereotypes encountered not only a new context but also a new institutional and intellectual authority in the United States that incorporated scholarship on art and architecture. The idea of a Latin American modern style in the United States was empowered by the growth of intellectual, economic, social and cultural studies under the rubric of “Latin American Studies,” which set the foundation for the later development of Area Studies.\(^{15}\) The drive to establish a Pan American political and

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\(^{15}\) New specialized disciplines such as Human Geography that developed in the Social Sciences under the Cold War in the United States engaged the problem of developing clear regional characteristics and delimitations. For a Cold War period article on this problem see: Edward L. Ullman, "Human Geography and Area Research," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 43, no. 1 (1953). See also: Robert
economic alliance, spearheaded by Rockefeller’s OCIAA during the Second World War, was supplemented by the intellectual project to articulate a Western Hemisphere as the heir and culmination of Western culture.\(^{16}\) Latin America was to be not only identified but also celebrated as a culturally recognizable region with its own contribution to Western civilization.\(^{17}\) The metonymic drive also applied to the regional construct itself. Brazilian modern architecture responded to both a culturally recognizable region and to universal Western values.

At MoMA, *Brazil Builds*’ metonymic drive had developed from the overwhelming lack of knowledge of the architecture of the region; from the need to surpass Mexican muralism as the key artistic domain of Latin American modernity (as *Portinari of Brazil* gave evidence to); and from the incorporation of tradition, as both history and ethos, into the narratives of architectural modernism. These three main conditions were guided by a dominant Pan Americanist discourse but, more importantly, by desires for peace and progress, which set the stage for a polyvalent exhibition of Brazilian architecture. Architectural modernism in Brazil—unlike in Mexico—encountered a cultural infrastructure that incorporated modern architects within the state

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15 A clear attempt was to address the perceived difference between the United States and Latin America by reexamining the inheritance of the Enlightenment in the Western Hemisphere. See: Arthur Preston Whitaker, *Latin America and the Enlightenment* (New York, London: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1942).

16 As a cultural construct the idea of Latin America deployed by Pan Americanism celebrated difference by eliminating confrontation; under this ideology the complex and varied-cultural traditions of the Americas as a whole were mobilized to celebrate common and shared values, emphasizing a mosaic of cultures.
apparatus and its cultural management. In the Serviço do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional (SPHAN, National Historic, Artistic and Patrimony Service), created in 1937 within the Ministry of Education and Health headed by Gustavo Capanama, modern architects like Lucio Costa found not only the ability but more importantly the necessity to incorporate Brazilian tradition to their developing architectural views. SPHAN enabled the creation of a Brazilian tradition, developing a cultural hierarchy in which the Baroque period and its architectural production became the key signifier of brasileidade. Once this focus on the Baroque circulated within Pan American circles, however, it lost its national characteristic, becoming ambiguous enough to signify a Latin American ethos.

The metonymic impulse of the 1940s reached fruition in the 1950s when discursive operations emphasized a regional construct. During the postwar, regionalism became a question that permeated international politics with the creation of the United Nations and modern architecture with the continued development of the International Style. The 1955 exhibition, *Latin American Architecture since 1945*, made evident this moment of cultural transition, and the dawn of a new future for the entire region. There were exceptions in Mexico and Brazil, but these were concluding traditions, echoes of a recent past now enveloped by the promise of postwar modernization. At the same time, however, postwar modernization brought forth the gaps in Latin American modernity. In René d’Harnoncourt’s new position as director of the Department of Manual Industries at MoMA, a new phase of modernization had a brief if clear echo of developmentalist attitudes—guided by economic and social interest—that manifested in the presence of state bureaucracies and in the development of local industries connected to international
economies. At the same time that Brazil Builds circulated throughout the United States, imagining a fully realized modern region, d’Harnoncourt’s projects within the Department of Manual Industries, were addressing a deficient modernity in the region. Rockefeller’s most significant influence on the museum was perhaps the creation of this ephemeral department that clearly sprung from the OCIAA and his deep personal concern over the region’s future after the war.

The time of postwar modernization coincided with the liquidation of the OCIAA and the end of cooperative Pan Americanism. The cancellation of the privilege status of Latin America was accompanied by a conservative political turn in the United States that established new economic terms on the region and developed a public attack on artistic modernism. This political turn was concurrent with Rockefeller’s own flirtations with Washington politics and with the onset of the Cold War, as conservative and traditional forces gained ground in the region. This complex background framed Rockefeller’s creation of the International Basic Economic Corporation (IBEC) in 1947, with the region as its prime laboratory. René d’Harnoncourt’s 1945 trip to Latin America—which revealed a clear political intent and overlap with the US government—also manifested the field of development or desarrollismo, the deep social, technical and economic needs of the region that would be addressed by IBEC. The creation in 1948 of the Comisión Económica para América Latina (CEPAL, United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America), brought in full force the management of economic and technical modernization under state control that Rockefeller’s IBEC aimed to both counter and enhance. The significance of d’Harnoncourt’s trip, which recalled Rockefeller’s earlier 1937 trip to assess the political temperature of the region after the Mexican oil
nationalizations, goes beyond the connections between MoMA and the United States government. This trip helped galvanize Rockefeller to create IBEC and test his private investment development ideas. It also made clear MoMA’s international projection that would be institutionalized in 1952 with the creation of the International Program.

MoMA helped build an image of a modern Latin America, one mobilized through architectural journals across the world. The political and ideological strife of the period examined in this work encompassed deep structural reorganizations at a global scale, marking the ascendancy of the United States to world hegemony. In Latin America, this period enabled a cultural and economic shift—both internal and external—as the war severed the region’s ties to Europe, finalizing a separation that had started with the First World War. This new political and cultural “American” imaginary permeated the early postwar period. As Jorge Francisco Liernur points out, the international flirtation with the region’s modern architecture during the postwar period had to do with a vitalist idea fueled by US postwar optimism, the belief in modernización throughout Latin America and the expiation of the European sins of the war.¹⁸ The projected image of modernism in Latin America had to contend with postwar modernization and the unfolding geographic imaginaries that transformed into the bi-polar world of the Cold War.

The figure of the cosmopolitan architect emerged as a subject who could negotiate this complex and dangerous political and cultural geography. As Henry-Russell Hitchcock argued, Latin American architects of the mid-twentieth century embodied a fundamental shift toward the United States that broke the region’s earlier orientation to

Europe, and fully embraced US culture. The postwar period enabled the creation of a new social, if elite, subjectivity. Before the war, cultural cross-fertilization in Latin America, as Liernur highlights, had engaged Europe, producing an embattled cultural subjectivity, more national than Latin American that reached regional consciousness when confronting the United States. In architecture this cultural dynamic was prolonged, for example, with Le Corbusier’s continued presence in the region through his own work, as in the 1950 Bogotá master plan, and through the practice of local architects like Emilio Duhart or Jorge Ferrari Hardoy, who had worked in the French architect’s office. These cross fertilizations offered lines of flight from US postwar hegemony and thus alternative identity constructions. At the same time, the work of Jose Luis Sert and Paul Lester Wiener in the region—completely absent from Hitchcock’s 1955 examination—presented an important modulation of Corbusian ideas in the Americas. The postwar period, nonetheless, saw the invention of a more cohesive Latin American subjectivity because the new cultural orientation demanded a postwar cosmopolitanism under US hegemony. The Latin American architect appeared in front of an “American” one, not in confrontation but as co-inheritor of a Western culture. Carlos Raúl Villanueva, a French born Beaux Arts trained Venezuelan architect, represents the litmus test of this postwar transformation, as he worked with US artist Alexander Calder and acoustical engineer Robert Newman to create one of the most celebrated images of Latin American architecture: the Aula Magna at the Universidad Central de Venezuela in 1952.

In the late 1930s, the Latin American ethos had been mobilized around the Brazilin pavilion as a positive force, as an “infectious spirit” that had made even New
York architects produce modern architecture. By the late 1940s this pathological language was revived, this time to warn against a growing corruption that threatened postwar modernism as a whole. If in the early 1940s the metonymic web that surrounded Brazilian architecture was fueled by this architecture’s postwar utopian promise, by the late 1940s and early 1950s, this promise—in the views of some—revealed a mannerist lack of vitality that made it recognizably Brazilian. Moreover, this exuberant modernism revealed a negative pathology deep within Latin American culture. The organic formalism developed in Brazil primarily by Oscar Niemeyer was accused in postwar European and the US architectural circles of formal degeneration and capricious license, an exuberant spirit that was easily transferred to a cultural one. Brazilian modernism, in fact any Latin American modernism, as Gillo Dorfles pointed out in 1956 in *Domus*, seemed to be governed by a *maniera barroca*—a baroque manner. Although Hitchcock had emphatically argued that the Baroque was a dead style, there was, he argued, something “certainly Baroque … [if] one does not use too historical a definition of Baroque” in the use of curves in plan so characteristic of a Brazilian style. This baroque impetus—although ill-defined, ambiguous and problematic—was an important thread that wove together a postwar Latin American architecture, modulating the earlier

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19 Gillo Dorfles, "Edizioni per gli architetti," *Domus*, no. 318 (1956). Dorfles had been preoccupied with the correct definition of the term baroque; he argued that spiritual baroque values more than formal (for example the need for monumentality) transcended the historical period and served to judge postwar architecture; see: ———, *Barocco nell'architettura moderna* (Milano: Libreria Editrice Politecnica Tamburini, 1951). This discussion did not escape Latin American cultural centers; see for example Argentinean architect Juan Borthagaray’s review of Dorfles 1951 book in *Nueva Vision*. Juan M Borthagaray, "Gillo Dorfles, "Barocco nell'aarchitettura moderna"* *Nueva Visión* enero, no. 2/3 (1953). This discussion, which continued well into the 1950s, was captured in *Arquitectura México*; see: "Crítica de las ideas arquitectónicas," *Arquitectura México* XIV, no. 62 (June) (1958).

metonymic drive through a new emphasis on leisure, exoticism and vibrant Latin temperament.

This Latin American ethos was part of the culture wars in the United States. MoMA’s 1948 symposium, *What is Happening to Modern Architecture?*, captured this moment of inflection. The rise of consumer culture, the formal and technical experimentations in architecture—not to mention an internationally active Niemeyer, who was projecting buildings at all scales in the United States—brought to the foreground the need for normativity. This *rappel à l’ordre* was the fundamental mission of the 1949 exhibition *From Le Corbusier to Niemeyer: 1929-1949*. If concerns had been voiced at MoMA’s 1948 symposium, the critics had not doubted the significance and vital presence of the Brazilian, and growing Latin American, contribution to modernism. It was not until 1953, in the II São Paulo Biennial, that the call to order became a moral call to decency that, under a marked cultural paternalism, Swiss designer Max Bill and Italian Architect Ernesto Rogers attempted to recenter the cultural map and the values of postwar modernism.²¹

*Latin American Architecture since 1945* countered the negative turn against Brazilian modernism by highlighting that the key contribution of Brazilian modernism had been not the creation of a national architecture but the foundation of a cosmopolitan Latin American modernism. Those who signaled the dangers, who pointed to formal exhibitionism, were focusing on a concluding tradition. Hitchcock clearly revealed the

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²¹ It is important to highlight that Walter Gropius, who resided in the United States, was far more tolerant in his critique of Brazilian modern architecture at the 1953 II São Paulo Bienal. Bill and Rogers had been intimately connected to the Argentinean cultural scene. In 1946 Rogers had resided in Argentina being involved with the University of Tucumán project. On this see: Jorge Francisco Liernur and Pablo Pschepiurca, *La red Austral: obras y proyectos de Le Corbusier y sus discípulos en la Argentina (1924-1965)* (Buenos Aires: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 2008).
normative intent behind the 1955 exhibition. He attempted to contain formal experimentation and exhibitionism by emphasizing the technical lyricisms of concrete vaults—magnificently executed by Niemeyer in the 1943 São Francisco Church at Pampulha, a building that broke with the declared time frame of the 1955 exhibition, going back to that of Brazil Builds. The key argument behind the 1955 MoMA exhibition, however, was the birth of new postwar traditions in Latin America: the growing use of steel and an emerging Miesian language adapted to the region; the presence of new formal experiments in concrete that had a marginal debt to Le Corbusier, as in the case of Villanueva; the presence of international commerce as illustrated by numerous tall office buildings; a liberalized and cosmopolitan architectural practice as revealed by the work of US firms throughout the region; the secularization of society, as exemplified by the almost complete absence of prominent religious buildings; as well as the modernization of the family itself illustrated by the marked influence of US domesticity. Mid-twentieth century Latin American modernism was the conclusion of a tradition initiated by Brazilian modernism, and the birth of a new, vital and, for the first time, Latin American style. The exhibition shed any residue of national identification by highlighting a decontextualized regional architecture; the images and the plans of the buildings floated in a white background—still present today in the catalogue—grounded primarily by the title of the exhibition and Arthur Drexler’s elegant and powerful visual staging. Deprived of any specific context, the works encountered by visitors inhabited an imagined geography that reinforced the idea of Latin America as culturally, if not homogeneous, certainly united in a common condition.
Latin American Architecture since 1945 helped shake loose the geocultural order under the banner of a Western Hemisphere established by the war by articulating positive and unthreatening, yet clear, differences between the United States and Latin America. The museum’s efforts paid off. The ability of the exhibition to bring forth an imagined cultural geography was boldly captured by a visitor’s comment: “They live better down there.” Unlike in Brazil Build’s, there was no map of the “down there.” There was no need for one since this was a mental map. More important than the exhibition’s ability to manifest a “down there” was its ability to reinforce the “up here.” In the end, this ambiguous, yet recognizable, Latin America made the presence of “America” unmistakable, and recognizable by an architecture proper and specific to the United States. This “American” architecture, although still in formation, embattled and diverse, was, at the time, best manifested by Skidmore Owings and Merrill’s 1952 Lever House—an elegant development of the international tall-building type that had been inaugurated in Rio de Janeiro with the Ministry of Education—until Mies’ 1958 Seagram Building set the highest standard of corporate modernism and cast a deep shadow on Latin America’s contribution to this architectural typology championed by MoMA’s 1955 exhibition. As Brazil Builds had created the image of a Brazilian national architecture and a Latin American modernism, the 1955 show created both a Latin American modernism and an “American” architecture by abstracting the contours of Latin America. Latin American Architecture since 1945 redefined the character of the postwar world imagined by Brazil Builds, drawing a sharper international difference as it also articulated clearer connections with a US-led postwar world.

The fundamental legacy of *Brazil Builds* was the postwar world it imagined. MoMA’s engagement with the region’s architecture during the war, although clearly responsive to this context, was not reduced to the immediacies of propaganda as directed by the conflict. The 1943 exhibition was a blueprint for a possible postwar world, and it is in this context that it must be examined within other museum efforts. This imagined postwar society tied *Brazil Builds* to the 1955 exhibition, beyond the museum setting itself. The promise made in *Brazil Builds* was actualized in *Latin American Architecture since 1945* as a threshold for the entire region and as a promise for the decolonizing nations in Africa and Asia. The architecture displayed in this exhibition was evidence of the possibilities of modernization, of the success of a single path of development, and of the recovery of the Western idea of progress. The incapacity of Latin America to step beyond this threshold was the fundamental reason for the exclusion of its architecture from later histories of modernism.

By bringing together five exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, I reveal a complex relational field that brought together architects, critics, historians and curators. My focus has been on MoMA’s engagement with the region’s architecture through initiatives that involved the entire museum (*Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art*), the Department of Painting and Sculpture (*Portinari of Brazil*) and the Department of Architecture and Design (*Brazil Builds, From Le Corbusier to Niemeyer, 1929-1949* and *Latin American Architecture since 1945*). I analyze these exhibitions as complex unitary objects that created meaning through both visual and textual information, recovering elements that have been forgotten or undervalued by existing scholarship, as was the case of the “old architecture” section in *Brazil Builds*. 
The individuals who provided the main focus, direction and labor of each exhibition manifest the fragmented condition of this relational field. I have engaged the ideas and views presented through catalogues, lectures, articles and letters, tracing and identifying the origins of the views and propositions contained, mobilized and deployed in each show. The key methodological approach has been to weave together these exhibitions and manifest an expanded field, without abandoning their contradictions and their tenuous unity. Each exhibition has been contextualized in its key local, historical, social and political moment as in the case of Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art, which was assembled in the wake of Cárdenas’ oil nationalization, without overdetermining the aesthetic discourse and response deployed by and around each endeavor.

My focus on MoMA highlights the clear danger of reifying the museum. The Museum of Modern Art was not the only site in the construction of an idea of a modern “Latin America” in the United States during this period. As Robert González keenly argues, the Pan American Union was a fundamental and active force in this endeavor.23 In modern architecture, however, this construction of Latin America reached its highpoint at MoMA. The museum’s endeavors were singular because these went beyond an Inter-American frame, engaging Western architectural modern culture as a whole. By revealing the connections between the museum’s exhibitions, symposiums and publications and discussions and ideas originating in the region—particularly in Mexico and Brazil—and extending to Europe, I balance the emphasis on the museum advanced by the dissertation and attempt to counter its reification. This dissertation fills an important gap in the

scholarship of Latin American modernism. MoMA’s influence on the internationalization of the region’s modern architecture is a story that, although consistently repeated and alluded to, has escaped examination. Studies of the region’s modern architecture have rarely failed to acknowledge *Brazil Builds* as a key exhibition that initiated the international appraisal and celebration of the region’s modern architecture. In his seminal *Arquitectura Latinoamericana: 1930-1970*, Argentinean historian and architect Francisco Bullrich celebrated Goodwin’s efforts and limited its effect to the United States; “world knowledge” of Brazilian modernism, he stated, would come later.\(^{24}\) The most recent English language history of modern architecture in the region, Valerie Fraser’s *Building the New World* (2000) credits both MoMA’s 1943 and 1955 endeavors as contributors to “the flurry of enthusiastic English language publications” on the modern architecture of Latin America. Fraser accepts the term “Latin America” as a universal signifier, without challenging the concept itself or critically articulating the historical moment of its construction. Her ambitious and eloquent study reveals the difficulties of the enterprise: the instability of the national frame, put into crisis by modernist architects attempting to create cosmopolitan works; the inescapable material conditions which fracture the national frame into a regional and cultural mosaic; and the complex forces within transnational imaginations that demand that the region’s architecture perform in a cohesive, singular, and quasi-oppositional manner to that of other regions. As Fraser tells her readers: “Latin American modern architecture … is not an uncritical reworking of

European modernism … but a deliberate and more profound adaptation of or challenge to European models.”

The idea of Brazilian modernism as the vanguard of a Latin American modern architecture had a clear beginning with Brazil Builds. My work, however, goes beyond single exhibitions to understand the overall trajectory of the museum’s Department of Architecture and Design and its engagement with modern architecture and culture. Studies of Brazil Builds have reinforced a national frame; particularly in Brazilian scholarship, following a tradition initiated by Yves Bruand’s in-depth analysis of that country’s modern tradition. My work positions the museum’s endeavors in the early 1940s, as leading to the 1955 Latin American Architecture since 1945 exhibition, a show that has evaded detailed analysis until now because the national frame continues to dominate examinations of modern architectural in the region and because the idea of a Latin American style continues to be analyzed through ontological frames. My work highlights Latin American modernism as a historical category.

This work is not a study of the region’s architecture, but rather, of an image of Latin American modernism mobilized through postwar architecture culture in the United States. My work assesses and reconceptualizes the rise of the United States as a cultural center of postwar Western culture, Latin America still being a blind spot of much US architectural scholarship on the postwar period. My aim is not to correct the absence, for example, of any case study of the regions’ architecture in anthologies such as Sarah Goldhagen and Réjean Legault’s Anxious Modernisms, which claim postwar culture to be


a global event. The key problem is one of participation, of agency in the main discourses of postwar culture. This work reveals the presence of the region’s architecture within the international debates, within the minds of those who argued from the new centers of postwar culture, as was MoMA. I am not advancing an overvalorization or an inverted hierarchy but rather a measure of the impact that the recurring images of the region’s architecture had during this period.

This work examines the relationships between the United States and Latin America, following the transformation of works, discourses and interpretations as these traveled south to north. A clear overarching political condition brought about by the war that conditioned the narratives was Pan Americanism. I have refrained, however, from using theoretical frames such as the “hemispheric turn” prevalent today in, for example, US historical and literary studies. The ultimate aim is to highlight a dynamic triangulation between cultural centers in Latin America, the United States and Europe; this connected condition that went beyond any single axis, was at the core of Western architectural culture in this period. I have used a shifting transnational frame bringing forth, for example, journals such as the Italian Architettura—in the case of the early

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reception of Brazilian modernism—or the Inter-American development field—as in the case of Peruvian architect Luis Vera’s critique of the 1955 MoMA show—to help offset my focus on the United States and on MoMA. The intent behind such counterpoints was not only to follow the ripples of events but also to articulate other possible centers thus drawing attention to multiple hubs and different borderlands of modernism and reveal the US construction of the idea of Latin American modernism. Whether this US construct was accepted or contested in the region and beyond is a matter for another study, and I hope that this work offers a foundation to forward this inquiry.

The first chapter examines MoMA’s initial major endeavor to present a synthetic modern Mexican culture or *mexicanidad*. The origins of *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* (May 15-September 30, 1940) reveal the complex partnership between the museum and the Mexican government and manifest the nascent field of Inter-American cooperation and the mounting need to present the region as a whole to US audiences. The chapter highlights the changing cultural and political background that repositioned Mexican muralism within a codified Revolutionary message and the rising pressure of commercialization in both Mexico—due to the loss of revenues because of oil nationalization—and in the US, because of the looming world conflict. In its construction of *mexicanidad*, MoMA’s exhibition incorporated every aspect of artistic production except for modern architecture. The chapter makes evident this absence and highlights the cultural and artistic conditions that enabled this exclusion, contextualizing John McAndrew’s failed attempt to incorporate modern architecture. I trace the origins of this exclusion of architectural modernism from MoMA’s exhibition to the cultural
confrontations in Mexico over the nature of architectural functionalism and to the management of culture under the Cárdenas government in the late 1930s. The chapter reveals how this complex cultural battle around modern architecture was presented in the United States through the efforts of Esther Born and gives evidence of the lingering effects and the transformations of cultural dynamics in Mexico as ideas and images crossed the border between both countries. The codified image of *mexicanidad* presented by MoMA’s Mexican exhibit conditioned and prepared the stage for the reception of Brazilian modernism which is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 2 examines the Brazilian pavilion at the 1939 New York World’s Fair and its reception in the international press. It reveals the metonymic drive, the need to construct both Brazil and Latin America, present in US architectural journals. The chapter studies the national character of Brazilian modernism by bringing forth the discussion in Brazil spurred by the pavilion itself, and the multiple strategies of emphasizing a national discourse known as *brasilidade*. It situates the architectural discussion within a general Brazilian debate guided by the work of anthropologist Gilberto Freyre. MoMA’s first engagement with Brazilian modern culture, *Portinari of Brazil* (October 9-November 17, 1940), was an attempt to build both an overlap and a difference with Mexican modern culture, and an initial encounter with Brazilian modern architecture that led to *Brazil Builds*.

The third chapter analyzes the museum’s endeavors on the 1943 *Brazil Builds* (January 13-February 28, 1943). It studies MoMA’s hermeneutic strategies around Brazilian modernism as these developed from the overwhelming lack of knowledge of the architecture of the region; the need to surpass muralism as the key artistic domain of
Latin American modernity; and the incorporation of tradition, as both history and folklore, to the narrative of architectural modernism. It contextualizes the Brazilian endeavor within the internal conflicts of the museum’s Department of Architecture, and the personal interests of Philip Goodwin, and delineates the role of Nelson Rockefeller and the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs to draw a careful picture of the tensions around cultural management in the United States. Henry-Russell Hitchcock and other critics fiercely contested the relationship between tradition and modernism advanced by *Brazil Builds*. Under the dominant Pan Americanist discourse, Brazilian baroque architecture, celebrated in the “old architecture” section of the show, set the stage for a polyvalent exhibition that gave birth to a Latin American ethos that escaped the national confines of *brasilidade*. The chapter shows how *Brazil Builds* articulated a postwar imaginary that lent to Brazilian modernism a metonymic capacity to represent the region projecting Brazil into the immediate future as an ideal postwar society.

Chapter 4 focuses on the overlaps between MoMA and the US government with respect to Latin America through the figure of René d’Harnoncourt, covering the period between the end of the Second World War and the onset of the Cold War. It reveals clear political activities deployed by the State Department and performed by the museum’s personnel, adding to the scholarship of MoMA’s involvement with US government agencies during the Cold War. More importantly, the chapter highlights the emergence of a postwar imaginary mediated by Rockefeller’s concern over the fate of the region after the war. This postwar imaginary brought forth by Rockefeller’s OCIAA in early 1943, emerged in the museum with the creation of the Department of Manual Industries, which incorporated the notion of *development*. Developmentalist ideas reworked images and
narratives on authentic vernacular culture that had been articulated in the 1930s through the museum’s exhibitions on Mexican art, this time through d’Harnoncourt’s engagement with Peru. I present the office of the Vice-President in Charge of Foreign Activities, a position created in 1944 and occupied by d’Harnoncourt, as a precursor to MoMA’s 1952 International Program.

The duality and polyvalence, the constantly shifting character of Brazilian modernism, is made evident in the fifth chapter, which focuses on postwar architectural debates in the United States that grew out of the social, technological and political changes brought about by the Second World War. This chapter brings forth the 1948 symposium *What is Happening to Modern Architecture?* as a fulcrum of these debates, and analyzes Henry-Russell Hitchcock’s views and his early engagements with Latin American architecture outside MoMA, and in collaboration with the museum in the exhibition *From Le Corbusier to Niemeyer: 1929-1949* (February 15-April 3, 1949). It departs from the dominant analytical frame of the “synthesis of the arts” under which Latin American modernism is traditionally examined and forwards the debates over the “American home” as an overlapping and coeval narrative that firmly located Latin American architecture within popular US culture.

The last chapter analyzes *Latin American Architecture since 1945* (November 23, 1955-February 19, 1956) as the culmination of the museum’s engagement with Latin American modern built culture and of the Pan American need to unify the region, now in the context of the Cold War and Rockefeller’s growing international private economic enterprise. The exhibition articulated a dual character, both as a celebration of difference, as the articulation of an architectural style specific to the region, and as an appeal for
normativity in mid-twentieth century modernism, a call for rules and order championed by Henry-Russell Hitchcock since the mid 1940s. This duality was clearly staged at MoMA by Arthur Drexler. This complex presentation of difference and order aimed at revealing a Latin American manner that had grown beyond its earlier Brazilian emergence. The Latin American style presented by the exhibition was a normative style, flexible enough to accept new traditions and materials, proper to the postwar period such as teamwork and the use of steel. This chapter examines the emergence of this normative condition, as a turn against Brazilian modernism, emphatically voiced in the 1953 São Paulo Bienal. The chapter follows the general critique that saw the degeneration of Brazilian modernism into a licentious formalism that overlapped with a Latin American baroque ethos and highlights how *Latin American Architecture since 1945* redefined the character of the postwar world first imagined by *Brazil Builds*. 
Chapter 1

Absent Architecture

In early May 1940 Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art (May 15-September 30, 1940) opened in the Museum of Modern Art’s new building on West 53rd Street, New York. This was a mammoth show, which occupied the entire exhibition space—overflowing into the outdoor sculpture garden of the museum. The exhibition was also an international affair, bringing together MoMA and the Mexican Government of President Lázaro Cárdenas. At this time, Mexico was in need of a new image. Cárdenas’ nationalization of the oil industry had made his presidency a target of negative international propaganda in a period in which the production and circulation of images and ideas took a heightened social and political condition. It had taken three months, the New York Times reported in April 1940, for Alfonso Caso, Manuel Toussaint, Miguel Covarrubias and Roberto Montenegro to select and organize—each in their respective section: Pre-Columbian, Colonial, Modern, and Folk—the “more than 1,000 precious objects from all parts of Mexico” that had arrived in New York in three railroad boxcars under heavy guard. This great exhibition, the Times announced in bold letters, included “Painting, Sculpture, Craft of All Kinds and Architecture.” When in February 1940 Nelson Rockefeller officially announced the exhibition, the Times reported that the modern art section was to be “represented by Mexico’s most famous artists, sculptors and

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30 Collaboration went beyond MoMA and the Mexican government. The Fogg Museum of Art in Cambridge, for example, supplied some of the archeological objects, as did the American Museum Natural History in New York.

A month before the opening, however, the *Times* underscored that the Modern art section would consist of “paintings [and frescos] by Mexico’s leading contemporary artists.” The earlier reference to modern architects was dropped. Visitors would find architecture, the *Times* pointed out, in the section dedicated to the Colonial period celebrating the “magnificence of the Mexican baroque.” Modern architecture had been excluded from the exhibition.

The themes of cooperation and collaboration between Mexico and the United States at all levels—institutional, intellectual and personal—were a key trope celebrated by the press. Collaboration had clear political ramifications at a diplomatic level and also within the Mexican cultural establishment reorganized by Cárdenas. *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* brought together MoMA and the recently created (1938) Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (National Institute of Anthropology and History, IHAH). The museum engaged a particular sphere in the cultural management of Mexico. When Rockefeller first announced the exhibition, it was “the museum, in cooperation with the Mexican government,” which “was attempting to do something that had never been done, even in Mexico, on such a comprehensive scale.” There was “enthusiastic cooperation” with Caso, Toussaint, Montenegro and Covarrubias. Rockefeller also underscored the museum’s previous Mexican exhibitions, and its “permanent collection of the great modern Mexican artists.” Just a week before the opening, the *Times* announced that “several members of the committee which assembled” *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art*

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33 "Mexico Ships Art for Exhibit Here." p. 45.
34 Ibid.
35 "Mexican Art Show Will Be Held Here." p. 23.
36 Ibid.
(Toussaint, Montenegro and Covarrubias) had all arrived in New York to “assist in the installation of the show,” then reported to have swollen to “4,000 Native Objects.” The *Times* made it clear, however, that the Mexicans (under Dr. Caso, Director of INAH) were “in charge.” In April 1940, the *Times* highlighted that the preparations for the exhibition had “been under way in the Museo Nacional in Mexico City, just a short distance from the great cathedral erected on the site of the ancient Aztec temple destroyed by Cortés.” The exhibition, the *Times* wrote, was “sponsored by the Mexican Government and the Museum of Modern Art.” Although this statement assigned joint participation and responsibility to the two actors, stress was put on Mexico, where it all had happened and been prepared. As such careful rhetorical crafting suggested, the theme of cooperation and collaboration was a key narrative for the success of the exhibition.

The nuanced narrative of collaboration alerts us to an important question: who produced and controlled the image of *mexicanidad* (Mexicanness) in the early 1940s and under what conditions did it emerge? This was not a one-way street, but a complex system of representation working in conjunction with other images and ideas that engaged various sites in a period plagued by contesting political ideologies. As Nelson Rockefeller pointed out in his June 1940 letter to *Time* magazine, it was important to correct the general impression—already present in 1940—that *he* was the Museum of Modern Art. MoMA, Rockefeller, argued “is by no means a one-man show.” This, however, already manifested an institutional presence, a governance mediated by a powerful figure, not unlike the symbolic operations that were characteristic of the New

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37 "Mexicans Arrive to Aid Art Show; Group to Supervise Exhibit of 4,000 Native Objects at Museum of Modern Art," *The New York Times*, May 8, 1940.
38 "Mexico Ships Art for Exhibit Here." p. 23.
39 Ibid.
Deal period. In its review of *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art*, which had prompted Rockefeller’s letter, *Time* magazine—prefiguring Henry Luce’s 1941 dictum “The American Century”—articulated its own vision of the Mexican show in relation to MoMA:

> Two Years ago Manhattan’s up & coming Museum of Modern Art decided to invade Paris … So successful was this venture that the Modern Museum decided to go on from there, show Paris the artistic achievements of other American countries. Last summer President Rockefeller went to Mexico City to make arrangements for a Modern Museum exhibition in Paris of Mexican art. Halfway through his negotiations, World War II scotched the scheme. Nelson Rockefeller decided to hold his Mexican exhibition in Manhattan instead.

The impression created by this popular US magazine was, and remains, poignant.

Whether it was true or not that MoMA was acting as mediator of Mexican culture in Europe was not the point; these were measured and provocative words. *Time* magazine’s review of the Mexican show was aimed at the hierarchical orders enmeshed within the rhetoric of collaboration and cooperation, stirring them for possible confrontation. *Time* aimed at rearranging the relationship so carefully crafted by the New

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43 *Time*’s review repeated accurate information delivered by the *New York Times*. 
York Times to give MoMA and Rockefeller not only a central position in the entire affair but also a dominant one. The museum, personalized in Rockefeller as figurehead, was portrayed as the cultural broker for the “other” American republics.\textsuperscript{44} This was a clear attack on a Pan American solidarity based on equal nations upon which the non-interventionist agenda of the US government was partly based. Such a subversive and destabilizing account of hemispheric collaboration was part of the political and cultural battles in which Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art developed and unfolded. The intent then is to identify why this collaboration, interaction and mediation failed to engage Mexican modern architecture as a constitutive part of mexicanidad in the early 1940s.

\textit{The Politics of Self-Representation}

MoMA’s Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art was an important example of the redirection of cultural flows caused by the Second World War and a poster child of Pan American collaboration. This exhibition was not, as Time magazine reported, Nelson Rockefeller’s “Mexican exhibition.”\textsuperscript{45} It was rather the working of the Mexican Government of President Lázaro Cárdenas and its Foreign Ministry, headed by Eduardo Hay. The exhibition was originally intended for the Jeu de Paume in Paris, France, under the name \textit{Exposition d’Art Mexicaine Ancien et Modern} (May-July, 1940). It however never occurred due to the outbreak of the war in Europe. As the original organizational document pointed out, the idea for a comprehensive exhibition of Mexican art and culture had been proposed for several years by André Dezarrois, Director of French National

\textsuperscript{44} Rockefeller became president of MoMA in May 1939. See: "Modern Museum Shifts Officials; Nelson Rockefeller Succeeds Goodyear as President-- S.C. Clark Heads Board Mrs. Sheppard Treasurer John Hay Whitney First Vice President--Old Policy of Art Institute to Go On," \textit{The New York Times}, May 9, 1939. p. 17

\textsuperscript{45} "Mexican Show."
The idea and program for the exhibition was finally accepted by the then-Mexican Ambassador Narciso Bassols in 1939. The French Ministry of Education and the Direction Générale des Beaux-Arts would serve as French institutional sponsors; Dezarrois serving as General French Commissioner. As Anna Indych-López points out, “MoMA officials absorbed many aspects of Dezarrois’s curatorial model for their exhibition, including the chronological and media-based themes, and the division of the curatorial labor among Mexican experts.” The French proposal called for five sections: I. Ancient Art. II. Colonial Art. III. Modern and Contemporary Art. IV. Popular Art, and V. “a historical and propaganda section.” The proposed French exhibition brought together the same group of Mexican experts as Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art, with some important exceptions. As in MoMA’s exhibition, Mexican archeologist and Director of INAH Alfonso Caso would be General Mexican Commissioner; the section of Ancient Art, however, was to be curated by the Director of the Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro, Paul Rivet. Manuel Toussaint remained in the same area as curator of Colonial art. Miguel Covarrubias was not considered in the French proposal to curate Modern Art. Painting was to be curated by José Clemente Orozoco and Diego Rivera;

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46 René Zivy, Secretary General of the Mexican Committee in Paris, must have advised Dezarrois on Mexican culture and art. He had published several articles in La Revue de L’Art, which was headed by Dezarrois. See: René Zivy, "Renaissance Artistique au Mexique," La Revue de L’Art LXXL, no. 376 (April) (1937). Zivy had had an art gallery in Paris since the late 1920s. On Zivy see: "Los Mexicanos en Paris: René Zivy y su labor franco-mexicana," Revista de Revistas, no. Agosto 28 (1938).


49 The number of sections varies in the document: IV. Popular Art; V. “Salle de blanc et noir,” this was lithography and prints; VI. “Salle historique et de propagande.” “Comité Mexicain d’organization,” n.d. Folder 1354, Series L, Box 138, Record Group 4 NAR Papers, RAC, p. 3-4.

sculpture by Ignacio Asúnsolo. The substitution of these three key figures of modern artistic production in Mexico for Covarrubias remains a mystery, but it is important to note that the inclusion of Covarrubias increased Rockefeller’s influence since the Mexican artists was a personal friend of his. As in the New York exhibition, Roberto Montenegro was to curate Popular Art in Paris; he had been the director of the Museo de Artes Populares (Museum of Folk Arts) and had lost his position with the advent of the Cárdenas government. The theme of a living art was to be presented in this section by “films reproducing popular scenes, ritual ceremonies, etc.;” recordings would present “the most significant songs;” a collection of native costumes was to be presented in “scientific manner.” A historical section, organized by Mexican writer and intellectual José de Jesús Nuñez y Dominguez, would focus on Franco-Mexican relations. The section on propaganda, under René Zivy, would also have a Franco-Mexican approach.

The French proposal did not include modern architecture; it called for “reproductions (photomontages) of the principle monuments and beautiful examples of Spanish-Mexican architecture from the capital and the states.” Narciso Bassols, who had approved the program of the French exhibition, was the same person who, as head of the Secretaría de Educación Pública (Ministry of Education, SEP) between 1931 and

51 “Comité Mexicain d’organization,” n.d. Folder 1354, Series L, Box 138, Record Group 4 NAR Papers, RAC. Rivera’s work was to be in one room with no other works. He was to come to Paris to paint a fresco. p. 3
54 MoMA’s plan for the Mexican exhibition was picked up by the French journal Mouseion in December 1939. See: "Organizations Des Relations Artistiques Entre les Etats Américains," Mouseion, no. December (1939). In its May-June 1940 issue, the journal Mouseion reported on four exhibitions that highlighted US-Latin American relations. The MoMA exhibition was not among them. See: "Les Relations Culturelles Entre les Etats-Unis et L'amerique Latine," Mouseion, no. May-June (1940).
55 “Comité Mexicain d’organization,” n.d. Folder 1354, Series L, Box 138, Record Group 4 NAR Papers, RAC, p. 3.
1934, had commissioned architect Juan O’Gorman to build numerous functionalist schools (Fig. 1.1). Bassols had also been the political and institutional force behind the Escuela Superior de Construcción (School of Construction), which, headed by O’Gorman, was created under SEP’s Departamento de Enseñaza Técnica (Department of Technical Education) in 1932. The exclusion of modern architecture from the proposed French exhibition, then, is not a question of lack of knowledge, but of a strategic construction of Mexico’s image in France, and later in the United States. As Indych López argues in her examination of the movable fresco problem, this had to do with an already accepted and established image of Mexico based on painting and muralism. This was part of the problem and complicated the inclusion of modern architecture in any show of Mexican culture. Modern architecture in Mexico had not been a co-participant in the construction of *mexicanidad* alongside muralism within José Vasconcelo’s tenure of SEP in the 1920s. Muralism had developed in colonial buildings (Fig. 1.2) and, more important, under new constructions in neocolonial style, such as Federico Méndez Rivas’ expansion of the SEP building which housed the famed Rivera frescoes (Fig. 1.3; Fig. 1.4). Moreover, modern architecture’s relation to *mexicanidad*, to an official Mexican past, was conditioned by the inability of Mexican architects in the 1930s and 1940s to reach a synthesis between the official past of *mexicanidad* and architectural modernism. I will return to this when I examine the absence of architecture in the MoMA exhibition; first it is essential to understand why Mexico necessitated a new public image within the growing calls on Pan American unity.

In 1939 Bassols had pressing problems. As Ambassador to France (1938-39), he was a key figure in the resolution of the Cádenas’ Goverment oil industry nationalization
controversy. In 1937 Cárdenas expropriated an oil industry owned by British, Dutch and US companies, due to the opposition of these companies to new labor legislation. This ignited a complex political and economic battle fought at every level. At the time, Mexico was subjected to a wide and extreme propaganda campaign in the US and abroad—promoted by the oil companies—that painted Mexico as a land of endemic violence, and the Cárdenas government in every color of the radical political spectrum in shades of barbaric and unruly illegality. Although admired by many in the US, Cárdenas walked “with a military step...moving his head neither right nor left,” but possibly falling either way. Culture was mobilized to counter this image. The Cárdenas government was cognizant of the importance of mass media. In 1937, it created the Department of Publications and Press (DAPP), which produced *Mexican Art & Life*, a beautifully illustrated and printed journal “to bring before the English-speaking people a graphic exposition of the monuments of our [Mexican] civilization, past and present” to promote “mutual understanding,” and build “better international comprehension.” Clearly aimed at a US audience this was Mexico’s own response to Pan American

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56 The French had proposed to serve as mediators between the Mexican and British Government before the confrontation with England had escalated. See: Narciso Bassols, *Cartas* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México : Instituto Politécnico Nacional, 1986).

57 Some of companies were: Gulf Petroleum Company, owned by the Melon family; Sun Oil Company owned by the Pew family; Standard Oil of California, Standard Oil of New Jersey owned by the Rockefellers; the Richmond Petroleum Company; the British El Aguila and the Dutch Huasteca Petroleum Company. Not all companies where expropriated. See: Miguel Alemán Valdés, *La verdad del petróleo en México* (Mexico: Gandesa, 1977). p. 256.

58 Lorenzo Meyer argues that the center of the propaganda machine against the Cárdenas government was Standard Oil of New Jersey. The intent was “to create an atmosphere of crisis to force Roosevelt to intervene militarily.” Lorenzo Meyer, *México y los Estados Unidos en el conflicto petrolero, 1917-1942*, 2. ed. (México: Colegio de México, 1972). p. 436.


60 Mexico. Departamento Autónomo de Prensa y Publicidad, "Mexican Art & Life," (Mexico City: D.A.P.P., 1938). This was in the first special and introductory issue of the journal. Monica A. Rankin, ¡México, La Patria!: *Propaganda and Production During World War II* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), does not consider this journal in her examination of propaganda practices of Mexico.
collaboration. Under José Juan Tablada, *Mexican Art & Life* produced a clear image of a
traditional, colorful and friendly Mexico, as many of its covers suggested (Fig. 1.5). At
the same time, the magazine took head on the question of oil nationalization, as in the
article “Whose Dollar in ‘Red’ Mexico?” that argued that accusations of “rampant
communism” based on “the artful display of a photograph, showing a demonstration of
the Communist party,” would serve similar purposes “in conservative, business-like New
York [where ] identical photographs could be taken in Union Square” (Fig. 1.6). The
journal highlighted the importance of visual culture and the ideological manipulation of
images in the construction of modern *mexicanidad*, operating corrections and its own
manipulations in its defense of the Revolution (Fig. 1.7).

*Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* could easily be crafted within a narrative of
historic good relations between two countries, as the original French proposal called for,
this time between two North American republics as part of the official Good Neighbor
hemispheric relations. Changes, however, had to be considered. As Dezarrois had pointed
out, the *Exposition d’Art Mexicain Ancien et Modern* would help present European
audiences the international stature of the Mexican School of mural painting; an
importance that, unlike in the United States where there was “true knowledge” and
“experience with direct commissions,” was only “suspected in France.” The shift to the
United States, as Dezarrois’s views reveal, could deemphasize Mexican modern painting,
and muralism itself, at a time when a new image of Latin American modern culture was

62 “Comité Mexicain d’organization,” n.d. Folder 1354, Series L, Box 138, Record Group 4 NAR Papers,
RAC, p. 3. The reinforcement of a “Latin sphere” must have appeared beneficial to the Cárdenas
government.
taken shape in the New York World’s Fair with the Brazilian pavilion. In 1931 MoMA had helped promote muralism by bringing Diego Rivera to New York to perform “a few small frescoes for us,” as part of the Mexican painter’s retrospective show. As Indych-López argues, José Clemente Orozco’s mural painted at MoMA in 1940 as part of the Mexican exhibit (already prefigured in the Jeu de Paume exhibition for which Rivera would had performed a mural) was an “afterthought.” The way in which reproductions of Mexican murals where exhibited at MoMA, “crammed together [in] relatively small … photographs … with no apparent chronological or aesthetic order, … suggest that there was no overall curatorial principle” (Fig. 1.8). The absence of large photomurals, which had been used by the museum since 1932 (Murals by American Painters and Photographers, May 3-May 31, 1932) also helped de-emphasize muralism. It would seem then that the growth of the Popular Art section in the MoMA exhibition followed the realignment of the exhibition from France to the United States. This realignment was executed along the lines of Folk and Popular Art, thus significantly shifting the image of *mexicanidad*. Although, as Indych-López argues, the New York exhibition absorbed the curatorial structure of the proposed French exhibition, its New York staging made it respond to a different cultural and political context.

In the United States, the exhibition would resonate with the immediate political situation, the oil nationalization that affected US companies, and the Rockefellers

63 p. 168.
66 Ibid. p. 181.
themselves. Nelson Rockefeller traveled to Mexico in the fall of 1939 to discuss the exhibition as well as the question of nationalization with Cárdenas, but only, Rockefeller insisted, in an unofficial capacity and not as a representative of the oil companies. The point is significant because it presents a clear overlap between family and personal, economic and political, commercial and cultural interests. At times, however, it seems this overlap has overdetermined the interpretations of the Mexican show.\(^67\) For example, amidst examinations that focus on the oil controversy that easily connect MoMA and Rockefeller economic interests, the question of the unresolved agrarian expropriations is often forgotten because these presented no clear connection to MoMA or the Rockefellers. As Catherine Jane points out, agrarian negotiations were closely related to the oil problem, as the US government “wanted to use the agrarian issue to establish a norm whereby close commercial relation between the United States and Mexico could develop.”\(^68\) *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* did not escape this commercial sphere, and because the exhibition so emphasized folk art, this agrarian sphere—site of most artisanal production—cannot be disregarded.

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\(^67\) It is hard to assess whether or not Rockefeller was forthcoming on this point. It appears that the general interpretation of his statement is one of a complete overlap of interests. See for example Indych-López’s *Ibid.* p. 162. I am not debating the clear overlap of interests, but their overestimation. As the Mexican Government itself pointed out, US oil interests in Mexico were about 30 percent, a stake that was not all owned by the Rockefellers. The main concern, as Jonathan Brown argues, was not necessarily on Mexican oil itself since this industry had already “been proletarianized” under the Revolution. More important, at least one can conclude for the Rockefellers, was to contain this precedent to Mexico, and avoid similar problems in other countries such as Venezuela, where the Creole Petroleum Corporation of which Nelson Rockefeller was director, and subsidiary of Standard Oil of New Jersey, vastly outproduced Mexican oil production. See: Jonathan C. Brown, *Oil and Revolution in Mexico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). For a detailed examination see: Catherine E. Jayne, *Oil, War, and Anglo-American Relations: American and British Reactions to Mexico’s Expropriation of Foreign Oil Properties, 1937-1941* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2001).

\(^68\) For the relationship between agrarian negotiations between the US and Mexico and the oil controversy see: Jayne, *Oil, War, and Anglo-American Relations: American and British Reactions to Mexico’s Expropriation of Foreign Oil Properties, 1937-1941*, p. 54-60.
Neither did the Mexican exhibit escape politics. It occupied, however, an ambiguous position between official and popular Pan Americanism. Rockefeller repeatedly insisted that this was the most important exhibition the museum had done to date, and, as John McAndrew—who had been responsible for the exhibition at MoMA—later underscored, it was “the last time the entire Museum was devoted to a single show.”

It was not simply a matter of the exhibition’s scale, since by “the entire Museum,” one can intuit the entire institution itself. This was indeed one of the largest and most complex exhibitions the museum had developed. It had, however, an added element: with *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art*, MoMA was acting as a diplomatic agent of the United States at a critical moment in US-Mexico relations. This diplomatic sphere was manifest in many ways, such as the signing of contracts with the Ministry of Foreign Relations of Mexico.

This was not extraordinary. MoMA had negotiated with state institutions such as the Louvre in France, which involved some diplomatic dealings. What was particular to the Mexican exhibit was the heightened concern over its political ramifications. “We want to make sure,” Rockefeller stressed, “that the public in this country does not think that we are taking sides because the feeling is running pretty high in both countries at the present concerning certain matters.” The exhibition had to be carefully considered. The museum didn’t “want to give the impression that [it] is being

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70 See: “Bases para la colaboración entre el Gobierno Mexicano y el Museo de Arte Moderno de Nueva York,” December 23, 1939. Folder 1354, Series L, Box 138, Record Group 4 NAR Papers, RAC.

71 Letter, Belson Rockefeller to John Abbott, February 14, 1940. Folder 1354, Series L, Box 138, Record Group 4 NAR Papers, RAC.

72 By February 1939, Columbia University professor and personal friend of President Cárdenas, Frank Tannenbaum had informed Crádenas that the slander campaign created by the oil industries had created great resentment in the US. Meyer, *México y los Estados Unidos en el conflicto petrolero, 1917-1942*. Note 357, p. 436.
used by the Mexican … or the American government.” MoMA’s entrance into the realm of international, specifically, Inter-American relations was not agreeable to the United States government. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, as well as Secretary of State Cordell Hull, declined any connection—originally to be at the symbolic, honorary level—with the exhibit. This left Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art, as still evident in the catalogue, poignantly asymmetrical in the diplomatic sphere and ambiguous in its celebration of official Pan American collaboration. As self-appointed and unofficial representative of US cultural policy, it was perhaps felt by Washington that MoMA had overstepped its bounds. It may have been that Rockefeller himself was testing political, diplomatic and cultural grounds, prefiguring his role as Coordinator of the Office of Inter American Affairs (OCIAA). As Helen Franc has implied, Rockefeller had prefigured and perhaps preempted his role as Coordinator when he submitted a memorandum on “Hemispheric Economic Policy,” which he personally delivered to President Roosevelt two months before his appointment as head of the OCIAA in August 1940 and three months after the opening of the MoMA show. The memorandum was developed after a 1937 tour of the region, “in connection with the large oil holdings in Venezuela of the Creole Petroleum Company, of which he was a director” and subsidiary of Standard Oil of New Jersey, the Rockefeller family owned corporation. One can infer that this “tour” aimed to assess the possibilities of a Mexican contagion in Latin America.

73 Letter, Nelson Rockefeller to John Abbott, February 14, 1940. Folder 1354, Series L, Box 138, Record Group 4 NAR Papers, RAC.
74 Letter, Edwin M. Watson (Secretary of President Roosevelt) to Nelson Rockefeller, March 16, 1940. Folder 1354, Series L, Box 138, Record Group 4 NAR Papers, RAC. Letter, Cordell Hull to Nelson Rockefeller, March 14, 1940. Folder 1354, Series L, Box 138, Record Group 4 NAR Papers, RAC.
Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art clearly demonstrated what Rockefeller could accomplish in the Inter-American field. In a quick hand written memo to himself, Rockefeller pointed out, how there was “Nobody here [in Mexico] to advise Cárdenas as Morrow advised Calles.”\(^7^6\) In this revealing note, Rockefeller imagined himself as US Ambassador Dwight W. Morrow, who steered US relations with Mexico during the complicated years of the final consolidation of the Mexican Revolution under strong man Plutarco Elias Calles.\(^7^7\) Morrow had used culture as a subtle, yet key propaganda weapon by orchestrating the 1930 *Exhibition of Mexican Art* organized by René d’Harnoncourt for the Mexican Government and the Carnegie Foundation, which brought Mexico’s modern painters and folk art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (November 25 – December 14, 1930), before touring the US.\(^7^8\) This precedent, which prefigured the 1940 exhibition in multiples ways, is revealing, and the implication of Rockefeller’s note is clear: he wished to guide Cárdenas as Morrow had guided Calles.

*Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* presented an opportunity to engage the image of *mexicanidad* and steer it away from a revolutionary rhetoric of confrontation that had returned under the oil nationalization, and into a new phase of Pan American cooperation. This image of an agreeable Mexico overlapped and coincided in many points with Cárdenas’ own national project known as *cardenismo*. There remained, however,

\(^7^6\) Handwritten and undated note, Folder 1354, Series L, Box 138, Record Group 4 NAR Papers, RAC.

\(^7^7\) Dwight W. Morrow was the US Ambassador to Mexico from 1927 to 1930. As a senior partner of JP Morgan, he was also involved with the first wave of Mexican nationalizations. Although Calles was president from 1924 to 1928, he continued to rule Mexico until 1934 (a period known as the Maximato, 1928-34), when President Cárdenas exiled him to the US. Calles ruled from his home in Cuernavaca. Morrow had a summer house in Cuernavaca for diplomatic purposes. Rockefeller’s self-imagining goes beyond politics and fully into the realm of cultural politics. Morrow initiated US courtship of radical Mexican muralists, a courtship by US capitalist and cultural interests that included Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. In 1931, Diego Rivera had a solo show at MoMA. Morrow hired Diego Rivera to paint the famed 1929 murals at the Palace of Cortez in Cuernavaca as a gift to the city.

\(^7^8\) The Mexican exhibit was the brainchild of Morrow. It was he who recommended d’Harnoncourt to the Carnegie Foundation and the Mexican government to develop this exhibition. See: A. W. K, "Exhibition of Mexican Art: November 25 to December 14," *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* 28, no. 170 (1930).
fundamental tensions since Cádenas attempted, at least early in his presidency, to build a socialist nation. Although by 1940 this socialist project was on the wane, MoMA did not reinforce this part of cardenismo, even in a mere symbolic way. As John Abbott, Executive Vice President of MoMA who coordinated the exhibition in Mexico, assured Rockefeller, “from this end [that of Mexico, the exhibition] is completely clear of politics.”

**The Mexican Exhibition**

John McAndrew, Director of the Department of Architecture and Industrial Arts, designed the exhibition at MoMA and “assisted in the architecture section” of the Colonial period. Trained first in art history (1924, when he met Henry-Russell Hitchcock) and later (1940) as an architect, both at Harvard, he taught art history at Vassar College before coming to MoMA in 1937 to head the Department of Architecture and Industrial Arts. In 1940 he produced a guide of the Modern architecture of the

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79 There has been much debate in Mexico over the nature of Cádenas’ national project or cardenismo, as to whether it was a prelude to new forms of capitalist accumulation, or a failed national socialist project. Within this complex debate, I take sides with Mexican historian Adolfo Gilly who underscores the view that cardenismo was a dynamic modernization process where contradictory and competing views on socialism in Mexico came to the fold. Gilly identifies clear socialist principles that characterize cardenismo during the first and most radical period (1934-35): a country of agrarian communities, socialist education, industrialization led by a state supported by industrial workers, and a capitalism subordinated to the state. The foundation of cardenismo was agrarian reform, undergirded by a nineteenth century populist agrarian socialism, which Gilly traces back to narodniki currents in Russia. See: Adolfo Gilly, "Los dos socialismos mexicanos," *Nexos en línea* (1986). (Accessed March 1, 2011). Also: ———, *El Cardenismo, una utopía mexicana*, 1. ed. (México, D.F.: Ediciones Era, 2001).

80 *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* was seen as the swan song of cardenismo. In December 1940 Manuel Ávila Camacho succeeded Cádennes. Camacho was more agreeable to foreign capital interests. He met most demands of the oil companies. Nationalization and agrarian reforms were, however, irreversible.

81 Letter, John Abbott to Nelson Rockefeller, February 10, 1940. Folder 1354, Series L, Box 138, Record Group 4 NAR Papers, RAC.


83 He had been teaching art history at Vassar College since 1932. See: *New York Times*, July 10, 1937. It was McAndrew who alerted MoMA about the possibility of the Mexican exhibition. See also: Lynes, *Good Old Modern; an Intimate Portrait of the Museum of Modern Art*. pp. 177-80.
northeastern United States for the Museum, and in 1939, along with Alfred Barr, he designed MoMA’s Sculpture Garden. A year earlier, he had curated—the architectural section of MoMA’s Three Centuries of American Art (May 24-July 31, 1938), which covered from Colonial to 20th Century architecture, including “the Modern school … fully represented by Frank Lloyd Wright and … many of the best known architects of the day.”

Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art presented the art of Mexico in five distinct sections: Pre-Spanish Art, Colonial Art, Folk and Popular Art, Modern Art and Children’s Art. As visitors entered the museum and passed the information, ticket and bookstore counter on the first (ground) floor, and walked across the lobby to the sculpture garden, they found, at the end of the hall announcing the exhibition, three architectural models: the Mayan-Toltec temple-pyramid at Chichén Itzá (c. 11th Century, known as

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87 The organizational structure of the exhibition, which appeared in the May 1940 MoMA Bulletin, differed slightly from that presented later in the official catalogue. In this account, the exhibition had only four sections: Pre-Spanish Art, Colonial Art, Folk and Popular Art and Modern Art but in fact a Children’s Art section organized by Victor d’Amico and Ann Stevens of MoMA’s Education Project, was absent from the catalogue. Mexican Children’s Art presented art education programs between 1917 and 1940 (Adolfo Best-Maugard’s schools, the Open Air Schools, and the Escuela de Talla Directa) through the work of its students. Unlike all other sections of the exhibition, this one claimed no direct or specific Mexican collaboration. It is important to highlight that the museum was chartered as an educational institution, and that, as Helaine Ruth Messer has argued, the museum’s aesthetic progressive stance was (and remains) intertwined with its educational mission to instruct the laymen through exhibitions. The Bulletin on the Mexican exhibit was “A brief guide to the exhibition published in the absence of the official catalog, which is being printed in Mexico and has been un-avoidably delayed. The catalog will contain 175 illustrations of which 20 are in color, and essays by the directors of four sections of the exhibition.” N.Y.), "Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art." Helaine Ruth Messer, "MoMA: Museum in Search of an Image" (Thesis (Ph D), Columbia University, 1979., 1979). p. 6.
“The Castle”); the temple-observatory of the Feathered Serpent of Xochicalco (c. 8th Century) near the city of Cuernavaca in the state of Morelos; and an unidentified temple-pyramid with its twin aztec teocalli. All three architectural models introduced the visitor to the “Pre-Spanish” section of the exhibition (Fig. 1.9). This section contained a wide array of objects exhibited in multiple ways: small figurines—such as a jade Olmec “Tiger Head,”—as well as other semi-precious stone objects and ancient painted pottery figures and ceremonial vessels were exhibited behind glass. A significant piece shown in this manner was a Mixtec gold breastplate that was part of the recently discovered “treasure of Monte Alban.” They immediately after the architectural models, the exhibition started with precious objects in vitrines; the circulation space of the Pre-Spanish section was generally dark to allow the objects to glow under their spotlights. Larger pieces, such as examples of Mayan frescoes and stelae, where exhibited with dramatic lighting that separated foreground from background (Fig. 1.10). Stone sculpture and objects, such as a Totonac “yoke” used in the sacred ball game, were placed on pedestals. These sculptural objects were placed in groups of two or three and were vividly illuminated with spotlights (Fig. 1.11). Although the Pre-Spanish section included architectural models, the intent was to contextualize the art works, to provide visitors with “models of the ancient temples in ruins of which the sculpture was found.” They provided a larger architectural order; there was no attempt, however, to consider these architectural objects within their

88 During the preparation of the exhibition rumors spread in Mexico City that the Government was selling the “treasures of Monte Albán” to a US museum. These rumors generated general public protests and a minor revolt. Unidentified newspaper article in Queens Museum exhibition: Schmelz and Ernesto Peñazola, Luis Marquez in the World of the Future: Mexican Identity and the 1939-40 New York World’s Fair (New York: Queens Museum of Art, 2010). Such event’s exemplified the tense relationship between the two countries.
89 Letter, Sarah Newmeyer to Thornton Martin, January 30, 1940. Folder 1354, Series L, Box 138, Record Group 4, NAR Papers, RAC.
larger urban or ceremonial context. Visitors with catalogue in hand could locate the temples by referring to the “Regional Map of Mexico” contained within (Fig. 1.12).

As visitors exited the Pre-Spanish section and found themselves back in the lobby, they may have been drawn to the garden by the large statue of the “Chac-Mool” (Reclining God) of Chichén Itzá placed outside yet close enough to the doors of the garden to draw their attention (Fig. 1.13). If, on the other hand, visitors decided to continue inside the museum by taking the main staircase, a giant bamboo frame “sculpture” covered with brightly colored paper hung high above their heads as a sort of surprise. Climbing visitors passed under “one of … folk art oddities … a Judas … twelve feet high and topped with a large sombrero.” These figures, the *Times* reported, hung over streets in Mexico and, filled with fireworks (also present in the MoMA piece; Fig. 1.14) would be blown-up before Easter as part of popular celebrations. This exploding Judas was the visitor’s first encounter with the living artistic tradition of Mexican popular culture. As one arrived to the second floor, one entered Colonial Art; this section shared the floor with the “gayest and most colorful section of the exhibition:” folk and popular art. The hanging Judas alerted visitors that examples of popular culture continued in the third, and last floor, of the exhibition.

In the Colonial section, visitors found everyday and religious objects, such as a silver censer and monstrance (Fig. 1.15), and a colorful feather mosaic depicting Saint Catherine; this example clearly exemplified the survival of Indian traditions and techniques in the Colonial period. Religious sculpture and painting, such as the “Virgin of the Apocalypse” (1620) by Baltasar de Echave Ibia (the Younger) were also present,

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90 “Mexicans Arrive to Aid Art Show; Group to Supervise Exhibit of 4,000 Native Objects at Museum of Modern Art.” p. 27.
as well as colonial portraiture, exemplified by the famous “Portrait of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz” (1750) by Miguel Cabrera. The Colonial section also included early nineteenth century portraits. Many of the exhibition techniques used in the Pre-Spanish section were deployed in Colonial Art: objects in vitrines, dramatic lighting, and sculptures on pedestals. Unlike in the Pre-Spanish section, colonial sculptures were exhibited as independent objects and were not grouped. This reinforced their perception as individual works of art. There were moments, however, in which works of art were used to emphasize a clear spatial and processional organization, developing axial symmetries to guide visitors from room to room (Fig. 1.16). This coordination of painting and sculpture recalled the religious character of the work exhibited. The fact that the photographer decided to use a somewhat oblique angle to capture the axis of symmetry alerts us to the architectural intention of McAndrew’s spatial arrangement of the works.

The Colonial section also included architecture, with colonial buildings shown through photographs and models, as well as with actual 1:1 decorative details, such as the gilded capital of a Baroque retablo or altarpiece. Architecture appeared to be contained in one autonomous room within the Colonial section (Fig. 1.17). Here visitors found a model of the Capilla del Pocito (1771-1791) and the Salto del Agua public fountain (1779), which was part of the aqueduct built by Viceroy Antonio de Bucareli, both in Mexico City (Fig. 1.18). Two bas-relief models of fachada-retablos (altar façades) seemed to introduce the architecture section. One of them was of the church of the Augustinian Convent of Alcomán (1560).\footnote{One can find a photograph that almost replicates this bas-relief model in Enrique Marco Dorta, \textit{Ars Hispaniae: historia universal del arte hispánico} (Madrid: Editorial Plus-Ultra, 1973).} These fachada-retablos were part of the open-air church typology developed early on under the Spanish conquest as part of
evangelization campaigns; McAndrew would later develop his interest in this architecture in the book *The Open-Air Churches of Sixteenth-Century Mexico.*

The architectural section followed the dramatic use of lighting, especially on the models, which seem to have been in color—specifically the one for the Capilla del Pocito with its color-tiled domes (Fig. 1.19).

Unity of the exhibition was achieved through materials and exhibition techniques. McAndrew also used the Popular and Folk Art to unify the museum experience. It is difficult to gather from the exhibition installation photographs exactly how, for example, the Colonial period transitioned into Popular and Folk Art, and how this last one, on the third floor, transitioned into Modern Art. What seems clear, however, is that McAndrew used the largest section (Popular and Folk Art) to create overlaps and thus tie the entire exhibition together. How effective this was is hard to assess. Sarah Newmeyer, publicity director of the museum, stated that the Folk and Popular art section contained “the widest and wildest variety of objects—pottery, toys, lacquers, weaving, masks, carvings, embroideries, porcelains and festival objects and decorations of straw, tin, clay, etc.” McAndrew had been concerned with the explosive growth of the popular art section from the very beginning, wishing to contain Montenegro’s expansive drive, which was fueled by Rockefeller’s personal interest in acquiring Mexican craft objects. In the catalogue, Montenegro offered a more tacit classification: Pottery, Weaving, Lacquer, Masks and Popular Painting. Such a wide and “wild” variety of objects required an overarching

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93 The stone shade of the tezontle stone is clearly perceived in the model; the polychromy of the domes, the blue and white horizontal zigzag pattern in the actual building, however, is not; but this must be an effect of the lighting and the black and white photography.

94 Letter, Sarah Newmeyer to Thornton Martin, January 30, 1940. Folder 1354, Series L, Box 138, Record Group 4, NAR, RAC.
dominant background. McAndrew addressed cohesiveness by using similar materials and forms throughout the exhibition. Plywood shelving and vertical supports, as well as natural materials—such as bamboo poles—served to create a cohesive presentation theme. These forms and materials were repeated in every floor, even in the Pre-Spanish section (Fig. 1.20; Fog. 1.21), and in the garden as well.

In the second floor gallery, the Popular and Folk Art objects brought forth a commercial aspect of exhibition design. Objects were generally grouped together and, unlike in other sections, some were also presented en masse. There was no dramatic illumination; all objects were presented in fairly neutral lighting. A significant characteristic of this section was the free-form and organic shape of the shelves on which these objects were presented (Fig. 1.22). Simply placed on these organic shelves, objects seemed readily accessible to the hand of the visitor and welcome close examination and touch. The perimetral disposition of the organic shelves—which cleared the center of the space—emphasized circulation. The at times domestic and festive way in which some of the objects were placed—such as the three fish lacquered in bright colors that swam unrefrained on the wall—must have given visitors a familiar impression transporting them away from the museum. This section seemed to unfold another type of space than that of the museum. The Folk and Popular Art section created the sensation of a commercial presentation rather than a museum staging. The presence of brilliantly colored objects—something the black and white exhibition photos do not capture but the official exhibition catalogue attempted to elaborate—must have reinforced the commercial intent.
Visitors would have recognized free-form shelves, and understood them as signs of commerce since organic or free-form shapes were a key part of the repertory of commercial display in this period.\textsuperscript{95} Alfred Barr, some time after the 1940 Mexican show, had pointed out this connection.\textsuperscript{96} It is important to highlight that in 1938 McAndrew had been involved with Edgar Kaufmann Jr. in the \textit{Useful Household Objects Under $5.00} exhibition (September 28-October 28, 1938.)\textsuperscript{97} This exhibition, “arranged before Christmas,” had a clear commercial objective.\textsuperscript{98} The \textit{Useful Household Objects} exhibition focused on industrial items. It attempted to resignify the notion of functionalism by presenting “something more” that turned “a well-designed object of industrial art,” into an “aesthetically gratifying” object. For McAndrew, this transmutation was a breath of life: A “good designer,” he stated, “can vivify a functional form into one aesthetically gratifying.”\textsuperscript{99} The notion of “good design,” which served as a code for “good taste,” was accompanied by the notion of a living practice, a practice that operated from both ends that is, from that of the designers and also from that of the users. This was “grass-roots tastemaking,” and handicrafts were a key component.\textsuperscript{100}

The Popular and Folk Art section of the Mexican exhibit pointed to a commercial strategy of tastemaking. The Mexican folk objects in the Museum, however, were not for sale; making it clear that the museum space was one of aesthetic consumption.

\textsuperscript{95} See for example: “On Display,” \textit{Interiors C}, no. 2 (September) (1940).
\textsuperscript{98} Elodie Courter, “Notes on the Exhibition of Useful Objects,” \textit{The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art} 6, no. 6 (1940). p. 3.
\textsuperscript{99} John McAndrew, “New Standards for Industrial Design,” \textit{The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art} 6, no. 6 (1940). p. 6. At the same time the useful object “cannot be appraised in aesthetic terms only.”
\textsuperscript{100} Lynes, \textit{Good Old Modern; An Intimate Portrait of the Museum of Modern Art}. p. 181. As Elodie Courter argued, along with industrial design, “honest handicrafts … deserve exhibition in galleries devoted to ‘the arts’ of today.” Courter, “Notes on the Exhibition of Useful Objects.” p. 5.
Nonetheless, these pieces could be found in the Kaufman Department Store in Pittsburgh, which had opened a Mexican Christmas Shop, selling the folk art objects displayed at MoMA.\footnote{Letter, John Abbott to Nelson Rockefeller, October 7, 1940. Folder 1354, Series L, Box 138, Record Group 4 NAR Papers, RAC.} In New York, Macy’s launched a month-long event called “Mexico in Manhattan,” which “showed how Mexican art could be commercialized.”\footnote{Schmelz and Peñazola, Luis Marquez in the World of the Future: Mexican Identity and the 1939-40 New York World’s Fair. Nelson Rockefeller put Elliot Noyes to collaborate with Macy’s. The outcome, however, is not clear. Folder 1354, Series L, Box 138, Record Group 4 NAR Papers, RAC. Macy’s was not only interested in Mexican goods, but in other Latin American goods. On Macy’s promotion of Cuban cigars see: “Economic Alliance of Americas Urged; Cuban Commissioner to the Fair Sees Example in Macy's Promotion of Cigars P.S. Straus Backs Plan Citites Demand Here for Goods from Mexico, Guatemala and Peru,” The New York Times, October 12 1939.} These overlaps, between MoMA and department stores allowed US consumers to participate in a living artesanal practice. As part of the exhibition publicity, Newmeyer suggested having “a color photographer take pictures on the spot of the Mexicans actually making these things.”\footnote{Letter, Sarah Newmeyer to Thornton Martin, January 30, 1940. Folder 1354, Series L, Box 138, Record Group 4, NAR, RAC.} The notion of a “living tradition” was the key trope articulated and repeated since the first exhibition of Mexican popular art: the 1921 \textit{Exposición de Arte Popular}, organized in Mexico City by Jorge Enciso, Roberto Montenegro and Dr. Atl (Gerardo Murillo) for José Vasconcelos’ Ministry of Education. This exhibition was part of the Centennial celebrations of Mexican Independence and, as Rick A. López argues, it was the first exhibition to present “vernacular art as the ultimate expression of primordial \textit{mexicanidad} [mexicanness].”\footnote{López, Crafting Mexico: Intellectuals, Artisans, and the State after the Revolution. p. 76.} Its catalogue showed Mexican artisans “making these things;” the same strategy Newmeyer suggested be taken in 1940 (Fig. 1.23).

As the Judas that hung from the third floor announced, Folk and Popular Art continued in the space of the museum dedicated to Modern Art. The third floor also contained Mexican Children’s Art developed by the museum’s Education Project directed
by Victor D’Amico. In the third floor, modern Mexican art was staged with a unified curatorial strategy based on the traditional white-wall gallery on which paintings, such as Frida Kahlo’s “The Two Fridas” (1939) and Rivera’s “Kneeling Dancer” (1939) hung. The third floor gallery appeared to have been subdivided into smaller rooms containing modern paintings accompanied by modern sculpture—at times freestanding other times set against a wall—but in either case, they were mounted individually on pedestals (Fig. 1.24). Benches placed in some of these rooms accentuated the space of the museum as one of both respite and contemplation. As Indych-López points out, “Small-scale works by the muralists ... functioned as surrogates for muralism.” This is an important detail to better interpret Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art, as she argues that the Mexican exhibition recorded the eclipse of Diego Rivera by José Clemente Orozco. As Indych-López points out, Rivera’s paintings in the exhibition were generally criticized for turning “away from socially engaged subject matter,” being highly “saccharine,” and overly sexual. Rivera, Siqueiros and Orozco, shared a room “reinforcing their broader canonization as los tres grandes [the three great ones] of muralism.” Although New York critics “censured Rivera’s contribution,” Indych-López points out, “they praised Orozco and Siqueiros for the bold, politicized easel painting in the exhibition.” This politicized painting, Indych-López argues, was precisely what was expected in the United States. “Rivera’s work failed to live up to expectations that Mexican painting be monumental and politically significant. [...] Orozco and Siqueiro’s success relative to Rivera’s,” Indych-López concludes, “indicates that it was no longer possible to foster a

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105 The section on Colonial Art also had benches.
107 Ibid. p. 176.
108 Ibid. p. 179.
depoliticized, simplistic view of Mexican muralism or present a hygienic presentation of Mexican nationalism in museum exhibition."^{109} If in 1940 it was no longer possible to present a simplistic view of Mexico and Mexican nationalism that excluded its political imagery, this image also included the commercialization of Folk Art. This unified view of Mexican culture was clear in the way McAndrew staged the exhibition by overlapping the different sections, sections that were connected through specific formal devices such as free-form stands and shelves present even in the Pre-Spanish section.\(^{110}\) Through these formal, visual and symbolic overlaps, the exhibition worked a telescopic historical structure that "emphasized timeless continuities and racial difference."\(^{111}\) It also emphasized that the politicized image of Mexico could be mediated through aesthetic and a commercial forms.

If the "Chac-Mool" sculpture in the garden had not been enough to entice visitors to go outside once they had exited the Pre-Hispanic section of the exhibition, perhaps the massive statue of "Coatlicue," Aztec mother of the goods, which stood on axis with the ground floor hall, drew the visiting crowds to the sculpture garden, now refashioned with twenty-five monumental pieces of pre-Columbian sculptures (Fig. 1.25).\(^{112}\) This

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110 The free-form was carried by the upper stands and by a thin ribbon in front of the lower one. The effect, whether intentional or not is startling, since plants were woven in between the ribbon and the stand creating a natural screen—albeit too low to impede vision—that recalled photographs of temples immersed in jungle vegetation.
112 "Mexicans Arrive to Aid Art Show; Group to Supervise Exhibit of 4,000 Native Objects at Museum of Modern Art." p. 27. This was not the original statue, which remained in Mexico, but a cast that made in sections, owned by New York’s Museum of Natural History.
“enormous collection of gaunt, contorted, monumental stone sculpture,” *Time* reported, “held Manhattan gallery goers spellbound.”

McAndrew and Barr had recently designed the sculpture garden, which opened in May 1939 as part of the inauguration of the new museum building. As Mirka Bênes points out, “they erected lightweight walls of plywood and wood basketry, some curvilinear some rectilinear in shape, thereby creating a series of outdoor rooms in which the sculptures and slender trees were placed.” This curvilinear geometry was carried in the staging of *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art*. For the Mexican exhibition, more trees were added and seven pavilions were built. Their plywood exhibition surfaces and roofs, as well as walls of “Mexican straw work” were all supported on natural cedar posts. Although the cedar poles did not follow the use of bamboo in the Folk and Popular Art section inside the museum, the organic shapes of the shelves clearly made the connection (Fig. 1.26). In 1939, McAndrew had used two different-colored gravels (yellow and grey) in free-from patterns, and the plywood shelves in the second floor section of the Folk Art exhibit recalled these organic forms.

The museum garden provided a social entertainment space and served as center stage for the opening of the exhibition as vividly portrayed by Miguel Covarrubias for *Vogue* (Fig. 1.27). The Folk Art pavilions sheltered and presented diverse contemporary pottery works and, as the *Times* claimed, “sarapes, sombreros, huaraches and other

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113 “Mexican Show.”


115 “Mexicans Arrive to Aid Art Show; Group to Supervise Exhibit of 4,000 Native Objects at Museum of Modern Art.” p. 27.

116 Not all shelves in the garden pavilions had free-form shapes; some where rectangular; these, however, had rounded corners.
objects of native apparel.”

It emphasized a native and living artisanal production. This was accentuated by the article’s photograph that depicts a museum assistant (Elodie Courter) holding a “fiesta mask” in front of several pottery pieces. There is, however, no evidence to this in exhibition photographs that show that such “Native Costumes” were in fact exhibited inside the museum in the third floor not in the garden as the *Times* claimed. Visitors, nonetheless, could relax in the garden and sit in shaded areas created by “Indian sunshades made of canvas stretched on wooden crosses at the top of cedar poles.”

This was hardly a museum space, certainly less so than the Folk and Popular Art section inside the museum. As relaxed and informal as it could get, this staging gestured toward those colorful marketplaces well-known to US tourists through publicity photos. The pavilions, with their lightness and impermanence, contributed to the festive marketplace feel, an air that contrasted the presentation of the heavy and monumental Meso-American sculptures.

There was “a lot of folk art,” McAndrew stated. “We even used the garden as a market.”

The *New York Times* insertion of the presence of native costumes in the garden perhaps pointed to the desire to have Mexicans behind the stands; to have living artisans complete the financial transaction that the objects in the Folk and Popular Art section implied.

**Mexicanidad: crafting “lo típico”**

*Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* was the culmination of a long revalorization of Mexican popular art. This living tradition could carry multiple meanings but above all, it

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117 "Mexicans Arrive to Aid Art Show; Group to Supervise Exhibit of 4,000 Native Objects at Museum of Modern Art."
118 Ibid.
represented a particular Mexican racial ethos that had survived through time. As Montenegro underscored in the May 1940 MoMA Bulletin, folk and popular art revealed the versatility and inventiveness of the Mexican people. “The artistic impulse which produced this popular art,” he highlighted, “is in part a racial inheritance which has continued without interruption in Mexico from pre-Spanish times.” The survival of forms and decorations as well as the preservation of techniques, albeit through adaptation and heavy European influence, made “contemporary craftsmen work in a living tradition.”

Montenegro singled out popular painting, the retablos—“religious pictures made as thank-offerings”—as a key example of religious feeling and “instinct for color and design.” These, along with anonymous nineteenth century paintings of landscapes, flowers and fruits, and historical scenes “show a vitality which is often lacking in the more academic work of the professional painter of the period.” With these comments, Montenegro completed the picture of a “living tradition.” Everyday objects—ceramics of Guerrero, popular serapes and lacquer industries—demonstrated the survival of ancient ways through artistic impulse. This impulse, connected to the land through the everyday, embodied and mediated the racial inheritance of Mexico. In this way, Montenegro closely followed the official ideology of mestizaje (racial mixture) institutionalized by the Revolution in the early 1920s.

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120 "Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art." p. 8.
121 Ibid.
122 As Marisol de la Cedena argues, unlike other countries in the region with large indigenous populations like Peru, the Mexican state, supported by intellectuals such a Manuel Gamio and José Vasconcelos, rejected the notion of racial degeneration that was part of mestizaje and embraced the positive aspects of hybridity and miscegenation. Marisol de la Cadena, "Silent Racism and Intellectual Superiority in Peru," Bulletin of Latin American Research 17, no. 2 (1998). For the question of Blacks and mestizaje in Mexico see also: Lewis, Laura. “Afro Mexico in Black, white, and Indian: an anthropologist reflects on fieldwork” in Ben Vinson and Matthew Restall, Black Mexico: Race and Society from Colonial to Modern Times (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2009). Also: Ben Vinson, Bobby Vaughn, and Clara García Ayluardo, Afroméxico: el pulso de la población negra en México, una historia recordada, olvidada
history, the Conquest, and its greatest contribution: “religious feeling.” Popular painting laid the foundation of an anonymous artistic form which expressed its equally general form: “lo mexicano,” characterized by feeling, instinctive use of color and a resistance to academicism. This “vitality,” contained in anonymous painting was the substratum that kept “lo mexicano” alive through the periods of academic (foreign) domination, such as the Porfiriato.\textsuperscript{123} By singling out the popular retablo-votive tradition, Montenegro offered a connection to the Colonial period, and by singling out anonymous nineteenth century painting he offered a link to Modern art. It is unclear whether McAndrew performed this link and overlap through the installation itself, since archival information on the exhibition does not facilitate its complete reconstruction.

MoMA presented the Mexican government with an additional stage on which to perform mexicanidad. It was a second stage, since Mexico already had an official representation in its national pavilion at the 1939 World’s Fair. \textit{Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art} highlighted the image of \textit{lo típico} that “typical Mexican character” that could help the Cárdenas government navigate the storm of oil nationalization and the economic crisis that it engendered. Because of this, the exhibition had to be, or at least be perceived to be, an uncompromised Mexican enterprise. The MoMA show was heralded as a form of self-representation; a Mexican-crafted image of what was truly and deeply Mexican, one that \textit{Time} magazine took a stab at by singling out Nelson Rockefeller’s involvement. Rockefeller did have a strong hand in this partnership, as he was the key figure in the financial survival of the exhibit, and since the United States Government

\textsuperscript{123} The Porfiriato was the second rule of Porfirio Diaz (1880-1910).

refused any sponsorship, Rockefeller personally covered many costs.\textsuperscript{124} Through his mediation, the Rockefeller Foundation became the primary sponsor of the MoMA exhibit, a fact that remained hidden at the request of the Mexican government.\textsuperscript{125}

By the late 1930s, Mexican Modern art contained an established and accepted visual and thematic pattern based on political imagery. As Indych-López points out, US institutions and the general public expected Mexican art to be “politically engaged.” This, she argues, “challenges traditionally accepted assumptions about the hegemony of cultural institutions in the US and their ability to use Mexican culture to serve ideological and political interests;” in short, to depoliticize Mexican art.\textsuperscript{126} Several considerations unfold. By the late 1930s, the mechanisms of depolitization did not necessarily involve censorship of political imagery, as in the 1933 controversy over the Rockefeller Center murals. The now-codified imagery of the Mexican revolution had entered a new social and political arena—not only in the United States but also in Mexico itself—as President Cárdenas pushed for the consolidation of a centralized government, with a hegemonic national culture and an all-controlling state apparatus in which dissent could be effectively managed. The uncontrolled fires of revolution were now within state supervision. Tensions remained, such as those around the assassination of Leon Trosky in October 1940. However, as Helga Prignitz-Poda has pointed out in her study on the

\textsuperscript{124} Nelson Rockefeller, for example, covered a $13,000 USD deficit incurred by musical concerts scheduled with the exhibition, as well as all of Mrs. Covarrubias expenses. Letter, Nelson Rockefeller to Mrs. Ulrich, July 12, 1940. Folder 1354, Series L, Box 138, Record Group 4 NAR Papers, RAC. He also paid for Orozco’s mural. See: José Clemente Orozco, Margarita Valladares de Orozco, and Tatiana Herrero Orozco, Cartas a Margarita : 1921-1949, (México, D.F.: Ediciones Era, 1987).

\textsuperscript{125} See: Letters from Nelson Rockefeller to the State Department on March 1940 involving US Government sponsorship. Folder 1354, Series L, Box 138, Record Group 4 NAR Papers, RAC. Abbot secured $15,000 USD form the Mexican Government. See: Letter, NAR to Walter Douglas, January 27, 1940. Folder 1354, Series L, Box 138, Record Group 4 NAR Papers, RAC. Once in the US, MoMA became liable for all the art objects. See: Letter, John E. Abbott to Alfonso Caso, March 14, 1940. Folder 1354, Series L, Box 138, Record Group 4 NAR Papers, RAC.

\textsuperscript{126} Indych-López, Muralism without Walls: Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros in the United States, 1927-1940. p. 185.
formation of the Taller de Gráfica Popular, for example, Cárdenas’ transformation and reconstitution of the political party structure allowed him to incorporate the most powerful sections of Mexican revolutionary politics (workers, military, syndicates, intellectuals and peasantry). The rise of the Popular Front and the fall of Republican Spain also helped coalesce and realign the political meanings of Mexican art. As Monica Rankin presents in her study of the development of WWII propaganda in Mexico, by the late 1930s, the consolidation of an official rhetoric of a democratic fight against “totalitarianism”—which obscured anti-capitalists rhetoric and highlighted Pan Americanism—revealed the improving relations between the US and Mexico. The assumption that the political valence of Mexican modern painting remained static as confronting the Unites States is, thus, unfounded.

Although Mexican modern art was indeed recognizable as being Mexican, it did not necessarily produce the image of *lo típico* under the new forces of Pan Americanism. Mexican modern painting and its muralist movement, which hegemonized the artistic production of Mexico, had an important and dynamic relationship with *lo típico*, but it was not the same since it remained a changing and developing image. *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* made this clearly evident, *lo típico* being a “living” folk and popular art that enabled a synthesis with the past. Folk and popular art wove Mexican modern art into *mexicanidad*; it was the bridge that connected high art to the material culture of “the Mexican people.” This was its role at MoMA in 1940, offering “a window to

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128 Rankin, *¡México, La Patria!: Propaganda and Production During World War II.*, specially Chapter 1.
authenticity.” As the images of popular upheaval and revolutionary zeal fell into a
codified narrative of the Revolution rural material culture, reduced to popular and folk
art, imprinted *mexicanidad* with a new productive vitality. The rhetorical construction
that Montenegro offered in the catalogue of *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* made this
clear to US and Mexican audiences alike. This vitality was measured by the expansion of
the crafts market since the early 1920s. As López argues, folk art was central to the
creation of *mexicanidad*. This was a complex process that incorporated folk art or *artes
populares* into the ideological rhetoric of the Revolution as a symbol of nationalist
aesthetics in clear juxtaposition of the Europeanizing Porfiriato. In the early 1920s,
however, the notion of *lo mexicano* played with the strategic ambiguities, slippages and
tensions between the categories of Indian, mestizo and campesino, and the complex and
varying views on mestizaje, which are, as López argues, too often reduced to a simple
“process of de-Indianization…and the enshrinement of ‘Mexico as a one-race nation.’”
This dynamic relationship between ideas such a mestizaje and folk art—which he traces
to different intellectual projects underscoring the tensions between Manuel Gamio’s unity
in diversity and José Vasconcelos’ Hispanism—was performed by different institutional
actors in Mexico; governmental institutions such as the Ministry of Education, Ministry
of Industry and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which oversaw *Twenty Centuries of
Mexican Art*. López’s study highlights the importance of this institutional frame in the
construction of *mexicanidad* within an overall confrontation between cultural nationalists
and those interested in developing a mass market for Mexican goods connected to the

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129 James Oles, "For Business or Pleasure: Exhibiting Mexican Folk Art 1820-1930,” in *Casa Mañana: The
Morrow Collection of Mexican Popular Arts*, ed. Susan Danly and Mead Art Museum (Amherst College)
(Albuquerque: Published for The Mead Art Museum, Amherst College by the University of New Mexico
Press, 2002). p. 29

United States. This institutional setting in which the idea of *mexicanidad* developed along the lines of authenticity is key to understanding why modern architecture was left out of *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art*.

The Cárdenas period saw a move from the ethnic to the national concomitant with the rationalization and standardization of the popular arts industry that can be traced to the growing rift between “the rapidly growing low-end market for trinkets and the stagnating market for high-end handicrafts.”¹³¹ This battle, played out in Mexico, was staged in New York between the Mexican Pavilion at the 1939 Worlds Fair and the MoMA exhibition. If one follows López’ argument on the rift between high-end versus low-end markets, it seems clear that MoMA opted for the first, perhaps countering Cárdenas’ main policy on popular arts that, as López points out, was subjected to the Secretaría de Economía Nacional (Economic Ministry), but also contributing to it by reinforcing the high-end market.¹³² Whether *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* helped increase the market for high-end crafts is difficult to say; what is clear, however, is that like previous exhibitions in the 1920s, it made folk art fashionable—at least for a moment. The MoMA exhibition helped cement an image of “a timeless peasant population that would not demand change.”¹³³ This may counter the political agency that Mexican campesinos and Indians still had in Mexico at this time. Nonetheless, the exhibition manifested the internal power play, a culture war, within the Cárdenas government along the lines of the handicraft market and the tourism industry. That Montenegro was allowed to organize the selection of Popular Arts—he had been fired

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¹³¹ Ibid. p. 166.
¹³² Artisan industries were subjected to the National Cooperative of Mexican Vernacular Industries, which “was neither an artisan cooperative nor an institution to protect the national patrimony but a state-sponsored merchant cooperative devoted to intensifying and reorganizing production.” Ibid. p. 163
¹³³ Oles, "For Business or Pleasure: Exhibiting Mexican Folk Art 1820-1930," p. 28
from the Museo de Arte Popular when Cárdenas came to power—is significant. If, as López argues, “Cardenistas looked suspiciously upon handicraft supporters as Callista conservatives [supporters of ousted strongman Plutarco Elias Calles],” Montenegro’s survival from the French plan into the MoMA execution of the exhibition seems even more revealing. That such questions were part of the ongoing debate was clear in Jean Charlot’s review of the MoMA exhibition. The French artist, who had resided in Mexico since 1921, highlighted the threat of commercialism by criticizing the staging of the folk art objects at MoMA. “Such objects,” he stressed, “belie the theory that man works spurred only by the profit motive.”

It was, however, such a narrative of authenticity that made these objects desirable to high-end markets in the US and Mexico.

Consumption then, not censorship, was the mechanism of depolitization of politically engaged art and the means to engage this in all aspects of Mexican culture.

The international fame of the Muralists could be mobilized to sell Mexican crafts. Orozco himself had recognized this shift from political propaganda to commercial advertisement by underscoring the circus-like atmosphere of the MoMA exhibition. Modern Mexican politicized painting was being use to advertise high–end Mexican crafts. In order to function as such, Mexican art needed to be political in theme that is, be recognizable as such to US audiences. Rivera’s highly eroticized paintings, overwhelmingly criticized,

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135 Jean Charlot, “Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art,” Magazine of Art 33, no. 7 (July) (1940), p. 404.
136 On Orozco’s comments see: Orozco, Valladares de Orozco, and Herrero Orozco, Cartas a Margarita: 1921-1949, especially the May 10, 1940 letter. Oles underscores the theatrical nature of Orozco’s mural performance in Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art, see: Oles, “Orozco at War: Context and Fragment in Dive Bomber and Tank (1940).” As he points out, Rivera had already made this advertisement connection between the muralists works and Mexican crafts in 1928, see: ———, “Orozco at War: Context and Fragment in Dive Bomber and Tank (1940).” p. 191. The used of muralism as an advertisement tool, Oles argues, started in the early 1920s. ———, “For Business or Pleasure: Exhibiting Mexican Folk Art 1820-1930.” p. 23. He points out an important shift between early practices of including the names of individual craftsmen in the 1920s, as in Atl’s Artes populares en México, and their subsuming within a general “native craftsmen” category as in Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art.
broke this implied contract and could not function as advertisements for *mexicanidad*. 

*Mexicanidad* then appeared as a closed image not open to reinterpretations.

Embattled by new forces *mexicanidad* adapted to the forces of Pan Americanism, highlighting commercial experiments that brought architecture into the fold. Colonial architecture played an important role in the creation of the picturesque image of Mexico that most tourists wanted and that was critical for the development of the crafts industry. Toussaint, who was responsible for the colonial section of *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art*, which included architecture, had, in 1931, produced a book titled: *Tasco: su historia, sus monumentos, características actuales y posibilidades turísticas* (*Tasco: its history, its monuments, present day characteristics and tourism potentialities*). As the title suggests, the book revealed the overlap between the tourism industry and colonial architecture in Mexico (Fig. 1.28). The book underscored Taxco as a “unique vacation place” because of its climate and its art works. This city, more than any other “in the Republic preserves its character in a vigorous and pure manner.”

The baroque church of Santa Prisca, along with the other baroque churches of the city, had been expropriated and incorporated into the state as national property by the Dirección de Bienes Nacionales (National Patrimony) of the Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público (SHCP, Ministry of the Treasury and Public Credit, headed by Bassols, 1934-35). Toussaint’s book mobilized the baroque churches of northern Mexico, weaving them into a developing pattern of *mexicanidad* connected to tourism and the development of the crafts industry—Tasco was a historic center of the silversmith craft. It even took a step further by incorporating the entire city of Taxco—it colonial plazas, fountains, buildings, etc.—into a picturesque

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living landscape through preservation strategies. The matrix of the Mexican colonial
town was then woven into the tourism industry in all its aspects within a specific
governmental fiefdom. The book, for example, made it clear that the “viajero,” or
traveler, would find the traditional “mercado” every Sunday in the Plaza de Borda. The
craft market, one of the cornerstones of the tourism industry and so well represented in
MoMA’s garden for the Mexican exhibit, made its appearance within the frame of the
traditional mercado. Toussaint engaged Mexican architectural historian Justino
Fernández and architect Juan O’Gorman in the production of the book. This was an
important early precedent, a point of contact between a modern functionalist architect, an
architectural and art historian who championed the cause of modernism in Mexico and an
official discourse on mexicanidad as it manifested in colonial architecture. This moment
of contact, however, did not produce a synthesis between modern and colonial
architecture and helps again explain why modern architecture was absent form Twenty
Centuries of Mexican Art.

**The Absence of Modern Architecture**

The absence of modern architecture from Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art can be
understood as an organizational inheritance from the original French proposal for the

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138 The book also served as a historic preservation-planning guide. Toussaint, for example, underscored that
the traditional stands built for the Sunday market added color and vitality and should not be eliminated.
Ibid. p. 187.
139 Toussaint’s book was financed by Alberto Pani’s Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público (SHCP,
Ministry of the Treasury and Public Credit). After his tenure at SHCP, Pani created and headed the
Compañía Explotadora de Hoteles (Hotel Development Company). See: Patrice Elizabeth Olsen, Artifacts
of Revolution: Architecture, Society, and Politics in Mexico City, 1920-1940 (Lanham, Md.: Rowman &
140 Fernández was also trained as an architect and had a personal relationship with Juan O’Gorman, and the
O’Gorman family. He was best friends with Juan’s brother, Edmundo O’Gorman, who would become one
of Mexico premiere historians. I have to thank Mexican scholar Cristina López Uribe for this information
on Fernández and O’Gorman’s relationship.
exhibition. As I have pointed out, this could not have been from lack of knowledge since
a key figure in the approval of the proposed 1939 French exhibition plan, which was
never in the end brought to fruition, was former Secretary of Education Narciso Bassols,
who had promoted functionalist architecture during his tenure as secretary (1931-34).
There were other points of contact between the MoMA exhibition and modern
architecture. For example, Orozco was in New York waiting to execute his portable
fresco, while architect Luis Barragán was busy with the painter’s house in Ignacio
Mariscal Street, Mexico City. There seemed to have been no observations or remarks
on the part of Orozco or any Mexican artist or organizer engaged with the exhibition on
the absence of modern architecture from the New York show. On the US organizer’s
side, as already noted, the first official announcement of the exhibition included
architecture within the examples of the Modern arts of Mexico. More poignant perhaps
was that, as part of its organizational strategy, MoMA opened an office in Mexico City,
on Zacatecas Street, in the fashionable Colonia Roma. The offices were within walking
distance of several functionalist buildings, such as the 1932 Frances Toor House (Fig.
1.29) and the 1933 Escuela Técnica Tresguerras (Fig. 1.30), both by Juan O’Gorman.
This school, along with the 24 primary schools built by the Ministry of Education (SEP)
under Narciso Bassols, had become the paragon of functionalist architecture in Mexico.
Unlike the primary schools—which were in poorer Colonias in the outskirts of the city—the Escuela Técnica Tresguerras could have been easily visited by MoMA staff. While in
Mexico, John Abbot, Monroe Wheeler, McAndrew, even Barr, stayed at the San Angel
Inn, somewhat far from the city center but close to O’Gorman’s 1931 Diego Rivera and

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141 Letter April 1940, in Orozco, Valladares de Orozco, and Herrero Orozco, Cartas a Margarita: 1921-
1949. p. 299. I have not been able to identify this house; it can be assumed it was never built.
Frida Khalo studios (Fig. 1.31), and close to the first functionalist building in Mexico: O’Gorman’s 1929 house for his father Cecil O’Gorman (Fig. 1.32). It is likely that they visited these buildings, at least Rivera’s house in which he often entertained visitors. Rivera alerted McAndrew of the planned Paris exhibition. Although there was no mention of these or any modern buildings in the correspondence on the exhibition, by 1939, these examples of modern Mexican architecture were already known in the United States.

In 1937, *Architectural Record* produced a theme issue titled “The New Architecture in Mexico,” for which California architect and photographer Esther Born served as guest editor.¹⁴² Born assembled a group of Mexican architects, engineers, and academics to present a comprehensive view of the development of functionalism in Mexican architecture and planning that was concentrated in Mexico City. Among the contributors was art historian Justino Fernández. In his brief essay, Fernández traced the development of functionalism and celebrated several architects such as Juan Legarreta, Enrique del Moral, Enrique Yañez, Mario Campos, José Cuevas, Alvaro Aburto and José Villagrán García. He highlighted O’Gorman’s work as the “purest expression” of the new architectural developments in his country. Fernández underscored how functionalism had gained social, political and legal recognition through the 1933 Architectural Council and in education, through the 1932 Escuela Superior de Construcción (ESC, School of Construction).¹⁴³ Through such institutions like the Council, architects in Mexico, “put all

¹⁴³ José Luis Cuevas, José López Moctezuma and Juan Legarreta composed the Architectural Council. Its task was “to pass [judgment] on the architectural merit of buildings to be erected in Mexico City.” Esther
their knowledge and experience at the service of the public, without receiving salaries” according to Fernández. It is important to underscore that both the Architectural Council and the ESC were institutions created by the government of President Abelardo Rodriguez within the period of Plutarco Elias Calles’ control of Mexican politics known as the Maximato. The Council attempted to channel urban development in Mexico City by guiding public opinion and helping “older architects to the understanding of the new theories.” The ESC, headed by O’Gorman and created within the Departamento de Enseñanza Técnica (Department of Technical Education) of Bassols’ SEP, was a direct attack on the established architectural profession organized around the Sociedad de Arquitectos Mexicanos (SAM, Mexican Society of Architects). It aimed to create a new builder-technician that sprung from the popular classes in opposition to a profesional and university establishment that served bourgeois culture. The creation of the ESC ignited the confrontation between functionalists and traditionalists captured in the 1933 Pláticas Sobre Arquitectura (Architecture Conversations).

The period of the Maximato (1928-1934) was characterized by a rapprochement with international capital and a critical distancing from key principles of the revolution. Within this context, Bassols engaged O’Gorman to build the SEP schools and to launch the School of Construction. Calles’ promotion of functionalism—still connected to a

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145 Born, Fernández, and Born, The New Architecture in Mexico. p. 15
147 The Pláticas sobre arquitectura were organized by the Mexican Society of Architects to consider the future of architecture in Mexico. It asked architecture professionals several key questions, such as What is architecture?, or What is functionalism? See: Carlos Ríos Garza et al., Pláticas sobre arquitectura Mexico, 1933 (México, D.F.: Facultad de Arquitectura, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2001).
more radical wing of the Revolution—served to establish a clear distance from the previous Obregón-Vasconcelos government and its Hispanist ideations, and helped reinforce official anti-clericalism after the Cristero War. The schools created under Bassols also addressed urban and proletarian concerns, reinforcing the alliance with labor that allowed the Maximato to better manage peasant forces, as it moved to stall agrarian reform. More importantly, as Rafael López Rangel argues, the emerging government bureaucracy under the Maximato found important overlaps with functionalism’s technical approach. As the Maximato moved through military, treasury (hacienda) and industrial reform, it created a governmental infrastructure that enabled and oversaw the need to challenge the figure of the artist-architect supported by a National University (UNM) and the SAM. These tensions resurfaced in 1937 when the Cárdenas Government subsumed the School of Construction within the newly formed Escuela Superior de Ingeniería y Arquitectura (ESIA, School of Engineering and Architecture) of the Instituto Politécnico Superior (National Polytechnic Institute).

Fernández’s article for Born was measured and controlled, and revealed little of this continuing controversy. It was difficult for a US audience to grasp the sense of urgency and confrontation, best articulated by Juan Legarreta in 1933 when he stated that “a people who live in hovels and round rooms can’t speak about architecture. We will make the houses of the people. Aesthetes and Rhetoricians—I hope you all die—will have their discussions later.” In 1937 Bassols was no longer Secretary of Education,

148 In 1929, Vasconcelos ran against Calles’ appointed presidential heir, Pascual Ortiz Rubio. As Juan O’Gorman pointed out, Vasconcelos’ colonial style schools—like the 1923 Benito Juárez designed by Carlos Obregón Santacilia—were not only expensive but resembled old monasteries; their libraries could be confused with churches. Juan O’Gorman, Autobiografía (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México; DGE Equilibrista, 2007). p. 112.
149 Ríos Garza et al., Pláticas sobre Arquitectura México, 1933. p. 3. Author’s translation.
and O’Gorman was already reconsidering his radical functionalism; a year later he abandoned architecture altogether and turned to realist painting. Nonetheless, he was still teaching at ESIA, along with engineer José A. Cuevas. With the creation of ESIA, the government sent a clear message to the architecture and planning professional communities that it would continue to create its own technicians, now within a full polytechnic institute that challenged the National University. To augment courses and create planning experts in the service of the state, the former Bauhaus director Hannes Meyer was invited by President Cárdenas himself in 1938 to reside in Mexico. In 1939, the Institute of Planning and Urbanism was created within the ESIA. A year earlier, the newly formed Unión de Arquitectos Socialistas (Union of Socialist Architects) presented its “Socialist Doctrine” along with its “Workers’ City” project in Mexico City.  

If Fernández had been too subtle for US audiences, Beach Riley was not so taciturn when his article for Born, “Social Progress and the New Architecture,” energetically championed functionalism. “This architecture,” Riley stated, “having grown out of the need to meet new social problems, finds its most congenial atmosphere and its healthiest growth in … social application.” Riley drew a politicized social and cultural spectrum where “a reactionary group who have consistently and loudly opposed every move of innovation or progress in the last two decades, ranging from agrarian reforms to the music of Carlos Chavez,” actively opposed the new architecture.  

The School of Construction, Riley emphasized, was connected to a “growing and powerful labor movement…[which] has taken up…the theoretical defense of modern architecture.” This, he argued, “affords an ideal field for this work,” but more importantly, it would help

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150 López Rangel, _La modernidad, arquitectónica mexicana: antecedentes y vanguardias, 1900-1940_. p. 102.
“influence the policy of the government.” The new architecture, Riley pointed out, offered an alternative image of Mexico to one dominated by “tourist guides and steamship circulars” that portrays a:

romantic country of ancient Indian and Spanish customs, a picturesque land of Fiestas, colorful native costumes, and guitar music. All this is true in its place, but it has been much publicized from the point of view and for the interest of the curio hunter that a wholly false impression had been created—the impression that Mexico is picturesquely primitive and backward—that it is a land of mañana where the Fiesta is of more importance than getting anything done. Nothing could be farther from the truth than this highly profitable myth.152

With these comments—which opened his article for Born—Riley took aim at the craft market and the tourist industry. The heightened nationalist sensibility of the Cárdenas period intersected with Mexican architectural culture at several points. Riley’s underscoring of architecture’s social application clearly pointed to Cárdenas’ reorientation of the Revolution after years of Maximato support for private industry and foreign investments. It also gestured to the consolidation of a program of social justice, which hinged on the development of workers housing, public education and health care under the aegis of the state beyond targeted symbolic projects.153 Architectural functionalism, as exemplified by O’Gorman’s schools, served this reorientation of

152 Ibid. p. 18. The reception of Reily’s views in Mexico was positive. His article was translated into Spanish and published in the journal Edificación. Beach Riley, "El progreso social en la nueva arquitectura," Edificación, no. 30 (December) (1939).

153 The two architectural benchmarks of these social programs were Villagán’s 1928-36 Tuberculosis Sanatorium and Muñoz García’s Central School of the Revolution. Both projects designed and built before the Cárdenas’ period were nonetheless subsumed within a rhetoric that underscored the progressive force of “the Revolution.”
governmental initiatives, enabling a continuity of goals and thus a normative narrative of the Revolution.

Another point of coincidence, highlighted by Riley, was the nascent tourism industry. Here, however, was a field of architectural production in which the debates over “style” and the image of Mexico gained a heightened significance. The Cárdenas government took clear initiatives to develop the tourism industry, with the creation of Banco de Crédito Hotelero (Hotel Credit Bank), which channeled public monies to help private companies such as Alberto Pani’s Compañía Explotadora de Hoteles (Hotel Development Company). Pani developed several hotels in Mexico City, such as the 1936 Hotel Reforma (Fig. 1.3) by Carlos Obregón Santacilia (and Pani’s nephew Mario Pani) that the newspaper Excélsior claimed, “marked a new era in the activities of tourism in our country.” Obregón Santacilia’s hotel exhibited a soft functionalism encoded with signs of mexicanidad, such as traditional tezontle stone—used to emphasize the vertical condition of the corner entry—and, in its interior, a mural by Rivera. This building represents a clear forerunner of Mexican architecture’s embrace of tradition, and a search for synthesis that will reach fruition in the early 1950s with the UNAM campus (Fig. 1.34). This landmark of the “new era” of Mexican tourism, however, was not included in Born’s The New Architecture in Mexico.

The Cárdenas administration consolidated the social initiatives of the Revolution, but, as Rafael López Rangel argues, it also saw the taming of radical functionalism and the beginnings of a dominant conservative posture within architectural circles that

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155 Ibid. p. 156
signaled the end of the social vanguards and the diminish public presence of muralism. With Born, one caught a glimpse of the complex Mexican architectural culture, still divided but also transforming under the pressures of economic expansion of private enterprise and the growth of the city through real estate developments or fraccionamientos. Fernández’s tempered essay provided a clearer mise-en scènè than did Riley’s, who was still preoccupied and seduced by revolutionary rhetoric, a rhetoric that had already been ritualized. A well-informed reader could have recognized and located the actors who were within this play provided by Born. There was O’Gorman (Fig. 1.35), who was portrayed as embodying the uncompromising radical position of collective socialism under functionalism seeking to demystify architecture by reducing it to a purely objective, material and technological process in the service of popular-proletarian needs. Cuevas (Fig. 1.35), the engineer who had launched the School of Construction (ESC) with O’Gorman, was clearly within the functionalist camp. Urbanist Carlos Contreras (Fig. 1.35) represented the new state interest in planning and territorial reorganization. Contreras had been trained at Columbia University and represented a progressive, yet tempered, view (some would say even conservative) within the planning apparatus of the state radicalized by the presence of Meyer. With these two figures, Mexican readers detected the unmistakable presence of the State.

“Advertising Man” Federico Sánchez Fogarty (Fig. 1.35) represented the growing Mexican private building industry, in particular the concrete industry, which had benefited from government projects and mobilized revolutionary messages through trade publications such as *Cemento* and *Tolteca*. Scholarship on these publications, especially *Tolteca*, has focused on how they helped negotiate and create an image of modern Mexico based on an internationalist functionalism in line with the ESC and O’Gorman’s views.159 Other than James Oles, few have underscored that Cementos Tolteca was British-owned.160 In a period of heightened nationalism and oil nationalization, as well as national consolidation,161 Born’s exaltation of Federico Sánchez Fogarty and his “pro-modern” internationalist propaganda intersected with various efforts to create an image of Mexico—of which *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* was a part—at a particular angle; corporate sponsorship and foreign interests were also behind functionalism and abstraction.

Through publications such as *Tolteca*, ideas of functionalist efficiency and capitalist profit coalesced.162 The growing industrial culture and its drive for efficiency breeched the implicit contradiction between the government’s social justice program (and the earlier socialist agenda of functionalist architects) and a developing capitalist market and culture.163 Functionalism’s ties to the burgeoning capitalist real estate market in

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161 These trade publications also articulate a regional field of contending economic forces between Mexico City (*Tolteca*) and Monterrey (*Cemento*).
163 Early on, O’Gorman’s drive for efficiency met the government’s bureaucratic drive for economy under Bassols. This “social action” deployed as social justice, as López Rangel argues, gave poor objects to the poor, clearly in tune with official state socialist ideology (under the Maximato) understood as “a cada quien
Mexico City was clearly present in Born’s agenda as seen through the works of such architects as Luis Barragán. His “Two-Family House,” being a private speculative project—something that was clearly pointed out in Born’s text—mobilized functionalism for capitalist purposes in “the fashionable Parque Hippodromo” (Fig. 1.36).

Functionalism was then not only a question of solving the social needs of the working classes by the vanguard of state experts but also “the vanguard of taste” itself. This, and other examples—such as Enrique de la Mora and José Creixell’s “Office Building” for the German industrial giant Siemens—clearly articulated the private and commercial world of non-governmental “new” architecture.

At the same time, functionalism advanced a progressive image for a middle class looking to identify itself with the progressive social justice message of the Revolution and with an intellectual and artistic intelligentsia. In Enrique Yañez’s apartment building located on Avenida Martí, “a new middle class,” Born argued, “educated, but of moderate means” lived “in the present [rejecting] the trappings of the former Díaz regime.” During the Cárdenas period, functionalism and its architects were able to provide a middle ground between the social policies of the Government and the needs of the private sector, and there was no better example of this middle ground than José Villagrán García.

Villagrán Garcia (Fig. 1.35) represented the reform movement within the School of Architecture of the National University (UNM), a progressive yet decidedly moderate
force that aimed to reconcile radical leftist forces and conservative traditionalist ones.\(^\text{166}\)

This line was clearly represented, in Born, by Villagrán García’s early work; the remnants of classical composition, the reliance on symmetry and the clear recourse to a soft monumentality in his 1926-36 Tuberculosis Sanatorium in Huipulco (Fig. 1.37) revealed a Beaux-Arts training that was the ideological core of the Mexican Society of Architects. More important, however, were his own words, published by Born under “Architectural Doctrine of José Villagrán García.” As a spokesperson and guide to the new architecture in Mexico, Villagrán García “asserted leadership through his philosophy.”\(^\text{167}\) Villagrán García—who had been teaching theory at UNM since 1927—listed four factors that conditioned the architectural problems of Mexico: poverty, unknown programs, lack of culture and atavism. The problems of poverty and lack of culture were officially recognized problems by the Cárdenas administration. Ignorance and Poverty, two of the “true causes that led to the Revolution” drew and conditioned the expanded role of the state under Cardenismo.\(^\text{168}\) Villagrán García did underscore a “lack of culture” that was “accentuated by the great numbers of ‘merchants of constructions,’” pointing to the problem of private development. As Patrice Elizabeth Olsen argues, the Cárdenas period saw a considerable increase in real estate speculation in the Mexico City. This was due to the relative low-risk associated with real estate investment, and also to “Legislation pertaining to the creation of ejidos [communal peasant lands] that...had less impact in the DF (Federal District).” Real estate companies such as Fraccionamientos Modernos or Compañía Fraccionadora de Terrenos benefited from a lack of a Plano

\(^{166}\) Between 1920 and 1931 there were three educational reforms in the architecture school, and another three during the Cárdenas government. See: López Rangel, *La modernidad arquitectónica mexicana: antecedentes y vanguardias, 1900-1940.* p. 169-171.


Regulador (master plan) that was still being studied (Born had included it in her book), by a lack of enforcement of existing and new regulations that attempted to control development, and by the Mexican Constitution itself—which reaffirmed the right to private property. The “lack of culture” created by the “merchants of construction” had a great impact on the problem of housing and was a key factor in the debate over worker housing, a context present in Born. Villagrán García, however, was not forthcoming on this issue.

He underscored the need to develop new architectural programs for novel institutions whose functions were “indefinite or in perpetual evolution.” He was referring to his Instituto Nacional de Cardiología (Fig. 1.38 National Cardiology Institute), the first of its kind, where ground had just been broken in 1937 and which would open in 1944. Mexican audiences would possibly have made the connection between “unknown programs” and the social directives of the Cárdenas administration with its creation of new institutions. It would perhaps be more difficult for a US reader to have made the connection. Villagrán García’s notion of atavism, however, would have rung clear to US ears. His exhortation for Mexicans to better manage their atavistic tendencies, to “control our naturally rebellious racial temperament,” played well with stereotypes of Mexicans already established by revolutionary violence in countless newspapers in the United States (Fig. 1.39). This atavism over-determined the role of architecture, which for Villagrán García was to “set forth…and make known the peculiarities” and “take an active and leading part in the evolution of our people.”

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169 Ibid. p. 217-222.
Villagrán García’s concern over atavism brings forth the problem of the past, the recurrence of an ancestral trait as presented by Montenegro in the MoMA exhibition, and its correct management in the present. In Villagrán the atavistic impulse framed tradition in a negative fashion. Rather than focusing on the question of racial temperament highlighted by Villagán himself, I want to focus on the question of cultural management of the past as organized by the Mexican government during Cárdenas. The creation of the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) in 1938, as López has studied, consolidated management of Mexico’s cultural and artistic past in this institution, taking it away from the “left-oriented Ministry of Education” and the dissolution of its Departamento de Monumentos Artísticos, Arqueológicos e Históricos (Department of Artistic, Archeological and Historic Monuments, DMAAH). The institutional setting in which architects had engaged anthropologists, historians, artists and art historians since Minister Vasconcelos and later Bassols, was eliminated. The DMAAH had been within the Ministry of Education since it creation in 1930; with a genealogy that went back to 1921, it preceeded Brazil’s National Historic and Artistic Patrimony Service (SPHAN) created in 1937 under Gustavo Capanema’s Ministry of Education and Health.

In Mexico, this erasure of the institutional setting in which architects could engage the

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172 López, *Crafting Mexico: Intellectuals, Artisans, and the State after the Revolution*. p. 138. López argues, following Daryl Williams that “SPHAN intentionally underplayed the importance of popular culture and excluded the black and indigenous experience, embracing instead an understanding of Brazilianness that tended to exalt Luso-Catholic above all cultural traditions.” p. 138. As Marcia Chuva points out, this view, although correct in certain aspects, was more complex, since the presence of other cultural traditions in Brazil were decidedly incorporated in SPHAN’s journal.
management of tradition institutionalized the separation between the past and the present in architecture. The centralization of cultural management of the Mexican past excluded modern architects. There seemed to be no need to articulate an integrated vision. Unlike in Brazil, there was no official institutional platform from which to offer a synthesis between past and present in architecture and thus complete the picture of *mexicanidad*. This was the key reason why *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* did no include modern Architecture.

The guidelines for *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art*, drawn only months before the material was sent to the US, revealed lingering concerns over architecture. As late of February 1940, McAndrew highlighted the need, when reviewing the Modern section under Covarrubias, to “add architecture.”¹⁷³ Architecture had been at the forefront of McAndrew’s mind from the very beginning. On reviewing Dezarrois’ plans for the Paris exhibition he noted how the “most important art of the [colonial] period is certainly architecture.”¹⁷⁴ One can see here the beginnings of an interest in the colonial architecture of Mexico that McAndrew would develop later in his career.¹⁷⁵ McAndrew helped Toussaint organize and select the materials on colonial architecture, making it understandable “for the New York public.”¹⁷⁶ His interest went beyond the colonial and included folk and modern architecture. By March 1940 he had identified the photographic sources (Kahlo, Brehme, Yañez and Lola Alvarez Bravo) for the presentation of a material on folk architecture that had never been shown before. This

¹⁷³ Letter, John E. Abbott to Alfred Barr, February 15, 1940. Folder 1354, Series L, Box 138, Record Group 4 NAR Papers, RAC.
¹⁷⁴ Memo, John McAndrew to Alfred Bar, “Notes on Dezarrois’ Prospectus”, October 19, 1939. Exh. 106 REG, MoMA Archives, NY.
¹⁷⁵ See: McAndrew, *The Open-Air Churches of Sixteenth-Century Mexico: Atrios, Posas, Open Chapels, and Other Studies*.
material, however, McAndrew found difficult to make intelligible. Less difficult was the Modern architecture section which he had already done part of the “fieldwork.”177 It is difficult to say exactly why, in the end, modern architecture was abandoned in the MoMA show. What is certain, is that the Mexicans did not have an integrated perspective of their architectural history. In his contribution to Born’s book, Fernández—who helped Toussaint in the selection of colonial architecture for the MoMA exhibition—drove a wedge between colonial architecture and functionalism. By starting his account with the neoclassical turn in Mexico under Manuel Tolsá and his 1797 School of Mines building, along with the establishment of the Royal School of Fine Arts of San Carlos in 1781, he made clear the origin of Mexican functionalism (Fig. 1.40). Fernández reinforced this genealogy of functionalism when he underscored the technical aspects of the art school, refurbished in 1843 as the School of Engineering and Architecture. The simplicity of the neoclassical style, Fernández argued, “had begun the conquest…over baroque and the variegated ‘churriguera,’” and although eclecticism had dominated the scene in the nineteenth century and there “were efforts to revive the old baroque, and Nationalism bethought itself of dressing its facades with pre-Cortésian Indian sculpture,” the neoclassical influence withstood, since some “buildings…were based on logical structure.”178 This separation between colonial and modern architecture was replayed in 1940 with the exclusion of modernism from Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art, this time, however, by Manuel Toussaint. In the catalogue for the exhibition, Toussaint—rebuffing Fernández—underscored the artificiality of what he saw as an academic neoclassical revival. “If it were not,” he pointed out “for certain great artists who have left us a few

177 Ibid.
buildings and statues and an occasional painting the whole period might be considered negligible." Toussaint transformed the neoclassical inheritance from a rigorous rationality manifesting in “logical structure[s]” that established a direct link to modernist rationalism to that of a strict academic style that countered and decimated the vitality of the “vigorous Mexican baroque.” If modern architecture had its root in neoclassical rigor, modern architecture in Mexico had no sign of *mexicanidad*.

The baroque tradition then was a multi-valance tradition, seen both as a source of vitality continued through popular and high art and as as an atavistic tradition to be surmounted. Villagrán García’s own attitude over Mexican’s atavistic tendencies highlighted his cautious approach to the Mexican baroque and other popular traditions. The new architecture was understood as a socially productive sphere with only faint overlaps with Mexican art and traditional culture. Fernández refrained from elaborating a direct contact between the new architecture and the muralist school thus diminishing any possible link to an atavistic tradition. The architectural past as manifested in the neocolonial style remained an important force in Mexican architectural and political culture, playing a central role in the symbolic representation of *mexicanidad* as in the Petróleos Mexicanos Building (1938-40, Fig. 1.41), constructed to commemorate the nationalization of the oil industry. Born made some concessions to this neocolonial and

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180 Ibid. p. 70. Toussaint did not need to take aim at Fernández’s article; he was most likely rebutting Fernández’s book, *El arte moderno en México; breve historia, siglos XIX y XX* (México, DF: J. Porrúa e hijos, 1937), where he stated that “the last days of the colonial period were as magnificent in the execution of neoclassical works, as those in the ultra baroque or churriguersesco.” p. 38.

181 It is important to highlight that the Secretaría de Educación Pública’s functionalist schools incorporated murals primarily in their interiors, and not, as in the later works of Mexican modern architecture of the late 1940s and early 1950s on main public façades. The loss of the patio typology in architectural modernism may have contributed to this difficult relationship between mural painters and architects.
peasant-populist architecture by including Ignacio Díaz Morales’ house for Sr. Elosúa, in Guadalajara that, built out of “adobe,” incorporated traditionalists motifs and techniques (Fig. 1.42). Sanchez Fogarty also included this house, along his tempered criticism of Le Corbusier’s *machine à habiter*, as a testimony of a “civil life” that had gone beyond the cities of Mexico and “literally overruns the country.”

Fogarty’s claim that the new architecture had breached the country-city divide, however, appeared hollow, since the house was in a key industrial city, Guadalajara. Although he juxtaposed it with images of traditional adobe and thatch rural houses in the countryside these images, abstracted through the elimination of any signs of life, only went so far (Fig. 1.43). In all the argument of a synthesis between modernism and traditional building practices remained incipient and primarily a visual one. It seemed clear that a synthesis of tradition in its various forms and modern architecture had not been achieved, because modern architects had no clear image of *mexicanidad* from which to offer a synthesis. The separation between colonial and modern Mexican architecture is fundamental to understand not only the absence of modern architecture from *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* but also to contextualize the international success of Brazilian modernism and its metonymic capacity to represent a vital and modern “Latin American” architectural culture.

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183 The tensions between the socialist project and a capitalist society intersect throughout Born’s book. The emphasis on O’Gorman’s schools as on workers housing signals the socialist project. This, however, was juxtaposed to the overwhelming presence of private houses, which revealed a developing middle and professional class. The Mexican revolution was a mixed and hybrid social project. As Gilly underscores, it was not drawn from an ideological program but rather made on the ground. More problematic with respect to the socialist agenda were speculative projects such as Luis Barragán’s “Speculation House” presented by Born.
Architectural Debuts

In May 7, 1939 the Brazilian Pavilion at the New York world’s Fair opened its doors to visitors. The pavilion demonstrated the solid relationship and the deep commitment to Western Hemispheric collaboration by the largest country in the Americas. It was the architectural expression of the “ideal atmosphere … mutual faith and confidence” created by the Good Neighbor policy, a policy the pavilion memorialized in its Good Neighbor Hall. In all, the pavilion underscored the unique geographical and historical ties between Brazil and the United States by commemorating, for example, Theodore Roosevelt’s explorations of the Brazilian hinterland. The narrative of similarity, connection and parallel between both countries was a key achievement performed in and through the pavilion. Resemblance, at the same time, did not impede singularity, difference and national individuality. Brazil projected itself as a familiar difference. Any contradiction, any possible strident note in this paradoxical image was overcome by a progressive modernism able to articulate both national character and international culture. This was the pavilion’s greatest feat of adaptation.

It seems, however, that the pavilion caught everyone by surprise—even the Museum of Modern Art, an institution dedicated to the celebration and consolidation of international modern culture. The enduring and historical friendship between both countries proclaimed by the Brazilian pavilion was tenuous, built on episodic bursts of US interest in Latin America, which, as Helen Delpar has demonstrated, tended to neglect
Brazil. The pavilion helped fuel a “new awareness of the significance of Brazil.”

MoMA moved quickly to remedy its oversight, opening an exhibition—*Portinari of Brazil* (October 9-November 17, 1940)—containing key works shown in the Brazilian pavilion. The overlaps between the World’s Fair and MoMA, the attempts to weave together Flushing Meadows and the museum in Manhattan, began a Pan American dialogue that gained complexity and heightened importance during the war. As publicized in the *New York Times*, MoMA’s *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* had been scheduled for “the benefit of visitors to the second year of the [1939 New York] World’s Fair.”

With this, the Mexican exhibition was tacitly linked with the official Mexican presentation at the Fair centered in the Mexican Pavilion. *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* did not officially overlap with the Mexican exhibit in Flushing Meadows; the museum was not directly involved in any of its exhibits. If *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* was a clear product of Good Neighbor collaboration, this partnership—unlike *Portinari of Brazil*—was contained at 53rd Street. MoMA nonetheless recognized and articulated a nascent Pan Americanist narrative and the need to create a unified region, weaving together the Mexican and Brazilian exhibitions. By extending the Mexican exhibit and by contextualizing the Portinari murals of the Brazilian pavilion within a larger muralist tradition, MoMA enacted a seamless Latin American culture.

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185 The museum did not extend such efforts to build cultural ties with European countries represented in the Fair, such as Finland, which was under Soviet, political and military pressure, or England, which use the World’s Fair to enlist the help and sympathy of the United States. *Stockholm Builds* (August 4-September 8, 1941) is an exception; it, however, could not consider the Swedish pavilion as part of its cultural strategies.

186 “Mexican Art Show Will Held Here.”, p. 23.


188 Only the Pre-Spanish section was extended; the Modern Art section was sent to tour the United States. It is important to highlight the impact of *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art*. As MoMA argued, “if publicity is
The Portinari show was MoMA’s first important step to embrace a larger Latin America both geographically and culturally. Modern architecture in the region could no longer be disregarded.

**Pavilions**

Unlike Brazil, Mexico did not present a stand-alone pavilion in the 1939 World’s Fair. Mexico was represented in the standard spaces of the Hall of Nations facing the Court of Peace, a building composed of adjoining rectangular two-story pavilions in modernistic fashion (a mix of Art Deco motifs, streamline design and large glass façades) that characterized the architectural harmony demanded by the Fair’s Board of Design. In the first floor of its pavilion, Mexico presented its pre-Columbian and colonial past through original and life-size reproductions of archeological objects, like the Aztec Calendar stone, and by large photographs of its pyramids. The rear of the first floor celebrated the Spanish colonial period through religious and secular art objects and presented the modernization of Mexico’s transportation infrastructure along with contemporary art works such as Rómulo Rozo’s “La Raza –Race” (Fig. 2.1). In the second floor, an “original carved colonial arch helps to make the transition between old

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190 “Weather Brings out a Throng of Fairgoers; the Mexican Pavilion is Dedicated; Mexican Consul Tells Nation's Aim Citizens to Redouble Efforts to Aid Democracy, He Says at Pavilion Aviator Also a Guest Non-Stop Airman Asserts He Made Flight in Interest of Good-Will an Apology for Whalen Envoy Sends a Message," *The New York Times*, May 28 1939. p. 20.
and new days … verify the assertion [made] on the upper floor that all along the route in Mexico tourists will find wonderful scenes, archeological sites, attractive cities, native customs and colonial architecture.” As the *Bulletin of the Pan American Union* emphasized, the exhibits at the Mexican pavilion were aimed at US tourists: “don’t forget some of the numerous travel pamphlets to help plan your trip. Your car will carry you to Mexico … try the fine highway from Laredo to Mexico City.”191 With large bright posters that claimed: “Eternal Springtime—The Climate You Like” or “Mexico 5 Times Cheaper Than Anywhere” (Fig. 2.2), the pavilion underscored one of Mexico’s primary industries: tourism.

The Brazilians also made clear overtures to their own tourism industry. One of the official publications, *Travel in Brazil* (Fig. 2.3), inserted the country within a “trend of touristic traffic [that] creates the necessity for advertisement material that not only seeks to lure the visitor, but … strives to direct him.”192 The Brazilians understood the difference between luring and guiding potential tourists by highlighting itineraries that showed “the country’s outstanding attractions and [also enabled] to study her economic possibilities.”193 Unlike Mexico that, as the *New York Times* reported, had “items of handicraft and folk art of interest to prospective tourists” shown in its pavilion, Brazil exhibited none.194 Brazil also could not compete with Mexico on the ease of travel offered by highway connections between the US and Mexico, a fact stressed in the

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193 Ibid. p. 10.
194 “Weather Brings out a Throng of Fairgoers; the Mexican Pavilion is Dedicated; Mexican Consul Tells Nation's Aim Citizens to Redouble Efforts to Aid Democracy, He Says at Pavilion Aviator Also a Guest Non-Stop Airman Asserts He Made Flight in Interest of Good-Will an Apology for Whalen Envoy Sends a Message.” p. 20. Brazil did show the craft of indigenous populations, “Adornos indigenas,” in the mezzanine. The press chose to suppress this; so did the official album, which presented no photographic record of the indigenous crafts exhibited.
Mexican exhibit. If in 1937 Esther Born had included the model of the Pan American Highway Bridge that connected Mexico and the United States in her presentation of the new architecture of Mexico, the pavilion made evident that such connections, as well as via train and air, were indeed a real and feasible option for US tourists (Fig. 2.4). The Mexican pavilion also contained reproductions of paintings (some of them for sale) by its famed muralists along with popular arts, posters and books. The intent was to showcase “the diverse artistry of the early Mexicans, handed down so richly to their present day descendants.” The pavilion clearly repeated the theme of MoMA’s *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art*. Displays followed the celebration of ancient and popular art and their relation to Mexican modern art, primarily painting and sculpture. As in the MoMA exhibit, modern architecture was missing.

Although MoMA claimed no direct imprint on the Mexican pavilion, the general attitude of the Mexican exhibition organizers had a clear impact. The pavilion acted as a kind of warehouse, storing any excess from the MoMA show. This general attitude, present in the museum, underscored the connection and the hidden hierarchy in MoMA’s views between the two sites, and the “correct” representation of *mexicanidad*. This directionality and aesthetic hierarchy was clearly reversed by the Brazilian pavilion, which lent its Portinari’s mural panels to MoMA. The Brazilian pavilion presented a complete modern culture (Fig. 2.5). It allowed for a narrative of seamless topography of modernism that facilitated the connection between Flushing Meadows and 53rd Street, and Brazil and the United States at multiple levels. The Mexican pavilion’s, at times,

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196 Abbott points out that any “surplus should be sent to the Mexican Pavilion at the World’s Fair.” John E. Abbott to Alfred Barr, February 15, 1940. Folder 1354, Series L, Box 138, Record Group 4 NAR Papers, RAC
antiquarian cluttered juxtaposition of disparate objects and techniques contrasted with MoMA’s stylized curatorial choices. This pavilion was full of museum curiosities. In this, it recalled nineteenth century Latin American pavilions at world exhibitions full of “anthropological” exotica.\(^{197}\) The Mexican pavilion revealed a representational tradition that the Brazilians were eager to abandon.\(^{198}\) The contrast with Paul Lester Wiener’s highly celebrated exhibition designs must have been severe (Fig. 2.6). It clearly singled out the Brazilian exhibit among other Latin American nations. Wiener, however, also designed the exhibitions for the Ecuadorian pavilion. Neither the press, nor Wiener himself, commented on these.

The Brazilian pavilion chose to focus on industrial culture. Unlike Mexico, Brazil did not have a developed leisure industry connected to the United States and thus linked tourism to industrial development; this, however, was not unique: Mexico incorporated this approach, by displaying a “large industrial map of Mexico.”\(^{199}\) The celebration of industrial culture in both countries, however, had different undertones. In Mexico, as already argued, it would bring forth the controversy over oil nationalization. For the government of Getulio Vargas, the celebration of industrial culture was tied to less-controversial natural resources such as coffee. “Coffee will be emphasized in the exhibit,” the *New York Times* reported in May 1938, the “process from cultivation of the bean to its brewing will be illustrated.” Coffee, however, also manifested a lighthearted agriculturally dependent nation. The pavilion, its exhibits, as well as the Brazilian official


\(^{199}\) "Weather Brings out a Throng of Fairgoers; the Mexican Pavilion is Dedicated; Mexican Consul Tells Nation's Aim Citizens to Redouble Efforts to Aid Democracy, He Says at Pavilion Aviator Also a Guest Non-Stop Airman Asserts He Made Flight in Interest of Good-Will an Apology for Whalen Envoy Sends a Message." p. 20
narrative, attempted to insert this tropical nation within an industrial sphere of interest. In this, it tacitly but decisively unfolded the context of an impending world war conflict.

The pavilion had to interrupt the narratives of primitivism and backwardness deployed through countless means and that were well-entrenched in US popular opinion. The Brazilian pavilion was under the institutional sphere of the Ministry of Labor, Industry and Commerce, and it aimed at presenting “exhibits of interest to the importer of Brazilian products, to the industrialist interested in new markets and to the traveler and tourist.”

Brazilian organizers were deeply interested and concerned with the way the pavilion would bestow a sense of national character and about which image of Brazil the pavilion would generate in New York audiences. As Daryl Williams has eloquently argued, the Brazilians “struggled to find a vocabulary appropriate for US ears.” The pavilion had to veer away from any form of excessive tropical exotica. The pavilion, as Commissioner General Armando Vidal requested, had to dignify Brazil through an “austere” simple and “severe” language that would distance, if not completely erase, the mind of fairgoers from the established picture of “tropical nations as carefree, chaotic, or underdeveloped.”

Brazil was not to be perceived as a light-hearted nation. The pavilion was to highlight the Brazilian economy by emphasizing the connections between primary materials and their industrial application. The press, however, grabbed hold of the tropical theme from the very beginning.

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200 “World Fair Pavilion Planned by Brazil; Contract for $200,000 Exhibit Building is Let Here,” *The New York Times*, August 11 1938.
As the *Times* highlighted, Brazil planned a “Tropical Pavilion.” The *New York Times* first advanced the tropical imprint by underscoring a pavilion of “tropical design” accompanied by a “tropical garden and an aviary filled with tropical birds.” The design by “Lucio Costa and O. Niemayer [sic] Filho …will include slender columns, a story above the ground level, affording a full view of the entire plot and giving accent to the tropical garden.” The focus on the tropical garden continued, by emphasizing that the tropical trees would be brought from Rio de Janeiro’s Botanical Gardens and that these trees would include seven royal palms. “A large veranda will overlook the garden,” which had a pool and fountain at its center. (It is most likely that the writer had seen the model and/or the sketches of the proposed pavilion; the model had been published in the May issue of the *Magazine of Art*, Fig. 2.7). The *Times* highlighted how the “entire wall facing the enclosed garden will be of glass,” and pointed out “the sculptural group” left of the auditorium placed on the “veranda.” The sculpture appeared in the model and the sketches but was not included in the final building. Bewildering, however, was the emphasis on the seven royal palms absent in any representation and description of the proposed pavilion. The royal palm trees point to a key project of Brazilian modernism: the Ministry of Education of Health (MES). The final 1937 proposal for the Ministry building elaborated by Costa and his Brazilian team incorporated two sets of royal palm trees disposed in linear fashion—seven on the south side and five on the north side of the site. The model and drawings of the MES also incorporated a mock-up of Celso

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203 *Tropical Pavilion Planned by Brazil; $1,000,000 Display at World's Fair to Include Garden and an Aviary Coffee to be Emphasized Rare Birds and Plants Will be Brought Here, Including Seven Royal Palms,* *The New York Times*, May 31 1938.
204 Ibid.
205 Ibid.
206 Le Corbusier had incorporated the royal palm tree in his August 1936 proposal.
Antônio’s 1938 sculpture “Homen brasileiro” (Brazilian Man), which was transposed to Costa and Niemeyer’s pavilion proposal. It seems a case can be made that the writer of the Times article conflated both buildings\(^\text{207}\) (Fig. 2.8; Fig. 2.9).

There were other markers that pointed to exuberance and excess, underscoring the tropical character of the Brazilians—such as the $1,000,000 US dollars spent by the Brazilian government in the endeavor. This amount first grabbed the imagination of the press in September 1937. These monetary figures proved to a US public the effects of Pan American diplomatic efforts made on behalf of the Fair, such as Edward F. Roosevelt’s “five month’s airplane tour of … Latin American nations” to gauge interest and, as Fair commissioner, sell the Fair. Monetary expenditures turned into clear symbolic gestures. The Brazilian expenditure, which partly helped secured the site, was part of the procedural aspects, such as setting a budget.\(^\text{208}\) “Now that we have a definite amount of space allotted to us,” the Brazilian Minister of Labor, Industry and Commerce, Rafael Correa de Oliveira highlighted, “we shall proceed at once with architectural plans and with development of the exhibits.” Certainty over space, intent and budgets bestowed a sense of symbolic Brazilian leadership for the region. “I am sure,” de Oliveira concluded, “you may also expect a large attendance from my country and from all South America.”\(^\text{209}\) The idea of a Brazilian leadership of Latin American nations was present

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\(^{207}\) The transposition is far more complex, since the sculpture, which appears in the pavilion’s sketches and model, was not Antônio’s but rather Ernesto de Fioti’s “Homen brasileiro.” Costa and Niemeyer transposed the controversy over Antônio’s 1938 sculpture. See: Maurício Lissovsky and Paulo Sérgio Moraes de Sá, *Colunas da Educação: A Construção do Ministério da Educação E Saúde, 1935-1945* (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: Ministério da Cultura Fundação Getúlio Vargas, Centro de Pesquisa e Documentação da História Contemporânea do Brasil, 1996). Chapter 4.

\(^{208}\) This seems particularly important since a key complaint about the competition call for the pavilion was the complete absence of a budget. See: "Exposição Mundial De Nova York," *Arquitetura e Urbanismo* 3, no. 1 (Jan-Feb.) (1938), p. 53.

\(^{209}\) "Brazil to Spend $1,000,000 at Fair; Nation's Official Spokesman Signs Contract for 48,000 Square Feet of Space," *The New York Times*, September 11 1937.
from the very beginning when Brazil announced its participation in 1937, the first of the Latin American nations. This implied a cascading principle—other Latin American countries would follow—and intensified in late 1939 due to the loss of European exhibitors. The large amount spent by Brazil—a country characterized by Lucio Costa as “poor”—gave it considerable rhetorical leverage (Mexico spent only $30,000 USD), and in the views of the New York Times explained “the many other unusual features” of the pavilion.

One of these “unusual features,” which the non-architectural press had some difficulty in framing, was its architectural style; a style that, as reported early on in August 1938, “will be in architecture typical of Brazil.” Rearticulating the address given by the Brazilian Ambassador on the May 1939 official opening of the building, the Times underscored how the “striking design” disabused visitors “of the impression that South America’s biggest republic consists mainly of coffee plantations, Rio de Janeiro and Sugar Loaf Mountain.” The official Brazilian narrative attempted to counter any emphasis on tropical themes. It underscored the pavilion’s “modernistic” design—“Executed with the use of much glass and painted white”—to highlight Brazil’s recent history. This recent history brought it closer to the United States. These were two nations similar in “political institutions and international feelings” that had a common

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211 "World Fair Pavilion Planned by Brazil; Contract for $200,000 Exhibit Building is Let Here." The building only cost $200,000, the rest was for exhibitions. The general contractor was Hegeman-Harris Company, an important construction company known however for their classical buildings such as the 1925 Harvard Business School (http://www.library.hbs.edu/hc/buildinghbs/the-campus-emerges.html) (Accessed Oct 2011) and the 1931 Union League Club in Manhattan. See NY Landmarks Commission, Designation List 449, LP-2389.
212 "Brazil to Spend $1,000,000 at Fair; Nation’s Official Spokesman Signs Contract for 48,000 Square Feet of Space."
213 "Brazil’s Pavilion Stresses History; Good-Neighbor Policy There for 200 Years Aided in Setting Border Rows," The New York Times, May 20, 1939.
bond: “the lack of any wish to conquer and disrupt the lives of other nations.” The political character of Brazil as being progressive and democratic was firmly installed from the very beginning alongside Brazilian modernism. Modernism was the aesthetic code that brought Brazil and the United States together under the banner of democracy.

Difference, the “Tropical Background,” however, was never far behind. It was not that the Brazilian official interpretation was trying to hide tropical nature; rather it attempted to control and guide how it would be interpreted in the United States. As already highlighted, the pavilion had an aviary and a pond with tropical flowers; it also had a snake pit—a feature quickly dropped by most news sources. What is important to my argument is that the Brazilians chose to present tropical nature in connection to advances in medicine and industry. The intent was to portray the Amazon region as a site of exploitation, as a source of “inexhaustible natural resources.” This tension between a productive nature, ready for exploitation, and a picturesque nature was clearly manifested in the non-architectural press. The tropical, exotic and lighthearted nature, however, seemed to have had the upper hand. As Jorge Francisco Liernur points out, this image of Brazil as a lighthearted nation was fueled by Hollywood’s infatuation with

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214 “Tropical Background Sets Off the Brazilian Display; Brazil's Pavilion Opened by Envoy Two Largest Nations of New World Pledge Friendship-- Crowds at Ceremony Ambassador Praises City New York Could Be Chosen as Earth's Pavilion, He Holds-- Whalen Welcomes Display," *The New York Times*, May 8 1939.

215 The pavilion had “a miniature Butantan snake farm.” "World Fair Pavilion Planned by Brazil; Contract for $200,000 Exhibit Building Is Let Here.” The Butantan Institute is a biomedical research center established in São Paulo in 1901. See: http://www.butantan.gov.br/home/ (Accessed November 2011). On Brazil medical advances see: "Brazil's Pavilion Stresses History; Good-Neighbor Policy There for 200 Years Aided in Setting Border Rows."


Carmen Miranda and by the pavilion’s engagements with Brazilian popular music. The celebration of tropicalism in the press highlighted the general preoccupation in the US over an impending war and offered a momentary escape. With its exhibit on the industrial application of Brazilian products, however, the pavilion was full of reminders of an impending world conflict.

Brazilian efforts successfully veiled the dictatorial government that had enabled such a daring contribution to the Fair. The tensions between picturesque and productive nature, between a nascent industrialization and agricultural production as well as between national and regional leadership were present once Brazil announced its participation in the Fair and continued when it revealed its striking pavilion. The serious monetary investment helped draw attention to a progressive and optimistic nation ready to be a world player in the concert of democratic nations. If the Brazilians were unsuccessful in containing the exoticism of tropical nature, they were able to control its political association since rarely, if ever, was “President Vargas” or the pavilion associated with dictatorship. Like New York itself, the pavilion was “Young and daring in architectural conception, teeming with life, eager to master all that signifies progress.”

Early on the *New York Times* carried the theme of a building lifted on “slender columns” allowing for transparency in its ground floor as characteristic of Brazilian and tropical architecture. Its celebration of the garden, the “veranda” and the glass façade—short of formal interpretation but hitting all key architectural moves—revealed the impact that the building had even in the lay press. Key elements, such as the brise-soleil and the

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219 "Tropical Background Sets Off the Brazilian Display: Brazil's Pavilion Opened by Envoy Two Largest Nations of New World Pledge Friendship-- Crowds at Ceremony Ambassador Praises City New York Could Be Chosen as Earth's Pavilion, He Holds-- Whalen Welcomes Display."
ramp, however, were unmentioned. For this, one had to turn to the architectural press, which introduced an more ambivalent national reading highlighting the metonymic capacity of Brazilian modernism and its ability to represent Latin America as a whole.

An infectious Latin American spirit

The Italian *Architettura* was the first European journal to pick up the pavilion, celebrating the tropical aviary and gardens in its October 1938 description of the model. At the same time, however, it underscored the vast terrace and the access ramp and, more important, its “steel piloti,” which allowed for its open plan and visual freedom on the ground floor. Marcelo Piacentini’s journal of the Syndicate of National Fascist Architects was the first international architectural journal to include the Brazilian pavilion within the general coverage of the New York Fair, and its inclusion appears more informative than celebratory. Piacentini had strong connections with Brazil and the Vargas regime. In 1935, he had been invited to Rio to design the University City, another education project under Minister Capanema, perhaps more important than the Ministry of Education itself. Piacentini was in Rio at the same time as Le Corbusier

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220 "L'exposizione di Nova York 1939," *Architettura*, no. 10 October (1938), p. 598. Images of the finished pavilion appeared in the July 1939 edition. The date is significant since Costa’s sketches were published in Brazil in June 1939.

221 If inclusion is a sign of celebration—this is basically the argument of the few authors who have examined the publication of the Brazilian pavilion—then the pavilion is indeed celebrated. It is, however, difficult, to determine what exactly is being noted, since one finds, as in the case of *Casabella*, that the pavilion is accompanied by such diverse stylistic representations as those of Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, not to mention the Aviation and the Westinghouse Pavilion.

222 It is hard to believe that Piacentini did not get involved in the MES competition, since a year later, Costa secured Le Corbusier as consultant for the actual building. For Piacentini’s participation in the university project as well as the MES see: Zilah Quezado Deckker, *Brazil Built: The Architecture of the Modern Movement in Brazil* (New York: E&FN Spon, 2000), p. 27-29. Quezado does not see any involvement of Piacentini in the MES.
and remained involved in the university project until 1938. In its July 1939 edition, *Architettura* dedicated an entire page with images of the pavilion; these images, which did not include any commentary, were within spreads that presented general views of the Fair. The Brazilian pavilion did indeed appear as a shock when compared to the monotonous Fair buildings. Immediately preceding the Brazilian pavilion was the Italian one, in full Fascist glory (Fig. 2.10). Giuseppe Pagano’s *Casabella* pursued the same celebration of Fascist architecture within the context of the Italian contribution to the Fair. This time, however, the confrontation of styles was made evident. Revealing a decidedly modern eye, *Casabella* presented dynamic images which stressed a diagonal composition in an attempt to break the heavy monumental axiality of Fascist architecture (Fig. 2.11). The interior of the Brazilian pavilion was enlisted in this battle of styles, in a spread that also included interior views of the Italian, Swedish and Dutch pavilions. The comparisons offered by *Architettura* and *Casabella* present mediated positions with respect to modernist language, in a moment when architectural style was part of the political management of culture in Brazil’s Estado Novo and its battle to craft a unified Brazilian nation. The influence that Italy could exercise over the cultural image of the Vargas regime was, however, best played out in Rio, not in New York.

The journal of the American Federation of Arts, *Magazine of Art*, produced the first critical examination of the Fair, commencing sharply on the commercial character of


\[224\] The spread preceding the Brazilian pavilion includes views of the New Mexico pavilion identified in *Architettura* as “reconstruction of typical buildings of southern states.” “Visita alla Fiera Mondiale di Nuova York,” *Architettura*, no. 7 July (1939), p. 406.


\[226\] Williams, *Culture Wars in Brazil: The First Vargas Regime, 1930-1945*, misses the connection with Piacentini.
the fair and a clear regional construct of Latin America through the modern style set forth by Brazil (Fig.2.7). In its May 1939 issue, US architectural critic Frederick A. Gutheim criticized the corporate pavilions, as “enlarged architectural models.” The Fair, with its “ridiculous” Beaux-Arts plan, was a “Versailles park” of monotonous overgrown pavilions, a sea of corporate and consumer signs that tried to hide the fact that this was a place where vulgar products were sold. No wonder the Brazilian pavilion came as a shock, being “close to breath-taking.”

If there was anything architecturally worthwhile at the Fair, Gutheim insisted, it was all in the foreign contributions. He went a step further arguing that one could see “the state of the world, and the future of what we call civilization.” To carry this point further, he presented a geopolitical organization of the Fair’s pavilions around four “groups of nations,” as assemblies or blocks that represent four possible futures. All other nations “distribute themselves with more or less obvious affinities and alliances.”

First were the totalitarian nations (Italy, USSR, and Japan) that used their buildings as tools for “frank” political propaganda. Capitalist powers (France, England and the US)—which constituted the second group—underscored trade and tourism, and put their buildings under the service of a “narrow undramatic patriotism.” The third group was those European Social Democracies (Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland) that celebrated economics and “some ideological aspect of their country.” The fourth group was “our South American neighbors, who have done some extraordinary architectural

228 The foreign pavilions presented the “the most thoughtful, most interesting, most realistic and certainly the most experimental architecture in the Fair.” Ibid. p. 288.
229 Ibid.
230 Ibid. p. 289.
work.” How “our South American neighbors” formed a cohesive political assembly was not revealed; Gutheim offered no clear words. This group of nations was simply neither totalitarian, capitalist or social democracies. What brought them together was architecture. Of architectural interest were only the last two “group of nations,” the South Americans being “the greatest architectural surprise.”

With his comments, Gutheim laid the foundation of the metonymic function of Brazilian modernism. In Gutheim’s article, one finds all the tropes that will inscribe the Brazilian pavilion in history. It is worth citing in full:

The Brazilian Pavilion has a purity and style that makes it close to breathtaking. The finesse of subtly curved façade makes the ordinary Fair buildings look almost brutal, the plan is an excellent refutation of the dogmas of the industrial designers, the arrangement of the plot is designed to produce the maximum of enjoyment, the ramps make an evil contrast to Norman Bell Geddes’ intestine-like exits from the General Motors Building, and the location of the entire building on posts is just as good economy as it is good design.

Everything was here. The celebrated open plan, the curves, the ramps, the piloti. This was an excellent cohesive modern building, an organic whole. Missing, however, were any allusion to a tropical character, to excess, leisure and exuberance; there was no reference to its tropical garden or free-form organicism. Absent also was as any overt reference to nationalism, and any reference to the brise-soleil. Gutheim’s narrative could have easily underscored the internationalist vocation of the International Style. Gutheim, however,

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231 Ibid.
232 Ibid. p. 316.
chose to emphasize a regional assembly—one limited to South America—establishing no links to other celebrated modern pavilions such as those of Finland or Sweden. Although not as successful, other Latin American pavilions—the Argentinean, Chilean and Venezuelan, with the exception of the Peruvian (the Mexican pavilion was absent from his consideration)—were also good buildings.\footnote{Gutheim singled out the Peruvian pavilion “with its concave mural, sculpture an inevitable flagpole looks more like a student’s essay than a mature building.” Ibid. p. 316. Peru, however, had no independent pavilion. Latin American countries represented in the fair in non-independent pavilions were: Dominican Republic, Cuba, Ecuador, Peru and Mexico. See: "All Aboard."} There was something about Latin America that had infused these buildings with good design. The “Latin American spirit” Gutheim argued, “is infectious.” It had even seduced New York architects Skidmore & Owings, who designed a “fine glass building” for the Venezuelans.\footnote{Gutheim, "Buildings at the Fair," p. 316.}

Brazil’s participation was cast within a geopolitical structure that made it operate metonymically from the beginning. In its June 1939 edition, the \textit{Architectural Forum} pursued the theme of Latin American unity introduced earlier by Gutheim (Fig. 2.12). Following the Brazilian pavilion, were the Argentine, Chilean and Venezuelan ones (Fig. 2.13). By grouping, at least sequentially, all South American pavilions together, and having the Brazilian as their introduction, \textit{Forum} presented the reader a clear architectural hierarchy. It also repeated the Fair’s early aim to use Brazil as a selling point to have other Latin American nations represented at the Fair. This narrative of regional assembly will be intensified as the war deepened inter-American relations due to the loss of European exhibitors. Latin America as a whole was posited as a region keenly interested in the Fair’s vision of the future reformulated in 1940 as a Fair “For Peace and
Freedom." Gutheim’s regional articulation was not politically naive. As assistant
director of the Division of Research and Information of the US Housing Authority during
this period, Gutheim had ties to Washington. It was not surprising then that he would
forward this regional assembly; an assembly also enacted by Forum.

Forum also had something to say about the architecture. The two-page spread
awarded to the Brazilian pavilion located it within a clear genealogy of decidedly modern
forms by underscoring that it was “designed by two pupils of Le Corbusier.” This was
the first US journal to present a comprehensive view of the building, incorporating plans
and interior views. Readers could appreciate its “magnificent plan” and “spacious” and
“open spaces” by examining the photos against the plans. The piece was clearly aimed at
a more demanding, knowledgeable and discerning professional. Although short on words,
it used the photographic talents of Fray S. Lincoln and G.E. Kidder Smith. In its few
words, the piece highlighted the pavilion’s openness and the quality of its exhibits—
“among the best … for interest, technique of display and quality of execution.” With
this comment, Forum acknowledged Paul Lester Wiener, the US architect who had been
commissioned by the Brazilian Government to design the exhibits. Forum also

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235 “Fair Envoys to Fly to South America; E.F. Roosevelt and John S. Young Off Tomorrow to ’Sell'
Nations on 1940 Radio Salutes Planned Two Officials Will be Gone 34 Days and Visit Nine Nations --
Another Trip Jan. 3.”

236 Gutheim had served as assistant editor for architecture for the Federal Writer's Project Federal Guide
Series (1936-37) and was a consultant for Federal Works Agency (1940-41). After the war he served as
assistant chief to the French Mission for Urbanism and Reconstruction. See: "Frederick Gutheim.


238 For a biographical sketch of Lincoln see: http://research.history.org/JDRLibrary/Online_Resources/AboutSearchDatabases/FSLincolnCollection.cfm


240 The Brazilian Government commission Wiener to design that country’s exhibit. The intent, as reported
to the press was “to further the good-neighbor policy and to reflect benefits resulting from reciprocal
treaties” between both countries. "33 States to Spend $4,000,000 at Fair; Whalen Estimates Cost of
highlighted Brazilian temperament, underscoring those everyday actions that made it an agreeable nation—“Brazil ... makes much of its coffee, its food, and the outdoor dining and dancing space.” Visitors found commerce and good living, a tempered yet happy life, grounded in a “superlative display of [architectural] ideas and forms.” This agreeableness, this *acomodação* (accommodating), was the foundation of *brasilidade*, of Brazilianness. In the *Architectural Forum* one finds an articulated celebration of the pavilion within a clear narrative of Modern architecture. One also finds the requirements set by Brazilian commissioner General Vidal—the connection to industry and commerce, to coffee, the driving engine of the Brazilian economy. There was, however, a soft tropicalism alluded in the food, the outdoors and dance—absent of all and any natural markers such as the aviary or the garden. Missing from these accounts was any reference—other than visual—to a key architectural element of the pavilion: its egg-crate *brise-soleil*.

The *brise-soleil* appeared in *Architectural Record*’s August 1939 presentation of the Brazilian pavilion as part of the “Considerable variety of light control in the Fair.”

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242 Ibid.
243 *L’Architecture d’Aujourd'hui* did not join the efforts. In its October 1938 edition the French journal presented its readers the New York World’s Fair, but only within a larger examination of fairs that included: Düsseldorf 1937, Glasgow 1938, Liége 1939, Zurich 1939, and Rome 1942. In its presentation of the New York Fair, it focused on the Perisphere, comparing it to Ledoux’s 1781 “Maison Sphérique” (the House for Rural Caretakers, p. 22), and on the French pavilion for the New York Fair. The Brazilian pavilion appeared in the January-February 1940 issue on exhibitions (p. 61). It was represented through photographs and plans, but with no descriptive text. The Pavilion was juxtaposed against the “Pavillion des Universités” for the 1939 Liége exhibition, and against an unfinished structure. The argument, however, was clear. What these buildings shared in common was their metal construction. The unfinished structure was a “new skeleton,” that exhibited its steel trusses. The Liege pavilion presented a “standard [metal] frame.” The steel columns of the Brazilian pavilion were clearly shown in the detail that includes the egg-crate *brise-soleil*.

244 “New York Fair: Flexibility, Circulation, Light Control,” *Architectural Record*, no. August (1939), p. 46. *Record* ignored the cohesiveness of style and design that allowed other journals to present the pavilion as an organic whole. The building is cut into pieces and appeared in functional thematic sections. *Record*
Record’s functionalist reading, more responsive to a professional audience seeking a technical solution to architectural problems, such as sun control, paid no attention to a regionalist assembly—in fact offering alternative universal links (technical and formal) by juxtaposing this “device” against the Irish pavilion with its “extensive use of awnings” and the vertical metal blinds of the Hotel General Motors in the Street of Tomorrow (Fig. 2.14). The British Architectural Review also focused on the egg crate brise-soleil (Fig. 2.15). Its intent, however, was significantly different than that of Record. The “rectangular pattern of the first floor façade,” the Review argued, “dominates the … pavilion;” finding it more “a unit of display rather than of function.” For the Review, the brise-soleil was a formalistic decorative move. Although not completely devoid of function—it “shades the south end of the building”—it was “a complicated way of solving a common problem.” Here one finds the kernel of a dual criticism—the accusation of manneristic formalism and exhibitionism—that will reach maturity in the 1950s. The brise-soleil, the Review pointed out, helped articulate the contrast between geometric and organic forms of the building. This formal juxtaposition was, however, unresolved since the “rectangular pattern” was first set against the main access ramp,

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246 Ibid. Plate IV.
247 Ibid. p. 72.
248 “As a piece of decoration the box front which shades the south facade end of the building is practical and striking. So why should we complain if this seems to be a complicated way of solving a common problem? After all this is a piece of exhibition architecture.” Ibid. p. 64. “A contrast with this [rectangular pattern] is provided by a series of curves on the first floor terrace.” “[The New York World's Fair].” Plate IV.
“disproportionately heavy” to the rest of the building. 249 This introduction to the “contrast” between orthogonal and organic geometries belied a decorative impulse, underscored by its “complicated” solution. The brise-soleil then served “as a piece of decoration,” a unit of display; but display of what? The Review did not articulate a clear position on this, preferring to emphasize that this “After all …is a piece of exhibition architecture.”

In the Architectural Review one therefore finds a reading of the brise-soliel as a formal expressive device. Detached from function it becomes a formal expression in search of a home. This ground will be the expressive nature of brasilidade. Although the British journal found the circulation “confused,” it praised the building. This was “a building for architects rather than for the less perceptive public.” Its free “steel stanchions,” as well as a general space division elegantly suggested by the free forms of the ceiling, bestowed the building with rare and exceptional openness. 251 In all, the Brazilian pavilion was a building of “particular quality” and “subtle design, as fascinating as it is rare.” 252 Along with the Argentinean one, it “forms an unexpected lively contribution from the South American continent” 253 (Fig. 2.16). Although the Brazilian

249 Record echoed the Review by showing no interest in the ramp, which is not included in the “Circulation” section of its article. It rather prominently presents the “easy slope” ramp of the Yugoslavian Pavilion “its figure-eight shape increases the buildings apparent size.” "New York Fair: Flexibility, Circulation, Light Control." p. 44. In circulation, or entry sequence, the Argentinean Pavilion seems to out do Costa and Niemeyer’s design in architectural means. “The subtle complexity of the entrance details in the Argentine pavilion achieves a dramatic interest by purely architectural means. Passing over a little bridge spanning a pool, the visitor is led between the bases of four stainless steel sheathed pylons and along a curved path marked out by a line of free-standing display cases. He finally enters the main display hall through frameless glass doors.” "[The New York World's Fair]." Plate VI.


251 “In the Brazilian Pavilion … there are no definite partitions, the division of space being merely suggested by the form of display stands and ceiling, so that an effect of ample size is achieved in quite a small building.” Ibid. p. 89.

252 Ibid. p. 64

253 Ibid. p. 65.
pavilion was singled out as a key individual contribution to the fair, the Review did not fail to echo the regionalist assembly first articulated by Gutheim.

**Brazilian appropriations**

The official publication, or album (Fig. 2.17), that accompanied the Brazilian pavilion underscored how the entire process of the development of the building had been a controlled affair ensuring not only “the professional value of the selected architects” but also “neutralizing any activity that could upset the glory of its realization.”\(^{254}\) The album—beautifully illustrated with images by Fray S. Lincoln—did not articulate any specific force or activity to be controlled; that the endeavor was cast as a neutralization of unsettling or disruptive elements seems peculiar, manifesting overarching concerns over the entire enterprise and its goals. As Lauro Cavalcanti points out, modernism was not the dominant force in architectural culture under the first Vargas regime. In the 1930s, the Vargas government was looking for an appropriate representation of *brasilidade*, and modernism—as embodied in the Ministério de Educação e Saúde (Ministry of Education and Health, MES)—was but one of several stylistic possibilities to represent the modern Brazilian nation.\(^ {255}\) That the 1939 pavilion was within the administrative sphere of the Ministry of Work, Industry and Commerce (from here on Ministry of Work) is key to the questions of *brasilidade*, national representation and “neutralizing activity” since it revealed an encroachment and overlap into the ideological sphere, propaganda activities and aesthetic field of Capanema’s MES. In 1938, the building for the Ministry of Work

by architect-engineer Mario dos Santos Maia opened its doors (Fig. 2.18). This structure, in a simplified Art-Deco “Manhattan style,” revealed dos Santos Maia’s sojourn in New York and unfolded an image of modernity that underscored urban cosmopolitanism.\textsuperscript{256} Compared to the MES, this building clearly articulated a more conservative aesthetic stance with respect to a modern project, one that took a measured distance from overt gestures to developing local themes and materials such as the use of landscape, color and glazed tiles that became hegemonic in the definition of \textit{brasilidade} within Capanema’s ministry. Unlike the MES, which was carefully studied to create an integrated urban spatial condition by raising the ministerial office block on 10-meter tall piloties that created an urban plaza, the Ministry of Work made no concession to a local urbanity, simply replicating the allowable building footprint of the city block.\textsuperscript{257} This maximization of land use pointed to a cost determined building pattern in true “Manhattan style.” Juxtaposed with the overly monumental and classicizing Ministry of Finance (Fig. 2.19), however, dos Santos Maia’s solution can be read as a middle ground between two opposite poles in the architectural culture of the period. The Ministry of Work’s engagement with the architects of the MES to represent Brazil in the 1939 World’s Fair points to a decisive turn in the architectural culture as evidenced by the construction of the ministerial buildings for the Federal Capital in the late 1930s.\textsuperscript{258} Within this context, the “neutralizing activity” claimed by the album can be interpreted as the consolidation of a nascent modernist representation of the national state that, as Cavalcanti points out, will be secured in the 1940s.

\textsuperscript{256} Ibid. p. 127.
\textsuperscript{257} It is important to underscore that these city blocks were those stipulated by the 1929 Alfred Agache master plan for Rio.
\textsuperscript{258} This change also coincides with a new minister, Waldemar Cromwell do Rego Falcão in the Ministry of Work.
Key to this neutralizing activity was the creation of an official celebratory narrative accompanying the pavilion. This was done by identifying, reproducing and assembling in the album commentaries by the “greatest authorities” and the “foreign press.” This celebratory narrative and authoritative report articulated in the album was written in Portuguese—there seems to have been no English version—and was thus directed to a national audience and reinforced a sanctioned view of brasilidade. The album started by unfolding the architectural spirit of the pavilion as described by Lucio Costa. As if responding to the Architectural Forum—which had characterized the Brazilian architects as “two pupils of Le Corbusier”—Costa argued that the design respected “the lesson of Le Corbusier,” but highlighted that the spirit that governed the pavilion was that of CIAM. Costa thus inserted Brazil within those “major countries” who have “a truly modern spirit,” bringing forth a much wider international context in which both he and Niemeyer participated. Brazilian architectural modernism was forged not as a subset of Corbusian formalism—an encounter with a singular individual—but rather, as links to international modernism at smaller and larger scales than the nation-state, as Costa’s dual recognition—Le Corbusier and CIAM—clearly revealed. Costa also took aim at an international functionalist culture and US architectural culture in particular. The architects of the pavilion did “not want to subordinate the modern spirit exclusively to the conveniences of technical and functional order” or to make “‘pseudo-modern scenography of the kind so much in vogue in the United States.”

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260 Costa and Niemeyer, "Answer to the Request by Commissary General Armando Vidal to Make Explicit the Spirit That Animates the Project."
Gutheim’s critique of the unbridled commercialism of the Fair. This newfound confidence, directed against US architectural culture (a culture Costa and Niemeyer had experienced first hand as they developed the pavilion in New York), articulated an important interruption of the hegemonic narratives of modernity, and challenged the geography of architectural modernism as articulated earlier by Costa himself. In the description or “Memoir” of the project published in *Arquitetura e Urbanismo* in its May-June 1939 issue, Costa underscored that Brazilian architects could not command attention in “an industrial, culturally developed land, such as the United States, at a Fair attended by countries that are richer and more experienced than ours…”

Although this earlier comment did not depart from the goals as stated in the album, the tone of the narrative was different. In the album, Costa articulated a clear challenge to a narrative of architectural modernism entrenched in industrial countries. After the critical acclaim of the pavilion, Brazilian architects could offer leadership in the “rigorous application of modern techniques … by the constant desire to produce a work of plastic art.”

This narrative of a synthetic architectural modernism of plastic artistic value, which will become Brazilian modernism, was refined in New York, because in New York, Brazil had to be seen as a nation, as a homogenous national space with a cohesive social and cultural form. New York, an other national context, facilitated the focused and precise articulation of *brasilidade* in architecture (Fig. 2.20).

Costa’s views on painting and sculpture helped present his notion of architecture as “a work of plastic art” that could guide the “application of modern techniques.” In his

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262 Costa and Niemeyer, "Answer to the Request by Commissary General Armando Vidal to Make Explicit the Spirit That Animates the Project."
definition of a “work of plastic art” deployed in the album, Costa pointed to painting and sculpture not as ornamental or decorative elements, but as objects of autonomous artistic value that could be integrated to the architectural composition. This articulation of the relationship between architecture and the arts—clearly indebted to and fueled by the MES building still under construction in Rio de Janeiro—was carried by the New York Times but missed by the professional architectural press. MoMA elaborated on this point by incorporating Cândido Portinari’s works presented in the pavilion in its show of the Brazilian artist. It was, however, in the pavilion’s architectural forms that the notion of artistic value and synthetic unity reached it’s highest and most refined expression. In order to reach value as a “plastic art,” architectural form needed to reach a recognizable formal expression. Key to this overlap between plastic art and architectural form was the source-origin of the pavilion’s organic curvilinear forms. These curved forms operated within a complex semantic instability that will later disappear under the term “free-forms.” Costa had justified early on in the Memoir that the pavilion had taken “advantage of the site’s gracious curves.” As Costa and Niemeyer stated in the Brazilian architectural journal Arquitetura e Urbanismo:

The undulating rhythm of the site, which the main body of the building accentuates, is repeated by the marquee, the ramp, the screen that protects the ground floor, the mezzanine, the auditorium, etc., thus imparting a distinctive and extremely agreeable aspect to the whole.  

Costa repeated this argument in the album (Fig. 2.21). In the album, however, he refined and elaborated on the implications of the New York site. The overall effect of “the site’s gracious curves” was that grace and lightness, that “breakdown in rigidity … [that] has something of the Baroque—in the good sense of the word—and this is very important to us, for it represents in some way a link with the traditional spirit of Portuguese-Brazilian architecture.”

In Costa’s later reformulation, the source of the curves, the New York site, had allowed an essential Brazilian expression, a baroque ethos, to come forth. This slippage is important for two reasons. First, because it firmly established a narrative of *brasilidade* as the key to understanding the pavilion’s architectural form. Second, because it hid the question of “modern technique.” In the Memoir, the architectural response to the “undulating rhythm of the site” was explained as a direct architectural response to the site carried all the way to the articulation of function—the curve of the site enabled the setback, which produced the garden, which led to a open ground floor, and determined the need for openness and closure, both in pedestrian circulation and in sun control. This made the building “extremely agreeable.” In the album, directed at a Brazilian audience, this formal effect was linked to a spirit of *brasilidade*. It is important to underscore that, as already presented, Gutheim’s celebration of the pavilion articulated no clear national markers, only an ambiguous “Latin American spirit” that pointed to “good

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265 Costa’s views on Brazilian colonial architecture are complex and developed throughout his career. This being said, however, his views are guided by a desire, articulated early on, in 1929, to identify a basic common stratum that manifests a national spirit. “Brazil,” Costa argued, despite its great extension, local differences and other complications, has to be only one thing.” Costa, “O Aleijadinho e a arquitetura tradicional,” in Costa, *Lúcio Costa: Sôbre Arquitetura*. p. 15.
“design” echoing Costa’s idea of an agreeable building. For Gutheim, the pavilion’s “purity and style” presented no clear link to traditional architecture and thus departs from ideas that see the building as an adaptation of tradition.

By highlighting a “link with the traditional spirit of Portuguese-Brazilian architecture,” Costa cast a deep shadow on the “rigorous application of modern techniques.” Brasilidade, an architectural work of plastic art that celebrated the spirit of Brazilian culture, displaced modern techniques. This became evident when examining the actual structure of the building: steel. The architectural press had little to say about the structural material that allowed the lightness, transparency and formal play of the pavilion. Costa and Niemeyer—these “two pupils of Le Corbusier”—choose, in “an industrial … developed land, such as the United States,” to build in steel, not in concrete.

Of particular concern—which has been underplayed in most analysis of the pavilion—was the Brazilian government’s intention to develop a national steel industry with US support. The pavilion could be used to impress in US minds that Brazil had the ability to manage a steel industry (Fig. 2.22). What better propaganda than a steel-framed building that celebrated and mitigated the severe language associated with that material steel. One finds this tension (between organicism and modern technique) even in the steel columns, which had an organic form, thus softening their industrial nature (Fig. 2.23). This fundamental connection has been missed by architectural scholarship, which has not dealt with the actual materiality of the building, focusing primarily on the formal interpretations that, following Costa’s lead, emphasize the pavilion’s lightness and impermanence as a product of artistic architectural value. The omission of the pavilion’s technique may signal a deep concern with how to produce a steel building without a steel
industry. The preoccupation over an honest representation of modernity in a “young” nation developing its modern architecture within particular economic and industrial constraints was an important conversation carried in the Brazilian journal *Arquitetura e Urbanismo*.²⁶⁶

Building in steel involved complex political negotiations, all concealed behind the façade of an agreeable *brasilidade*. In January 1940, four months after Brazil had signed the 1939 Declaration of Panama, guaranteeing the neutrality of the Americas, Brazilian Ambassador to the US, Carlos Martins, informed President Getulio Vargas that the United States Steel Company was reconsidering its agreement to establish a steel plant in Brazil. Martins, looking for alternatives in the US, initiated talks with Ford Bacon & Davis to counter this measure. Martins was instructed, however, not to continue since the Brazilian government was accelerating negotiations with the German company Krupp, and that he should focus on obtaining only financing from the United States. The US government showed great concern over Brazil’s overture to Nazi Germany, and the endangerment of the neutrality pact. The Brazilians responded that any resolution on the neutrality of the continent was contingent on the development of Brazil’s steel industry. In June 11, 1940, as Fair visitors drank Brazilian coffee and danced to Samba in the Brazilian pavilion, Vargas publicly criticized the liberal politics of supposedly democratic nations such as the United States, and celebrated the political organization of Axis countries. In another public speech, he further reiterated that development of Pan-Americanism was possible only with United States military and economic aid to Brazil. After such pronouncements, Ambassador Martins informed Vargas that United States

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²⁶⁶ See: Gerson Pompeu Pinheiro, "Rumo à Casa Brasileira," *Arquitetura e Urbanismo* 3, no. 3 (May-June) (1938).
Steel and the US government were ready to restart negotiations to develop a Brazilian steel industry.  

**Brasilidade in architecture**

As Cavalcanti argues, the architectural work of Costa and Niemeyer “initiated the consolidation of a quintessential Brazilian [architectural] language, independent and autonomous from a European matrix.” In the 1939 pavilion, the connection between architectural form and Brazilian spirit was evidenced in “the freedom of the ramp, flexibility of its volumes, protection against sun exposure with fixed elements, use of the curve as an expressive element, and blurring of internal and exterior space.” This narrative construction linked and for the most part continues to link organic free-form to *brasilidade*. The connection between organic form and *brasilidade* has produced a canonical “Brazilian” architecture—much contested today with the growing research, for example, on work by Paulista architects, such as Vilanova Artigas. It has also produced a series of historical misreadings and blind spots in interpretation fueled by notions of sensuality, hedonism and tropicalism that migrate and merge with architectural ideas and interpretations. As Liernur has pointed out, much of the critical acceptance and celebration of singularity of the Brazilian pavilion has been an a posteriori historiographic construction much influenced by MoMA’s *Brazil Builds* and fully

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267 In September 1940, the US agreed to loan $20 million USD through the Export-Import Bank for its development. The first Brazilian steel mill was opened in 1946 at Volta Redonda, in the state of Rio de Janeiro. See: Carlos Martins Pereira E Sousa, “Verbete,” Centro de Pesquisa e Documentação de História Contemporânea do Brasil (CPDOC/FGV), http://cpdoc.fgv.br/ (Accessed January 20, 2011).


269 Ibid.
developed during the early postwar period. In such views, the pavilion captured and manifested Brazilian modernism as a particular and recognizable—to use the words of Henry-Russell Hitchcock—“architectural idiom” that successfully negotiated the tensions between earlier functionalism and a growing organicism.

It is essential to follow the discursive transformation of brasilidade deployed through and around the pavilion when it emerged; how the general calls for patriotism in architecture transformed into espíritu de brasilidade and ambiente brasileiro, and how these—which are not necessarily the same—enabled a link to a specific tradition of the colonial architecture of Brazil. The national rhetoric of brasilidade helped cement the relationship between spirit, environment and tradition, all within a modern architectural idiom. The notion of adaptation—a kind of architectural mestizaje—was key to retaining the idea of progress in a non-industrial and un-democratic country. This construction of brasilidade in architecture can be traced through Arquitectura e Urbanismo’s presentation of the pavilion, its competition and the ensuing debate over the “casa Brasileira—the Brazilian house,” and the “casa do Brasil um pais extrageiro—the house of Brazil in a foreign country.”

In the January-February 1938 issue of Arquitectura e Urbanismo, the Instituto de Arquitetos do Brasil (Brazilian Institute of Architects, IAB) criticized the ministerial competition call for the 1939 pavilion, unfolding a series of observations that articulated a poignant defense of the professional sphere of the architect and IAB’s role in the architectural culture of Brazil. Most salient was IAB’s critique that the announcement

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271 This was done as a series of open letters to the Minister of Work signed by IAB president Nestor E. de Figueiredo published in the journal with additional commentaries. The defense of the profession was highlighted in the adequate correspondence between the work and the prizes, the lack of a budget, and the
called for a commercial competition—“o edital chama comercialmente de concurrencia”—in what, IAB argued, should be a cultural competition among Brazilian architects. At stake, IAB argued, was the international presentation of the “casa do Brasil num país estrangeiro—the house of Brazil in a foreign country,” and the international demonstration of the artistic and technical capacity of Brazilian architects.

Although articulated in Brazil for a relatively small professional community that hardly covered the entire national territory, the journal imagined a global gaze upon Brazil as a whole. International opinion mattered. Such neglect of architecture had been the norm in Brazil’s participation in international exhibitions. A particular focus of IAB’s critique, among other things such as the unidentified composition of the jury, was the competition’s request for detailed solutions of technical problems, which seemed to displace all architectural concerns. IAB’s preoccupation underscored the competition’s interest in technical solutions. Because of this, because “it is not known what is to be realized, if a simple shed or a large building…” the competition would not attract “the most representative elements of our meritorious architecture.”

For IAB, the architect was the fulcrum of architecture as an expression of civilization, arguing that even in the United States, no work of architecture was produced without an architect. Brazil’s failure assured that the winning architects would supervise the construction of the pavilion. IAB insisted that it’s own competition regulations be followed for the pavilion competition.

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272 “De inicio o edital chama comercialmente de concurrencia o que deverá ser, tão sômente, un concurso de ordem cultural entre os arquitetos brasileiros.” First, the announcement calls for a commercial competition in what should be, if only and solely, a cultural competition amongst Brazilian architects. “Exposição Mundial de Nova York.” p. 50.


274 This technical orientation of the competition announcement unfolded several concerns as, for example, the views that the competition should have called for “ante-projetos” or design proposals not projects, in the “exaggerated scale for the drawings (1:50 instead of 1:100)”, and in the level of the technical solutions which called for “studies in plumbing, gas, electricity, phones, bells, etc.” “Exposição Mundial de Nova York.” p. 51.

275 Ibid. p. 50.
to produce a work of architecture, IAB argued, would have a lasting repercussion in “our national cultural forums.” As IAB’s narrative underscored, Brazil’s representation as a nation was connected to a global scene. The pavilion was, from its beginnings, linked to transnational forces.

IAB decisively inserted architecture within the national cultural sphere defined as *brasilidade*. In its exchange with the competition organizers, IAB mobilized a highly patriotic rhetoric, arguing that the competition had “uma alta finalidade patriótica—a lofty patriotic purpose.” As architecture was the true index of civilization, IAB reminded the Minister of Work, that any project chosen must be an affirmation of the progress of Brazilian architecture and the ability of Brazilian architects.\(^{276}\) For IAB, the defense and promotion of Brazilian architecture was a clear act of patriotism, architecture being “part of the permanent concern over the perfect execution of everything that pertains to our Patria—nation.”\(^{277}\) If IAB highlighted a nationalist discourse, it did so, however, in constant tension with an ever-present international backdrop, in particular that of the United States. IAB mobilized architectural culture in the United States to correct the deficiencies of the competition call, that is, to make it more “Brazilian.” More important was IAB’s idea of architecture as a set of values that transcend national space and the architect himself as a key figure in both national and transnational space, a figure that had the same rights of clear compensation and supervision of his work “as in any civilized country.”\(^{278}\) IAB clearly posited the architect as the only professional able to assure the correct execution of the “casa do Brasil.” This was first articulated not through a rhetoric

\(^{276}\) Ibid.
\(^{277}\) “Confidentes no alto patriotismo de V. E., e certos de que os nossos pensamentos se irmanam na preocupação constante da perfeita execução de tudo que se refere a nossa Patria.” Ibid. p. 51.
\(^{278}\) Ibid. IAB’s narrative also articulated a tension with engineering, as a clear alternative transnational space.
of national difference, but through a discourse that emphasized links with an international architectural culture present in the United States. This global frame was the foundation of architectural *brasilidade*, for as Micol Siegel argues, it “allowed to shift the focus from a local stage with differentiated actors to an international setting in which ‘Brazilian’ was a singular, monolithic category.”

IAB’s critique was aimed at correcting what it saw as a “defective” competition call. It, however, did not define the stylistic contours of *brasilidade* in architecture. Not once was the “casa do Brasil num país estrangeiro” directly equated with traditional Brazilian architecture, modernism or any particular style. In fact, IAB reported on its success in changing the competition call in key points such as the disclosure of the composition of the jury, and underscored ideological openness and “the greatest liberty of [stylistic] school.” IAB reported on the final composition of the jury, as it advised readers on the competition deadline (March 7, 1938). To substitute a jury member from the technical sub-commission of the Ministry of Work, “the Ministry of Education was approached to provide a professional, considering that this Ministry can best assist in the art of Brazil.” At the same time, however, in the same January-February 1938 issue in

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279 Siegel, *Uneven Encounters: Making Race and Nation in Brazil and the United States*. p. 210. Although Siegel focuses on race in the 1920s, her study unfolds important questions for modernism in the 1930s. Siegel makes an eloquent argument to understand transnationalism as a “myriad of connections linking people who reside…in cities” as a counter point to an analytical structure based on comparisons (US-Brazil) which reify national narratives. p. xii.

280 There was an interesting side note on Dulphe Pinheiro Machado, the engineer who wrote the competition call, and his confrontation with Marcelo Pacentini over Rio’s University City project in page 51.

281 "Em Tempo," *Arquitetura e Urbanismo* 3, no. 1 (Jan-Feb.) (1938). p. 52.

282 Ibid. IAB did not directly revealed who was this “professional” supplied by the Ministry of Education. As Zilah Quezado Deckker points out Eduardo de Souza Aguiar had been a member of the MES competition jury. Quezado Deckker, *Brazil Built: The Architecture of the Modern Movement in Brazil*. p. 55. The jury, as announce in March-April *Arquitetura e Urbanismo*, was composed by João Carlos Vital director of the Department of Statistics and Propaganda of the Ministry of Work, and architect Rubens Porto, technical assistant to the Minister of Work, as well as IAB architects: Nestor E. de Figuereido, President of IAB, Angelo Bruhns and Eduardo de Souza Aguiar. "Feria Mundial de Nova York / Termo de
which *Arquitetura e Urbanismo* presented and critiqued the competition for the pavilion—in its “Tribuna Livre (Open Forum)” section—the journal published an article by Brazilian intellectual Carlos Maul. In his “A casa brasileira—The Brazilian home,” Maul attacked architectural modernism as a foreign import brought to Brazil by “an architect with a complicated name, Israeli, Russian or Polish, who built a house for a new rich man in a distant neighborhood.” At first, Maul pointed out, this “strange…glass house…without style or comfort,” awoke curiosity; it, however, generated a development fueled by frivolity that destroyed the “domus” of the Brazilian family. Maul clearly attacked Greogri Warchavchik, one of those “pioneers of [foreign] monstrosities.” He also attacked the key architectural form of international modernity: the skyscraper. This singling out of a key US architectural image and typology along with the pavilion competition controversy and the ongoing construction of Ministry of Education, signals an embattled local architectural stage. Against the skyscraper, responsible for the “catastrophe” of a modern life spent on the street, Maul celebrated the “typical” Brazilian house as the spatial core that enabled the institution that was the Brazilian family. The “casa tipica…is the support of a domestic society. (…) It is the space of rest and of life in common.” The publication of Maul’s article manifested the extent of the rhetoric on the family during the first Vargas’ regime, and its importance in the construction of *brasilidade*. As Darién J. Davis argues, “the institutionalization of national culture, promoting to Brazilians a vision of a national family…began in the [1934] Constitution.”

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under Article 152: On the Family, on Education, and on Culture. The “casa de Brasil num país estrangeiro” had indeed deep nationalist connotations, and as Maul argued the traditional “casa brasileira” had to be defended. Maul’s views, for example the opposition between the house and the street, had important parallels with the work of Gilberto Freyer, to which I will turn promptly.

In its March-April 1938 issue, *Arquitetura e Urbanismo* reported on the winners of the pavilion competition highlighting the key issue of national representation. It first underscored the official governmental context of the ceremony with speeches by Minister Waldemar Falcão and President Getúlio Vargas. The President of IAB, Nestor de Figueiredo pointed out how all Brazilian architects appreciated the support of the government and “promised to advance the Brazilian spirit (espiritu de brasilidade) within the modern architecture of the century we live in.” The IAB journal then proceeded to explain the process followed by the jury. After procedural mechanics the jury ensued to establish the criteria as to how to interpret nationhood in architecture; the jury decided that the question should not depend on architectural details, be they traditional or indigenous, but should be linked to an architectural form capable of translating the expression of the Brazilian environment; further, that this form should preferably be current considering that the New York Fair had as its aim, establishing a vision of the “World of Tomorrow.”

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286 Ibid.
As Zilah Quezado Deckker has pointed out, exactly what was meant by “Brazilian environment—*ambiente brasileiro*” was not specified. As reported by the journal, the jury thought that the pavilion did not need to refer to historicist or neocolonial citations to manifest a national architecture. It seems also that the jury did not consider architectural details as part of, or conducive to, creating a Brazilian environment. It was all centered on an architectural form able to translate the expressiveness of Brazilian environment. The jury, however, found no entry able to reconcile this requirement with the functional conditions of an exposition pavilion. The three selected winners: Lucio Costa, First, Oscar Niemeyer, Second, and Paulo Camargo e Almeida, Third, came closest.

The confrontation between a technical and a cultural solution that IAB first attempted to solve, and the jury later recognized as difficult to answer, was manifest in the jury’s comments published in *Architeturca e Urbanismo*—no visual record of the winning projects was published. Technical aspects, however, were understood along with architectural concepts, such as: good entry, good orientation, and ample exhibition spaces with good circulation. Carmargo’s entry was celebrated for its “spontaneous link between the road and the building.” Considering the difficulty in establishing such a connection between the “public road and the interior of the pavilion,” the jury commend a solution that allowed the public to “penetrate the pavilion without obstacle or indecision.” In solving this, Camargo’s solution, however, fell short of providing adequate exhibition

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288 The key elements of the program for the jury were “the location of the exhibition halls, circulation and sun control, the location of the restaurant, which, because of its nature, requires an adequate atmosphere, and finally the character of a provisional building, like an exposition pavilion should be.” “Feria Mundial de Nova York / Termo de Julgamento do Concurso de Ante-Projetos para o Pavilhão Brasileiro na Feria de New York.” p. 99. Except for the location of the restaurant, Costa and Niemeyer repeated, almost verbatim these functional requirements in their Memoir of the final pavilion, published in the March-June issue of *Arquiteturca e Urbanismo*. By April 1938, Costa and Niemeyer were already in New York, designing the final pavilion in the office of Wallace K. Harrison.
289 Ibid. p. 99.
space, especially in the second floor. Particularly meritorious was the general plan—
“good and flexible”—and the location of the restaurant—well connected with the
exhibition hall—in Niemeyer’s proposal. Also having a good entry, good orientation,
and ample exhibition spaces with good circulation, it was praised for resolving the
“essential technical conditions of a pavilion.” Niemeyer’s solution, however, lacked any
“espiritu de brasilidade.” The jury was surprised that “the author had not turned to
constructive elements indispensable for the new architecture.”290 Exactly which elements
these were, the jury did not specify, and considering that Niemeyer has been singled out
as the key exponent of a Brazilian modern style this comment seems poignant. Lucio
Costa’s proposal was the one that possessed the greatest “espiritu de brasilidade.”
Exactly which elements advanced this spirit was not mentioned. Single out, however,
were the ample windows that opened towards “the patio” and provided visitors with
moments of distraction. Costa’s proposal displayed “a beautiful harmony in a modern
spirit that frees it from the preoccupation of asserting any specific element of modern
technical construction.” In all, the jury underscored, Costa knew how to use those
essential modern elements only when necessary, creating in the end a “recinto
tranquilo—a quiet place for the exhibition of plastic arts, architecture and urbanism.”291

The “espiritu de brasilidade” was thus a “bela armonia—beautiful harmony” within the
general modern spirit. In it, modern building technique (“técnica moderna da construir”)
retreated to the background, allowing the harmony of brasilidade to be experienced.

Musical metaphors seemed to govern the “espiritu de brasilidade” and mediate between

290 Ibid.
291 “Este projeto é, dos três, o que possue major espírito de brasilidade. O seu conjunto tem uma bela
harmonia dentro do espírito moderno que afasta da preocupação de impôr determinados elementos da
técnica moderna de construir. Entretanto o seu autor soube usar êsses elementos quando os julgou
necessários.” Ibid. p. 98.
the expression of a Brazilian environment and a Brazilian spirit. Modern construction appeared as the pentagram upon which a Brazilian harmony was expressed. In the end, however, Costa built a space of silence: a quiet space—“recinto tranquilo.” The contradiction seems ironic, and may explain why later in the album Costa did not use any musical metaphors and focused on an architectural explanation based on an architectural narrative of a classical stylistic transformation from a Doric Order into an Ionic one.292

By including “a patio in which to serve national products,” Costa’s proposal went further than any other in offering a clear and concrete manifestation of the “ambiente brasileiro.”293 It is important to underscore here first that the “ambiente brasileiro” took the form (at least in the narrative) of a patio, of a traditional colonial urban architectural typology. Second, that the patio was understood primarily as a space of commerce and consumption, not of pure leisure. In this, Costa’s proposal came closest to the opening comments ushered by Minister Falcão on the unveiling of the competition winners, thanking Vargas for his interest in the commercial expansion of Brazil. There seems, however, to be a moment of instability between the patio of the winning entry and the garden of the final building. The final building retained a close relationship between the restaurant and the outdoors; this, however, was primarily a visual one. At the same time, in the final building the Coffee Bar was located in the interior of the building.294 The overlap of a space of leisure and that of commerce appeared somewhat unresolved. This outdoor space of leisure consumption, pushed by the lagoon against the glass wall of the

294 Compared with the refined and open articulation between interior and exterior in the Swedish pavilion, elaborated—among other moments—precisely in the restaurant, Costa and Niemeyer’s solution appeared ill-resolved since it depended primarily on a visual connections. This outdoor space of leisurely consumption was also well developed in the Chile and the Venezuela pavilions.
restaurant was somewhat small for the masses of anticipated visitors (Fig. 2.24). New York landscape architect Thomas D. Price designed the garden, a fact concealed by Architetaura e Urbanismo, which claimed Price to be Brazilian.²⁹⁵ The relinquishing of the design of the garden to a US designer remains an important subject for further study. The subtle yet decisive transformation from the patio of the winning entry to the garden in the final building marks an important instability in the use of architectural traditions as carried by colonial urbanity and the countryside, an overlap that was reinforced by the presence in the final design of a veranda, a key typological spatial form in the architecture of Brazilian seventeenth century sugar plantations. With this simple transformation—and I can only signal the narrative transformation, since the drawings of the winning entries were lost—a new set of relationships and interpretations were enabled, ones that endowed the pavilion with a specific “ambiente brasileiro” in connection to Brazilian history and race. With this in mind, I would like to offer a final consideration on the pavilion.

Acomodação: the architecture of racial democracy

The same issue (March-April 1938) in which Arquitetura e Urbanismo published the results of the pavilion competition contained a reprint of Costa’s (1937) “Documentação necessária,” in which he called for the study of “nossa antiga arquitectura—our old architecture.”296 Read against Carlos Maul’s nostalgic vision of a past that should be defended, Costa’s article gained a sense of historical juncture resolved in favor of modernism because his study of the past was also the selection of a past that could construct the new. Costa called for the study of the good Portuguese tradition—“à boa tradição portuguesa.” Implicit in Costa’s argument was the extinction of the wrong past. Costa’s article was a defense of a minor building tradition, one that had remained in the shadows of Architecture with its dominant study of “churches and convents.” Civic architecture, “housing, in particular,” Costa argued, needed to be studied. “It is in the villages and the vigor of their rural construction, both rough and welcoming,” he asserted “that the qualities of a race are best shown.”297 Several complex issues unfold from this. First and foremost is the question of a good tradition or rather, of a single national tradition; second, and never far behind when considering the question of nation within a Brazilian context, but certainly much more difficult to pin down, is the question of race.

In an answer to Costa, published in the following issue (May-June, 1938), Gerson Pompeu Pinheiro, Chief Editor for Architecture of the journal, pointed out that “Documentação necessaria” was based on a generalized and abstracted view of

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297 Lúcio Costa, "Necessary Documentation (1937)," Future Anterior 6, no. 2 (2009). p. 50. This was the tradition that reverberated in Costa’s later recalibration of the spirit that animated the New York pavilion; this “popular architecture that takes shape naturally” was that “something of the Baroque—in the good sense of the word.” And it was in this sense, in the identification of a good tradition, “so as not to reproduce an aspect already dead,” that Costa and Niemeyer developed the “casa do Brasil num pais estrangeiro.”
architectural tradition that paid little attention to regional differences present in “a vasta extenção territorial do nosso país—the vast territorial expanse of our country.”\(^{298}\) For Pinheiro, this vast differentiated geography produced local characteristics that enabled a differentiated architecture responsive and peculiar to each region. In Brazil, Pinheiro continued, “there has been confusion in the available choices on the question of nationhood (nacionalidade). Architecture is no exception.”\(^{299}\) Pinheiro insisted that considering the diversity of buildings existing in Brazil, “one cannot speak of “arquitetura brasileira (Brazilian architecture). Such formula … has the taste of propaganda.”\(^{300}\) As Mastitela Siolari points out, Pinheiro defended a functionalist modernist tradition in the wake of an architectural brasilidade defined by the group assembled around the Ministry of Education and Health project.\(^{301}\) The dispute was no longer with neocolonial traditionalist elements but rather, an internal quarrel within modernism and among modernists; a clash, Siolari argues, opened by the MES competition.\(^{302}\) Siolari recognizes that in the background of this dispute was the constitution of a national identity as framed by the political actions of the Vargas government. Siolari, however, fails to see any clear connection between Pinheiro’s defense of rational functionalism, his doubts over brasilidade, and “a Brazilian

\(^{298}\) Pinheiro, “Rumo à Casa Brasileira,” p. 113.
\(^{299}\) Ibid. p. 114.
\(^{300}\) Pinheiro uses “sabor litero-patriótico,” literally meaning literary-political taste. Ibid.
\(^{302}\) Cavalcanti completes the picture by underscoring the importance of the modernists within the Serviço do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional (SPAHN), as part of Capanema’s attempts to define the contours of the novo homem Brasileiro—the Brazilian new man. Cavalcanti has developed these themes in several books and articles. See: Lauro Cavalcanti, Modernistas na Repartição (Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Editora UFRJ: Paço Imperial: Tempo Brasileiro, 1993). ———, "Modernista, Arquitetura e Patrimônio," in Repensando o Estado Novo, ed. Dulce Chaves Pandolfi (Rio de Janeiro: Editora FGV, 1999). Cavalcanti, however, sees Brazilian modernism as an inclusive project (“um projecto de nação incomparavelmente mais globalizante” in “Modernistas, Arquitetura e Patrimônio, p. 184) and fails to articulate modernism’s elitist and exclusionary practices.

civilization.” Siolari perhaps jumps too quickly to Pinheiro’s critique of architectural 
*brasilidade* as a corruption of functionalism in which artistic preoccupations take over the 
reasonable process of the development of an architectural project; how economic, technical 
and constructive reason was subjected to a supposed creative national genius, later to be 
exemplified by the work of Niemeyer. It seems, however, that there was much more 
background than just the political actions of a modernizing corporatist state. The work of 
Gilberto Freyre, to which Costa referred in “Documentação necessaria,” helps to 
complete this picture, and unfold the question of race within the national rhetoric of 
*brasilidade*.

Freyre’s *Casa-grande & Senzala* (*The Masters and the Slaves*, 1933) was the 
study of the process and effects of miscegenation under the Portuguese colonization of 
the tropics. His aim, with this work, was the revalorization of miscegenation and cultural 
*mestizaje*, as well as the rehabilitation of the tropics as a site of civilization. Centered on 
the relationship between master’s house and the slave quarters in sugar plantations of 
northern Brazil, *Casa-grande & Senzala* revealed the centrality that architecture had in 
Freyre’s ideas. Architecture demonstrated the principle of adaptation, the transfiguration 
of Portuguese tradition into a Luso-Brazilian tradition. For Freyre, the relationship 
between the master’s house and the slave quarters created “zones of fraternization” that 
enabled miscegenation, and created a new social and economic order. In the interaction 
between the big–house and slave quarters, under patriarchic domination and a slave 
driven economy of mono-plantation, a new race and a new racial harmony were created. 
As Freyre scholars and commentators have pointed out, his work was based on symbolic 
types (the patriarch, the slave, etc.); architecture was one of these abstractions. The big-
house–slave quarters relationship was a symbol of interdependent social relations, a stage for the drama of miscegenation. If the plantation complex was the arena that enabled miscegenation, the big-house was the space that civilized this form of domination. As Rugai Bastos points out, the key actor of miscegenation and accommodation (acomodação) for Freyre was the domestic slave, not the field slave. Domesticity—in the form of the big-house complex, the family or the house slave—played a key role in Freyre’s understanding of brasilidade and contextualizes the architectural debates over the Brazilian house revealing its racial undertones. Domesticity established a link between popular and elite culture and between white and black races providing a stabilizing concept within the ideology of Brazilian culture, strong enough to flatten the antagonisms of industrialization and class conflict. In his next book, Sobrados e Mucambos (Mansions and Shanties, 1936) Freyre examined this relationship in architecture in greater detail, extending his study to the nineteenth century.

The Brazilian pavilion had to make clear the racial harmony of the casa-brasileira as part of industrial culture. Casa-grande & Senzala and Sobrados e Mucambos were the background of Costa’s “Documentação necessaria” and the general cultural frame that undergirded the 1939 pavilion. It is important to point out that by the mid 1930s narratives based on the juxtaposition of the urban versus the rural, although still potent, were no longer tenable as differentiating forces; modernity and brasilidade—the narratives of a “real” Brazil as found in rural and jungle landscape (present in art since

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304 Ibid.
the 1920s)—were coming together, even in architecture.\(^{306}\) The industrial modernity that Freyre had tacitly criticized in 1933 and directly in 1936 was coming into its own as evidenced by the consolidation of the 1930 Revolution into the 1937 Estado Novo.\(^{307}\) Costa’s text had to navigate Freyre’s reactionary stance, his deep mistrust and critique of modernity.\(^{308}\) If miscegenation was the sexual result of the “zones of fraternization” produced by the big–house complex, the loss of the “typical Portuguese carrure (built),” as Costa argued in “Documentação necessaria,” was the architectural one.\(^{309}\) Simpler customs, along with “the grandiosity of the American landscape,” combined with the “Material difficulties of all kinds” and the labor of natives and blacks, Costa emphasized, all contributed to “the softening [amolecimento], noted by Gilberto Freyre.”\(^{310}\) Costa, however, operated a softening of his own, a new act of cultural miscegenation, by inserting the typical Brazilian house within a process of adaptation that included the nineteenth (even the twentieth) century. Costa’s evolutionary development of modern architecture in Brazil was a synthetic and adaptive development that started in the

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\(^{308}\) Boris Fausto states that conservative thought in Brazil during this period has to be understood as a complex alliance of progressive and reactionary social forces embedded in a “modernization from above.” This better explains Freyre’s complex relation to modernity, which Carlos Guillerme Mota characterizes as an oscillation between a narrow idealistic regionalism and a generic universalism, within an intellectual strategy of dissolution, of erasing the contours of any scientific object. See: Boris Fausto, “O Estado Novo no Contexto Internacional,” in *Repensando o Estado Novo*, ed. Dulce Chaves Pandolfi (Rio de Janeiro: Editora FGV, 1999), Mota, *Ideologeia da Cultura Brasileira (1933-1974)*.

\(^{309}\) Here, Costa operated a complex overlap between the human body and architecture.

\(^{310}\) Costa, “Necessary Documentation (1937).” p. 50. Emphasis in the original. Costa was not specific on which of Freyre’s work he was citing. In *Sobrados e Mucambos*, Freyre underscored that the epicenter of the antagonisms and of the accommodations that soften their hardship (atenuaram as durezas) was the big-house, the architectural type that Costa turned too to construct his genealogy of modernism. Gilberto Freyre, *Sobrados e Mucambos: Decadência do Patriarcado Rural e Desenvolvimento do Urbano*, 3.a ed. (Rio de Janeiro: J. Olympio, 1961). p. xxi.
seventeenth century and ended with the Corbusian fenêtre à longueur of the 1920s through the activity of nineteenth century mestres de obra (master builders, Fig. 2.25). In this development, Costa underscored the importance of the nineteenth century phase of development—because of the “predominance of the voids in the facades” through the use of iron.\footnote{311} In Freyre, the nineteenth century was the period of decay of brasiliade with Brazil’s opening to non-Portuguese influences (British and French), the growth of urbanization, and the rise of political and economic power of the cities. The nineteenth century marked the decay of the sugar plantation economy concentrated in the north and the rise a coffee growing industry of the south. Freyre had valorized miscegenation and adaptation as constitutive of a Brazilian ethos but he tied this ethos to a particular race: the Portuguese (already the product of miscegenation), a particular economic and social structure: patriarchic agriculture, and a specific geography: the tropics. His idea of a Luso-tropical civilization was not contained to the seventeenth century, being also a utopian political project, but it depended on these three elements.\footnote{312} Costa valorized of adaptation as a Brazilian ethos that could be applied to any time period, to any cultural interaction. By accepting the changes brought about by the nineteenth century, he

\footnote{311}'no començo do século XIX, predominam francamente os vãos” Costa, Lúcio Costa: Sôbre Arquitetura. p. 92. 
\footnote{312}Bastos underscores that Freyre’s Brazilian ethos served to articulate the relationship between the old and the new, becoming a fundamental force in the political pact of the 1930s. Rugai Bastos, "Gilberto Freybe e a Questão Nacional." p. 56. My focus is on architecture, on the not so clear relationship between Freyre and architectural modernism in the late 1930s. It is generally claimed that Freyre praised the architecture of Costa, but this seems to have happened after modernism had become the dominant architectural expression in Brazil. Freyre’s “Suggestões para o estudo de arte brasileira em relações com a de Portuga e a das Colónia,” published along Costa’s “Documentação necesária” in the first issue of the Revista do Patrimônio of SPHAN made no allusions to Costa. On the relationship between Freyre and Costa see Silvana Rubino, "Entre o CIAM e o SPHAN: Diálogos entre Lúcio Costa e Gilberto Freyre,” in Gilberto Freyre em Quatro Tempos, ed. Ethel Volfzon Kosminsky, Claude Lépine, and Fernanda Arêas Peixoto (São Paulo, SP: Editora UNESP Fundação: Editora da Universidade do Sagrado Coração, 2003). Rubino, however, jumps to quickly to Freyre’s and Costa’s later work. Rubino recognizes some key early differences between Costa and Freyer; for example, how Costa did not go as far as Freyre to consider the shanties and their anonymous builders as part of the good tradition. p. 267. She also recognizes Costa’s separation from Freyre when it came to the nineteenth century.
radically departed from Freyre, and fully engaged the modernizing aims of the Estado Novo. Costa’s incorporation of the nineteenth century as part of the process of cultural and technological adaptation is key to understanding the 1939 pavilion and for example the use of steel; with this material Costa and Niemeyer proved that the disintegrating forces of industrialization, which Freyre saw as antithetical to a Brazilian ethos, could be softened and accommodated to the culture of the tropics.

In Costa’s narrative the question of race, so prevalent in Freyre, was limited to celebratory statements on labor that provoked acute reactions in Brazil. In his reply to Costa, Pinheiro strongly argued that a Brazilian architecture could not be reached by “praising the ingenuity of Indians and blacks, [or] of our primitive workers or master builders.”313 Pinheiro’s reaction was not superficial. As Gomes da Cunha argues, positive images of manual work were key to the rehabilitation of slaves’ contributions to Brazilian culture and society. Images of the Afro-Brazilian population in Brazil were tied not only to music, religion and folklore, but also to unqualified and marginalized labor. The valorization of manual work, which Costa presented in “Documentação necessária” was part of the official ideological stance of the Estado Novo, and key to the construction of the new Brazilian man.314 Pinheiro’s argument went further, extending to the patriarchal system of domination that was intricately tied to Freyre’s idea of miscegenation and adaptation. As Siolari states, Pinheiro attacked Costa’s “artistic modernism” on the grounds of its dependence on the “chefe o condutor (chief or conductor)” of an

architectural expression that was becoming a style.\textsuperscript{315} In Freyre’s language: this was a patriarhpic dependence on Le Corbusier—master of modernism’s big-house. This was clear in Forum’s characterization of the Brazilian architects as “two pupils of Le Corbusier,” a comment the official album chose not to suppress. In this, Costa and Niemeyer were performing the role of a key racial character in the saga of miscegenation: the mulatto, who, in Freyre’s views, was characterized by his social mobility—in this case, Costa and Niemeyer’s cultural mobility by building in New York. The question of race manifested fully in the figure of the architect not as a sign of blood but as a professional class, running for freedom in the cities. If in the old days mulattos ran to cities to “pass themselves as free,” in the late 1930s they ran there, to pass themselves off as modern.\textsuperscript{316} For Pinheiro, this architecture eternally tied to a master rather than to universal technical reason (which had to be grounded in locality), could never be truly Brazilian.\textsuperscript{317}

Costa and Niemeyer orchestrated the key works of painting and sculpture in the pavilion to tell the story of miscegenation in Brazil. Neither of Freyre’s works (Casa-grande & Senzala nor Sobrados e Mucambos) had been published in English translation by the time the New York pavilion opened. It is thus understandable that one hears no echo of his arguments in its reception by the English-speaking non-professional or in the

\textsuperscript{316}“But Negroes and, above all, mulattos ran away from the plantations to the cities more probably to pass themselves as free. Those who had a trade—tinsmith, cabinetmaker, blacksmith—sometimes gained by this not only freedom but professional and social advancement.” Gilberto Freyre, The Mansions and the Shanties (Sobrados e Mucambos): the Making of Modern Brazil, [1st American ed. (New York: Knopf, 1963). p. 131-32.
\textsuperscript{317}One finds a clear echo of this position in Rino Levi’s entry for Brasilia. His proposal resolved housing in clusters of eight independent skyscrapers (of approximately 80 stories high) link together by skywalks and fed by independent vertical circulations. There were 32 of these housing clusters. All were to be in steel. Levi argued that since all steel was to be produced in Brazil, this material was a sign of brasilidade.
architectural press. Freyre—despite all the idealization and eilitism in his work—posited “elements [of Indian and African culture] in a positive and active light, rather than ignoring them as passive or condemning them as corrupting elements, the prevailing assumption among Brazilians at the time.” A clear example of this active celebration of African culture was Celso Antônio’s “Reclining Woman” sculpture, presented outdoors in the pavilion’s veranda (Fig. 2.26). Antônio’s sculpture of a young black woman materialized Freyre’s key subjugated actor of Brazilian miscegenation: black women. With her arm behind her head, perky breasts and soft inviting smile, she embodied the seduction of Brazil and of the tropics. Here, US visitors encountered the origin of ‘racial democracy.’ “Reclining Woman” was perhaps the clearest example of an official (and Costa and Niemeyer’s) embrace of Freye’s notion of miscegenation, and the subtle yet decisive statement of Brazilian nationalism modeled against the United States.

Read against this context, Costa’s critique of the “pseudo-modern scenography so in vogue in the US” unfolds the period’s preoccupation with racial problems, and Brazilian leadership

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318 This was accomplished later, for example, by Argentinean historian and architect Jorge Gazaneo, who started his presentation of the work of Lucio Costa by quoting from Freyre’s Casa Grande & Senzala. See: Jorge O. Gazaneo, Lucio Costa (Buenos Aires: [Instituto de Arte Americano e Investigaciones Estéticas], 1959).

319 Jeffrey D. Needell, "Identity, Race, Gender, and Modernity in the Origins of Gilberto Freyre's Oeuvre," The American Historical Review 100, no. 1 (1995). p. 66. Needell speaks only of Afro-Brazilian culture. Music, played in the bar, certainly celebrated the cultural influence of black Brazilians—albeit dominated by white or mulatto interpreters such a Carmen Miranda, Heitor, Villalobos, etc. Unlike the musical festival that accompanied Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art, which presented reconstructions of Aztec music (equally mediated by white performers in this case by Carlos Chavez), the Brazilian pavilion did not incorporate any autochthonous Indigenous music or pure African rhythms. Indian crafts, “Adornos indígenas,” were displayed in the mezzanine—the album, however, failed to offer its readers an image of this display clearly reflecting their location in the back of the mezzanine. For a critical assessment of the incorporation of Brazilian popular music as part of the official cultural program of brasilidade see: Davis, Avoiding the Dark: Essays on Race and the Forging of National Culture in Modern Brazil. p. 133-141.

320 As has been underscored by several scholars, Freyre’s notion of miscegenation was intertwined with his views on racism in the United States. For an account of the changing nature of miscegenation in Brazil see: Lilia Moritz Schwarz, “Gilberto Freyre: Adaptação, Mestiçagem, Trópicos e Privacidade em Novo Mundo nos Trópicos,” in Gilberto Freyre e os Estudos Latino-Americanos, ed. Joshua Lund and Malcolm McNee (Pittsburgh, PA: Instituto Internacional de Literatura Iberoamericana, Universidad de Pittsburgh, 2006).
in progressive matters of race. The album offered no comment on Antônio’s work; it simply juxtaposed a decontextualized image of the copy of the stone sculpture next to the equally decontextualized Portinari murals; their careful arrangement on the page, however, continue to tell the story of miscegenation (Fig. 2.27).

The building gave clear stage directions to its visitors. The orientation of the sculpture on the veranda, looking towards the Portinari murals, presented the script to follow. As visitors climbed the ramp and entered the veranda they would be surprised by Antônio’s sculpture, slightly hidden by the protruding volume of the auditorium. This concealment and revelation added to the seduction. After their encounter, and guided by the gaze of the young black woman, visitors would enter the Good Neighbor Hall to confront the final characters in the long drama of Brazilian miscegenation as captured by Portinari in three large murals. As visitors left the veranda, exposed to the elements, and entered the hall they re-enacted a crucial transformation in this national drama enabled by architecture, in Freyre’s words: “tornando-se caseiras,” becoming part of the big-house, becoming domestics (Fig. 2.28). In the pavilion, the works of Antônio and Portinari operated as one cohesive narrative enacted through the spatial transformation, from exterior to interior, of the architecture, completing the architectural design as a synthetic proposition of racial brasilidade.  

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321 In this, Brazil contributed to a growing change in the perception of miscegenation as a positive influence, reinforcing the perception that the entire region was indeed the product of miscegenation. The foundation for this was provided by the engagement with Mexican art in the United States. For an examination of mestizaje in Latin America modernism see: Tace Hedrick, *Mestizo Modernism: Race, Nation, and Identity in Latin American Culture, 1900-1940* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2003). Hendrick focuses on Indian mestizaje and does not include Brazil in his study.

322 In the Memoir of the project, Costa and Niemeyer underscored that the Portinari murals and Antônio’s sculpture completed the architectural composition. This section of the Memoir has been consistently left out from all translations. Costa and Niemeyer, "O Pavilhão Brasileiro na Feira de Nova York." p. 18.
Art without Architecture

Immediately after the closing of Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art, MoMA opened Portinari of Brazil (October 9-November 17, 1940). The museum’s attention with respect to Latin American art had rarely, if at all, drifted away from Mexican art. This one-man exhibit was the museum’s first step into a larger Latin American culture. The exhibition brought together over a hundred works in different media; it showed twenty-six studies for the frescoes from the Ministry of Education and Health, a building still under construction and not yet seen by US audiences. Most importantly, the MoMA exhibit also included three murals—“Noite de San Joao,” “Jagandas do Norte” and “Cena Gaúcha”—on display in the Good Neighbor Hall of the Brazilian pavilion (Fig. 2.29).

Most of the work exhibited in the museum had already been shown in the Detroit Institute of Arts, a fact that most of the press chose to ignore. The Portinari exhibit appeared to have been a last-minute decision. Several galleries in the third-floor of the museum—scheduled to have a print show organized by Stieglitz—became available; Portinari was shown in this “released space.” MoMA, however, was not content with simply showing the Detroit exhibition. As the Bulletin underscored, the museum augmented the show and made it available, after New York, to other museums in the United States. The three murals of the Brazilian pavilion were key to this augmentation—the murals (approximately 12 square feet) were sent along with the show.

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323 The museum first tested this in its Art in Our Time: 10th Anniversary Exhibition (May 10-September 30, 1939), organized for the 1939 World’s Fair. This exhibition included Portinari along the already tried and tested Diego Rivera and Jose Clemente Orozco. In 1939 MoMA bought Portinari’s “Morro.”
324 There is a discrepancy between the “Check List” published in MoMA’s Bulletin (Vol. 7, no. 6 (1940) pp. 13-16) and the final exhibition list as present in the archive; for example, the murals were not included in the Bulletin.
325 Letter to Paul Rosenfeld, December 23, 1940. Exh 108 REG, MoMA Archives, NY.
326 This was clearly stated in the Bulletin, which served as a catalogue. Florence Horn, “Portinari of Brazil,” The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art 7, no. 6 (1940).
to several US museums.\footnote{See in particular: Letter (probably by Sarah Newmeyer) to Wilson P. Munger, January 3, 1941. Exh 108 REG, MoMA Archives, NY. In Culture Wars in Brazil, Williams considers the Portinari exhibit as a co-production between MoMA and the Detroit Institute of Arts. The Detroit museum held its Portinari exhibition in September 1940 independent of MoMA. See also: MoMA Press Release, Brazil’s Most Famous Modern Painter Arrives for Opening of his one-man show at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, September 18, 1940.} These actions reinforced the notion that MoMA was the main mediator of Latin American modern culture in the United States. Also important were the twelve frescos studies of the Ministry of Education and Health (MES) exhibited along with photographs of the finished frescoes in the building (Fig. 2.30).\footnote{Telegram, Alfred Barr to Josias Leão, October 3, 1940. Exh 108 REG, MoMA Archives, NY.} To complete the image of Portinari, MoMA engaged Florence Horn, art critic of Fortune magazine, and Robert C. Smith of the Hispanic Foundation of the Library of Congress, who wrote essays for the museum’s Bulletin that doubled as the catalogue for the exhibition.\footnote{Concurrently with the Portinari exhibit MoMA organized: “Festival of Brazilian Music.” Although the concerts were in MoMA’s auditorium, this program, officially organized in collaboration with the Brazilian representation of the New York World’s Fair, created a symbolic overlap between the pavilion and MoMA. Walter Burle Marx, brother of the landscape architect, arranged the program. See: Edward Alden Jewell, "Portinari Display of Painting Opens; Work of Brazilian Artist Is Seen at Preview in the Museum of Modern Art Fair Murals Exhibited Retrospective Assemblage of Pictures Is Marked by a Wide Diversity of Style," The New York Times, October 9, 1940. Also: Festival of Brazilian Music, Exh 108 REG, MoMA Archives, NY.} With Portinari, MoMA returned to its original consideration of Latin America within the context of its art: Mexico and its muralist school within a new political context and a growing interest for formal abstraction in the arts. As Smith had underscored, the source of indifference to contemporary Latin American art beyond Mexico among art historians was the general perception that it was “but a weak reflection of the modern Mexican renaissance.”\footnote{Robert C. Smith, "Brazilian Art," in Concerning Latin American Culture, ed. Charles C. Griffin (New York: Published by Columbia university press for the National committee of the United States of America on international cooperation, 1940), p. 181.} Portinari enabled an important connection with Mexican artistic technique—just a couple of months before Orozco had finished his mural at the museum as part of Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art—facilitating a transnational Latin American
imaginary. Unlike Mexican muralism, Portinari’s work offered a direct link to modern architecture as he was celebrated as the artist who had painted the murals of the MES—a building to be prominently displayed in *Brazil Builds*. In a period of heightened Pan Americanism, he also enabled a connection with Latin American culture along narratives of race that went beyond indigenous peoples, at a moment when a possible war brought forth question of integrating the armed forces in the United States.\(^{331}\)

The relations between Mexico and Brazil were clearly elaborated in the bulletin-catalogue by Smith. “Just as the Indian and the mestizo have been of prime importance to those Latin American painters of the Mexican Renaissance,” Smith argued, “the negro and the mulatto have been the principal inspiration of Candido Portinari.”\(^{332}\) Miscegenation was a key theme of Latin American artistic renewal. For Smith, however, Portinari operated an important change in and through muralism. The Brazilian painter brought a dynamic realism combined with a simplification of composition and suppression of detail that favored “a simple, impressible pattern of dark and light abstract forms.” This gave his murals a “sense of overwhelming rhythmic movements.” This sense of “atmosphere” was also present, Smith pointed out, in the Pavilion’s murals through the use of a “looser technique,” vague outlines and fluid surfaces.\(^{333}\)

Portinari’s work represented a preoccupation with race and an urban and rural proletariat that had received little to no official recognition in Brazil until the Vargas regime. Such images of *brasilidade*, with its prominent labor scenes, the dispossessed and favelas, grabbed the attention of progressive and socialist circles in Brazil who


\(^{333}\) Ibid. p. 11.
wanted to develop a muralist school. As Annateresa Fabris argues, these political and artistic circles saw Portinari in connection to Mexican Muralism. Like Rivera in Mexico, Portinari was capturing a “socialist society in gestation.” If the Brazilian intellectual and artistic elite were enthusiastic in connecting the art of Portinari to social questions as tackled by the Mexican school in the 1920s and 1930s, Smith was not so keen. As he underscored in the catalogue:

Unlike Rivera and the Mexicans [Portinari] has no didactic social message to expound. But what he has observed he states with sympathy and dignity, untouched by propaganda. Upon such a firm basis Brazilian painting should continue to grow in importance and to play and increasing significant role in the future art of Pan-America.

Whether Portinari had “no didactic social message to expound” is still highly debated. What is important, however, is that for MoMA, Brazil represented an alternative guide for Latin American artistic aims in an age where Pan-Americanism was needed. No longer could single countries, such as Mexico, stand alone. These were not the times for closed forms of culture such as \textit{mexicanidad}, but rather for open cultural images that could construct the region as a whole. Pan America was clearly spelled out by Smith. Metonymy had a political use. Brazil had to operate as a regional marker; it had to be Latin America if it was to construct Pan America. The elimination of any sign of social

\footnotesize{\begin{itemize}
\item[335] Smith, "The Art of Candido Portinari." p. 13.
\item[336] Williams underscores an apolitical Portinari, in the painter’s attempts to distance himself from Rivera and the Mexicans by citing a 1941 interview given by Portinari in the US. Williams, \textit{Culture Wars in Brazil: The First Vargas Regime, 1930-1945}. See note 52 p. 301. Fabris offers for a more complex presentation of the Brazilian situation.
\end{itemize}}
commentary that could be confused with propaganda, and the construction of a seamless and “non-ideological” democratic Pan America, articulated a Western Hemispheric construct in line with the developing Inter-American system of the early 1940s. So much so, that the Portinari exhibition was seen by the press as coming out of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs. In his review of the exhibition in *The Nation*, Paul Rosenfeld accused the show of being a product of the “double powers” of Nelson Rockefeller, as “guarding of the muses” at MoMA and head of the OCIAA. For Rosenfeld, this show was Inter-American (well-intended) propaganda. In this, Rosenfeld stressed, MoMA had confused its role as arbiter of taste with that of political and commercial propaganda. It was not that Portinari’s work was “not uninteresting,” nevertheless it was “insufficient to justify its present prominent position.” In a reply to such accusations, the museum (there is no discernible author) emphasized that Nelson Rockefeller had nothing to do with the exhibition—“he was not even on the committee the approved the exhibition”—and more important, that the exhibition had been approved before Rockefeller had been appointed head of the OCIAA.

Rosenfeld did not comment on the themes of the paintings, much less on their connection to a total modernist culture that included architecture. *New York Times* critic, Edward Alden Jewell, on the other hand, did. In his review of the MoMA show Jewell mentioned the Brazilian pavilion and the new Ministry. The connection to Brazilian modern architecture, however, was nominal and weak, even in the museum show, which

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337 Paul Rosenfeld, "High Brazil," *The Nation* 151, no. 17 (October 26) (1940), p. 402.
338 Letter (it seems to be from Alfie Barr) to Paul Rosenfeld, December 23, 1940. Exh 108 REG, MoMA Archives, NY. Rockefeller was appointed head of OCIAA in August 1940. Barr had already discussed “the general problem of Latin-American cultural relations” in late July 1940, before Rockefeller had been appointed director of OCIAA. See: Alfred Barr to Nelson Rockefeller, August 8, 1940. Folder 1203, Series L, Box 123, Record Group 4 NAR Papers, RAC.
presented the Ministry murals in small reproductions without any clear indication of their spatial location and impact on the building, reproducing a 1938 image of the finished murals still with the platform scaffolding (Fig. 2.31). The MoMA show also separated the pavilion murals, shown together as a triptych in the Good Neighbor Hall—a disassembly criticized by Jewell who argued that such separation destroyed their “propellant rhythmic movement.”339 He made no connection, however, to their racial narrative. This loose connection to the pavilion was emphasized by the fact that, other than nominal mention, there was no attempt to engage their architectural setting. MoMA dismissed the opportunity to re-present the pavilion and introduce the Ministry to a US audience (a material available in the pavilion) and provide a full picture of modernist culture in Brazil, possibly because of continuing considerations over a Latin American architecture show; serious deliberations on Brazil Builds did not start until January 1942. The relation of Portinari’s work to Brazilian modern architecture should not be over emphasized, but neither should it be dismissed since it was a constant presence in US emergence of his work.340 This loose connection recalled Costa’s position on the autonomy of artistic and


340 In Brazil, however, it had solicited a stronger response and debate. The paulista intellectual Mario de Andrade had drawn a clear rift between Portinari’s “easel painting, in which he practiced an erudite art, and his mural painting, in which he aimed to reach the masses.” Cited in “Portinari” by Alfonso Arinos de Melo Franco in O Journal, August 28, 1938. In: Lissovsky and Sá, Colunas da Educação: A Construção do Ministério da Educação E Saúde, 1935-1945. p. 244. The debate over Portinari’s popular aims grounded his mural work and gives new light to Smith’s emphasis on their abstract condition, resolved in Brazil by underscoring that all of Portinari’s work was popular in inspiration and erudite in execution. “Portinari,” Alfonso Arinos de Melo Franco in O Journal, August 28, 1938. Lissovsky and Sá, Colunas Da Educação : A Construção Do Ministério Da Educação E Saúde, 1935-1945. The tension between an erudite and a popular art was fueled by the debates on nationalism. The less receptive journal of the Brazilian military: Nação Armada, saw Portinari’s work as driven by internationalist forces, “conscious, sub-conscious and inconsistent Communists,” as well as US love for eccentricities. Such universalist proclivities present in Portinari’s work, the journal stated, did not congeal with the work of frank nationalism being done in
architectural values, and allowed MoMA to unfasten the ideas of racial miscegenation and geographical adaptation, providing a clear narrative proper and specific to art and to architecture. This was one of the lasting contributions of *Brazil Builds*.
Chapter 3

Searching for Latin America

Despite all the critical acclaim that the Brazilian pavilion at the 1939 New York World’s Fair received from the architectural press, it received little attention from historians of a still-nascent modern architecture history. The pavilion did not appear in J.M. Richard’s 1940 *An Introduction to Modern Architecture*, or in Sigfried Giedion’s 1941 *Space, Time and Architecture*. That acknowledgement would have to wait until MoMA’s seminal 1943 *Brazil Builds*, but more importantly, it would have to wait until the end of the war. The pavilion did, however, register in MoMA’s 1942 *What is Modern Architecture?* (Fig. 3.1) This book, edited by Margaret Miller (an art historian and painter educated at Vassar College), was connected to a circulating exhibition (1938-44) of the same name prepared by John McAndrew, who curated *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art*, and Elizabeth Mock, who would become deeply involved in *Brazil Builds*. Part of the museum’s attempt to proselytize modernist aesthetics, this small project recorded two important moments: It revealed the deep changes that the museum suffered by the United States entry in the war. It also was the museum’s first official embrace of Brazilian modernism before *Brazil Builds*.

341 The book was prepared from the 1939 Norton Lectures at Harvard; published in 1941 it could have incorporated the pavilion. The Brazilian pavilion does not appear in any of its numerous enlarged editions. In 1941, Giedion included Le Corbusier’s 1929 Plan for Buenos Aires, a sketch of the towers in the park principle (illustration 313, p. 565), and mentions Rio as part of the French architect’s sweeping urban planning works.
Didactic in intent, *What is Modern Architecture?* underscored the difference of the present from the past by pointing out the effect that science had had on modern life. It made an appeal for the architect to become “a scientist” as well as “a psychologist … and an artist.”[^342] Under the aegis of utility, strength and beauty—and in that order—a modern world would emerge. The call for Vitruvian principles manifested the lessening of the modernist break with the past that the 1932 *Modern Architecture* exhibition had championed. It underscored a good architectural tradition based on unchanging values. *What is Modern Architecture?* followed the 1932 show in its reliance on the figure of the vanguard architect who provided examples to follow, by assembling a pantheon of heroes, dutifully amplified, to meet new and present considerations. It also tacitly presented an expanded, yet abstract, geography of modern buildings that, without immediate authorial attributions, exemplified the qualities of utility, strength and beauty. The Brazilian pavilion was included within these—under the category of beauty.[^343] The pavilion operated as a counterpoint to the rigid geometries deployed in 1932. If the characteristics of the style had “revealed harmoniously proportioned rectangles or smooth cylinders in their full perfection and purity” by 1942 “these elementary geometric forms are contrasted with more complex shapes of freely curving abstract character.”[^344]

Brazilian modernism was first set within a narrative of stylistic development as


[^343]: *What is Modern Architecture?* introduced new themes, such as the virtue of ordinary materials like plywood, not present in Hitchcock and Johnson’s *The International Style*. In 1932, the principles were: architecture as volume, regularity over symmetry and the avoidance of applied decoration. The idea of an intrinsic elegance of materials that surpassed decoration and reach particular aesthetic heights in architectural details (window details in particular) was modulated in 1942 to include “the richer, more varied surfaces of wood, brick and stone, materials as old as architecture itself.” Ibid. p. 36. On detailing as the height of modern ‘decoration’ see: Henry Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International Style* (New York: Norton, 1966). pp. 72-73.

[^344]: McAndrew, Kassler, and Miller, *What Is Modern Architecture?* p. 35. The use of Frank Lloyd Wright to illustrate the purity of geometric shapes was already a commentary on the style as defined in 1932.
counterpoint to abstract orthogonal forms. More important, this abstract world of stylistic loosening was positioned in an ambivalent relation to the “free forms of nature.” The “freely curving” forms of the Brazilian pavilion were not identified with organic forms, but rather with abstract geometric complexity, like the “fanciful jigsaw shape suspended from the ceiling” of the pavilion set off by the curved wall and the circle of the dance floor. It is not surprising that McAndrew, who had recently designed the freely curving shelves of the Mexican exhibit, and MoMA’s garden, emphasized an abstract geometric genealogy for these curving forms; after all, in the United States, the loosening of rigid geometries was strongly connected to commercial themes and the emphasis on abstract geometry helped secure its artistic pedigree. This context set the stage for Brazil Builds, an exhibition that would introduce a new genealogy for the loosening designs of modern architecture.

**A South American Architecture Show at MoMA**

The Brazilian pavilion at the 1939 World’s Fair, designed by Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer, with the collaboration of Paul Lester Wiener, must have exposed the lack of Modern architecture in Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art, and raised interest in the architecture of the region at MoMA. As Janet Henrich (Director of the Department of Architecture) stated in an early January 1942 memo to Elodie Courter (Director of the Department of Circulating Exhibitions) and Monroe Wheeler (Director of Exhibitions and Publications), the Department of Architecture had been talking about “the whole question of Latin American architecture shows… since 1939.”

345 Although the Brazilian

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pavilion was never mentioned outright, the singling out of the year of the World’s Fair established a clear link. Brazil, however, did not appear as the only candidate for a “Latin American” show. What comes through in letters and memos was a general concern about the modern architecture of the region: “The question seems to be a double one: is there enough material (good modern building) to make an interesting show; and can the necessary research material be obtained as well as good photographs.”

Brazil was certainly a strong consideration, but other than the work of Niemeyer, who “is undoubtedly the best modern designer in Brazil (we have two of his models which we have never shown…) I have gathered,” Henrich continued, “that there is not a great deal of work other than his which is of first quality.”

Exactly how Henrich was able to measure the quality of other Brazilian works was not mentioned. In December 1940, Architectural Record had published a short piece on the first large modern building in Brazil, the Roberto Brothers’ 1936 ABI Building in Rio de Janeiro (Fig. 3.2). A year before, the French L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui had presented a house by Rino Levi in São Paulo, and an apartment building by Angelo Bruhns in Rio de Janeiro. This work

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346 Ibid.
347 Ibid.
348 The Associação Brasileira de Imprensa (ABI), the Brazilian Press Association building was the first large-scale modernist building in Brazil. It incorporated a fix brise-soleil and a thermal dissipation corridor. For a history of the building see: Yves Bruand, Arquitetura Contemporânea no Brasil (São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva, 1981). p. 93.
captured Henrich’s concerns. Bruhns’ tower with its clear Art Deco influence, and Levi’s 1935 “Casa Week-end” caught in-between streamline, with its boat inspired details, and modern functionalism, made them teeter between modernistic and modern (Fig. 3.3). The possibility of a show concentrating solely on Brazil was not guaranteed. Uruguay, because of its “very advanced social-work set up, which undoubtedly includes some architecture,” was a very strong contender.\footnote{Memo, Miss Henrich to Miss Courter cc. Mr. Wheeler, Re; South American Arch, January 15, 1942. Exh. 213. REG. MoMA Archives, NY. The information on Uruguay came from Agnes Rindge Claflin (1900-1977). She was Professor of Art and director of the Vassar Art Gallery. She served as Executive Secretary and Consultant in the Art Division of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs between 1941-42. She became a member of the Museum of Modern Art's Advisory Committee in 1941, and served as the Assistant Executive Vice President to the Museum 1943-44. Cf. http://www.dictionaryofarthistorians.org/claflina.htm (Accessed April 25, 2007.) Information on Uruguay also came from Uruguayan architect Román Fresnedo Siri, who appeared to have been in New York and met with Henrich.} From the director of the San Francisco Museum of Art came the suggestion of a show on Chilean modern architecture. “I saw an exhibition of eight or ten models, plans and elevations,” wrote Grace McCann Morley, “at the Museo Nacional of Santiago in February 1941. It is functional, simplified ‘international’ style on the whole, kept mercifully plain thanks to lack of funds. It included housing and town planning. It would be interesting.” As if considering all and any possibilities, Colombia was also thrown into the mix.\footnote{Letter, Grace McCann Morley to Eloide Courter, February 14, 1942. Exh. 213. REG, MoMA Archives, NY. This is only a transcribed paragraph of the letter. I have not been able to find the original. “There is some modern in Bogotá also.”} What governed the letters and memos was the general lack of information and knowledge about the architecture of the region. What also governed the scope of the interests expressed was the absence of Mexico. All considerations were within South America.

Was it possible then to have Urugua\textit{y Builds}? It is most likely that in early January 1942, like Washington, MoMA was considering all options. As Quezado Deckker points out, however, the 1942 Rio Conference underscored the strategic
importance of Brazil in the south Atlantic, making a Brazilian show highly desirable. It was only a month after the US had gone to war, and eight since Nelson Rockefeller had decided to step down as President of MoMA (May 1941), after realizing he could not manage being both president of the museum and head of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA). Rockefeller had become president in May 1939, as part of a new impetus fueled by the museum’s new home and an internal reorganization that made Stephen C. Clark Chairman of the Board of Trustees, a position that had remained empty.

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352 Quezado Deckker, *Brazil Built: The Architecture of the Modern Movement in Brazil*. p. 212. He points to the coincidence in date (January 15) between the Henrich’s memo to Miss Courter and the opening of the conference.

353 President Roosevelt established the office in August 1940 as part of the Council of National Defense. Its first designation was as the Office for Coordination of Commercial and Cultural Relations Between the American Republics (OCCCRBAR). It was established by an Executive Order (EO) in August 16, 1940 and abolished by EO 8840 in July 30, 1941, with its functions transferred to the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA). The OCIAA was renamed Office of Inter-American Affairs (OIAA) in March 23, 1945 by EO 9532. Originally established under the umbrella of the Council of National Defense (1940-41), it was moved to the Office for Emergency Management (1941-45), and later, in August 31, 1945, to the Interim International Information Service of the State Department, until it was abolished by EO 9710 in April 10, 1946, effective May 20, 1946. http://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/229.html#229.1. (Accessed Feb 14, 2011.) In 1940, Nelson Rockefeller, then 30 years old, was appointed chairman of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Inter-American Affairs. He also was the coordinator/director of OCCCRBAR and OCIAA. Although Rockefeller took a leave of absence as president of Rockefeller Center Inc, he remained president of MoMA until May 1941. The OCIAA worked in collaboration with the State Department’s Division of Cultural Relations, producing war propaganda and Inter-American cooperation programs. In this period Nelson Rockefeller had substantial involvements in Venezuela. He was the director of the Creole Petroleum Company (a subsidiary of Standard Oil of New Jersey in Venezuela), and had several real estate holdings in Caracas. Cf “Defense Post goes to N. Rockefeller,” August 17, 1940. *The New York Times*. Rockefeller headed the OCIAA from July 3, 1941 to December 26, 1944. Although he never officially resigned as Coordinator, he left the OCIAA to become Assistant Secretary of State in charge of relations with the American Republics at the State Department. A post he resigned from on August 25, 1945. Wallace K. Harrison, who was Director of the Cultural Relations Section of the OCIAA (Aug 6, 1941), and later Director of Information, became Director of the OIAA, after Rockefeller left for the State department. President Truman terminated the OIAA on April 10, 1946. Harrison had resigned in September 13, 1945, but was asked to remain on-board until all remaining functions of the OIAA could be transferred to the State Department. All information activities of the OIAA were transferred to the Interim International Services of State Department in August 31, 1945, and later, in 1948, to the International Information and Cultural Affairs Office of the State Department. For a brief history of Nelson Rockefeller’s involvement see: January 23, 1950, Memo to Files from Joan van Orden. Subject: Offices held by NAR-CIAA and Assistant Secretary of State, Folder 10, Series O, Box 2, Record Group 4 NAR Papers, RAC. Also: Letter, President Harry S. Truman to Wallace K. Harrison, April 10, 1946. Folder 98, Series O, Box 12, Record Group 4 NAR Papers, RAC.
since 1929. The move to the new building marked the beginning of a process of institutionalization as well as the decline of Alfred Barr’s influence, the growth of Monroe Wheeler’s, as Director of Exhibitions and Publications, and John Abbott’s, as Executive Vice-President. This “putting the house in order,” also saw the ousting of John McAndrew, and the weakening of the Department of Architecture. It is important to underscore that the period in which the museum developed key exhibitions on Latin America was one of internal turmoil. United States entry into the war affected the museum in two significant ways. First, as is well known, it help established a clear and public link between the museum and US government, through Rockefeller’s OCIAA, and James Thrall Soby, who coordinated the museum’s involvement with the US Army Special Service Division. The link with the OCIAA, thus was not the only channel of collaboration with US government departments; the relationship with the OCIAA, however, conditioned the reception of Latin American culture at the museum and bestowed a lasting impression in the region of the museum as an extension of the US government, laying the foundations of a web of suspicions that would be further fueled by the Cold War. This was a key difference between Twenty

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354 See: "Modern Museum Shifts Officials; Nelson Rockefeller Succeeds Goodyear as President-- S.C. Clark Heads Board Mrs. Sheppard Treasurer John Hay Whitney First Vice President--Old Policy of Art Institute to Go On." p. 17.
357 For example, in his analysis of the planning of Brazil Builds, Quezado Deckker implies that the possibility of using Brazil Builds as a propaganda weapon made Rockefeller change his opinion on funding architecture shows at MoMA. “The Department [of Architecture] did not initially get a grant from the Coordinator; the funding came after the trip.” Quezado Deckker, Brazil Built: The Architecture of the Modern Movement in Brazil. p. 113. There is certainly something to this observation, since the OCIAA funded the book (and through it the exhibition) precisely because of its propaganda possibilities. However, this explanation of Rockefeller’s intent seems politically overdetermine, since Rockefeller had seek State
Centuries of Mexican Art and Brazil Builds. The impression that MoMA was under the shadow of Rockefeller’s OCIAA—as The Nation’s review of the Portinari exhibit underscored—helped veil the second change, subtle yet important, brought about by the war: the rise in the influence of women at the museum, in the architecture department, and with Brazil Builds in particular.

While MoMA had always had powerful women at the top, now it seemed it had influential women on its staff. In January 1943, the same month of the opening of the Brazilian architecture exhibit, an extensive confidential memorandum on museum personnel to Arthur W. Packard (Abby Aldrich Rockefeller’s personal financial consultant) painted a museum controlled by women in the staff. It seemed that “The Secretary of the Museum [Frances Hawkins] runs the Chairman of the Board [Stephen C. Clark] and the Executive Vice-President [John E. Abbott] and this does not have popular appeal.”\(^{358}\) The museum, the memo stressed, was full of strong women who controlled the men—like Iris Barry controlled Abbott, who happened to be her husband; it was full of “Officious and tactless” women with hard exteriors, of “Pussy-Pants,” of gossipy men and women. For the author of the memo the museum seemed to be caught in a web of relations controlled by women of questionable politics (Iris Barry “was once a little communist”), grasping jewish [sic] friends,” and dubious morality (Hawkins had “managed and staged vaudeville”). There were also certainly pleasant and industrious women, but only a man “could alleviate a great deal of [the discord] Department approval, and to complicate the issue he had various economic and personal interests in Latin America.

\(^{358}\) Confidential Memo to Arthur W. Packard, January 1943. Folder 230, Series III 2E, Box 23, Record Group: Cultural Interests, Office of the Messrs. Rockefeller. RAC. Packard was close to the Rockefeller family, and personal financial advisor to Abby Aldrich Rockefeller.
among *The Women.*” All this appeared to be common opinion, as the often-repeated phrase “as you very well know” revealed. “What the museum needs badly,” the memo proposed “is a man secretary … and preferably a man office manager.” While the brunt of the animosity was aimed at Frances Hawkins, it is important to underscore that the memo’s call for masculinity aimed to counter a museum “unfortunately composed of a body of artistic temperaments…badly in need of good business administration.”  

The early debates over *Brazil Builds* reveal a subtle gendered power battle within the museum. Geopolitics (no matter how pressing) and gender politics (no matter how controlling of the internal workings of the museum), did not displace the high standards set by key figures—both men and women—in the museum. The Department of Architecture, headed by Henrich, continued to hesitate about doing a thematic show focusing on a single country. In a note of March 1942, the decision to organize an exhibition of Brazilian colonial and modern architecture that would be shown in New York and circulated around the country was considered only “If material of sufficient quality can be obtained.”  

Wheeler pushed for a Brazil–only show modeled after *Stockholm Builds.* This, however, implied a simple straightforward exhibition based only on photographs. Henrich

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359 Confidential Memo to Arthur W. Packard, January 1943. Folder 230, Series III 2E, Box 23, Record Group: Cultural Interests, Office of the Messrs. Rockefeller. RAC.

360 Note (no author), March 1942. Exh. 213. REG, MoMA Archives, NY.

361 “Dear Elodie: People keep telling me how extraordinary Brazilian architecture is, and I still think you should have a show like "Stockholm Builds" on Brazil. You will remember that we discussed the matter with Kidder-Smith, and he wanted to take an assistant with him, which would make a pretty costly trip of it. What about sending him down alone to assemble photographs already made, and to take a few more himself? I think we could get a grant from the Coordinator to cover this trip.” Memo, Monroe Wheeler to Elodie Courter, February 11, 1942. Exh 213 REG MoMA Archives NY. See: Quezado Deckker, *Brazil Built: The Architecture of the Modern Movement in Brazil.* p. 112. Quezado Deckker correctly points out that Wheeler’s use of *Stockholm Builds* as a model implied a simple show.
warned against using *Stockholm Builds* as a model. The anxiety produced by the almost complete lack of information on Latin American architecture was evident. For Henrich, the problem was the difficulty in doing the research:

I certainly think a good South American show could be very popular, but most of the discussion I have heard about such shows during the last year has been based on a slight misconception. Our STOCKHOLM BUILDS has been used as an example of how a South American show could be done. Actually although GEKS [Kidder-Smith] is an architect, he did not have a great deal of the information needed to put the show together in an interesting fashion. Betty Mock did a great deal of research and fortunately it was possible for research on Stockholm and Swedish building to be done here—which would not be true, I am afraid, in the case of South America which is very badly documented.  

The closure of the European stage and the redirection of cultural flows revealed an overarching problem: the overall lack of knowledge on the architecture of the region. In the early 1940s, Latin America was, within the imagination of those organizing the exhibition, a place of discovery and exploration. This narrative, a quintessential male dominated narrative, encountered resistance because of the cost involved (thus Wheeler’s mobilization of *Stockholm Builds*) in such explorations. In the end, however, it became the leading narrative of the enterprise.

The narrative of discovery and exploration in *Brazil Builds* overlapped, and at times merged, with the OCIAA’s drive to make the region known to US audiences. This drive existed in US scientific and political circles for some time. The enterprise of

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362 Memo, Miss Henrich to Miss Couter, Re; South America, January 15, 1942. Exh. 213. REG, MoMA Archives, NY.
“knowing” Latin America was, as Ricardo Salvatore argues, crucial for its early twentieth century capitalist exploitation. The US deployed a vast and complex apparatus—through institutions, universities and corporations—to “know” the region. These machines for knowledge—such as the American Geographical Society, the Carnegie Institute or the Rockefeller Foundation—focused on science and industry. MoMA, along with the OCIAA inaugurated the discovery of Latin American modern culture, and more important, of its modern architecture. To discover this new architectural world, a network of individuals and institutions was slowly created, MoMA being positioned at a key nodal point.

Paul Lester Wiener was then brought into the fold. He had designed the exhibitions of the 1939 Brazilian and Ecuadorian pavilions, and as Henrich pointed out: “lectures three months each year at the university in Rio and seems to know a good deal about the people and general set-up connected with modern architecture there.”

Although part of the New York cultural elite, Wiener was not directly connected to MoMA. He was not an unknown figure in US architectural circles, since he had designed

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363 See: Ricardo Donato Salvatore, Imágenes de un imperio: Estados Unidos y las formas de representación de América Latina (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 2006). Salvatore rightly presents the relationship between commercial exploitation and knowledge. I want to underscore, however, that the drive to know Latin America in the early 1940s was fueled also by the need for inter-American cooperation.

364 Part of this network was the Division of Pan American Affairs of the American Institute of Architects.

365 "Paul Lester Wiener, Architect and City Planner, is Dead at 72; Designer of Communities in North and South America is Stricken in Munich," The New York Times, November 18 1967.

366 Letter, Janet Henrich to Lincoln Kirstein, March 4, 1942. Exh. 213 REG, MoMA Archives, NY. Wiener’s early relation to Brazil was primarily through the Brazilian Institute of Architects (IAB) and the Instituto Brasil-Estados Unidos. He lectured at the Universidade do Rio de Janeiro (Universidade do Brazil) from 1942 to 1944. His archive reveals scant communications with Oscar Niemeyer (only two letters: 1942 and 1956) and none to Costa. As Cavalcanti states, Costa and Niemeyer set up their architectural studio for the 1939 pavilion in Wallace K. Harrison’s office. Cavalcanti, Moderno e Brasileiro: A história de uma nova linguagem na arquitectura (1930-60), p. 176. There is no correspondence between Wiener and Harrison in Wiener’s archive. See: University of Oregon Library, "Wiener Inventory [with May 1973 Addenda] " (Oregon: University of Oregon, 1971).
the US pavilion for the 1937 World’s Fair,\(^{367}\) but by the early 1940s, he was focusing on urban planning, founding Town Planning Associates with Jose Luis Sert and Paul Schulz, and developing an interest in mass production techniques.\(^{368}\) Wiener emphasized the need to include town planning, a suggestion that was completely disregarded in the exhibition.\(^{369}\) He also underscored the need to have good photographs made; photographs of modern architecture, he commented to Henrich, were of poor quality and have “too much emphasis on palm trees and not enough on architecture.” To perform the photographic survey, Wiener recommended Genevieve Naylor, a photojournalist for *Life* magazine, who was in Brazil at the time preparing a book under OCIAA sponsorship. In the end, G.E. Kidder-Smith was selected, and an exhibition of her work (*Faves and

\(^{367}\) He designed the US pavilion along with Charles Higgins and Julian Clarence Levi. The pavilion, which was a “symbolic skyscraper,” was awarded Grand Prix in Public Building Architecture at the Paris World’s Fair. "Awards are Made for the Paris Fair; Paul Lester Wiener, Adviser to U. S. Board, among Americans Receiving Official Prizes Grand Prix to Glackensi Jo Davidson Gets Same Prize in Sculpture-Loewy Wins Transportation Award," *The New York Times*, September 16 1938. Wiener, along with Harris, also won a Diploma for the Federal Displays.


\(^{369}\) “Any show on modern Brazilian architecture should include at least some aspect of town planning work which has been done. Rio, Goyaz and Sao Paulo all have good and well worked out plans. (Goyaz designed by Professor Agash) (There exists interesting comparative schemes and models for the work at Sao Paulo – which also has a fine public works program).” “Conversation with Paul Lester Wiener re Brazilian Architectural material.” n.d. Exh. 213 CUR, MoMA Archives, NY. The question town planing was included in the catalogue (p. 95).
Places in Brazil: Photographs by Genevieve Naylor, January 27-February 28, 1943) was installed at Goodwin’s insistence as a supplement to Brazil Builds.  

Along with Wiener, Bernard Rudofsky also offered a direct connection to the Brazilian architectural professional scene. He had arrived in New York in May 1941 in connection with MoMA’s Organic Design in Home Furnishings exhibition (September 24-November 9, 1941), as part of the Latin American representation, and used this opportunity to stay permanently in the US. Rudofsky claimed to be one of the main sources of Goodwin’s knowledge on Brazilian architecture. “For his exploratory trip to Brazil,” he stated, “I furnished him pertinent books and composed his itinerary, complete with lists of places and persons to visit.” Rudofsky did become an interpreter of Latin American architectural culture in the US. After Brazil Builds closed at MoMA, it traveled to Boston where it opened at the Museum of Fine Arts under the auspices of the Pan American Society. In March 1943, Rudofsky gave a lecture there in connection to the

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370 Letter, Janet Henrich to Lincoln Kirstein, March 4, 1942. Also: “Conversation with Paul Lester Wiener re Brazilian Architectural material.” n.d. Exh. 213 REG, MoMA Archives, NY. There are singular discrepancies between the notes on the conversation with Wiener, and Heinrich letter to Kirstein relaying the conversation, for example, the comment on the emphasis on palm trees does not appear in the notes from conversation but in the letter to Kirstein. Other discrepancies reveal Henrich possible biased towards Naylor. In the letter, Naylor becomes someone who “supposedly knows many of the good architects.” On Naylor see: Robert M. Levine and Genevieve Naylor, The Brazilian Photographs of Genevieve Naylor, 1940-1943 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998). Her photographs were shown at MoMA: Exhibition 215: Faves and Places in Brazil: Photographs by Genevieve Naylor (January 27-February 28, 1943). See: H.D, "More of Brazil," The New York Times, January 27 1943. The selection of Kidder-Smith was generally justified because of his connection to Stockholm Builds, and also because he was an architect. His selection emphasized the shows connection to the American Institute of Architects, and deemphasized that to the OCIAA.


373 Agnes Mongan, working at the Fogg Museum of Art, organized a program around Brazil. “We would like to have an exhibition of the baroque architecture of Brazil either in November or February. We would then arrange to have the seminar study groups on Brazil meet at the time the exhibition is being held. We will make all our other programs subsidiary. I know I can borrow some things from Robert Smith of the Hispanic Foundation, Library of Congress, but I would like to keep these as supplementary material to the
exhibition. In Boston, Rudofsky underscored the connection of Brazilian modern architecture to its colonial past. He also linked Brazilian architectural developments with those of Italy, a link that had been deemphasized in *Brazil Builds*. Brazilian painters, Rudofsky argued, found inspiration in Paris: “aspiring architectural students went to Italy, the home country of architecture.” The connections between the two countries went further. As in Brazil, the government in Italy had been a key sponsor of modern architecture. Rudofsky echoed Gerson Pompeu Pinheiro with this statement, who had praised the Italian embrace of an international architectural expression within a nationalist regime. Rudofsky, however, was careful not to align Brazil with Italy politically.

The cast of characters involved and the themes that unfolded through the “South America architecture show” may shed light on a question that remains somewhat unanswered: why Goodwin? Answers to this question tend to focus on Goodwin’s voluntarism. His trip to Brazil, he later recounted, “was taken on the spur of the moment… partly on a good will mission and partly to investigate the advanced modern architecture of which photographs had been coming to [the US] for several years.”

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374 See: Bernard Rudofsky, "On Architecture and Architects," *New Pencil Points* 24, no. 4 (1943). The type written manuscript is in the MoMA archives (Exh. 213, REG). There are no significant variations from the published piece. On the exhibition traveling to Boston see: Memo, n.d., “Publicity.” Exh. 213 REG, MoMA Archives, NY. On Rudofsky’s lecture see: Letter, Elizabeth Mock, March 1, 1943. Exh. 213 CUR, MoMA Archives, NY. This lecture, however, seems to be part of a larger symposium on Brazilian architecture, in which Paul Lester Wiener also participated. See: Library, "Wiener Inventory [with May 1973 Addenda] ".
377 He avoids this political connection by emphasizing architectural projects over architect’s names.
probably was also one of the few people in the museum who could take a two-month study trip. A trustee of the museum, trained as an architect and independently wealthy, Goodwin was chairman of architecture over a decade (1935-1948), and oversaw the separation of architecture and design into separate departments in 1940. As an avid art collector he had a predilection for European art—having no knowledge of Spanish or Portuguese (he spoke French), and had shown no particular interest in Latin America. As a practicing architect, he had only recently—between 1936 and 1939 with the design of the new building for MoMA—converted to modernism. This conversion, guided by a younger Edward Durell Stone who tempered his strong Beaux-Arts tendencies, was fueled by the possibility of having a foreign European architect—in particular Mies van der Rohe—design the museum’s new building. The disagreement around the design of the new building had revealed strong nationalistic undercurrents—pointed out by Barr—within the museum; sentiments which Goodwin did not hesitate to mobilize to maintain control of the design. Did Goodwin feel that the Brazilian development of Corbusian modern architecture could offer an alternative point of view, a bulwark against a newly reinforced German influence enabled by Gropius’ migration in 1937 and Mies’ in 1939 to the United States—a migration facilitated by Barr himself? There is no plain answer to his question. The overwhelming success of Brazil Builds, to which Goodwin certainly contributed, and his enthusiastic championing of Brazilian strategies of climatic

381 Unluckily, there is no information in the museum’s archive about the preparation of the “study-journey” to Brazil, or why Philip Goodwin and Kidder-Smith were selected for this project.
adaptation, points to this possibility. On the other hand, Goodwin’s 1947 modification of his 1941 design for the Yale Art Museum with its strict orthogonality revealed no formal Brazilian influences.\textsuperscript{382}

If in 1932 the \textit{Modern Architecture: International Exhibition} ushered the birth of the Department of Architecture at MoMA, in 1943 \textit{Brazil Builds}, propelled by the Pan American craze of the period, ushered its rebirth. By September 1942, Philip Goodwin appeared to be overseeing \textit{Brazil Builds}, along with “Acting Director” of architecture, Alice M. Carson. Early preparations for the exhibition revealed the leadership of Janet Heinrich, but she left the museum in 1942 to get married, “leaving the department in the hands of a newly employed secretary, a very sweet girl with very little experience.”\textsuperscript{383} If one follows the comments of the confidential memorandum, it would seem improbable that the Architecture Department, a “department that doesn’t really amount to very much,” could successfully develop a single exhibition, even under “the watchful eye” of Goodwin, much less one with as much lasting influence as \textit{Brazil Builds}. Mixed within these observations and comments of a disintegrating architecture department were financial considerations. Rockefeller’s presidency of the museum had also brought about


\textsuperscript{383} Confidential Memo to Arthur W. Packard, January 1943. Folder 230, Series III 2E, Box 23, Record Group: Cultural Interests, Office of the Messrs. Rockefeller. RAC. The memorandum does not give the name of the “sweet girl” on which the fate of \textit{Brazil Builds} hung, possibly being Anne Tredick. For a biography see: http://www.provincetownbanner.com/article/obituaries_article/64838/Obituaries/3/26/2009 (Accessed December 21, 2011)
a financial tightening that affected the architecture department.\textsuperscript{384} While in Brazil, Goodwin wrote Barr expressing his hope “that the Architecture Department can be prolonged until the Brazil exhibitions are finished.”\textsuperscript{385} By July, Goodwin and Kidder-Smith had returned from their two-month expedition making patent that a Brazil-only show was viable, and, possibly also shoring up the Department of Architecture itself. The quality of the material, as well as “the fact that no Latin American indigenous modern architecture has as yet received such serious consideration [made] all think that it will be a very successful and influential show.”\textsuperscript{386} By October, in “a sudden turn of activity,” Elizabeth Mock was brought in to work on the exhibition and the book; Carson, Goodwin, Kidder-Smith and Courter had made an initial selection of the more than 600 photographs.\textsuperscript{387}

But a key preoccupation remained: the catalogue.\textsuperscript{388} Considering the possible propaganda impact this book could have, and Barr’s view that the “exhibition might be considered as a kind of magnificent poster for the book,” the initial preoccupation proved correct.\textsuperscript{389} Wheeler turned to the OCIAA; he put together a straightforward proposal,

\textsuperscript{384} See: Lynes, \textit{Good Old Modern; an Intimate Portrait of the Museum of Modern Art}. p. 221. Lynes implies that the removal of McAndrew was in part due to his inability to “keep within his budgets.” He also underscores a concern over the relaxation of standards; both concerns bring \textit{Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art} to the fold. Lynes implies that Rockefeller was somehow predisposed against architecture exhibitions because these “did not make any money.” On the other hand, upon becoming president of MoMA, Rockefeller underscored that the museum needed to be more than painting and sculpture, highlighting the expansion of architecture and industrial design. “Modern Museum Shifts Officials; Nelson Rockefeller Succeeds Goodyear as President-- S.C. Clark Heads Board Mrs. Sheppard Treasurer John Hay Whitney First Vice President--Old Policy of Art Institute to Go On.” p. 17.


\textsuperscript{386} Letter, [possibly from Barr] to Philip Goodwin, July 30, 1942. Exh. 213 CUR. MoMA Archives, NY.

\textsuperscript{387} Letter, Alice Carson to Elizabeth Mock, October 9, 1943. Exh. 213 CUR, MoMA Archives, NY.

\textsuperscript{388} Agenda Meeting Museum of Modern Art, August 11 Brazilian Architectural Exhibition, August 10, 1942. Exh. 213 REG, MoMA Archives, NY. The agenda on the “Brazilian Architectural Exhibition” indicated Monroe Wheeler as being in charge of the exhibition—a question mark appeared next to “The book on modern Brazilian architecture.”

\textsuperscript{389} Letter, Alfred Barr to Philip Goodwin, October 7, 1942. Correspondence AHB, mf 2167:345 AAA.
underscoring that the museum had financed the “expedition” and could not under a “recently curtailed” budget underwrite both exhibition and publication. Wheeler praised the quality of the works found in Brazil, the photographs and information collected, and added that “a book on Brazilian modern architecture, issued in New York, would be a most felicitous from the point of view of inter-American relations.” Such a book “will reflect great honor upon our new ally.”

By September 1942, Goodwin informed Wheeler that Wallace K. Harrison (Director of Cultural Relations of the OCIAA since August 6, 1941) and Nelson Rockefeller had approved the Brazilian project. Still, it had to be presented later that month to the appropriate OCIAA committee by René d’Harnoncourt. Goodwin wondered whether they should proceed with the program without waiting for the OCIAA’s final decision, and whether it was best if he made the case in Washington personally.

What had to be finalized was whether or not Brazilian modern architecture would be recruited for the war propaganda effort, and this had to be cleared by the State Department. In his examination of the exhibition, Quezado Deckker is correct in underscoring the political instrumentality of the exhibition. He, however, puts too much stress on a nationalist (Brazililian) reading, which prevents him from analyzing the exhibition’s wider political and cultural instrumentality.

As a propaganda tool, the catalogue was couched in a Latin American transnational image. If in his memorandum to Rockefeller, Wheeler had underscored the architectural contribution of a single nation, the OCIAA’s internal proposal reinserted the project within a transnational territory. It underscored that a volume on Brazilian modern architecture would be of interest to “other American republics, such as Mexico, Uruguay,

390 Memorandum, Monroe Wheeler to Nelson Rockefeller, Exhibition and Book on Modern Brazilian Architecture. Exh. 213 CUR, MoMA Archives NY.
and Venezuela, who have made considerable efforts to develop a modern architecture of
their own.”

This relational geography that brought together Latin American countries
was perhaps not exceptional considering the mandate of the OCIAA. In the proposal,
however, the terms of the discussion were clearly rearticulated, and the proposal made
clear that the narratives that dominated US-Latin American exchanges had to change.
Views that stressed “picturesque aspects,” the primitive and “backwardness” had to be
replaced by Latin America’s “contribution to contemporary thought and modern living.”
The “other American Republics” had to be considered “as equals.” This position,
championed by the OCIAA, should not be undervalued. It inserted Brazil Builds, as well
as the museum, within a complex web of OCIAA and State Department projects that
emphasized the metonymic function of Brazil. The articulation of a Western Hemisphere
of equal nations grounded on a common modern culture within a State Department that
had been traditionally dismissive of and consistently belligerent against Latin America
was unparalleled. In the modern architecture of Brazil, the “expedition” led by Goodwin
and Kidder-Smith had found “the most advanced thought of the twentieth century that is
without parallel on this hemisphere.” This was not only a weapon of war propaganda,
but also a blueprint for the postwar future.

392 Project Authorization, Identification No. SE-1447, Purchase of 3000 copies of “Brazil Builds;” a
volume of the modern architecture of Brazil. René d’Hanoncourt Papres II.26. MoMA Archives NY.
393 It is hard to tell how much of this narrative was crafted by people at the museum. There are clear
parallels between the OCIAA Project Authorization and a document titled “Purchase of 3000 copies of
‘Brazil Builds;’ a volume of the modern architecture of Brazil.” Exh. 213 CUR, MoMA Archives, NY.
There are also considerable differences. For example, the second document asks for $11,000. This would
have effectively paid for almost all costs of the exhibition and the book; something Quezado Deckker
considers to have been the case op. cit. p. 113. The OCIAA Project Authorization, however, provided only :
$6000 the ammount Wheeler had budgeted for the book. Wheeler made it clear to Rockefeller the total cost
of the entire endeavor (exhibition and book): $12,500. The Project Authorization underscored that the costs
of the exhibition had been “privately borne.”
394 Project Authorization, Identification No. SE-1447, Purchase of 3000 copies of “Brazil Builds;” a
volume of the modern architecture of Brazil. René d’Hanoncourt Papres II.26. MoMA Archives NY.
Brazil Builds was conceived as regional in scope. Its expeditionary frame kept it in flux early on, and left it open to be a “South American exhibition.” Although a Brazil-only show was already in the works, an early April 1942 letter to Henry Allen Moe (Administrator of the Solomon Guggenheim Foundation), written on behalf of Goodwin and Kidder-Smith (there is no discernable author), clearly articulated a larger project: “after [Kidder-Smith] has completed his work for Mr. Goodwin in Brazil, he proposes to continue to travel in other countries in South America, gathering material on architecture.” This letter to the Guggenheim Foundation seemed like a last attempt to finance an extended trip that would produce “an exhibition or series of exhibitions of South American architecture in addition to the Brazilian show.” Although it became clear that Brazilian modern architecture could carry a solo show, this tension between a national and a regional expression was never abandoned. Brazil operated as a catalyst for other South American shows—a trigger, much like the Brazilian pavilion, for a cascade of surveys of Latin American culture. Born out of a general lack of knowledge on the architecture of the region, Brazil Builds was conceived both as a larger Latin American architecture endeavor and as a Pan American endeavor that unfolded a Western Hemispheric culture. The architecture found in the “expedition” served a metonymic function. In the United States, Brazil sufficiently represented the entire region; this was part of its appeal—something Uruguay Builds could perhaps have not accomplished. Uruguay Builds could serve as an example of modern architecture in the region, but not as an expression of Latin American ethos.

396 Ibid.
Brazil Builds: “Our first South American survey”

Except for the New Acquisitions Gallery, Brazil Builds (January 13-February 28, 1943) occupied the entire ground floor of the Museum of Modern Art, being installed by Alice M. Carson, acting curator of the Department of Architecture, with the help of Bernard Rudofsky\textsuperscript{397} (Fig. 3.4). Elizabeth Mock was heavily involved in research and editing and in the overall production of the eponymous book, which was financed by the OCIAA. Out of the 667 black and white photographs taken by G.E. Kidder-Smith, 300 were used in varying sizes—none, except for one, however, as photomurals. Of 165 Kodachrome slides, 48, continuously displayed in the lobby of the museum along with a rose-wood map of Brazil on the west wall of the corridor that led to the garden, greeted visitors to the exhibit.\textsuperscript{398} As the slides highlighted, the exhibition incorporated the use of color as an important aspect of display. Redwood panels, left in their natural state and holding smaller black and white photographs, served as counterpoint to walls painted in white, grey, blue and yellow (Fig. 3.5). Photostats of plans and sketches, as well as three models—one of the Ministry of Education in Rio de Janeiro (still under construction), another of the Brazilian Pavilion for the New York 1939 World’s Fair, and one of Rudofsky’s 1941 João Arnstein House in São Paulo (Fig. 3.6)—completed the show.

\textsuperscript{397} Letter, Alice Carson to Philip Goodwin, December 14, 1942. Exh. 213 CUR, MoMA Archives, NY. Rudofsky helped on several elements of the exhibition. Carson underscored how he helped with the map and the model of the brise-soleil. He also produced the model of the Arsninet House. See: Scott, “Functionalism's Discontent: Bernard Rudofsky's Other Architecture,” note 34, p. 87.

\textsuperscript{398} “Information for Annual Report,” Exh. 213 CUR, MoMA Archives, NY. The Information for Annual Report states that 190 photographs were used, the January 12, 1943 Press Release cites 300. Quezado, Quezado Deckker, op. cit. (p. 128) confuses the map of the catalogue with that of the exhibition. The map on the main hall of the Museum had no state markers.
The exhibition was divided into two sections, “old” and “new”, the last being the largest one. The examples of “old” Brazilian architecture were organized by political state (Mina Gerais, Rio de Janeiro, Baia, Pernambuco and Pará, Fig. 3.7). Small maps of Brazil stenciled on the wall marked the appropriate state. Visitors first encountered the old architecture; as they moved through the exhibition, they roughly traveled from the south to the north of Brazil. They first encountered baroque architecture in Ouro Preto and Congohas do Campo, with the sculptural work of Aleijadinho (Fig. 3.8). Ecclesiastical architecture dominated. Each cluster of photographs also contained non-religious buildings, such as an “old fazenda [plantation] near Belo Horizonte” (Minas Gerais), a “Warehouse in Salvador, Baia,” a palace in Belém (Pará). The clusters also presented a historical span from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, stylistically from the baroque to the neoclassical. This was a soft linearity, since the historical timeline was at times challenged—as in the case of the juxtaposition of the nineteenth century Itamaratí Palace with the seventeenth century church and monastery of São Bento, both in Rio de Janeiro—and at times disrupted by views of magnificent landscapes. Encompassing a longue durée and incorporating the natural conditions that enabled the architecture, each regional cluster represented a microcosm of the whole of Brazil.

Visitors could gather a sense of geographical traveling as they moved through the section on old architecture. Examples of the architecture of the state of Rio de Janeiro, which seems to have extended for an entire wall, softly broke this, leading visitors to the modern section. At the threshold between old and new, visitors first encountered the signature building of Brazilian modernism: the Ministry of Education and Health (MES, 399 For a planimetric reconstruction of the exhibition see: Quezado Deckker, op. cit. p. 129. See also the Installation List (Corrected 4/21/43), which gives a clear picture of the contents of the show. Exh. 213, REG, MoMA Archives, NY.)
Fig. 3.9). A photomural (it appears to be the only one in the entire exhibit), a model, and several panels of information along three walls, clearly manifested the importance of this building. Next to the MES, the ABI (Brazilian Press Association) building by the Roberto Brothers shared the honors. Organized by building programs: transportation, schools, hotels, houses, apartment buildings and recreational facilities, the modern section broke with regional political markers, stressing the national extension Brazilian modernism. The modern architecture section also included two key thematic considerations: concrete and sun control. A working brise-soleil model (the movable louvers actually worked), a one-to-one scale assembly of those in the ABI, MES, and Niemeyer’s Yacht Club at Pampulha, highlighted Brazil’s singular “contribution” to international modern architecture400 (Fig. 3.10). This was the key argument deployed through the exhibition and reinforced in the catalogue (Fig. 3.11). The exhibition, however, also made a clear gesture towards the incorporation of the arts with the model of Lipchitz’s “Prometheus” for the MES401 (Fig. 3.12).

Goodwin’s celebration of Brazilian modernism was centered on the brise-soleil. The “control of heat and glare on glass surfaces by means of external blinds” had been an ignored question in “North America” by architects and it was a major oversight that needed rectifying. The Brazilian handling of this problem, Goodwin stated in what seems to be an act of rewriting history, instigated the expedition. The debt to Le Corbusier as intellectual author (he had used movable sunshades in his 1933 housing project for

Barcelona, Fig. 3.13) was recognized; nonetheless, it was “the Brazilians who first put theory into practice;” the Ministry of Education and Health being the most successful integration of this sun-shading device.\(^\text{402}\) For Goodwin, practice superceded theory. The importance of the brise-soleil was highlighted in the exhibition as well as in the catalogue, which presented numerous illustrations on the use of this device in Brazilian modern architecture. Its variety of implementation testified to its plastic adaptability, linking it both to new technical developments, such as the pierced concrete blocks known as cambogé, as well as to traditional forms, such as colonial rotulas. As a functional device, the brise-soleil revealed the Brazilian mastery of a modern technique. Goodwin deployed a complex yet schematized relationship between technological development, tradition, formal plasticity and architectural practice in which the notion of adaptation served as primary link between these. The Brazilians did not simply apply Le Corbusier’s theory; they adapted it to local multi-tier conditions, as exemplified in their operability or in their color (blue, which recalled colonial times). Brazilian adaptation was then both practical and symbolic.

By underscoring the lack of attention to questions of sun control by US architects, Goodwin framed the narrative within a general and common architectural problem brought about by the adoption of large glass surfaces in buildings. It is important to note that Goodwin did not circumscribe this problem to the tropics, but rather, that it was present in the “average office building,” focusing his critique on the general practice in the US of using “airless awnings” or “feeble” Venetian blinds. As an architect, Goodwin

had personal experience with this problem. As Quezado Deckker points out the question of light and heat control had surfaced with the 1939 MoMA building. Barr had insisted on changes in the design of the main façade to incorporate diffused daylight in the galleries. The experimental solution, the use of Thermolux (a sandwich of spun glass between two sheets of clear glass), turned out to be too intense; a false wall had to be built to block the light and heat; in the end, artificial lighting substituted daylight.\footnote{Quezado Deckker, \textit{Brazil Built: The Architecture of the Modern Movement in Brazil}. p. 115. The story of the Thermolux fiasco is in: Lynes, \textit{Good Old Modern; an Intimate Portrait of the Museum of Modern Art}. p. 195. Goodwin had also been involved in MoMA’s 1935 exhibition on the work of Le Corbusier (\textit{The Recent Work of Le Corbusier}, October 24, 1935-January 2, 1936) with included the Salvation Army Building in Paris, in which Le Corbusier attempted to reduce heat gain by mechanical process. In the end the building was later retrofitted with a brise-soleil.}

\textit{Brazil Builds} also celebrated reinforced concrete construction, underscoring the country’s capacity to produce cement and reinforcing rods as well as its inability to produce structural steel, a deficiency that was being remedied by the construction of a large steel mill. This mill, as previously stated, was being built with the help of the US government (Goodwin refrained to point this out) at Volta Redonda. Goodwin also celebrated the plastic possibilities of concrete: “Almost anything can be done with reinforced concrete.” To carry this point across, the catalogue showed the undulating façade of Ramos de Azevedo’s office building in São Paulo (Fig. 3.14).\footnote{This seems to be the office: Escritório Técnico Ramos de Azevedo, Severo & Villares S. A, created after the death of the fairly important late nineteenth century architect Francisco de Paula Ramos de Azevedo (1851-1928). See: http://www.itaucultural.org.br/aplicExternas/enciclopedia_IC/index.cfm?fuseaction=artistas_biografia&cd_verbete=5394&cd_idioma=28555 (Accessed Dec 27, 2011)} In the exhibition, this example was accompanied by images from Alvaro Vital Brazil and Ademar Marinho’s Vital Brazil Institute in Niteroi (1942) and Saturnino Nunes de Brito’s Water Tower at Olinda (1937) and the Anatomical Laboratory at Recife (1940)—both used cambogé extensively (Fig. 3.15). Niemeyer’s decidedly plastic work at Pampulha
(Casino, Restaurant and Yacht Club) was not included under this category, but rather, under the program of recreational buildings. It was, however, singled out in the catalogue, along with the MES, as a clear example of the interpretation of Le Corbusier’s theories by sympathetic young Brazilian architects.

The Brazilian landscape appeared in several forms. The extensive use of tropical plants in the exhibition, so far-reaching that Barr jokingly wondered, “whether [the exhibition] was a flower shop or an architectural exhibition,”[^405] made a sensorial appeal to its visitors. References to Brazil’s magnificent scenery were ample. The Brazilian landscape was, at the same time, a hindrance to be surmounted. In Rio, whole hills have been “scooped up and dumped” on the bay to create boulevards. If such actions placed Rio next to modern cities like New York and Chicago, “landscape gardening,” still tied to “18th century French models,” revealed a conservative inheritance that remained alive.

The massing technique of “landscapist” Roberto Burle-Marx broke with this conservative “dot–and-dash” method. Burle-Marx’s work, however, occupied a liminal space, between old and new and between landscape and art. His work was introduced in the section of old architecture with the Fazenda García (Samambaia, 1743) near Petrópolis (Fig. 3.16). At Pampulha he had produced an “agreeable scheme of planting and filled the pool of the restaurant with lovely water plants,” but the photographs did not reveal his now characteristic style (Fig. 3.17). As a painter, he had also done an “excellent mural for the Yacht Club,” but it was not included in the exhibition. Absent, even in drawing, were the now-famed gardens at the MES, which by the date of the exhibition had not been executed. Burle-Marx’s signature style was not recognizable in *Brazil Builds*.

The overlap between landscape, architecture and art, came to the foreground with sculpture, which, Goodwin insisted, “must not be omitted from a discussion of modern building.” The exhibition clearly made this point with Lipchitz’s “Prometheus” sculpture for the ministry building that visitors could examine after exiting the modern section. In the beginning of the modern section, details of the Portinari murals in the ministry had introduced visitors to the integration of the arts. The MES initiated and completed the relation between architecture and art.

**The Baroque as a Modern Tradition**

Goodwin’s *longue durée* approach to Brazilian modern architecture revealed the erupting complexities and contradictions within modernism as it took root in the late 1930s and early 1940s in the United States. Goodwin was not satisfied with the proposed name of the exhibition. He found *Brazil Builds* “succinct and clear,” yet being “the same as ‘Stockholm Builds’ it does not suggest, to my mind, that the photographs would cover the 18th Century, part of the 19th as well as the 20th.” For Goodwin, Brazilian modernism had “carried the evolution of the whole movement some steps forward towards the full development of the ideas launched in Europe and America well before the war of 1914.” In *Brazil Builds*, this evolution appeared to move both into the future and into the past. In the early 1940s, the preoccupation over tradition—“European, African and Native”—as a persistent force in Latin American culture was a key thematic topic of research institutionalized by the Joint Committee on Latin American Studies.

The outline of research established in 1942 framed tradition within four categories: its

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Recognition in Cultural and Literary Expressions; cultural influence of Spain and Portugal; the impact of ideas and imagination through modern means of diffusion, and Miscellaneous Topics, which included minor forms of culture such as folklore. Although not directly mentioned, architecture fell in the first two categories, particularly within the cultural legacy of the Iberian Peninsula. As a clearly identified area of research the study of tradition was part of an overall endeavor to establish “a regional organization of research” in order to understand the varied and deep contrasts the characterized Latin America as a whole.\textsuperscript{408} Brazil Builds revealed the lingering presence of the historical past as well as of tradition—forces European functionalists had consistently shunned until the 1930s, when, for example, Le Corbusier, in his 1931 Mandrot Villa in France and his 1933 project for the Errazuriz house in Chile, incorporated local materials and traditional techniques.\textsuperscript{409} It also made known MoMA’s attempts to incorporate tradition, whether popular (\textit{American Folk Art}, February 2-March 7, 1938) or historical (\textit{Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art}, May 15-September 30, 1940), within its modernist project. (This was not an exotic issue in the United States. Activity over Colonial Williamsburg had been going on for some time—having Abby Aldrich Rockefeller as one of its champions.) For the first time, however, both the past and tradition in architecture were incorporated in an

\textsuperscript{408} Preston E. James, "Outline of Research in the Study of Contemporary Culture Patterns in Latin America," \textit{Notes on Latin American Studies}, no. 2 (October) (1943), p. 3. Emphasis in original. Although published in 1943, the areas of research were established in 1942. The American Council on Learned Societies established the Joint Committee on Latin American Studies in cooperation with the Social Science Research Council and the National Research Council. A member of American Council on Learned Societies participated in Rockefeller’s OCIAA.

\textsuperscript{409} As Pérez Oyarzun argues the use of a rustic vernacular was an ideological position since concrete technology existed in the locality of Zapallar, where the house was to be built. See: Fernando Pérez Oyarzún, \textit{Le Corbusier y Sudamerica: viajes y proyectos}, 1a ed. (Santiago: Ediciones Arq, 1991). The project was known in the US since it was included in MoMA’s \textit{The Recent Work of Le Corbusier} (October 24, 1935-January 2, 1936) organized by Philip Goodwin.
architectural exhibition.\textsuperscript{410} In this way, \textit{Brazil Builds} was a radical departure from other surveys like \textit{Modern Architecture: International Exhibition} (February 9-March 23, 1932). The incorporation of these two: the past as a historical object of study, and tradition as a surviving force or ethos that condition the present through the past, made \textit{Brazil Builds} a fairly complex proposition.

\textit{Brazil Builds} helped naturalize the relationship between colonial and modern architecture, between tradition and progress, between old and new. It did this through a complex visual and narrative strategy of juxtaposition. In both exhibition and book, the past was confined to its own section. There were no direct formal juxtapositions. The relationship between old and new architecture was left purposefully loose. This lack of formal parallels—modern architecture was not baroque architecture—allowed for other forms of connecting the old and new, such as land and climate or the creative genius of Brazilian culture. \textit{Brazil Builds} articulated a series of continuities and breaks between old and new. It also articulated a parallel—differences and similarities—between Brazil and the United States—the 1939 New York pavilion being an important staging of this relationship.\textsuperscript{411} The exhibition also deployed a complex geographical triangulation between shifting cultural territories: Europe/Portugal, Brazil/Portugal, Brazil/Latin America, United States/Europe and Brazil/United States—some of these were only implicit, others were clearly articulated.

\textit{Brazil Builds} presented US architectural circles and a general non-professional public with a complex and demanding relationship between old and new; this complex

\textsuperscript{410} \textit{Three Centuries of American Art} (May 24-July 31, 1938) incorporated colonial architecture. This was done under a general survey of US artistic production.

\textsuperscript{411} This comparison was already well established in Brazilian intellectual circles and will reach an important articulation in Viana Moog’s 1954 \textit{Bandeirantes e pioneiros}. 
relationship was somewhat lost in the reception of the exhibition, as evidenced in the professional press, and was criticized by architectural historians at the time. Because of this, tropical nature, both as landscape and character, became the clearest point of contact between the old and the new transforming material tradition into a general ethos.

**The Baroque as Latin American ethos**

Colonial architecture in Brazil, Goodwin pointed out, had to contend with “special forces:” the Church, gold and the negro slave. Goodwin was not clear on whether these forces where particular to Brazil or if for example they were equally present in Portugal—Brazilian narratives, on the other hand, were quite specific on their particularity with respect to Brazil, finding in some of these the root of a local plastic and adaptive culture.412 “To these special forces must be added,” Goodwin continued, “the constant factors of the land and climate.” Land and climate, although particular to Brazil, had clear similarities with the mother country, revealed in architecture by the similarity of building materials (despite the enormous quantity of wood) of a largely humid and hot country.413 Continuity between Portugal and Brazil, the incipient ideology of Lusotropicalism, was the core of the idea of adaptation and cultural plasticity in *brasilidade*. As Jessé Souza has pointed out, the plasticity of Portuguese culture—championed by Gilberto Freyre and adopted by intellectuals each with their considerable nuances with

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412 The homology between Portugal and Brazil had been a well-established narrative in Brazil, clearly present in architectural as well as non-architectural narratives of *brasilidade*, for example in Gilberto Freyre’s 1933 *Casa-grande & Senzala*. Freyre rejected the power of the Church as being a key condition of the Brazilian colonial experience, and underscored Brazilian slavery as distinct from that of Portugal.

413 “Except for greater heat and humidity, the climate of the coastal plain is not so very different from that of the mother country.” Goodwin, Smith, and Museum of Modern Art (New York N.Y.), *Brazil Builds; Architecture New and Old*, 1652-1942. p. 20.
respect to the question of Brazilian national character⁴¹⁴—was predicated on the possibility of communicating a culture that is able to both transform and retain its original substance. This tension between original essence and transformation, between difference and similarity, crisscrosses Brazil Builds and remains unresolved, diffused and contradictory because Brazil Builds offers modernism not as a formal synthesis of this tension but rather as the survival-transformation of an ethos of adaptability and transformation. The implied continuity between old and new was not formal, that is, the presence of a historical style. Modern architecture was not modern baroque. Modern architecture was the resolution of an unresolved artistic impulse, the expression of a Brazilian ethos that found a first outlet in colonial Baroque architecture. The old architecture in Brazil Builds was an unfulfilled original expression—a force without a full resolution. The culprit for this loss was everything that the nineteenth century represented. Still latent, as all “true” spirits, this Brazilian ethos had resurfaced in modernism’s renovation of a stagnant local culture reliant on France and a monoculture economy dependent upon England. The relationship between old and new then was predicated on both a continuity and a break.

Goodwin’s views opened the exhibition to a much larger continental conversation that sought the renovation of the Baroque and its categorization as a common Latin American ethos.⁴¹⁵ Pan Americanism installed a disruptive force in the traditional nationalist narratives of brasilidade. Goodwin had borrowed the views of Robert C.

⁴¹⁵ Goodwin also made gestures to draw parallels between Brazil and the US; he was quite ambiguous and at times contradictory about this; for example, US audiences were told that, unlike New England colonists, Brazilians did not develop a “strongly original native architecture.” Goodwin pointe out that colonial Brazil would have developed a more native architecture, if its “colonists…had had to meet a wholly different set of building conditions from those which they had known at home.” Goodwin, Smith, and Museum of Modern Art (New York N.Y.), Brazil Builds; Architecture New and Old, 1652-1942, p. 20.
Smith, but softened much of the argument that the art historian had presented in 1939. This opened Brazilian modernism to a more polyvalent reading. For Smith, Brazilian colonial architecture was completely Portuguese; no other European colony in the New World had “so faithfully and consistently reflected and preserved the architecture of the mother country.” Goodwin followed this homology, but he also softened it, pointing out that Brazilian colonial architecture also had a “certain independence,” its buildings had a “certain flavor of their own.” The move is important, for it allowed later interpretations that abandoned the clear cut dichotomy that Smith had articulated between the Portuguese and Spanish colonial experience—“In Brazil were never felt those strange indigenous influences which in Mexico and Peru produced buildings richer and more complicated in design than the very models of the peninsular Baroque.” Goodwin did not make any overt gesture to incorporate Latin America in Brazil Builds. His celebration of Brazilian baroque, however, allowed for a Latin American tradition to come forth. This became evident in the reception of the narrative on tradition as rearticulated by the architectural press: “How lovely has been the Iberian influence on the architecture of the Americas,” Sacheverell Sitwell pointed out in the Architecture Review’s 1944 presentation of Brazilian architecture. “The Iberians, architecturally, have been the greatest colonists. The Portuguese only less than the Spaniards.” For the British art critic, the mining of precious metals demonstrated the similarities between Spain and Portugal’s colonial techniques. In either case, through Indian or African hands, the outcome was the

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417 Ibid.
same; the colonial experience in Spanish America as well as in Brazil produced “Baroque and Rococo” towns.418

_Brazil Builds_ received visitors with a singular example of Brazilian colonial architecture: the baroque architecture of Minas Geraes—an image of the colonial baroque town of Ouro Preto literally protruded from the wall to meet visitors (Fig. 3.18). As Márcia Regina Romeiro Chuva argues, one of the key actions of the National Historic and Artistic Patrimony Service (SPHAN), which was under the jurisdiction of Gustavo Capanema’s Ministry of Education and Health, was the consolidation of a narrative on colonial architecture that singled out the Baroque as the key object of national historical patrimony.419 SPHAN created a hegemonic discourse that offered a clear hierarchy and significance of the colonial contribution—a presentation followed by _Brazil Builds_. It is important to highlight that in this period this narrative was not nationalist, for although framed by national considerations, it was part of an international conversation and an international network in which SPHAN participated—Smith’s study on Brazilian colonial Baroque, published in SPHAN’s journal, was financed by the American Council on Learned Societies. Moreover, in his lecture at the 1943 Inter-American Conference on Intellectual Exchange, Mexican art historian Manuel Toussaint—who had been involved with MoMA’s Mexican exhibit—defended baroque art as a common Latin American expression. Speaking “in the name of the Continent,” and in a clear Pan Americanist key, Toussaint explained how a common root had diversified under different climates. For the

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419 Márcia Chuva, _Os Arquitetos da Memória: Sociogênese das Práticas de Preservação do Patrimônio Cultural no Brasil (Anos 1930-1940)_ (Rio de Janeiro: Editora UFRJ, 2009). p. 258. Whether or not SPHAN’s actions eliminated other traditions is a subject of debate in Brazil. Chuva, for example argues that SPHAN’s journal reveals a more complex picture in which the historical material culture of popular and traditional building techniques was presented. This can be posited against SPHAN drive to monumentalize architecture. This tension is important for it qualifies Cavalcanti’s argument and views of SPHAN as dominated by modern architects and by “pedra i cal,” stone and mortar projects.
Mexican art historian, the baroque was not only an artistic expression but also “a spiritual modality” that, although developed under political oppression, was a “cry of rebellion.” Baroque art, Toussaint highlighted, “brings all countries of the Continent together through a spiritual tie, more intense and more effective than many international treatises or many Pan-American political conferences.” Toussaint abandoned the national frame that had served to present baroque art and architecture, three years earlier in *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art*. By highlighting Brazilian baroque architecture, especially church baroque, Goodwin established a point of contact with Latin American baroque culture as exemplified by Mexican and Brazilian colonial architecture. Goodwin’s interpretation made *Brazil Builds* respond to a Pan-American moment. *Brazil Builds* presentation of baroque architecture was a tangible evidence of the 1936 Pan-American agreement on Intellectual Cooperation, which spawned the 1939 Pan-American Union’s Division of Intellectual Cooperation. The idea of historic culture was now part of a network of scholars engaged at an Inter-American level, and at an international level with the efforts of the valorization of the baroque.

*The Baroque and brasilidade*

If in *Brazil Builds* the old architecture pointed to a larger Latin American culture, it also served to highlight a national Brazilian ethos. The complexity of Goodwin’s *longue durée* approach to Brazilian modernism was already present in Costa’s...

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evolutionary development of modern architecture in Brazil, as elaborated in his 1937 “Documentação necessária,” in which the nineteenth century, not the Baroque period, played the key role in the development of modernism in Brazil. In Costa’s argument, a good tradition (“boa tradição”) survived through nineteenth century “mestres de obra” (workmen), not through Baroque ecclesiastical architecture. Goodwin disregarded Costa’s 1937 point of inflection—unlike “Documentação necessária,” there were no nineteenth century iron verandas or staircases in Brazil Builds. But by 1941, Costa, had modulated his original argument to celebrate the Jesuit baroque contribution as key to brasilidade—an argument clearly connected to his architectural intervention in the Jesuit Mission in Rio Grande do Sul, a project celebrated in Brazil Builds as an honest and noncompetitive intervention in a historic building (Fig. 3.19). Costa found the Jesuit contribution in Brazil to have a spiritual irreducible essence, to be the “true style of the fathers of the Order.”\footnote{Lúcio Costa, "A arquitetura dos Jesuítas no Brasil," \textit{Ars} 8, no. 16 (2010). p. 128. It was originally published under the title: “Arquitetura jesuítica no Brasil” in 1941 in SPHAN’s journal. Emphasis in the original.} This Jesuit style, however, was an international artistic production that had not taken root in Brazil. Costa’s celebration of the baroque, linked to his modernist project, was not the imitation of forms but the identification of a Brazilian ethos that, by 1941, had to be aligned with SPHAN’s official discourse on Brazilian historic patrimony.\footnote{His 1937 celebration of the popular-indigenous hand was not lost in 1941, but the shift towards an elite concept of the monument signals the institutional presence of SPHAN and its production of an official historic patrimony.} Preceding Toussaint’s Inter-American lecture, Costa articulated the same tension between an international Jesuit expression that manifested particular transformations according to climate and locality. He, however, drew a clear line of demarcation between Brazil and the rest of the continent. He underscored that the
influence of the Jesuits remained “uninterrupted” in Spanish-America for the entire eighteenth century; this made the notion of “Jesuit art” span the entire Baroque period in Spanish America. In Brazil, on the other hand, he pointed out, the activity of the order was already diminished in the first half of the eighteenth century and completely interrupted in 1759. This made the Jesuit contribution in Brazil, Renaissance in character—more moderate, regular and cold, without the severe quality of the Counter Reformation.424 The lack of power of the Catholic Church, an argument established as a singular condition of Portuguese colonization by Freyre and re-articulated by Costa, was not followed by Goodwin who underscored baroque architecture as represented by church buildings as a key foundation of brasilidade in Brazil Builds. The image of the gilded interior of the Church of São Francisco de Asis, Salvador, Bahia (1710) drew a clear link to the Mexican baroque (Fig. 3.20). With this, Brazilian architectural ethos overlapped with Latin American culture as a whole.

Costa’s appreciation and valorization of the baroque was predicated on the notion of renewal (renovação), with the Baroque breaking Renaissance formulas. “If at times baroque monuments deserve that stain of being artistic anomalies, most of them,” Costa argued, “are authentic works of art, that came about not through a process of degeneration, but, on the contrary, by a legitimate process of renovation.”425 Costa’s views underscored the moments of rupture in history as a form of continuity, the persistence of eternal essences that in the end countered socio-political breaks. What was at play was the notion of tradition as independent from the historical past, serving within

424 Costa, ”A arquitetura dos Jesuítas no Brasil.” p. 129.
425 “Se algumas vezes os monumentos barrocos merecem realmente essa pecha de anomalias artísticas, a grande maioria deles – inclusive daqueles em que o arrojo da concepção ou o delírio ornamental atingem o climax – é constituída por autênticas obras de arte, que não resultaram de nenhum processo de degenerescência, mas, pelo contrário, de um processo legítimo de renovação.” Ibid.
a temporal cycle of renovation. Only as independent from history could tradition survive as an essence to be rescued by, and in, modernism. This argument was lost in Brazil Builds. The presence of two deeply unrelated yet linked architectural productions was played out in Niemeyer’s hotel in Ouro Preto, which appeared in New York under the programmatic category of hotels, being the only example in this category (Fig. 3.21). This hotel, the Brazilian exhibit pointed out “looks very at home in its 18th Century setting. Obvious reasons are the sloping tile roof and the occasional use of Itacolomi stone. Less obvious is the design itself, bold in outline and delicate in detail, which has a sympathetic relationship with the native baroque.” The hotel was the clearest example of the correct relationship between the old and the new. Each period produced it own distinctive architecture, responsive to its own conditions. Contrast, not “sympathetic relationship,” was the basis of the architectural intervention. As Costa stressed in a letter to SPHAN Director, Rodrigo M.F. de Andrade, contrast and dissimilarity made the old architecture “appear more distant, gaining more than a century, at least, in age.” As Cavalcanti argues, the old baroque architecture lifted modern architecture to the status of a work of art. Modern architecture also pushed the past deeper into the background, allowing tradition to emerge. This complex and dynamic relationship between the “boa tradição (good tradition)” and the “boa arquitetura (good architecture)” was a difficult proposition to be carried by Brazil Builds since it unfolded only through the multiple iterations of the design process. At the same time, simple contrast was not enough; it had to be tempered by the good (genius) architecture. Niemeyer’s first proposal, for example,

had been softened: the Corbusian roof-terrace—already altered by Niemeyer with a mimetic green lawn—was substituted with a sloping tile roof; wood lattices were added in the private terraces, and an egg-crate brise-soleil, similar to the one of the 1939 pavilion (in the end abandoned), hid the large glass panels of the reading room (Fig. 3.22).

In the end, the relationship between old and new was a difficult argument to follow in the United States. Most journals gravitated to the clearest argument deployed by the exhibition: sun control. Some journals, such as Pencil Points, attempted to carry this relationship between old and new architecture, producing the almost surreal juxtaposition of images in a comparison between a nineteenth century sugar mill in Recife and the Ministry of Education and Health (Fig. 3.23). The Architectural Record carried the relationship between old and new through a series of visual juxtapositions that illustrated how “contrast heightens the values of both the new and the old” (Fig. 3.24). It is not surprising that Record presented this relationship since Goodwin himself had targeted the journal as part of “the plans for the use of the Brazilian material.” Record went farther than the exhibition with clear juxtapositions between old and new. It however, chose not to include Niemeyer’s Ouro Preto Hotel, focusing instead on his Pampulha buildings. Absent also was the Ministry of Education and Health.

This dance of proximity and distance between old and new was stratified at different levels, from almost direct references to actual historical architectural elements like glazed tiles and latticework, to more ideological ones, such as arguing that rammed

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428 In the built project vertical fins substituted the egg crate brise-soleil. For images of Niemeyer’s first project, and for the debate over the hotel see: Cavalcanti, Moderno e Brasileiro: A história de uma nova linguagem na arquitectura (1930-60). Chapter 6.
429 “Architecture of Brazil,” Architectural Record 93, no. 1 (January) (1943), p. 36.
430 Letter, Philip Gooding to Alfred Barr, October 1, 1942. Correspondence, AHB mf 2167:345. AAA.
earth was an early form of reinforced concrete construction. In the end, the dominance of
the ecclesiastical architecture of the Baroque period, which offered a deeper elite
historical grounding based on formalism, as well as a more diffused notion of
technological transfer seemed to have displaced the Brazilian ethos found in popular
cultural forms. For New York Times critic Edward Alden Jewell there was “a sharp line of
demarcation” in the show: “Portuguese baroque and ‘functional’ modern do not often
blend.”

**Tradition as Discipline**

In his review of Brazil Builds, Henry-Russell Hitchcock rejected Brazilian
modernism’s relation to the Baroque period; for him “the richness and solidity of the
early tradition … offers less of a clue to the present-day work than a few nineteenth-
century monuments.” With this Hitchcock denied the possibility that Brazilian
modernism had achieved a formal synthesis between tradition (brasilidade) and
modernism, and had moved beyond Corbusian forms. Hitchcock emphasized the
nineteenth century origin of international modernism, through an architectural production
scarcely documented by Goodwin. Hitchcock underscored a connection that for him
remained hidden in Brazil Builds: nineteenth century “South American” dependence on
Paris. As “world center of culture,” Paris exercised a clear influence in the region. What
had not always been clear to North Americans, Hitchcock pointed out, was why South
American “reflections of Parisian art seem generally so belated and so inferior.” This
picture could be completed only through a triangulation that brought Europe, the United

citations:

States and South America together. Parisian architecture created “so belated and so inferior” an architecture in Latin America, Hitchcock pointed out, only if “compared to our own.” Hitchcock’s was then not only a review of Brazilian or South American architecture but also an argumentation on the difference of the nineteenth century foundation of modernism as exemplified by the disparity of the European influence in North and South America. In Hitchcock’s views difference was measured in appropriate geographical distance. French Restoration architecture “maintained for several decades with real charm and elegance” in Brazil made Brazilian towns part of provincial France. This architecture, Hitchcock argued, “might have been built in any French provincial city” or, at best, as in the case of the Itamaratí Palace in Rio, “in the new quarters of Paris”433 (Fig. 3.25). This geographical measure—being a suburb of French architecture—revealed Brazil’s complex relation with its own culture. The “new architecture” section of Brazil Builds demonstrated that Brazilian architects remained strongly linked to France. The “old architecture” in the show served to mask this. Hitchcock followed the same argument deployed in Brazil Builds, but instead of Portugal, France becomes the frame of reference. At stake was the correct origin of international modernism.434

If Brazil Builds was to show the roots of Brazilian modernism, in Hitchcock’s estimation, it had failed to do so by underscoring Portuguese colonial tradition, which was identified incorrectly as the source of modernism. Hitchcock thus displaced what perhaps he perceived as a nationalist argumentation, and recentered modernism in a

433 Ibid.
434 The accusation of French influence was a key argument against modernism in Brazil, launched particularly by the conservatives and neocolonialists—French influence folded onto internationalism. See: Cavalcanti, Moderno e Brasileiro: A história de uma nova linguagem na arquitectura (1930-60), pp. 103-05.
hegemonic industrial Euro-internationalism. Hitchcock accepted no part of baroque
tradition; for him, the decisive moment of Western architecture in Brazil was the arrival
of Granjean de Montigny who brought to Brazil the “French discipline of style.” He
did not coincide with Costa’s nineteenth century inflection point.) For Hitchcock, only
the correct tradition—French tradition—could produce a proper rational form one that
could sustain a local inflection. Modern architecture in Brazil (both nineteenth and
twentieth century modern architecture) acquired Braziliannes only through the presence
of a correct base-structure or stylistic pattern on which to build. Through “the skillful use
of clear light color and … rich native materials,” Hitchcock argued, “an effect of
lightness and gaiety which the French [nineteenth century] originals probably never had”
located this architecture in Brazil. The base remained, nonetheless, decidedly French
since Brazilian architects, unlike their US colleagues, had not broken away from the
Parisian orbit. Such close proximity to French culture prevented synthesis, a process that
for Hitchcock distinguished the nineteenth century architecture in the United States. What
characterized “South American architecture,” for Hitchcock, was not synthesis, but on the
contrary, the tensions and contradictions between the local and the foreign—between
lightheartedness and substance, between the national and the international. He repeated
the generalized perception—emphatically presented by Goodwin—that Brazil was a land
of contrasts. Without contrast, without “gaiety” and “lightness” this architecture would

435 He locates it in what is known as the 1816 French artistic mission commissioned by Brazilian Emperor
João VI. The intent was to create the Royal School of Arts and Sciences in Rio. Nine French artists,
technicians, musicians, writers and architects (Grandjean de Montigny), all members of the Institute de
France or the Academy composed the mission. Hitchcock, however, misses the point that this was part of a
national unifying project, and not merely an aesthetic one. See: Afonso de E. Taunay, A Missão Artística de
1816 (Rio de Janeiro: Ministério da Educação e Cultura, 1956). Also: Gustavo Rocha-Peixoto, Reflexos das
Luces na Terra do Sol: Sobre a Teoria da Arquitectura no Brasil da Independência 1808-1831 (São Paulo:
Pro Editores Associados, 2000).
436 Hitchcock, "Review: Brazil Builds (Construcção Brasileira), Architecture New and Old, 1642-1942 by
remain, for Hitchcock, unquestionably an alien European expression. Brasilidade served only to enliven the discipline of style; it remained unable to offer synthesis because it was fundamentally a lack of discipline, a loosening of style.

Hitchcock located the origins of modern architecture in Brazil, not in the everyday construction expertise of local foremen as Costa did, but in French academic tradition. Only academic tradition offered the “discipline of style” that could correctly regulate Brazilian creative ethos. This offered Hitchcock several benefits. First, it allowed him to ground Brazilian modernism in “a particular version” of “European modern architecture” that is, in Corbusianism, as “the most conspicuous monument [the MES] shows,” and even in “less prominent French architects” as in the case of Rino Levi’s Sedes Sapientiae (Fig. 3.26). Second, he was able to take Goodwin head on and refute his proposition that, in the end, it was not a matter of origins but of mastery of modern forms and techniques, evidenced in the Brazilian execution of the brise-soleil. Third, by linking modern Brazilian architecture to the academic tradition, Hitchcock took aim at the nascent talent behind organic modernist forms: Oscar Niemeyer. A narrative was in place that would gain further strength in the early 1950s as Brazilian modern architecture was reduced to Niemeyer’s free-forms.437 The most “interesting work,” Hitchcock argued in 1943,

such as the Ministry in Rio and the recreational buildings at Belo Horizonte [Niemeyer’s Pampulha Projects], like the work of a century

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437 The centrality of Oscar Niemeyer was present early on. In a MoMA memo dated Dec. 17, 1942, the authorship of the Ministry of Education and Health and the 1939 Pavilion is attributed solely to Niemeyer; no mention is made of Lucio Costa. Memo: Brazil Builds – outline. Miss Carson to Miss Newmeyer, December 17, 1942. Exh. 213 CUR, MoMA Archives, NY.
ago, varies and enlivens the imposed French discipline by the use of native stones and even the traditional painted glazed tiles.\textsuperscript{438}

Such enlivening, however, should happen without “deterioration from the highest French standards of proportion and composition.”\textsuperscript{439} What exactly produced such deterioration was left to the reader to speculate. But there seemed to be one source: tropicalism, which took two forms—material decay and lack of discipline. As “inevitable” material decay, which was “not even necessarily undesirable,” deterioration may be an inescapable condition of modern architecture’s adaptation to the tropics. Hitchcock was not completely forthcoming on this matter, but it seems that he was pointing to the notion of the aging of materials to which he would turn to several years later in \textit{Painting Toward Architecture}. Parallel to this material breakdown, and the second condition of tropical deterioration, was the disciplining of Brazilian expression. Although the new Brazilian architecture appeared “solider and fresher than the executed buildings of a decade ago or more in France…there is as [in the nineteenth century work] some deterioration from the highest standards of proportion and composition.”\textsuperscript{440} If modern architecture was to be truly incorporated within Brazil, initial “modifications” of this “imported style” require development beyond “merely the personal touches of a few gifted Brazilians.” The gifted free hand of Niemeyer was the second, and perhaps more important, form of tropicality that induced deterioration in the (French) body-language of modern architecture.

\textsuperscript{438} Hitchcock, "Review: Brazil Builds (Construcção Brasileira), Architecture New and Old, 1642-1942 by Philip Goodwin; G. E. Kidder Smith." p. 384. The “interesting” work in Belo Horizonte is Niemeyer’s work at Pampulha. These are: the Casino, the Restaurant, and the Yacht Club. Missing was the church, yet to be built, which Hitchcock would include in the 1955 MoMA exhibition.

\textsuperscript{439} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{440} Ibid. p. 384. Hitchcock did not link this decay to baroque formalism.
In 1943, Hitchcock was already concerned with the state of the International Style, as regional and national forces along with brilliant and talented architects, pushed its boundaries. Discipline, however, went both ways. Architects in the United States, Hitchcock warned, should not be seduced. These forms were, in the end, alien forms, which served only to ignite the desire to further develop modernism in the United States.

Despite the impressiveness of the Brazilian achievement of the last decade, we may perhaps believe that in North America the architecture of the twentieth century has advanced further beyond its beginnings. But the study of these still very European buildings to the south may be of at least catalytic value to us at a time when there is no building in Europe.\textsuperscript{441}

Hitchcock disregarded the Western Hemisphere of “equal nations” that the OCIAA was keen to build. In a time dominated by Pan American narratives, not only did Hitchcock insist in locating South America in Europe, but he also lessened the impact of any possible intellectual or creative collaboration in the Americas. This “other Europe,” a temporary remedy during the war years, could be of use to US architects—but only temporarily and superficially. This exotic quasi-likeness presented by \textit{Brazil Builds} could re-ignite architectural production, but only discipline could create a true independent and vital style. Rudofsky, however, disagreed.

In his Boston lecture, Rudofsky underscored how little influence the academy had exerted on practicing Brazilian architects. Architects in Brazil, he argued, were

\textsuperscript{441} Ibid.
The catalytic value that Brazilian architecture offered the US professional scene, then, was precisely the figure of the practicing architect. The gifted Brazilian architect was, for Rudofsky, a figure of resistance to the dominant trend in the United States. Architects in the US, he pointed out, were businessmen. In this guise, the architect could not be “an advocate of a better life.”\textsuperscript{443} Attacking what he perceived to be a US culture dominated by “salesmanship” and “advertisement,” Rudofsky proceeded to outline the dangers ahead. Those who “have already benevolently ridiculed the supposed dependency of Brazilian architecture on European prototypes,” he added, aiming directly at Hitchcock, have only to compare “the state of things between the two neighbor countries … There stands the Ministry in Rio, and here we have the Pentagon building in Washington.”\textsuperscript{444} Architecture culture in the US, “judged by the professional literature,” Rudofsky continued, was a riddle, as demonstrated by

the fact that the government of the United States mobilizes all its capacities to fight the demolishing forces of a barbaric enemy, while in one of its peaceful manifestations, Federal architecture, it is unconsciously and acknowledged admirer and imitator of these forces. Whether the American architect has tacitly supported this tendency … or whether he was impotent to fight the evil spirit, is irrelevant.\textsuperscript{445}

\textsuperscript{442} “The graduate Brazilian student undergoes an apprenticeship lasting many years, comparable to that of an artisan, whose goal is not just to convey to him an all-embracing training but to implant in him the thought that not a single one of the manifold problems of planning should escape his attention or be left to the decision of others.” Rudofsky, “On Architecture and Architects.” p. 63.

\textsuperscript{443} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{444} The Architectural Record’s January 1943 issue, which presented to a general US architectural public Brazilian architecture, also included an extensive article on the Pentagon Building. Record did not included the MES in its presentation of Brazilian modernism.

In the end, it was a question of temperament. If, for Hitchcock, South American architecture revealed an architect dependent on European models, for Rudofsky it was the clearest proof of the region’s cosmopolitanism. The South American architect, for Rudofsky, was an elegant and educated world traveler. Speaking several languages, he was able to approach foreign cultures without mediation. The South American, Rudofsky argued, experienced the world as the last humanist: the linguist. This was the contribution of Brazilian architecture to the architectural profession and US culture and postwar society as a whole. Forces “at work today which pave the way for standardization which might result in dulling the people’s sensibility,” threatened this cosmopolitanism. “The enormous flow of American magazines and movies will very soon affect the Brazilian’s freshness.” Decay was not found then in tropical civilization but in the corroding forces of US commercialism. The threat opened by the war was that of a disenchanted world, in which architects acted either as specialists or experts.

In such a world, cosmopolitanism, signaled by the creative artistic impulse, withered slowly away, drowning in “American” dullness.

Under the figure of the craftsman-architect, Rudofsky started to delineate and give form to a growing concern announced by the war industry: specialization. In Rudofsky, the Brazilian architect emerged as a type that countered the “unimaginative specialist,” a bulwark against the “less desirable type of mass production.” Goodwin, Hitchcock and Rudofsky all coincide in their triangulation, in the need to include Brazilian modernism in a larger international conversation; their conversations differed but also overlaped, coinciding, in their attempts to narrate Brazilian modernism as both local and

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446 Ibid.
447 Rudofsky celebrated the lack of specialists in Brazil.
international, in the realization that the Brazilians had made a singular contribution to Western culture. This contribution, however, was not the ethos of Latin Americanism or *brasilidade*, a static celebration of nationhood, but rather the dynamics of the triangulation—South America–North America–Europe—that changed and multiplied the relationships as the cultural center shifted from Europe to the Americas at the dawn of the postwar.

**Latin America at the dawn of the postwar**

*Brazil Builds* had a comparative structure that presented the architecture of the past against contemporary developments. In this, it had clear parallels with *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art*, which was a “study [of] Mexico’s art of today against the background of its cultural past.” A key difference between both exhibitions was one of medium. In *Brazil Builds*, modern architecture offered a new cultural and artistic synthesis as the manifestation of a renewed Brazilian ethos. In *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art*, painting had revealed *mexicanidad*. Another key difference between both exhibitions was that *Brazil Builds* operated in a key moment of historical inflection—1943 marked the beginning of postwar planning in the United States. The architecture world was not immune to this new framework—from February onwards *Architectural Record* carried the term “postwar” on its cover in almost every issue of that year. *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* missed this historical inflection point. The Mexican exhibit was rearranged into two exhibitions: *Modern Mexican Paintings* and *The Popular Art of*

448 Museum of Modern Art (New York N.Y.) and Mexico, *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art - Veinte siglos de arte mexicano.*, p. 11.
Mexico for circulation in the US; their circulation, however, stopped in 1942. MoMA did not abandon Mexican modern art organizing Recent Acquisitions: May-Day Sketchbook of Diego Rivera; Soviet Posters (May 1-June 13, 1943), which spoke of the vitality and longevity of Mexican modernist painting.

Beyond the objective differences between Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art and Brazil Builds—beyond the absence of architecture in the former and presence in the latter—there was another key difference between both: Brazil Builds exhibited no evidence of cultural or historical conflict. Unlike the Spanish colonies, which where conquered, Brazil, Goodwin pointed out, was settled. Unlike Mexico, in which modern art was tied to Revolution, modern architecture in Brazil was part of “democratic” experimentation and evolution. The conflict that Barr had underscored as a key aspect of Mexican artistic culture was absent in Brazil. Brazilian modernism (art and architecture) offered a new relationship with the convulsive history of Latin America. Brazil Builds presented an important opportunity. Cast within a narrative of peaceful relations between different cultures, these same forms, materially and symbolically, revealed the needs of a nascent postwar culture and the possible centrality of architects in this new world.

Brazil Builds clearly responded to a war context, its formidable legacy, however, was the postwar world it imagined. Examinations of Brazil Builds emphasize the exhibition’s clear link to the overall Allied war efforts. Brazil was part of the industrial chain of countries and territories that composed the extra-territorial assembly line of the war, specifically the South-Atlantic supply lines. Such rhetoric was made clear in OCIAA sponsored films, like the 1943 “Brazil at War,” where the images of raw materials being

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produced in Brazil seamlessly flowed into US factories as production lines poured out the raw machines for war. 450 Brazil—its architecture, its products, and its modernity—was fully aligned with the US and the Americas’ war endeavors. But, if examined closely, *Brazil Builds* made no strong overtures to the war and its products. Other than the symbolic value that the exhibition could muster in Pan American spheres, as it unquestionably did, there was little direct reference to the war. *Brazil Builds* occupied an ambiguous temporal ground. It clearly underscored its war context but more importantly, in the United States, it was used to project towards the postwar future as its images created an agreeable modern world. As *New York Times* art critic Edward Alden Jewell pointed out to his readers: “The exhibition … has very direct bearings on world-wide post-war reconstruction. Brazil has much to offer in that respect, and what has been achieved there deserves to be studied with close attention.” 451 *Brazil Builds*’ ability to operate within a postwar context is the key to its enduring success and the reason why it operated metonymically representing Latin America. In it, modern architecture offered a new cultural pattern for the development of modernism; it also offered a new postwar organizational pattern and client: the state.

For Goodwin, the beginning of Brazilian modern architectural experimentation dated to well before the 1930s, well within the temporal frame of the European experiments. 452 This located his narrative within the period of avant-garde groups confronting an established conservative and traditionalist status quo. In *Brazil Builds*, however, the national state came to the foreground as a key player in the development of

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451 Alden Jewell, "Brazil Builds Anew."
452 Goodwin made no clear or specific overtures to specific modernist events such as the 1922 Semana de Arte Moderna (Week of Modern Art) Exhibition in São Paulo. This loose temporality also offered a clear pre-Vargas origin.
modern architecture. The role of the state was something completely missing in avant-garde narratives of modern architecture in Europe or the United States. The juxtaposition between an avant-garde—understood as a group of individuals who severed their ties to nation and tradition—versus a collective of intellectuals linked to the state—gifted individuals within a progressive government that forwarded a modern agenda for the nation—was clear in Brazil Builds. The centrality of the Ministry of Education and Health both as example and symbol for postwar modernism cannot be underestimated. The image of this building was immediately mobilized in the US and Europe, appearing in numerous non-architectural spheres, such as the New York publication, School Management journal. This building was raised to the level of icon because it embodied both architectural and social meaning. Its architectural iconic nature was predicated on its formidable adaptive modernist language—an adaptation that was able to transcend function and become an art form. As an icon, it did not rest solely on this, but also on the fact that this was a government building. In this way, it was the very essence of a progressive social collective meaning. In this, it escaped its national frame, becoming a symbolic model for postwar reconstruction.

In Brazil Builds, authoritarianism was veiled. Brazil Builds performed a historical obfuscation and veiling that revealed its projective thrust and its postwar context. The exhibition deployed an ideological narrative that stressed a Brazilian peaceful history, one that clearly paralleled that of the United States. The two key moments in Brazil’s recent political history—the 1930 Revolution and the 1937 Estado Novo—were reinscribed, the first as “the advent of the Vargas government,” the second as a simple reorganization of government. This veil provided an optimal image for a US culture
focused on the war effort and starting to imagine a postwar world. Goodwin himself noted the presence of state control, “under whose aegis we operated,” referring directly to the DIP—left obscured to US readers through its acronym. The Departamento de Imprensa e Propaganda (Department of Press and Propaganda) was a key element in Vargas’ authoritarian apparatus (Fig. 3.27). War conditions, as Goodwin highlighted, framed the levels of information control, and, at the same time, also served to veil the authoritarian nature of the Brazilian regime and its elite cultural politics.453 Through the sacralization of colonial architecture as historical monument, the celebration of modernism as a work of art, and the power of genius—as in the sculptures of Aleijadinho and Niemeyer’s architecture—SPHAN spun a complex web of elite values within a bureaucratic management of culture.454 The belief in an authentic popular culture was itself already an elite construction, mobilized by state power. The notion of the survival of a genuinely popular ethos that revealed a national culture was present in both the Mexican exhibit and in Brazil Builds. Culture was a bureaucratized elite project, and in this it had clear authoritarian strains. This, however, was complicated in Brazil by the fact that the Vargas regime was a dictatorship that offered a platform for progressive Brazilian intellectuals. As Chuva points out, SPHAN’s project becomes hegemonic, consolidating Brazilian culture around colonial baroque architecture with the advent of Estado Novo that is, with the advent of dictatorship. Recognizing the intricate relationship between political and civic spheres, she offers the mechanism of “tombamento,” of recoding monuments in the official patrimony books and the legal

453 It continues to do so. For example Quezado Deckker frames these as “a series of bureaucratic procedures [that] had to be followed on account of the state of emergency.” Quezado Deckker, Brazil Built: The Architecture of the Modern Movement in Brazil, p. 119.
454 Chuva, Os Arquitetos da Memória. These views are spread throughout the text, but are more concentrated in Chapter 7.
infrastructure around this process, as a clear tool in the overlap between power and aesthetics. This soft authoritarianism, however, continued to displace the more aggressive operations of the Estado Novo and its cancellation of democratic activities. As Elizabeth Cancelli has pointed out, the period of the Estado Novo saw the creation of a particular police consciousness that helped sever the link between nation and state by articulating an international network (linking FBI, Gestapo, British and Italian Secret Service, among others, not to mention agreements with other Latin American governmental agencies) organized against international communism and Judaism; one find a clear echo of anti-Semitism in Maul’s 1938 attack on Warchavchik.\textsuperscript{455} Contemporary Brazilian scholars on the Vargas regime highlight 1941 as the end of the repressive period and the beginning of populist cooptation in which propaganda took a heightened sense of political agency.\textsuperscript{456} The centrality of propaganda and the internal fight between Brazilian ministries to control the image of the nation, both in and outside Brazil, underscores the need to better articulate the implications of the complicity of Brazilian intellectuals under the Estado Novo and its bureaucratic machinery, as well as the links between progressive architectural postures and conservative thought.

Goodwin celebrated and underscored Brazil’s national progressive character by showing the leading role that its government had taken in “encouraging Modern

architecture” and how it served as a model for the rest of the hemisphere and the world. It was also a model for reconstruction:

Other capitals of the world lag far behind Rio de Janeiro in architectural design. While Federal classic in Washington, Royal Academy archeology in London, Nazi classic in Munich, and neo-imperial in Moscow are still triumphant, Brazil has had the courage to break away from safe and easy conservativism. Its fearless departure from the slavery of traditionalism has put a depth charge under the antiquated routine of governmental thought and has set free the spirit of creative design. The capitals of the world that will need rebuilding after the war can look to no finer models than the modern buildings of the capital city of Brazil.457

Goodwin delineated the contemporary geopolitics of the war, but also offered the architecture in the exhibition as a model for the future. Incorporating the war rhetoric to advance the cause of modern architecture, he opened the exhibition as a prospect for the postwar. Brazilian modern buildings were “depth charges” that demolished the antiquated routines of government and cleared the way for the free spirit of creative design. Yet, unlike the bombing raids on Europe, the shells of Brazilian modern architecture were selective since, “although emphasis is on modern buildings…the older architecture has not been neglected.”458 This relationship with tradition as a fertile ground for modernism remained problematic for postwar modernization, and it rang false as a model for European reconstruction. Brazil Builds would have to contend with the geography of

458 MEMO Brazil Builds – outline. From Miss Carson to Miss Newmeyer, December 17, 1942. Exh. 213. CUR MoMA Archives, NY.
reconstruction, and the reorientation of US interests back to Europe. By prefiguring the postwar reconstruction within the realm of national collective representation, Goodwin made a clear overture to a central question of postwar architecture: monumentality.

Sigfried Giedion, José Luis Sert and Fernand Léger’s 1943 joint statement, “Nine Points on Monumentality,” outlined the features of a new postwar monumentality. Although never formally published, it entered an ongoing debate galvanized by the 1927 League of Nations Competition.459 As mentioned earlier, Gutheim’s celebration of the 1939 Brazilian pavilion, for example, was woven to a general critique of the Fair’s monumentality, and it revealed the extent of this public conversation. Giedion’s framing of the question, which has dominated architectural scholarship, was but one strand of a complex discussion. Several of the themes elaborated by the three European exiles living in New York, nonetheless, overlap with Brazil Builds. The “integration of the work of the planner, architect, painter, sculptor and landscapist” recalled key works presented in the exhibition. The Ministry of Education and Health building clearly presented such integration. Its brise-soleil addressed the call for “Mobile elements [that] can constantly vary the aspect of the building.” It even had the added touch of being controlled by human hands, thus literally humanizing the large machine-like functional façade. By “changing positions and casting shadows” this mobile façade was, as called forth by the “Nine Points,” a “source of new architectural effects.”460 The emphasis on the “lyrical value” of a new monumental architecture was clearly met by Brazilian modern

459 This touch stone project, later on linked to the 1948 United Nations project, as well as Giedion’s repeated articulation of the question, has obscured a larger discussion displacing Brazil Builds contribution. 460 Sigfried Giedion, José Luis Sert, and Fernand Léger, “Nine Points on Monumentality,” in Architecture Culture, 1943-1968: A Documentary Anthology, ed. Joan Ockman, Edward Eigen, and Columbia University. Graduate School of Architecture Planning and Preservation. (New York: Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning; Rizzoli, 1993).
architecture. The integration of “elements of nature” and the creation of “man-made landscape” was also a signature of Brazilian modern architecture. The projects presented in Brazil Builds were clear evidence that, in Brazil, there was a “unifying culture.” These projects also proved that the “collective force” of its people had been translated into architectural symbols, and that the emotional lyrical value of its buildings had superceded the traditional notion of sheer size in monumentality. Moreover, the call in the “Nine Points” for an enlightened government that would not be “imbued with the pseudo-ideals of the nineteenth century” was one of the key features underscored by Goodwin. In this sense, paradoxically, the Brazilian authoritarian government of Vargas led all Western democracies, serving as an example for the postwar period. Giedion certainly thought so. In his 1944 re-elaboration of his views on monumentality, he inserted the MES within the genealogy established by Le Corbusier’s failed League of Nations project, underscoring that the MES was “a move” towards embracing “the higher aspirations of the people.”

From Postwar to Cold War

In its March 1943 “Foreign Letter” to the US State Department, the Whaley-Eaton Information Service\textsuperscript{462} presented a note on Latin American economic markets stating the “readiness with which British investors are preparing to enter the South American development field.”\textsuperscript{463} The Whaley-Eaton information note underscored the possible confrontation between British and US interests in a region unified within the idea of a Western Hemisphere under US leadership and revived an interwar geography of commercial struggle with Great Britain.\textsuperscript{464} The confrontation between two friendly allied powers in the midst of a European war was odd. It also raised serious questions regarding early postwar planning. The note had the intended effect, raising a red flag across US Government agencies, because of it, Under-Secretary of State Sumner Wells, and Laurence Duggan, head of the South American desk at the State Department, were “anxious to get an accurate report on just what the British are doing,” turning to the Rockefeller’s OCIAA for an explanation and correct assessment of the situation.\textsuperscript{465}

\textsuperscript{463} Whaley-Eaton Foreign Service included in a note from Berent Friele to Nelson Rockefeller, March 31, 1943. Folder 4, Box 1, Series O, CIAA, Record Group 4, NAR Papers, RAC.
\textsuperscript{465} Memorandum, Nelson Rockefeller to Frank A Jamieson, May 22, 1943. Folder 4, Box 1, Series O, CIAA, Record Group 4, NAR Papers, RAC.
The Whaley-Eaton information report conflated war needs and interests such as British propaganda activities in the region, with postwar planning regarding the future of British colonial policy, all within the growing anxiety in US economic and political circles over the nature of a postwar world. The March 1943 communiqué was officially reported as: “unfounded”—something the State Department later learned to be an error in judgment since the British were indeed actively seeking to regain their past commercial status in the region by, among other things, actively undermining US propaganda efforts. Latin America would indeed be a stage of postwar commercial and cultural confrontation. Three years after the Whaley-Eaton report, Alfred Barr warned Nelson Rockefeller that Penguin, the British publishing house, was ready to produce a series of books on Latin American art for that market. Barr underscored that these were to be “huge editions” in several languages at extremely low cost, and, not missing the geopolitical implications, he noted that these would be “excellent British good-will gestures.” Rockefeller, then back at MoMA, lamented that the region appeared not to be “an American concern,” and underscored how Brazil Builds had been “outstanding in this respect.” US leadership over the cultural market in Latin America had been a primary concern of US foreign relations. In 1944, as Assistant Secretary of State for the region, Rockefeller had approached MoMA to do “a series of books … on Latin

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466 The British attempted to play the US imperialist card in Latin America. Rockefeller warned that European countries where “already drawing plans that established commercial claims on the region, and that eleven thousand blacklisted firms and individuals would waste no time to regain their lost share of the region.” NAR, Memorandum on Post-War Planning for the Hemisphere, February 23, 1943. Folder 63, Box 8, Series O, CIAA, Record Group 4, NAR Papers, RAC.
467 Letter, Alfred Barr to NAR, September 18, 1946. Folder 1216, Series L, Box 125, Record Group 4, NAR Papers, RAC.
468 Letter, NAR to Alfred Barr, September 23, 1946. Folder 1216, Series L, Box 125, Record Group 4, NAR Papers, RAC.
American countries, similar to *Brazil Builds.*\(^{469}\) Exactly what these books would entail and contain was not described, and there is no certainty that these would have been on or included architecture. *Brazil Builds’* clear overture towards a postwar world does, however, present a possible framework of this unexecuted project. Just days after the close of *Brazil Builds* in New York and the beginning of the tour that lasted until 1948, Rockefeller was engaged in a detailed report on the future of the region after the war. As the Whaley-Eaton note revealed, the region was part of the complex postwar planning by the major allied governments; at the same time, the State Department’s reaction to the British threat in the region revealed the growing fear on the part of Rockefeller that Latin America would not fare well in US postwar planning.

The emergence of postwar planning in 1943 marked an important shift in the management of cultural relations in the US government as full responsibility for “long-range projects…concerning the Arts, Music, Students Interchange, Cultural Institutes, American Libraries, and American Sponsored School programs were assigned to the Division of Cultural Relations of the Department of State.”\(^{470}\) The management of culture, until then shared with Rockefeller’s OCIAA, was placed fully within the halls of the State Department. During this period of internal governmental reorganization, the Museum of Modern Art continued to engage Latin American culture, offering two shows in 1943: *The Latin-American Collection of the Museum of Modern Art* (March 31-June 6, 1943) and *Recent Acquisitions: May-Day Sketchbook of Diego Rivera* (May 1-June 13,

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\(^{469}\) *Letter, John Abbott to NAR, June 14, 1944. Folder 1203, Series L, Box 123, Record Group 4, NAR Papers, RAC. Abbott mentioned: Photographs of El Oro Province Ecuador by Irving Rusinow as an example. Rusinow was a photographer for the Institute of Inter-American Affairs and worked for the film section of the OCIAA. Abbott underscored that such a project would be impossible without the support of the OCIAA.*

1943). In 1944, it opened *Modern Cuban Painters* (March 17-May 7, 1944). None of these had OCIAA support.\(^{471}\)

**The Rockefeller Postwar Plan**

In 1943, Rockefeller saw the demise and eventual end of the OCIAA, as President Roosevelt had “indicated his desire that the Department of State assume the leadership and the major responsibility for international post-war planning.”\(^{472}\) The relocation of the region within the global considerations of the State Department was a clear sign that the preference accorded to Latin America because of the war, would end.\(^{473}\) It also redrew Rockefeller’s sphere of influence and interest.\(^{474}\) He, however, would not go without offering his advice. In a general memorandum of February 1943, Rockefeller laid out his ideas and views on the postwar world, and its effect on Latin America. Peace in Europe and Asia, Rockefeller pointed out, would bring about centrifugal forces, both economic and social, that would tear apart the close collaborations established by the Good

\(^{471}\) The OCIAA could engage in emergency types activity; this included the supplying of educational materials, which the catalogue of *Brazil Builds* clearly fit.


\(^{473}\) Rockefeller’s concern came to the foreground as he wrote Secretary of State Cordell Hull, reminding him that “the State Department has the responsibility for the direction of policies governing the economic development in the Hemisphere.” Memorandum (First Draft), NAR to Secretary Hull, July 19, 1943. Folder 5, Box 1, Series O, CIAA, Record Group 4, NAR Papers, RAC. Rockefeller’s letter to Secretary Hull suffered several drafts; with each draft one can see a moderation in tone. I quote from the original draft.

\(^{474}\) Harry Hawkins, the head of the State Department’s Trade Agreements Division, would head an informal “clearing house in the inter-American field.” The reorganization of the OCIAA along clear commercial and trade guidelines rather than cultural or political ones was a clear indication of the re-location of the region in US Government concerns from a national security position, as emphasized by Rockefeller during the war, to one of a market of US goods, during the postwar. Rockefeller had originally proposed the creation of a special committee within the State Department composed of Laurence Duggan, Will L Clayton of the Commerce Department, and later Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs (1946-1947), and himself to direct the transition of Inter-American affairs into the halls of the State Department. Nelson Rockefeller, (Draft) *Memorandum on Post-War Planning for the Hemisphere*, February 23, 1943. Folder 63, Box 8, Series O, CIAA, Record Group 4, NAR Papers, RAC. On Harry Hawkins, see: Oral History Interview with John M. Leddy, by Richard D. McKinzie, June 15, 1973. The Harry S. Truman Library. [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/leddyj.htm](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/leddyj.htm) (Accessed, October 5, 2010).
Neighbor Policy. The maintenance of this long fought unity was his primary concern, and the way to retain it was “by developing a program which will bring about a steadily rising standard of living for the people of all countries and classes throughout the Hemisphere.”

The war, Rockefeller advised, had had an adverse economic impact on Latin America. It had disrupted inter-American trade, by concentrating it on strategic materials, and because of this, “industrial development [in the region] had been brought to a standstill [and] economic dislocation, unemployment and the beginning of social unrest,” he pointed out, “are to be found throughout the Hemisphere.”

Rockefeller outlined seven main fields of engagement, developed by the Industrial Research Institute of the Inter-American Development Commission—in which he served as chairman and Wallace K. Harrison as Deputy Coordinator—aimed at developing a multi-tier industrialization in the region.

The development of manufacturing (one of the seven target areas aimed at overall industrialization) included handcrafts—such as wearing apparel, jewelry, leather goods, ceramics, toys—as well as small industries, comprising textiles, glassware, preserved food products, wines, department store merchandise, drugs and pharmaceuticals, chemicals. Manufacturing was complemented with the development of large industries such as agriculture, road building, power, light, transportation and aviation, automobiles, electricity, industrial machinery, building materials and equipment.

In relation to other industrial nations, Rockefeller saw Latin America as the principal recipient of the surplus labor that peace would create in the

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476 Ibid. p. 2.

477 These were: 1. Finance. 2. Transportation. 3. Power and Communications. 4. Development of Raw Materials. 5. Development of Manufacturing. 6. Related Problems which will affect this program of development and industrialization. Rockefeller, Ibid. p. 9-10.

478 Ibid.
United States.\textsuperscript{479} The region would offer the “opportunity and [have the] demand for men coming out of the armed forces and war industries with technical skills essential to development and industrialization in the Hemisphere.”\textsuperscript{480} Rockefeller placed Latin America in a key and deep relationship to a US-led postwar world. Reconstruction in Europe would be accompanied by the conclusion and completion of the Good Neighbor policies, establishing once and for all a Western Hemisphere. As is well known, this did not happen, as the conservative tide that rose against the New Deal aimed at sweeping away what was deemed a highly bureaucratized interventionist state and the threat of Communism in Europe made it a key stage of the early Cold War. What is important, however, are the clear points of contact that MoMA offered to the now embattled cultural relations between the United States and Latin America, as Rockefeller transitions from the OCIAA to the State Department and later returns to the Museum of Modern Art. This transition also saw the appointment of René d’Harnoncourt as Vice President of Foreign Affairs and as Director of the newly created Department of Manual Industries at MoMA.

\textit{Our Man in MoMA}

In early 1945, René d’Harnoncourt toured Latin America. It was hoped that the three-month visit by MoMA’s Vice-President in Charge of Foreign Activities would help strengthen and expand contacts between the museum and “Latin American artists and organizations.”\textsuperscript{481} MoMA had received numerous requests from museums in the region for assistance on installations, teaching materials and exhibitions. In the US, the

\textsuperscript{479} In Rockefeller’s view, the region was integral to the economic growth of the United States; its development was necessary “if we are to maintain future employment following the war.” Ibid. p. 10

\textsuperscript{480} Ibid. p. 11.

\textsuperscript{481} Letter, René d’Harnoncourt to Nelson Rockefeller. October 3, 1944. Folder 1325, Series L, Box 135, Record Group 4, NAR Papers, RAC.
Committee on Latin American Studies had asked d’Harnoncourt “to call a meeting on research in the field of Latin American art.” D’Harnoncourt was seen as a key figure who would help forward the cause of Latin American art and culture. He had been involved with Mexican art since the late 1920s (he had a personal affinity for Mexico, which persisted for his entire life), and had developed considerable knowledge on primitive art. He had just recently, in early 1944, joined MoMA as Vice-President in Charge of Foreign Activities and as Director of the Department of Manual Industries—a department intended to parallel the museum’s Department of Industrial Design. The aim of this department was to “examine the problems of design and craftsmanship in handmade articles” in the Americas and had key points of contact with Rockefeller’s 1943 postwar plan. As Vice-President in Charge of Foreign Activities, d’Harnoncourt was to “maintain relations with cultural organizations in the other American Republics,” and coordinate with the museum’s departments “that have extended their activities into this field.”

This job seemed tailored for d’Harnoncourt’s recent background. Having worked for the US Department of the Interior in its Indian Arts and Craft Board, he entered Rockefeller’s OCIAA as “acting director” of its Art Section, a post that took him throughout Latin America. In 1944 he went to MoMA at Rockefeller’s suggestion with

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483 As previous noted, d’Harnoncourt organized the 1930 Exhibition of Mexican Art. This early exhibition revealed the cultural and political connections which d’Harnoncourt would cultivate during his life. D’Harnoncourt migrated to Mexico in 1925 and remained there until 1931 when he moved to New York. His interest in the region coalesced around primitive and folk art.


485 D’Harnoncourt met Nelson Rockefeller through Alfred Barr, after his 1941 MoMA show on US Indian craft. D’Harnoncourt straddled both the OCIAA and the Department of Interior. His main job as acting
the intent, as revealed by his administrative titles, to maintain and enhance the museum’s relation with the region.\textsuperscript{486} D’Harnoncourt’s move to MoMA coincides with a moment in which the cultural network that tied MoMA, Latin American and the OCIAA together was being dismantled. Despite the liquidation of the OCIAA, it seemed that in early 1945, the Pan American craze initiated by the war was still in full swing. It was time, d’Harnoncourt stressed to MoMA Trustees to establish a network of “individuals and agencies involved in the South American market.”\textsuperscript{487} In a postwar world, Latin America had to be firmly aligned to US interests. His trip would help expand MoMA’s influence in the region, and, more importantly, cement his own relationship with and position at the museum. There were then many reasons for d’Harnoncourt’s trip to seem entirely appropriate.

As he reported to the Board of Trustees, the “enthusiastic reception I received as a representative of the museum everywhere I went far exceeded my expectations.”\textsuperscript{488} MoMA’s reputation and prestige was such, d’Harnoncourt stated, that it was considered the “leading institution of the hemisphere.”\textsuperscript{489} This was important since what was being played out was precisely US cultural hegemony over the region, and the displacement of all remnants of European cultural authority. There seemed to be no impediment to expanding the museum’s influence. Local “Coordinating Committees … composed of

\textsuperscript{486} D’Harnoncourt connection to Latin America developed through the OCIAA, and Rockefeller’s interest to establish new institutional relationships.


\textsuperscript{488} Ibid. p. 1.

\textsuperscript{489} Ibid.
American business men well established in their communities” could help create “member centers” in major cities. Latin America, d’Harnoncourt enthusiastically reported, was ready for a membership campaign, for the sale of museum books, for traveling exhibitions, even for the “establishing of a circuit of motion pictures.” In early 1945, d’Harnoncourt identified no serious impediments; the region, he reported to the trustees, offered “great opportunity” without any social or political concerns. The South American cultural market was then ripe for the taking, and the museum had to act. The possibility of establishing museum centers that could begin membership drives and collect fees was immediate in Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro; in these two cities, interest was so great that “they are ready to start the drive as soon as they have our letters and instructions.” D’Harnoncourt warned the trustees about British and “more recent French efforts … to gain the goodwill of the South American market.” The presence of an interwar economic landscape and the specter of European culture, as I have highlighted, manifested a constant threat to US cultural hegemony in the region during the early postwar. Latin America, however, was ready for an extended network administered by MoMA.

The report to the trustees revealed an important aspect of the Latin American economic and cultural landscape. In his report, d’Harnoncourt pointed out the established and general mentality in the region that cultural programs, such as the museum’s

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traveling exhibitions, be free of charge. D’Harnoncourt pointed to a key difference in the management of culture in Latin America. Although private organizations existed and were “capable of raising funds,” governmental institutions, especially the Ministries of Culture and Education, dominated the scene. With MoMA, d’Harnoncourt argued, artists and institutions confronted “a specific set up … contingent on our earnings,” and although he stressed that such a set up “was well received and in the larger places I was assured that means could be secured to pay necessary fees,” it did reveal an extensive and intensive overlap between government and culture in the region. 494 Non-commercial projects and the public nature of culture remained a central question in Latin America. Even the Motion-Picture Service, which d’Harnoncourt noted was the most solicited service offered by the museum through the Film Library, had to take this mentality into consideration. As the Brazilians suggested, Latin American members of the museum could act as intermediaries between the private sphere of the museum and the public sphere by offering free access to an interested public, “such arrangements would make it possible to avoid criticism since [such] projects would be completely non-commercial.” 495 MoMA then brought to the region a private management of culture that—although it had important parallels in Latin America with institutions such as the Museu de Arte Moderna in São Paulo and the diTella Institute in Buenos Aires—has generally escaped analysis. The ability of a private institution to develop cultural projects outside its own country must have been perceived by the general public as suspect simply

494 Ibid. p. 3.
495 Ibid. The proposal was made by a São Paulo “group of intellectuals” who would organize a film society with paying members. Although first showings of museum films would be for members, subsequent showings would be open and free to the general public.
on the grounds of the extraordinary expense,\textsuperscript{496} but also on the basis of an established mentality that linked culture to government, in contrast to a professed US mentality that saw culture as a private affair, brought under the aegis of government only under extraordinary circumstances like the war.

This ambiguous position between governmental and private cultural management was exploited by d’Harnoncourt on both sides of the Rio Grande. In a letter to the US Government signed by Stephen Clark but drafted by d’Harnoncourt (this was a procedural letter to explain the trip and get a special passport), the Vice-President in Charge of Foreign Affairs highlighted how the activities of his office were “in line with the policy of the Department of State” and its cultural relations programs.\textsuperscript{497} This overlap and seamless relationship between the US government and MoMA was repeated and articulated in Latin America by d’Harnoncourt. As he stated in Rio’s \textit{O Jornal}, as “Vice President,” “Director” or “vice-director” of MoMA (the journal switched his administrative position throughout the piece, being more interested in the success of Brazilian culture in New York than in correct administrative titles) his trip aimed to develop effective exchanges at a level of intellectual cooperation. The world after the war, he added will see a fantastic development of plastic art, and concluded by celebrating how Brazilian artists had avoided the two great dangers presented by the

\textsuperscript{496} Everything had to be done in “half an acre,” the Metropolitan Museum of Art on the other hand, d’Harnoncourt pointed out in 1960, had seventeen and a half. In the space of the museum “we not only must install many shows but must handle the work of getting together and dispatching many outside loan exhibits, including major shows all over the world as well as our circulating exhibitions, which travel to almost every state and to Canada. We service over fifty New York high schools. We’ve published two hundred and fifty books and pamphlets in the past thirty years, and we have to earn over half our income and get most of the rest from annual contributions and special grants from foundations.” Hellman, “Profiles: Imperturbably Noble.” p. 82.

\textsuperscript{497} Letter, Stephen C. Clark, November 26, 1944. RdH II.28. MoMA Archives, NY.
war’s aftermath: excessive nationalism and international standardization. The general notion of “intellectual cooperation” was the key framework with which US government agencies constructed people to people exchanges. In an interview published in Lima’s La Prensa, d’Harnoncourt declared that there were plans for a “copious exchange” between MoMA and museums as well as other South American institutions. These types of exchanges helped create “Cultural Democracy,” and revealed how, throughout history, the relations between the cultures of North, Central and South America “have not been violent.” D’Harnoncourt mobilized a particular interpretation of culture that displaced political frictions without abandoning the political frame of cultural exchanges, as his celebration of a culturally democratic postwar world revealed. The Inter-American political sphere was clearly articulated when La Prensa announced that part of his visit to Peru was to deal with the Manual Industries of Peru project. This connection revealed a clear link with a US government agency. The Peruvian project had been launched in 1942 by the OCIAA’s Commercial and Financial Department in collaboration with the Committee on Manual Industries of the Inter-American Development Commission as an attempt to address the imbalances created by the rapid expansion of the strategic raw material extraction markets in the region. Directed by Truman Bailey, it aimed at assisting the economic development of Peru through the rehabilitation of native arts. In


500 It has also clear connections to the State Department. In 1943 the point people responsible for the program were: Norton D. Carrel, Director of the Inter-American Development Commission; James H. Wright, Division of American Republics, Department of State, and René d’Harnoncourt, of the OCIAA. Memo, Nelson Rockefeller to René d’Harnoncourt, March 30, 1943. RdH II.29, MoMA Archives, NY.

1946 the Peruvian Ministerio de Fomento (Ministry of Development) assumed the financial and administrative responsibility of the project by creating the Instituto para el Fomento de las Artes Manuales (Institute for the Development of Manual Arts).\footnote{The successful transition from a US government project to a Peruvian one was celebrated by Time. See: "Peru: Old Crafts in New Hands," Time, no. July 1 (1946). http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,803761,00.html (Accessed March 2012).}

The presence of an Inter-American economic development project that eventually lands in the cultural sphere of the Museum of Modern Art, articulated the complex overlaps and the thin filaments that connected US governmental agencies and MoMA. It also revealed a complex understanding of culture; one that weakened the clear boundaries of elite aesthetics as articulated primarily through painting and sculpture through individual artists, as the spaces of the museum were given over to craftsmen, as in the case of the 1940 Mexican exhibit. In Lima, as in Rio’s media, d’Harnoncourt was re-imagined as the Director of a museum that had a vested interest in and was actively developing relations in Latin America at all levels. Both newspapers celebrated d’Harnoncourt’s 1941 MoMA exhibition, Indian Art of the United States. O Jornal highlighted his book Mexicana, which had been published in 1931, and La Prensa, observed that he had put together Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art, which, as already mentioned, was organized by John McAndrew. The re-emergence of the Mexican exhibit along the notion of manual industries revealed a pressing economic and aesthetic world that MoMA had yet not abandoned; intricately connected to the US government programs of culture and economic development the notion of handcrafts was also an important substratum in the museum’s imaginary of Latin American culture. This overlap between economic development and cultural imaginaries, however, did not mean that MoMA was
an arm of the US government. At the same time, nonetheless, if the museum itself cannot be singled out as a covert agent of the US government, its particular members can.

When considering d’Harnoncourt’s trip to the region, an important question remains: Why, by the end of 1944, a year after President Roosevelt order the staggered dismantling of the OCIAA, was MoMA interested in Latin America? Although, as d’Harnoncourt argued, there were many reasons for a trip to the region, none of his recommendations to develop the South American market were eventually followed. MoMA’s overture toward Latin America, which coincided with Alfred Barr’s “retirement” as Director, was anomalous at a time when it was clear that European reconstruction would take priority in the United States. Although d’Harnoncourt’s trip to Latin America had the professed intent to expand MoMA’s cultural influence by initiating “a membership campaign” in the region, this was a cover. This institutional mission was an excuse for “activities” d’Harnoncourt was to perform for the State Department. D’Harnoncourt’s trip was confidentially organized at the request of Nelson

503 In 1943, the Brooklyn Museum had approached Nelson Rockefeller to form a subcommittee with representatives of New York museums interested in Latin American issues to coordinate efforts. Rockefeller sent the proposal to Stephen Clark, Chairman of MoMA, senior member of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Art of the State Department. René d’Harnoncourt was involved. The proposal never prospered. Letter, Isabel S. Roberts, Chief Curator Brooklyn Museum to Rockefeller. May 4, 1943. Folder 1203, Series L, Box 123, Record Group 4, NAR Papers, RAC.

504 An important overture to this postwar geography was Exhibition 274, The Lesson of War Housing (January 16-March 4, 1945). Nelson Rockefeller recalled that he “brought [d’Harnoncourt] to the Museum to pull the whole together at a time when it lacked a leader.” Cited in: Hellman, “Profiles: Imperturbably Noble.” p. 53. In Hellman’s extensive article, d’Harnoncourt is credited with Barr’s reinstatement at the museum due to his ability to create a working atmosphere where “people that hate each other” can work together (p. 50). Much is attributed to his aristocratic background and manner, but also to his condition of non-expert on modern art. “He is not an absolute authority on art, outside his own field of the primitive, so he isn’t a threat to the Museum’s experts, but he is sufficiently one of them to understand them. He’s a fundamentally selfless person with a very strong character” (p. 53). In all, d’Harnoncourt was the quintessential cosmopolitan character.

Rockefeller, then Assistant Secretary of State.\textsuperscript{506} The charge was to prepare a “careful survey … on propaganda activities being carried by foreign powers in the other American republics.”\textsuperscript{507} MoMA served as a cover, helping conceal what effectively was an intelligence mission.\textsuperscript{508} As Rockefeller bluntly put it:

In order that you may effectively carry out this study, I should like to suggest that you arrange some program in connection with your present activities which would provide a logical reason for a visit to the other Americas. This might facilitate the investigations that would be necessary to obtain the information we desire.\textsuperscript{509}

Under the cover of culture, d’Harnoncourt—turned accidental spy—traveled the region. Art, d’Harnoncourt stressed to Rockefeller, served as the perfect cover,

since we [at the museum] are interested in the propagation of art in the broadest sense including city planning, industrial arts and education, my connection with [MoMA] will enable me to make contacts in the various circles that may prove useful as sources of information.\textsuperscript{510}

As art opened the doors of Latin American politics, the politics of the early postwar

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\textsuperscript{506} Rockefeller headed the OCIAA from July 3, 1941 to December 26, 1944. Although he never officially resigned as Coordinator, Rockefeller left the OIAA to become Assistant Secretary of State in charge of relations with the American Republics at the State Department, a post he resigned from on August 25, 1945.
\textsuperscript{507} Letter, Nelson Rockefeller to René d’Harnoncourt. September 29, 1944. Folder 1325, Series L, Box 135, Record Group 4, NAR Papers, RAC.
\textsuperscript{508} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{509} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{510} Letter, René d’Harnoncourt to Nelson Rockefeller. October 3, 1944. Folder 1325, Series L, Box 135, Record Group 4, NAR Papers, RAC.
\end{flushright}
himself at the museum. Opportunism governed MoMA’s relations with the region, as overtures wither away in disinterest, or were derailed by more immediate and pressing concerns.\textsuperscript{511}

As Frank Ninkovich argues, the US government approach to international cultural relations was governed by a complex and contradictory dynamic between a tradition of private voluntarist programs initiated in the turn of the twentieth century by private philanthropic foundations, such as the Carnegie Corporation and the Rockefeller Foundation, and the need for a centralized management developed with the creation in 1938 of the Division of Cultural Relations of the State Department.\textsuperscript{512} The OCIAA reinforced the voluntarist tradition through Nelson Rockefeller’s activist attitude and, within the proclivities of the New Deal, it also institutionalized and bureaucratized its efforts.\textsuperscript{513} With an overriding belief in national security, Rockefeller’s OCIAA launched several key themes of US cultural relations that were initially aimed at Latin America; among them, Ninkovich points out, were the notion of culture as “high culture,” as well as the need to sell the United States to a foreign audience.\textsuperscript{514} The contradiction between an elite and fundamentally undemocratic sensibility of culture, and a rapidly growing US postwar technocracy and conservative populism that questioned the need to sell the

\textsuperscript{511} D’Harnoncourt recommended securing “the service of a person who can speak and write fluent Spanish and who is completely at home with business terminology.” This recommendation made to the Trustees was never followed. René d’Harnoncourt, “Report on trip to Latin America, Dec. 27, 1944 to March 23, 1945.” April 9, 1945. Folder 1325, Series L, Box 135, Record Group 4, NAR Papers, RAC. p. 4.

\textsuperscript{512} Ninkovich sees a fundamental contradiction between the two: “a governmental cultural role based on political premises would have required the repudiation of the political liberal creed upon which traditional American policies of cultural interchange were based.” He acknowledges the belief, as embodied in the private sector, in fundamental autonomy of culture as guaranteeing individualism, and the political needs of government, which coops this autonomy for its realpolitik. Frank A. Ninkovich, \textit{The Diplomacy of Ideas: U.S. Foreign Policy and Cultural Relations, 1938-1950} (Cambridge [Eng.]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981). p. 23.

\textsuperscript{513} Ninkovich also highlights the importance of Latin America in relation to the formation of US cultural policies as the Division of Cultural Relations was created within the frame of the Good Neighbor Policy, and in response to the 1936 Pan-American Conference in Buenos Aires. Ibid. p. 24.

\textsuperscript{514} Ibid. p. 63.
United States to the world and eventually which “America” to sell, were clearly at odds. Ninkovich’s views on the nature of culture within the OCIAA and State Department need to be tempered with a more complex picture. As the manual industries programs showed, the OCIAA had “an elastic definition of culture” that allowed for a complex articulation and mobilization of projects. These contradictions as well as the overlaps between private and public sector perspectives and needs remained the signature of US cultural relations during this period. In this sense, the figure of d’Harnoncourt, a private individual in the service of the government, was quite typical of the early postwar period. This type of cultural broker was one that would continue under the Cold War.

**How democracy works**

As a secret agent under the cover of culture d’Harnoncourt was able to gauge the political temperature of Latin America. D’Harnoncourt’s 1945 confidential report to Rockefeller does not read as an exciting spy novel full of intrigue teeming with shocking and revealing information on key figures of Latin American politics and culture playing as double agents in heated cultural and political conspiracy. He did meet with key political figures such as the Peruvian Victor Raúl Haya de la Torre, and Mexican labor leader Vicente Lombardo Toledano. He also met with key cultural figures, such as Uruguayan painter Joaquín Torres García, Chilean poet (and then Senator for the Communist Party) Pablo Neruda, as well as the influential Argentinean intellectual and publisher Victoria Ocampo. It is striking how many architects he visited in Brazil, among

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them the rather unknown and young member of the Communist Party, Jôao Vilanova-Artigas, who a year later received a Guggenheim Fellowship to visit the United States.\footnote{See: Letter/Report, René d’Harnoncourt to NAR. May 21, 1945. Folder 1325, Series L, Box 135, Record Group 4 NAR Papers, RAC. On Vilanova-Artigas see: Marcelo Carvalho Ferraz, ed., \textit{Vilanova Artigas} (São Paolo: Blau, 1997).}

The report consisted of a twenty-two-page letter with an appendix on the main individuals he talked too, accompanied by a document titled: “Observations on Propaganda Activities and Their Effect on Public Opinion.” In the report (divided in two sections: “Impressions Gathered on Political Subjects,” and “Problems Concerning Cultural Interchanges”) d’Harnoncourt stressed the conversational nature of the information gathered. Such informal means of retrieving information allowed him to imagine himself as a transparent mediator, as a mere messenger of “the judgment of the people I met;” d’Harnoncourt simply relayed “their statements or opinions.”\footnote{“Most of the report reflects the judgment of the people I met and wherever I made an interpretation of their statements or opinions, I have made it clear that the interpretation is my own.” Letter/Report, René d’Harnoncourt to NAR. May 21, 1945. Folder 1325, Series L, Box 135, Record Group 4 NAR Papers, p. 1.} Such casualness allowed him to conclude that the opinions of “professional groups and the ‘inteligencia’” with which he met perfectly coincide with those of everyday people he encountered “on trains, buses and in hotels.”\footnote{Ibid.} This overlap between the professional and intellectual class and a “general public” manifested the limited social and political geography of the report, and its clearly elite perspective. It also underscored the informal pattern of cultural cooperation that had been the prevailing mechanism of private foundation initiatives that insisted on people-to-people exchanges. This being said, d’Harnoncourt’s report also perfectly echoed the established perception within US political circles, as voiced by the State Department, of the “striking role of the intellectual minority” in Latin America, to the point that for the Department, “public opinion as such
is nonexistent outside the limited circle of the intellectuals." It was easy then to conclude that the modern intellectual would necessarily be the sole agent of modernization in the region, and that the key cultural form of exchange was “high” culture. The insistence by the Brazilians upon the development of a film program, however, opens critical questions on the notion of popular culture and mass media at the time, and the idea of culture that Ninkivoch, for example, presents. The development of the manual industries initiatives fomented briefly by MoMA, also complicates the web of elite cultural values associated with the museum.

D’Harnoncourt’s gaze—political in intent yet socio-cultural in form—deployed a complex and dynamic structure of social classifications in an attempt to identify friends to support and foes to convert, all within a restricted sphere of “intellectuals.” In an OCIAA and State Department overwhelmed by economic and technical reports on Latin America, his views must have offered Rockefeller a fresh humanist and culturalist perspective. It also provided Rockefeller a known voice in a sea of impersonal reports. The OCIAA served as a collator and depository of all US Government departments’ relations with Latin America, as well as all Foreign Service officers’ coverage of each particular situation in their country of assignment. D’Harnoncourt was then able to offer a general overview of political trends simultaneously developing in the region as they manifested in culture. He was able to capture the “psychological” state of the region. As Ninkovitch argues, such attempts to capture psychological traits or factors were based on

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519 Ben Cherrington, Director of Division of Cultural Relations of the State Department. Cited in Ninkovich, The Diplomacy of Ideas: U.S. Foreign Policy and Cultural Relations, 1938-1950. p. 31. Although Cherrington’s views were uttered in 1938 they are clearly echoed in d’Harnoncourt.

520 The OCIAA was full with exceptionally detailed reports on just every aspect of Latin American economic conditions, for example, babassu nuts. For the contents of the collection see: United States. National Archives and Records Service, George S. Ulibarri, and John Parker Harrison, Guide to Materials on Latin America in the National Archives of the United States (Washington: Supt. of Docs., 1974).
the unquestioned belief in the individual as source—transmission and reception—of ideas, a belief buttressed by nineteenth-century socio-racial and evolutionist views (scientific racism) that, although discredited, remained entrenched in US cultural values. Such views assumed a rational individual who had reached his full potential in the United States, a subjectivity toward which Latin Americans, inhabiting a cultural lag, had to progress and evolved towards. As Undersecretary of State Sumner Wells pointed out: “the Anglo Saxon type had had six or seven hundred years of education and training in the science of government and human life;” Latin Americans, needed to catch up.

D’Harnoncourt reported on the growing radicalization of Latin American politics and society. In all, as Rockefeller had predicted in 1943, the region was volatile. There was widespread antagonism toward the United States, clearly present in Mexico and Chile, for example, manifesting in both “progressive and reactionary quarters.” The “middle,” d’Harnoncourt reported was “moving to the two extremes.” The overall impression was of the ascendance of totalitarian regimes fueled by the situation in Argentina. The vortex of political tensions in South America was the rise of Juan Perón. Although, d’Harnoncourt did not mention Perón directly (he will assume the Argentinian presidency in 1946), his influence in 1945, as Vice President, Secretary of War, and head of the Department of Labor, was undeniable. For d’Harnoncourt there were clear signs that Argentina was heading toward fascism, and that it could carry at least Chile and Peru with it. Latin America was affected by a nationalist reaction that infected even

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521 “Admittedly, the cultural personnel within the State Department never discarded the crude nineteenth-century evolutionism that had been discredited by Franz Boas and his disciples, a view that saw cultures evolving from primitive, irrational forms into modern liberal-rational entities.” Ninkovich, The Diplomacy of Ideas: U.S. Foreign Policy and Cultural Relations, 1938-1950. p. 5.
522 Cited in Ibid. p. 30.
524 Ibid. p. 4.
communists. Brazil remained on the margins of this political turmoil, insulated by its language barrier, and by a healthy preoccupation with national problems, uncharacteristic of other Latin American political spheres that insisted in linking “local and inter-American arguments.”

Although political tensions ran high in Argentina, d’Harnoncourt was received with “extraordinary courtesy,” and was surprised that “when they realized that I was American [Argentineans] were anxious to have me know that the relationship between the two governments should, in their opinion, not influence the relationship between individuals.” This was an appeal to inter-subject relations that transcended politics and offered evidence of values, which, if supported and protected, would be agreeable to US democratic principles. The “flight from the center,” d’Harnoncourt underscored, was due to a lack of leadership from the United States. It was not a matter of US intercession in local problems but rather, of a “lack of convincing authoritative statements on the type of social and political order that this country stands for.” Because of this, “people” in Latin America had “no choice but to join groups that believe in an aggressive program of self-help.” Although “authoritative statements” would not be effective in themselves, d’Harnoncourt highlighted that these would help educate an influential and growing middle class in the effectiveness of democracy.

525 “Due to the size of the country and its unique position of being the only country not sharing the common language of Latin America, Brazil seemed to me less susceptible to the socio-political current that influence public opinion against the United States in other American republics.” Ibid. p. 11.
526 “Some of them even stated openly their disapproval of the attitude of their own government towards the United States. I also noted that many of the chance acquaintances in the course of the conversation led to the current police practice of jailing people on perfunctory charges or even without charges, of keeping incommunicado and subjecting them to the third degree. I was certainly made aware of the fact that the man in the street is afraid and has some vague notion that a manifestation of interest by the United States in these matters might bring great security to him as an individual.” Ibid. p. 7.
527 Ibid. p. 13.
528 Ibid.
were “paper democracies,” the United States needed to show its peoples how democracy actually worked.\(^{529}\)

**Manual Industries**

Exactly how the Museum of Modern Art could help foment democratic values in Latin America was a serious question. D’Harnoncourt’s position as director of a Department of Manual Industries must have been at odds with some of the region’s development strategies, as the Sub-Committee on Industrial Development of the OCIAA was underscoring the need in Mexico, for example, to develop industrialization through large scale programs such as transportation, irrigation, iron and steel, as well as building materials. Could the notion of manual industries bring about industrialization and democratic values, associated with the United States? Orchestrated through the figure of d’Harnoncourt, the museum’s interests unfolded two geographies that will gain clarity in the postwar period. In d’Harnoncourt’s dual staff appointments one finds a yet diffused idea of the museum’s “Foreign Activities” that prefigured the creation of the International Program in July 1952. Also nascent, under the frame of “Manual Industries,” was the concern over development questions in the region, and in the soon to be decolonizing areas of the world. It is important to mention that from its inception, US government Inter-American relations had a global intent, even in the cultural sphere. Inter-American projects served to construct a world-view, since similar problems were “arising in other

\(^{529}\) “Instances that demonstrate court procedure, protection of the economic welfare of the majority of the people through public regulations such as price control and protection of the individual against the undue action by government authorities, should be given the widest possible publicity.” Ibid. p. 14.
areas” of the world such as China.\textsuperscript{530} The Manual Industries Department at the museum then prefigured a particular developmentalist view of Latin America and of the postwar world.

At the same time, within the frame of Manual Industries, an interwar geography of folk and craft production comes to the foreground that pointed to earlier museum initiatives, such as \textit{Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art}. The themes of folk art and manual industries pertaining to Latin America in a modern world was an important one developed by the museum—not all with successful exhibitions—that had many points of contact with US government agencies. It was also an important initiative being developed at the same time as \textit{Brazil Builds} and remained an important substratum in the museum as Latin American architectural modernism was gaining a foothold in US architectural culture. In 1942, when Goodwin traveled to Brazil in relation to MoMA’s Brazilian architecture exhibition, he met with Lincoln Kirstein. Kirstein was in South America working on “a collection of Latin American folk art.”\textsuperscript{531} This project, set within the OCIAA and other US government agencies—at this time d’Harnoncourt was at the Department of the Interior—unfolded a series of initiatives that justified the creation of the Department of Manual Industries and d’Harnoncourt’s appointment at MoMA. In early 1945, as d’Harnoncourt traveled Latin America spying for Rockefeller, he was also buying pieces for a possible Latin American folk art collection.\textsuperscript{532} Several exhibitions that remained undeveloped, such as \textit{American Craftsmanship} (1944), were planned;


\textsuperscript{531} Letter, Lincoln Kierstein to René d’Harnoncourt, November 16, 1942. RdH II. 29, MoMA Archives, NY.

\textsuperscript{532} See for example: “Objects Purchased in Argentina by René d’Harnoncourt,” January 1945. See also: Purchase and Expenses Connected with the Assembling of Specimen of Latin American Folk Art for Museum of Modern Art RdH II.29, MoMA Archives, NY.
others, such as *Timeless Aspects of Modern Art* (1949), were conceived as an introduction to a series of special exhibitions showing modern art’s relation to the art and crafts of other epochs. MoMA pursued the theme of primitive and popular art in Latin America, helping organize a showing of Haitian popular painting in Havana, Cuba, in 1944. Architecture was also present within these considerations as a volume on “Aboriginal architecture of the Americas” was planned for the general public. As already presented, the theme of folk architecture was to be include in *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* and was carried in *Brazil Builds* in photographs of fisherman’s huts in the state of Pernambuco (Fig. 4.1). Perhaps the most concrete initiative was d’Harnoncourt’s promotion of Bailey’s “Manual Industries of Peru” project with the production in 1947 of a report-pamphlet by the same name aimed at developing the retail market in the United States (Fig. 4.2).

In the 1940 Mexican exhibit, folk art had been conceptualized within the idea of a vital artistic aesthetic surviving within tradition. This frame was still present in Kirstein’s ideas for a collection that aimed “to accumulate ephemeral objects…since many of the artifacts are being lost through lack of interest, stopping of the tourist trade, and disintegration of tradition.” As the idea of development gained currency in the early 1940s under the aegis of postwar planning, folk art became a tool of economic development. The idea to “encourage and to preserve the fine handicraft traditions that are in danger of disappearing,” although present, took a secondary role, being displaced

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533 On *American Craftsmanship* See: Memo, General Activities, September 11, 1944. RdH II. 28; *Timeless Aspects of Modern Art* RdH II.28, MoMA Archives, NY.
534 *Exhibition Haitian Popular Painting*, Spring 1944 RdH II.28. On the aboriginal architecture project: “Some Concrete Projects that could be Started Immediately (n.d) RdH II.28, MoMA Archives, NY.
by the need to create “means to bring additional income to rural sections without expensive [US] involvement.” This reversal of hierarchy, from an aesthetic to a developmentalist intent, revealed the preeminence of the Inter-American Development Commission, a development sphere absent from the Mexican exhibit, albeit its clear commercial intent, but present in the Peruvian project. The aesthetics of folk art recontextualized in Peru within a developmentalist frame changed and later severed the connection to MoMA at the same time that aesthetic considerations in the museum changed under the pressure of industrial postwar concerns. What was conceived as a depository of traditional knowledge that manifested an essential culture, a “Latin American civilization”—to use a typical early Inter-American frame—was now mobilized for development purpose—for “credit dollars” as Time magazine pointed out—because the idea of manual industries overlapped with vocational educational initiatives. Local knowledge was no longer a vital and living knowledge, rather, it was something to be rescued, rationalized and integrated into technological and economic modernization. As part of literacy and health education, vocational training highlighted a different kind of intellectual exchange located not within cultural relations departments but within educational and scientific ones. A complete hierarchical change was operated, one that can be traced in the museum’s exhibitions. If earlier shows aimed at educating US consumers by exposing them to authentic folk art, the manual industries programs were aimed at re-educating local producers to a craft they had lost. This educational program intended to create a particular postwar subjectivity in the region. The large-scale

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536 Memorandum, René d’Harnoncourt to Nelson Rockefeller, March 30, 1943. RdH II.29, MoMA Archives, NY.
rehabilitation of traditional Peruvian crafts, d’Harnoncourt argued, could stave off the negative effects of industrialization by assisting craftsmen in their economic and artistic rehabilitation.\footnote{Inter-American Development Commission and Truman E. Bailey, \textit{The Manual Industries of Peru. Report on a Project} (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1946). p. 4.} Recovery of lost techniques, experimentation with new materials, and the organization and management of their commercial production was predicated on the celebration of the individual as craftsperson-artist. Lost was the idea of community and of an authorless work that had undergirded earlier Mexican folk art exhibits in the United States. The Manual Industries program’s aim was the creation of liberal-citizens who study “English and are well informed on world events.”\footnote{The case illustrated was that of the Vera brothers, who “employed at the Institute have progressed rapidly and their health and appearance have improved with regular employment. They are both studying English and are well informed on world events.” Ibid. p. 46.} Set within the museum’s growing concern over mass production—as exemplified in the \textit{Useful Objects, 1945} exhibition—such a frame seemed somewhat obsolete and blind to the impact that the war had had on the region.\footnote{Exhibition 300, \textit{Useful Objects, 1945} (November 21, 1945-January 6, 1946). This was originally called \textit{Useful objects under $10}, and was the second of such shows. See: Edgar Kaufman, Jr., "The Department of Industrial Design," \textit{The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art} 14, no. 1 (1946).} This may be the reason why these initiatives have been forgotten. Although d’Harnoncourt himself argued that he “didn’t do an awful lot about manual industries, or about foreign activities,” such an imagined Latin American territory, filled with small craft workshops, will be a trope carried by MoMA through d’Harnoncourt even in the 1953 when he visited the region again under the Insitute of Inter American Affairs to develope manual industries in the region.\footnote{Hellman, "Profiles: Imperturbably Noble." p. 102. See for example: MoMA Press Release, “René d’Harnoncourt to Visit South American Countries to aid Government Program for Development of Manual Industries,” August 23, 1953. This visit was done under the sponsorship of the Institute of Inter-American Affairs, the successor agency of Rockefeller’s OCIAA, at the State Department.} The persistence of this imaginary, which d’Harnoncourt proposed as “a nucleus to which to tie Latin American projects” at the museum, should not be underestimated as it survived through
d’Harnoncourt’s interest in primitivism in *Ancient Arts of the Andes* exhibition (January 25-March 21, 1954). This perspective had important overlaps with the OCIAA, which saw manual industries as key for “the participation of Latin American peoples in a war-reconstruction program.” It also signaled a larger postwar geography of development as evidenced by d’Harnoncourt’s first major exhibition at MoMA, *Arts of the South Seas* (January 29-May 19, 1946.)

**Cold War Dawning**

The Argentinean regime was not, d’Harnoncourt pointed out in his 1945 report to Rockefeller, the traditional Latin American dictatorship, invested in keeping “certain individuals or groups in power.” The Argentinean regime was a complex governmental structure that integrated ideology and propaganda. If traditional dictators in the region were “national affairs,” Argentina did not fit this pattern; its regime:

> has all the earmarks of a carefully integrated system that is upheld by a definite ideology. The intrinsic supremacy of Argentina over other Latin American nations and the injustice of her treatment by the great powers is the basic tenet of this creed. The word “Herrenvolk” is not actually used, but it is implied in every statement. The governing group, just like the Nazi party in its early stages, justifies its actions as efforts to clean out the

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542 Letter, René d’Harnoncourt to Nelson Rockefeller. September 12, 1944. Folder 1325, Series L, Box 135, Record Group 4, NAR Papers, RAC.
corruption engendered by previous governments of more democratic character. [...] Propaganda or government regulations have obviously established “formulas” for the treatment of delicate subjects. Even in fields as far removed from politics as the fine arts the same terminology is being used now that was used in Germany ten years ago. The director of the National Museum, in talking about contemporary painting, used the expression “sound” and “degenerate” art in the exact sense in which they were used by Dr. Rosenberg.545

If Argentina’s regime demonstrated the capacity of a Latin American government to transcend its traditional local frame, it, however, was not sufficiently developed to create its own brand of ideology. It is perhaps not surprising that in early 1945, for an Austrian émigré reporting back to the US government, fascism had only one form. D’Harnoncourt misses the particularities and specificities of the Peróns’ (Juan and Eva’s) populism and its complex mass movement. He also missed Brazil’s authoritarian structure at the brink of collapse, as Vargas was ousted by a military coup in October 1945 that ushered in a period of democratic rule. D’Harnoncourt’s cultural dependency on established European political forms framed his approach to both Fascism and Communism in the region. For MoMA’s Vice-President in Charge of Foreign Affairs, it was simply a matter of influencing the region by creating correct images to affect change, of exporting the right kind of images to the region.

For d’Harnoncourt, culture was a central player in the rise of Fascism in the region because Latin American culture transcended national boundaries. In a more subtle understanding of reactionary politics in the region, d’Harnoncourt also saw how conservative elements were able to assemble alternative Inter-American alliances and

545 Ibid. p. 9.
formations, as evidenced in the rise of the “hispanidad movement,” and the anti-Protestantism wave that, he reported, was sweeping the continent. In Argentina, as well as in Mexico, he pointed out, Protestantism was charged with the breakdown of the family, the growth of divorce, the use of birth control and the general “breakdown of morals,” all these perceived as the damaging influence of the United States. The region was clearly reacting to a world opened by the war, and to a US postwar imaginary that underscored freedom, democratic, secular and liberalizing values, embraced by a growing professional class but rejected by the traditional views of conservative interests. This anti-Protestant sentiment—that revealed the fluidity and porosity of politics and the everyday—manifested new social formations, “informal social cliques with common political beliefs.” Such loose social organizations, d’Harnoncourt warned, were in the process of coalescing into “organized groups.” The reactionary politics of the anti-Protestant movement (if it can be called a movement), which claimed US culture of Protestant “lawlessness [to be] one step removed form [the] moral chaos of communism,” underscored a socio-political landscape that will grow to maturity during later stages of the Cold War in a “third way” politics. Among certain groups and individuals, Latin America will be constructed as an alternative—both from the right and the left—to the bi-polar world of the United States and the Soviet Union. This emerging

546 Narratives that attempt to analyze hispanismo in this period position Latin America in a dependent or ideologically subservient condition with respect to Spain. This parallels d’Harnoncourt’s views of the ideological immaturity of Latin America with respect to communism. Hispanismo is then seen as an exported ideology perfectly align with and contained to conservative politics; such views disregard, for example, the hispanismo of a progressive Spanish culture represented by Spanish Republican exiles in Latin America, as well as local forms of hispanismo, progressive and reactionary, developed in the region itself. For an approximation of the notion of hispanidad in the mid 1940s period see: Bailey W. Diffie, "The Ideology of Hispanidad," The Hispanic American Historical Review 23, no. 3 (1943).
548 Ibid. p. 3.
549 Ibid. p. 10.
world of political neutrality fiercely challenged by the United States government would help Latin America negotiate the Cold War. The formation of the CEPAL (United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America) in 1948, and its leadership under Argentinean economist Raúl Prebisch in the early 1950s, revealed the coalescing of common Latin American questions—social, economic and political—that manifested in the idea of a common culture.\footnote{Prebisch assumed the presidency of CEPAL in 1950. See: http://www.eclac.org/ (Accessed April 13, 2011).} This imaginary of a Latin America brought together by culture as an alternative to bipolar Cold War politics was also present in the \textit{Seminario para el estudio del pensamiento en los países de lengua española} (Seminar for the Study of Thought in Spanish Speaking Countries) organized in the Colegio de México by intellectuals Samuel Ramos and José Gaos in the late 1940s.\footnote{José Luis Abellán, \textit{La idea de América: origen y evolución} (Madrid: Ediciones ISTMO, 1972), especially Chapter 8.} These ideas and culturalist positions had clear resonances and manifestations in architecture, with Félix Candela in Mexico and with architectural historian Manuel Castedo in Chile—both, like Gaos, Spanish Republican exiles.\footnote{On Candela’s political imaginary see: Maria González-Pendás, "Technics and Geopolitics: Félix Candela’s Political Imaginary," in \textit{Latin American Modern Architectures: Ambiguous Territories}, ed. Patricio del Real and Helen Gyger (New York: 2012).} The presence of a Hispanist movement, of a Spanish cultural elite in the region was clearly hinted at by d’Harnoncourt in his report. The ideological confrontation between the US and the USSR as it played out in Latin America was present in the formation of UNESCO, as the US government carefully monitored candidates in their efforts to contain leftist views, and combat the accusation of Anglo-Saxon domination that resulted in the election of Mexican Jaime Torres-Bodet as general
director in 1948. It is important to point out that d’Harnoncourt was considered as a possible member of the US delegation to the critical 1947 UNESCO Mexico City conference. In response to a State Department probe, Nelson Rockefeller, then back at MoMA, underscored that d’Harnoncourt’s “political affiliations and attitudes, if any are all discrete, and I am quite confident would never rise to haunt anyone later.” The soon-to-be Director of the Museum (1949) certainly exemplified “the private citizen,” who the Chairman of the US National Commission on UNESCO, Milton Eisenhower, asserted, should determine the cultural policies of the United States.

D’Harnoncourt’s 1945 report to Rockefeller revealed a complex cultural landscape of tightly woven political and cultural values. Although for him, the flight from the center was evident at both ends of the political spectrum, there was no recognition of a popular support of reactionary or progressive politics; for him, it all rested on the “intellectuales.” Latin America was governed then primarily by “ruling cliques” in power through fear or benevolence. This simplistic picture articulated a weak popular culture, highly susceptible and easily manipulated. The strengthening of tradition, clearly elaborated in the Manuals Industries of Peru project, played not only an important economic role but also a political one. In d’Harnoncourt’s views, the masses of “inarticulate people of low economic and educational level” are particularly susceptible

553 The accusations of Anglo-Saxon domination of UNESCO were ushered by Julian Huxley, the first Director of UNESCO. See: Ninkovich, *The Diplomacy of Ideas: U.S. Foreign Policy and Cultural Relations, 1938-1950*. p. 140.
554 The Second Session of its General Congress held in November 1947, was to go through the last draft program for UNESCO. See: http://www.unesco.org/education/eduprog/50y/brochure/unintwo/92.htm (Accessed April 13, 2011).
555 Letter, NAR to William Benton, July 31, 1947. Folder 1323, Series L, Box 135, Record Group 4 ,NAR Papers, RAC.
to communist indoctrination.\textsuperscript{557} The rise of “the communist movement in Latin America” was due, not to social conditions, which remain absent from his report, but rather to the receptiveness of the masses to simple forms of propaganda. This was clear in the Soviet approach, which, d’Harnoncourt pointed out, was not of an ideological kind but of simple effortless messages such as the heroic role of USSR in the battle against fascism, and the social advancement of workers and women in the Soviet regime.\textsuperscript{558} The Soviets kept a distance, at least publicly, from “official ideological propaganda,” which reached the region, if at all, mainly through local figures. This, d’Harnoncourt stated, was due because, with few exceptions, Latin Americans “show in their actions a lack of understanding of Soviet ideology, and, what is more important, a lack of party discipline which makes them exceedingly unreliable from the Soviet point of view.”\textsuperscript{559} In all, Latin Americans remained ideologically immature and were viewed as “children” playing at serious politics.\textsuperscript{560} The fraternal rapport established during the war transformed into the paternal relationship of the Cold War.

Within this structure of simple messages and lack of discipline, the only thing that the United States had to do to convert communist sympathizers in Latin America, d’Harnoncourt concluded, was simply to give them “sufficient proof that a Democratic way of life will gain them security and prosperity.”\textsuperscript{561} In this, the exchange program, aimed at an “influential middle class,” as exemplified in Vilanova Artigas’ Guggenheim

\textsuperscript{557} Letter/Report, René d’Harnoncourt to NAR. May 21, 1945. Folder 1325, Series L, Box 135, Record Group 4, NAR Papers, RAC, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{559} Ibid. p. 2.
\textsuperscript{560} The need for discipline in the region is a theme common to politics and aesthetics, as Henry-Russell Hitchcock early on called for stylistic discipline in Brazilian modernism and later in Latin American modernism as a whole.
Fellowship, and overtures towards the acceptance of Latin American culture in the US that is, access and status, would serve as effective counter propaganda in a complex world where children have little understanding of the world of adults. The framing of manual crafts as a stage of modernization and the creation of liberal citizens was part of this approach to a soft culturalist propaganda and indoctrination, and the second prong that accompanied the celebration of high culture. Both ends of the cultural spectrum served as important weapons in developing the “psychological war” against communism. Cultural programs were able to instill curiosity and establish fashionable trends in the masses as well as in intellectual circles. The move to make all things Russian “fashionable,” d’Harnoncourt pointed out, had been a key Soviet strategy of their indoctrination. The clear overture toward style and fashion, of what was in vogue, had deep and complex implications and also inserted the cultural warfare in the language and arena of the unfolding consumer society of the postwar.

Managing a Global Modern Culture: MoMA’s International Program

At the end of the Second World War, the Museum of Modern Art launched a dynamic policy of cultural relations as part of an expansion policy that imagined the museum as a key international player, assuming the leadership of postwar modern culture in the United States. This prompted the creation, in 1952, of the International Program.

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562 D’Harnoncourt placed all his hopes in the growing and influential middle class, “in this group rather than among the small ruling minorities in which we can hope to create active blocks of sympathizers that are badly need to counteract the activities of our antagonists.” Letter/Report, René d’Harnoncourt to NAR. May 21, 1945. Folder 1325, Series L, Box 135, Record Group 4 NAR Papers. p. 14. The question of the middle class, its composition, political affiliations, influence, etc. was a central question in Latin American democracies.

563 “This official propaganda has been effective at least in one way. It has aroused great curiosity in the Soviet Union and made it quite fashionable to be concerned with Russian affairs.” René d’Harnoncourt, “Observations on Propaganda Activities and their Effect on Public Opinion.” May 21, 1945. Folder 1325, Series L, Box 135, Record Group 4, NAR Papers, RAC, p. 2.
This new outlook, as Franc highlights, had its philosophical base in the museum’s war experience its links to the OCIAA, and in d’Harnoncourt’s Foreign Affairs and Manual Industries administrative positions, created during the transitional years of early postwar planning.\(^\text{564}\) The museum’s postwar international projection had its operative mechanism in the expansion of the Department of Circulating Exhibitions, a department that had been haphazardly created in 1932 with the circulation of the influential *Modern Architecture* exhibition, under the title: *International Exhibition of Modern Architecture*. What before was a nationally focused program, defined early on as comprising the United States and Canada, expanded into an international one, reaching every inhabited continent\(^\text{565}\) (Fig. 4.3). Since its inception, the Department of Circulating Exhibitions had engaged in managing and organizing international exchanges, but this was done primarily with Europe. Early on, for example, the department had prepared a registry of modern works of art in the US, which enabled the 1932-33 *American Painting and Sculpture, 1862-1932*, not only to be shown throughout the United States but to also bring Whistler’s “Portrait of the Artists’ Mother” to the United States from the Louvre in Paris.\(^\text{566}\) In its early days, the department would generally reconstitute exhibitions first shown at the museum—like the 1943 *Brazil Builds*—and enable them to circulate in the United States and Canada. With the war and the support of the OCIAA the department extended its services to Latin America.\(^\text{567}\) By the end of the Second World War, the perspective on what was international had clearly changed. It is important then to draw a distinction


\(^{566}\) MoMA and McCray, "Circulating Exhibitions." p. 7.

between the war context and the need in 1952 to define an internationalist approach to circulating exhibitions that required the identification of target areas within an ideologically polarized world. The United States had reached not only economic hegemony; it had also developed an autochthonous art movement—Abstract Expressionism—that proclaimed not only cultural independence from Europe but more importantly, ideological hegemony over democratic artistic culture.\footnote{See: Guilbaut, \textit{How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War.}} In all, the United States had become, as d’Harnoncourt highlighted in his 1945 report to Nelson Rockefeller, a “universal cultural center.”\footnote{Letter/Report, René d’Harnoncourt to NAR. May 21, 1945. Folder 1325, Series L, Box 135, Record Group 4, NAR Papers, RAC, p. 20.} MoMA, and in particular the Rockefeller family members at the museum (specifically Abby Aldrich and Nelson Rockefeller), had been key supporters of the development of American modern art throughout their involvement with the museum.\footnote{These two figures should not be conflated; as Barry Bergdoll has argued, Abby Rockefeller’s support of Colonial Williamsburg presents a particular vision of American Art that does not necessarily coincide with that of his son Nelson. In conversations with Professor Bergdoll, I want to underscore that both, mother and son do come together in their interest in folk culture, including that of Mexico. In 1931 Abby Rockefeller wrote to Francis Paine, who help organize MoMA’s Diego Rivera show, on how she was “very interested in getting early American things for Williamsburg and particularly things that may have come from the West Indies or Mexico, otherwise colonial.” Letter, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller to Francis Paine, June 22, 1931. Folder 88, Box 7, Record Group 2, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Papers, RAC.} By 1946, with the return of Nelson Rockefeller from his experience in Washington, it was clear to him that MoMA had the possibility of exporting American culture to the world. It was in this context that the International Program of the Museum of Modern Art was formed. Understanding the new position of the United States and its cultural institutions, Rockefeller pointed out that

\begin{quote}
The Museum was projected almost overnight into the international field, and as a result, it holds a unique position throughout the world today.
\end{quote}
Looking back to the early years when the Museum was getting underway,
I don't think any of us ever thought it was destined to play such an
important part in international affairs. [...] Its opportunities are
unlimited. 571

The museum expanded the international component of the Department of Circulating
Exhibitions by creating a parallel, yet at times not fully separate, International Program.
Having a single director for both departments institutionalized this overlap. In 1946,
Porter McCray became director of the Department of Circulating Exhibitions, succeeding
Elodie Courter, its first director. McCray trained as an architect at Yale University, where
along with other students, he started a contemporary art society engaging John
McAndrew at MoMA, New York gallery owner Curt Valentin and architect Edward
Durell Stone (among others), to mount shows of modern art and architecture at Yale. He
created a network of friends and collaborators; at Yale he met Henry Dickson McKenna,
husband of Rollie Thorn McKenna who would later travel with Henry-Russell Hitchcock
in Latin America in 1954. 572 There he also came across Wallace K. Harrison, through
whom he met Nelson Rockefeller. In 1941 he went to Washington DC to work at the
OCIAA under Harrison’s cultural programs division. McCray’s first international
assignment was in Guatemala to work on the US Exhibition at the Guatemala National
Fair, which had “a huge section on mural decorations in government buildings.” 573

571 Letter, Nelson Rockefeller to Marshal Field, March 13, 1946. Folder 198, Series 2E, Box 20, Record
Group III, Office of the Messrs. Rockefeller / Cultural Interests, RAC.
It can be found online: http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-porter-mccray-
12974
11).
In 1952, McCray became director of both the Department of Circulating Exhibitions and the newly formed International Program. The circulation of exhibitions required and manifested a network of people and institutions beyond New York City, making MoMA a node in a national and international system of museums, biennials and other cultural institutions. The development the International Program in the 1950s was a clear response to a US Congress at odds with modern culture as a whole and to an Eisenhower administration enmeshed in European reconstruction and pursuing strict fiscal policies. As McCray highlighted to the Junior Council, the disappearance of government sponsorship, “the rigorously controlled economy of the rest of the world” as well as the cancellation of “the Dollar credit … in the realm of cultural exchange” were the principal hurdles to surmount in the development of the museum’s international projection.\(^{574}\) The museum pursued external funding to sustain its international program, a key source being the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF).\(^{575}\) McCray put together a comprehensive granting proposal that dovetailed with RBF interests; key was the RBF stipulation that the International Program had a continued life without RBF monies. The RBF grant was awarded on June 25, 1952, and starting on July 1 of that year, gave $125,000 a year for five years for the development of an International Exhibitions Program. The Fund also granted MoMA $50,000 per year for three years for

\(^{574}\) Porter McCray, “Remarks before the Junior Council, December 9, 1952.” Folder Museum of Modern Art 3, Box 8, Porter McCray Papers, Archives of American Art (AAA), p. 2. The war had been a boom for international cultural exchanges. The main supporters of MoMA’s international activities during the war were the OCIAA and the Office of War Information. Porter McCray, “Remarks before the Junior Council, December 9, 1952.” p. 2.

\(^{575}\) The Museum also approached the Ford Foundation. See: Letter, MoMA to Henry Ford II, November 11, 1950. Cross Reference Sheet in Folder 1572, Box 156. Series L, Record Group 4, NAR Papers, RAC. The Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF) was central in the formation of MoMA’s International Program. The involvement of the Rockefeller family in MoMA did not guarantee immediate nor unlimited funds form the RBF. The Fund had extensive commitments, and MoMA—although highly regarded by the RBF—was one of many institutions the RBF supported.
development research for a television program. The expansion of MoMA’s international commitment was accompanied by a preoccupation with mass media in the United States. Although these two programs were independent, the incipient engagement with mass communication techniques and ideas was part of the museum’s overall cultural programming.576

The $625,000 awarded to the International Program would finance a variety of projects organized in five sections or activities:

1. US participation in major art biennials
2. Museum exhibitions sent abroad under the International Program
3. Sending works of art to international exhibitions
4. Preparing exhibitions on other areas of the world to be presented in the US
5. Exhibitions prepared for the US Government for circulation by its agencies577

The grant proposal underscored the intent to “present in foreign countries and the United States the most significant achievements of the art of our time.”578 One can appreciate, however, that four out of five directives involved exporting US culture to the world, and only one was aimed at presenting in the United States the “achievements of other areas of the world.” It is significant that, prior to 1957, this being the end of the RBF grant, the Department of Architecture and Design produced most of the exhibitions under category four, and that with the exception of Textiles and Ornemental Arts of India (1955), all

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576 Letter, Rene d'Harnoncourt to Rockefeller Brothers Fund, June 12, 1952. For a detailed report on the TV research program see: Letter, Rene d'Harnoncourt to Dana Creel (RBF) Oct 6, 1954. Folder 3438, Box 573, Record Group 3, RBF, RAC. Also: Letter, John D Rockefeller III to Rene d'Harnoncourt, June 25, 1952, Folder 3437, Box 573, Record Group 3, RBF, RAC.
578 “A Proposed Five-Year Program of International Exhibitions,” June 12, 1952. Folder 3437, Box 573, Record Group 3, RBF, RAC.
were in the area of architecture, these being: *The Architecture of Japan* (1953), *The Modern Architecture of Italy: Architecture and Design* (1954) and *Latin American Architecture since 1945* (1955). This reversal of the cultural flow, from exporting US culture to importing world architecture, was significant for a period bent on defining an “American” architecture culture as distinctly conditioned by postwar technological advancements, construction techniques and socio cultural factors as in for example, curtain walls and the suburban home. The celebration of foreign architectural examples by MoMA’s International Program as a key cultural import to the United States in a period when the contours of “American” postwar modern architecture were being redefined was a significant cultural strategy. Hitchcock’s 1951 reassessment of the International Style published in *Architectural Record* loosened its earlier restrictive character by highlighting an “American” architecture “that will grow more diverse in kind.”

This receptive character of US architecture culture manifested a modern architecture that had ceased to be monolithic, as Hitchcock pointed out two years later in the exhibition *Built in the USA: Postwar Architecture*.

The International Program’s reception efforts have to be considered alongside *Built in the USA: Postwar Architecture* (January 20-March 15, 1953), a key MoMA architectural exhibition that, although prepared primarily for US consumption, circulated

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extensively outside the United States. Organized by Hitchcock and Arthur Drexler, with the collaboration of Philip Johnson, it was a reply to the earlier 1944 *Built in the US since 1932* (May 24-October 22, 1944) organized by Elizabeth Mock and Philip Goodwin—the latter being a reassessment of the 1932 *Modern Architecture* show. As a re-evaluation of the International Style and the first major architecture exhibition after *Brazil Builds, Built in the US* attempted to redraw the contours of postwar architecture in the United States. Unlike its 1944 homologous predecessor, the 1953 *Built in the USA* was sent to tour Latin America in its Portuguese and Spanish versions by the International Program in the 1950s. Its first international debut was at the 1953 II São Paulo Biennial. It was also sent to Rio de Janeiro on the opening of the new US Embassy. With help of the State Department and the United States Information Agency (USIA), the International Program also sent the exhibit behind the Iron Curtain, after being first tested in Latin America.\(^{581}\)

**An embattled modern culture**

MoMA’s international projection, which Rockefeller realized was clear by 1946, responded to the evolving attitude in the US government towards modern culture. MoMA’s international projection was concurrent with the concentration and bureaucratization of US government cultural programs at the State Department. This centralization marked a shift from the management of cultural relations to the administration of information. The incorporation of the OCIAA within the State Department’s Interim Information Services—which saw the merger of Rockefeller’s programs with those of the Office of War Information (OWI)—were clear signs that a

\(^{581}\) I would like to thank Peter Minosh and Hunter Palmer for sharing their paper on the research produced for Barry Bergdoll on this exhibition.
“cultural approach” to the management of US cultural programs abroad would be seriously undermined.\footnote{582} This rearticulation of cultural relations into information management radically changed the notion of culture. The OCIAA had championed an anthropological definition of culture that highlighted “the way of life of a people” thus allowing for the possibility of a Latin American culture that in its difference contributed to Western culture as a whole. The new management of information, on the other hand, revealed culture as a message within a preponderantly one-way communication system determined by a greater efficiency of the message within a bureaucratic state apparatus and Cold War ideology. As Nicolas J. Cull argues in his study of USIA, the creation of the agency was a complex process that started with President Truman’s dissolution of the OWI and the OCIAA and their folding into the State Department until the final creation of an independent agency by President Eisenhower in 1953. For Cull, the fundamental philosophical structure of the USIA was imprinted under Truman’s 1950s coordinated overseas propaganda drive known as the “Campaign of Truth,” a campaign clearly modeled to counter Soviet propaganda.\footnote{583} \textit{Reconocimiento}, the need to know and to acknowledge the achievements of Latin America, undergirded the OCIAA’s engagement with the region and conditioned its particular version of propaganda. By the late 1940s, the common ground that had allowed the OCIAA, the State Department and MoMA to meet within a bi-polar world of democracy and fascism during the war had radically shifted, revealing deep and irreconcilable historical fault lines within the new bi-polar construct of the Cold War.

\footnote{582} Ninkovich, \textit{The Diplomacy of Ideas: U.S. Foreign Policy and Cultural Relations, 1938-1950}. p. 117. 
At the same time in the United States, government management of information was attacked on several fronts by the conservative backlash that overtook US politics after the war. First were the accusations of unfair government competition with the private sector; not far behind were the accusations of a government compromised by communist infiltration. The US Congress appropriations committee, for example, saw the State Department’s efforts to manage postwar information under its Information and Cultural Program as a “radical departure in the methods of conducting [US] foreign relations” that needed “the approval of the people through their representatives in the Congress,” because such information services made the government engage in the “news business,” unfairly competing against private enterprises.\(^{584}\) Congress’ defense of liberal economics aimed at ending New Deal policies and internationalist cultural programs that weakened “American values.” The growing fear of communist infiltration, infection and contagion, made the arts and the museum a central stage of the cultural Cold War. As early as 1946, US House Representative (Rep.) George Dondero had identified the Museum of Modern Art as a site of communist infiltration.\(^{585}\) Undergirding the virulent attacks and growing hysteria over communism in the late 1940s and early 1950s, was a conservative imaginary buttressed by traditionalist aesthetics that took aim at a cosmopolitan urban culture and struck at the core values of modernism and its internationalist vocation. Dondero, as well as other conservative ideologues’ attack on modern art was predicated on values established by “American precedents and American

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principles,” which coalesced in their opposition to “modern art.” Although these “American values” rarely manifested outside loose rhetorical claims, they did have a key center of gravity: the average man. An ideological slant in which the average American served as the template for a common international cultural denominator, articulated an aesthetic sphere that, albeit ill-defined, was in clear opposition to elite cultural sites such as MoMA. The average man became the lightning rod that galvanized opposition against any remnant of New Deal cultural management in the postwar. “If we are going abroad to impress people,” claimed House Representative Karl Stefan, “we should try to impress the average individual…” What ignited the controversy was the State Department’s 1946 *Advancing American Art* exhibition, organized by Assistant Secretary of State William Benton, a modern art collector and personal friend of Nelson Rockefeller.

With this exhibition, modern art became a source of concern in government circles, and, in 1947, forced George Marshall, Secretary of State under Harry S. Truman, to cancel the Department’s program of circulating exhibits altogether. As Helen Franc points out, MoMA’s development of its International Program was a clear response to modern art’s embattled condition in US government agencies. As Barr noted, pressure from Congress had compromised US cultural prestige abroad. But at the same time it had articulated a key “American principal” to be defended, one in which MoMA excelled: the private management of culture. It was key to find the right medium for modern culture, one in which the museum and the US government could coincide; that

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587 Ibid. p. 5187.
590 Memo, Alfred Barr to René d’Harnoncourt. Subject: American Cultural Prestige Abroad. December 1, 1950. Folder 1227, Series L, Box 125, Record Group 4, NAR Papers, RAC.
medium was architecture. Many authors have tackled the story of the State Department’s engagement with modern art and its unfolding themes, but few have examined the role played by architecture in this period, and less how, if at all, Latin America emerged in this debate. The cultural-political context of modern art went beyond the thematic content of images and conservative ideologues’ attack on abstraction, which, as Barr highlighted, put the likes of Dondero in close proximity to Socialist Realism.

Although modern art was the focus of the US Congress’ attacks, modern architecture, as later presented in Henry Luce’s *Time* magazine, could also carry the “sinister aspect” of an undemocratic interventionist state. This point was carried through in *Time*’s 1953 coverage of the newly inaugurated UNAM Campus in Mexico City (Fig. 4.4). The Mexican government’s continued support of muralism, present in the 1952 University City, recalled New Deal art policies, programs and controversies that, for conservatives in the US Congress, were clearly directed by communists. *Time*, however, was not concerned with the actual imagery, not falling prey to the simplistic “guilt by association” formula used by Dondero and later by McCarthy. It published full-color images of the campus; even of Siqueiros’ overtly political mural, appropriately morphed by impressing its US readers that it “shows students returning to nation the fruits of their studies” (Fig. 4.5). Latin America was not to be made a central stage of the ideological Cold War battle. For the popular US magazine, the problem was neither the pictorial political message carried by the architecture, not the communistic background of its

mural artists (happily forgotten), instead the overall architectural and urban project itself. The problem with the University City was that it enabled the conversion of what had been a part-time faculty composed of private individuals—lawyers, physicians and businesses—into a “full-time faculty.” The physical displacement of a university that before operated in the city’s “courts, hospitals and board rooms” and was now concentrated on a campus, required the creation of an educational bureaucracy. The cost of education, Time warned its readers, would certainly rise.\textsuperscript{594} Behind the celebrated integration of the arts and modernist architecture, behind “the happy blending of Indian, Spanish Colonial and modern cultures,” hid big government. This was the New Deal at its worst, and a clear sign that Latin America remained behind the times, resisting a US-led postwar world. If the region was not the center-stage of the ideological battle in the early postwar, it was, nonetheless an integral part of the US economic imaginary of this period, and of a continuing battle against a protectionist state.

A month later, another Henry Luce publication, \textit{Architectural Forum}, delineated the correct relationship between “American Principles” such as democracy, and modern architecture, as it juxtaposed US modern embassies against the “pretentious classicism of official Soviet architecture abroad”\textsuperscript{595} (Fig. 4.6) The State Department’s use of the best US architects was “a good deal more important than exporting tractors” \textit{Forum} argued in its March 1953 issue, since, “No country can exercise political leadership without exercising a degree of cultural leadership as well.”\textsuperscript{596} \textit{Forum} appeared to sanction not only US government cultural management but also the government’s use of modern culture itself to advance American values. Rather than elaborating on the notion of

\textsuperscript{594} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{596} Ibid.
democracy as embodied in stylistic or material principles, for example, the transparency of modern buildings as a sign of democracy, or in the principles of abstraction as the symbolic language of democracy itself, *Forum’s* article championed another key American value: big business. US government architecture was but the first wave in a larger “diplomatic” endeavor by US corporations building abroad. The United States government initiative was but the beginnings of an “export drive,” as *Readers Digest*, Ford, US oil and steel companies followed “our best architecture.” Modern architecture was a good ambassador for US business, as its abstract technological nature helped internationalized national markets. As the language of an international postwar modern architecture was in the hands of US architectural centers in clear coincidence with its economic centers, the government’s use of modern architecture amounted to the export of US big business. But the article went beyond this loose overlap. US government-sponsored modern architecture engaged sound economic practices, by making foreign governments pay their war debts to the United States. Cases in point were Harrison & Abramovitz’ US Embassies in Havana, and Rio de Janeiro, the first “thoroughly modern embassies” built by the State Department.\(^597\) Both used its finishing material, Italian travertine marble, as part of the Italian government debt cancellation to the United States. As Jane C. Loeffler points out, the use of European debts to provide materials for these embassies went beyond finishing materials and covered from concrete to interior movable partitions.\(^598\) Modern US postwar architecture could be mobilized to counter communism by opening international markets and undermining the interventionist state


in Latin America. The diversity that Hitchcock saw in his 1951 reassessment of the
International Style, then, was undergirded by an expanding economic and financial
network that made Italian travertine available to Cuba and Brazil. If in the United States
the International Style had given way to heterogeneous forces, materials and techniques
within an international market, in Latin America the regionalist defense of local
expression had to cede to standardization efforts of that same market. Harrison &
Abramovitz’ embassies fitted with heat-resistant glass eliminated any need for the brise-
soleil in Rio and Havana.

*Forum*’s article highlighted the political and economic sphere of US postwar
modern architecture; a subject addressed later that same year in MoMA’s *Architecture for
the State Department* (October 6-November 22, 1953). Modern architecture offered a
possible point of contact between the US government initiatives and the museum. In
1956, Lloyd Goodrich, Chair of the Committee on Government and Art, commented to
Theodore Streibert, Director of the United States Information Agency, when considering
the late 1940s entanglements of the State Department’s cultural programs, how there “are
of course fields in which such political considerations would not arise: architecture,
design, crafts, historical exhibitions.”599 The International Program’s activity of
importing architecture must be analyzed against this cultural and political context.
Architecture would help create a depoliticized modern culture under the banner of
technical expertise and private enterprise that is, under the US ideal of liberal democracy
of the 1950s.

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599 Letter, Lloyd Goodrich to Theodore Streibert, July 9 1956. Folder 2701, Box 270, Series L, Record
Group 4, NAR Papers, RAC. Goodrich forwarded this letter to Rockefeller. On the USIA see: Cull, *The
Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945-
1989.*
The museum as a space of liberty

One of the strong points of McCray’s grant proposal to RBF was MoMA’s commitment to institutionalize its International Program as independent from the museum. It was clear that a US government, at odds with modern art as a whole and pursuant of strict fiscal policies, would not react positively—at least through the State Department—to the museum’s cultural policy. As Franc presents, two women, Mrs. John D. Rockefeller III (Blanchette Rockefeller) and Elizabeth Bliss Parkinson, took the lead to create “an auxiliary organization of community leaders throughout the United States and abroad.” With the creation of the International Council, a decisive step was taken in the consolidation of the private management of US culture abroad. The purpose of the Council was "to enlist the aid of community leaders from all parts of the United States in promoting cultural exchange," and to assume financial responsibility for the International Program. The intent was for the Council to acquire both a national and international character, superseding its original local organization, and effectively separating itself and the International Program from the museum, acquiring legal and financial independence.

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600 Franc, “The Early Years of the International Program and Council.” p. 120. The Council had important non-New York members, such as the John de Menil, who, in Houston, Texas, had assembled a considerable modern art collection; San Francisco philanthropist, Walter A. Haas (owner of Levi-Strauss & Co.) and Cleveland philanthropist Leonard Hanna, helped counter a New York and Connecticut centric International Council. Influence was determined by the level of involvement of each member.

601 Report on the Activities of Museum of Modern Art's International Exhibition Program, Press Release MoMA No. 46, May 3, 1956. Folder 3439, Box 573, Record Group 3, RBF, RAC. The relationship was finalized in December 13, 1956 with the signing of a three-party agreement between the Museum of Modern Art, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and the International Council of the Museum of Modern Art Inc. Under this agreement the International Council would gradually assume full funding of International Exhibitions Program. The RBF would contribute and additional $460,000 over next 5 years on tapering basis, after which the International Council would be responsible for all funding. Under the stipulations of the agreement, the International Council was to become a "membership corporation under the laws of the state of New York. “Agreement Among the Museum of Modern Art, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and The International Council at The Museum of Modern Art, Inc.,” December 13, 1956. Folder 3441, Box 573, Record Group 3, RBF, RAC.
by 1962. 602 This tension between the national and international character of the Council is highlighted by Franc in her study of the International Program, but remains unresolved, even at the local, New York level. In the end, the Council remained controlled by MoMA trustees and could not break its locally determined internationalism. 603 Nonetheless, the museum remained an important stage in the performance of internationalism and its connection to US democratic values. The Council agreed to continue the projects initiated by the International Program in 1952, but also “to strike a balance between exhibitions planned to represent the United States at international exhibitions, other major shows intended for larger centers, and those intended for smaller communities.” 604 The Council’s aim was to reach deeper into US society.

Chaired by Blanchette Rockefeller, and composed of some of MoMA’s most influential trustees, the International Council thought to promote a parallel between artistic creation and political freedom, under bourgeois democratic capitalism. It sought guidance by approaching art directors such as John Rothenstein, director of the Tate Gallery in London, and mass media industrialists such as New York publisher Alex L. Hillman. It supported publications and awarded travel grants to art historians such as Meyer Shapiro and artists such as Ben Shahn. 605 It also sought the guidance of US

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602 As stated in the agreement: "The Council will cooperate with museums throughout the Unites States in order to achieve a truly national status," The “Council may at any time change its name to eliminate there from reference to 'The Museum of Modern Art,' or in any other manner." Agreement Among the Museum of Modern Art, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and The International Council at The Museum of Modern Art, Inc., p. 5. Dec 13, 1956. Folder 3441, Box 573, Record Group 3, RBF, RAC.

603 Franc, “The Early Years of the International Program and Council.” pp. 120-23.

604 Projects accepted by the International Council at the Museum of Modern Art for the Fiscal Year July 1, 1957 – June 30, 1958. Folder 3441, Box 573, Record Group 3, RBF, RAC.

political intellectuals such as George F. Kennan, the key ideologue of the early Cold War and former US ambassador to the Soviet Union. Kennan addressed the International Council in May 1955 on the theme of international art exchanges. He highlighted the need to engage in cultural exchanges not only to correct the negative image of the United States abroad but, more importantly, for the “enrichment of our [own] national spirit.” In the United States, popular and commercial culture as well as standardization, threatened “divergencies in cultural stimuli and outlook,” creating a monotonous and homogenous culture. Geography did not help. The continental nature of the country, Kennan warned, “the great interior spaces,” which incidentally also applied to the USSR, “allowed the narcotic effect of contemporary commercial culture.” Foreign cultural values, which he identified as universal values, could counter the negative effects of geography. Universal artistic values, values which “even in the blackest of moments of cultural isolation”—those of Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia—transcended politics. Only the artist, no matter his own personal political affiliation, could manifest such “symbolic value in international life” through a work of art. Even totalitarian countries, Kennan argued, recognized the power of the artist to create a “credible civilization.” In the Soviet Union, he pointed out, despite all the terror and brutality, “it has really been the politicians who were the supplicants, and the people who wield the pen and the brush whose influence was courted.”

The museum space as a key stage for the artist was critical for democratic culture.

Kennan’s celebration of the artist as a fulcrum of political influence and ambassador of civilization itself responded to the shockwaves of Dondero and McCarthy.

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RAC. Kennan’s address, “International Exchange in the Arts,” was later published. See: Report on the Activities of Museum of Modern Art 1952-56. Folder 3439, Box 573, Record Group 3, RBF, RAC.

to which he alluded obliquely in his address to the Council. This was not the first time that a key personality in US politics had directly addressed the museum. A year earlier, within the celebration festivities of MoMA’s 25th Anniversary, President Eisenhower highlighted in a brief letter that the museum was a key space in the performance of freedom and reminded Americans “that freedom of the arts, is a basic freedom, one of the pillars of liberty in our lands.”\(^{607}\) The specter of Dondero’s 1940s attacks and McCarthy’s ongoing Congressional hearings were clearly present. Less so, if at all, was a key and defining moment of US policy towards Latin America, the 1954 CIA orchestrated invasion of Guatemala.\(^ {608}\) If as Kennan highlighted to the Council, mass culture, standardization and modern technology were the negative, yet very visible, exports of US culture to the world, intervention was its hidden counterpart.

The museum as a space where freedom was refracted as artistic liberty and the governmental sphere where freedom was manipulated as an ideological tool overlapped at MoMA. The space of the museum as a space of freedom—one that revealed the private workings of US democracy—was a key element of liberty as it took form in “American” social particularities and, as such, it was recruited during the Cold War to perform a political adjustment of the situation in Guatemala by changing general perception. This became clear in 1955, when the “president” of Guatemala, Carlos Castillo Armas and his wife visited New York, and MoMA opened its welcoming arms. A year before, Colonel Castillo Armas had deposed the democratically elected president Jacobo Arbenz with the


help of the CIA. As Special Assistant to President Eisenhower, sitting on the National Security Council and head of the Planning Coordination Group, Nelson Rockefeller underscored the overwhelming negative effects of the coup; how it had compromised the image of the United States as a progressive democracy-defending nation. Steps needed to be taken to counteract this harmful image; a “psychological action program” was suggested. A hero’s tour of the United States was in order. One can turn to *The New York Times* to understand how this psychological action program worked to craft a new image for Castillo Armas (Fig. 4.7): major New York City institutions such as Columbia University and Fordham University eulogized Castillo Armas as a defender of “human dignity,” granting him honorary degrees. *The New York Times* translated and carried Castillo Armas’ address to the United Nations in full; the Pan-American Society and the City of New York offered a hero’s parade to this anti-communist warrior; *Time* magazine carried the eulogizing to a national and international stage. This psychological action program included a visit to MoMA. Madame Castillo Armas, however, cancelled her visit to the museum, due to her husband’s sudden illness leaving no trail of eulogies.

One can only speculate on how the museum intended to use its ample cultural weaponry

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609 The idea of intervention had been considered as early as 1953. See: Memo, CD Jackson to President Eisenhower, April 2, 1953. Folder 4, Box 1, Sub Series 9, Recently Declassified, Series O, Record Group 4, NAR Papers, RAC.
610 Rockefeller returned to Washington DC in 1953 as the Chairman of Eisenhower’s Advisory Committee on Government Organization. He became Under-Secretary of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare in April 1953, an appointment he resign in December 1954; afterwards he became special assistant to the President on Cold War Strategy.
611 See: Memorandum for the Operations Coordinating Board, By JW Lydman: EMU. Subject: Some Psychological Factors in the Guatemalan Situation, SECRET, DRAFT. September 30, 1955. Folder 91, Box 3, Sub Series 9, Recently Declassified, Series O, Record Group 4, NAR Papers, RAC.
613 Memo, James White to Mrs Mellon, Nov 3, 1955. Rene D’Harnoncourt Papers, III.19, MoMA Archives, NY. The note refers solely to Mdme Castillo Armas’ last minute cancellation. There is only this brief note at the MoMA Archives, any other information appears to have been vetted.
to underscore the values of a modern democratic society, values that *The New York Times* mobilized around Castillo Armas by highlighting his promise to restore constitutional rule, or how his wife Odilia was also in New York “to gain new ideas…to apply in social welfare and education.” Moments like these reveal the complexities of the Cold War and more important, the overlaps of political and cultural spheres in the efforts to articulate images of democratic modernity. Castillo Armas’ sudden illness hid MoMA’s participation in the psychological warfare waged by the US government and prevented a possible link with the region’s modern architecture since Castillo Armas’ visit to New York in early November would have coincided with *Latin American Architecture since 1945*.

**Latin America: Unfamiliar Territory**

The early postwar world unfolded a new geography that re-established the traditional link between Europe and the United States, and engulfed Latin America within a new economic imaginary (and policies) aimed at developing private markets. In 1947, Nelson Rockefeller created the International Basic Economy Corporation (IBEC), a private enterprise with the philanthropic charge to help raise living standards in Latin America. With this initiative, social responsibility was entrusted to business investors in an attempt, Rockefeller pointed out, to prove “that financial returns can be realized [in less profitable areas] by employing scientific, modern technical methods.” At the same

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time in this period, the US cultural sphere was highly politicized. The 1946-47 US Congress’ attacks on modern art, fueled by the “lasting operations of the House Un-American Activities Committee” revealed a changing cultural landscape that demanded a reassessment of the museum’s direction.617 “Where are we going?” Nelson Rockefeller and Alfred Barr asked themselves over lunch on October 1947, a consideration that prompted Barr to write an overview of the museum, its problems and its future. Beyond administrative questions with regard to consolidation and the elimination of departments—an evaluation in which Barr pointed out the Department of Architecture as “immensely influential in the course of architecture in this country and in the international exchange of ideas and achievements”618—Barr’s overview marked an important moment in the museum’s changing view and assessment of Latin America at a moment when the region’s modern architecture was reaching a heightened international visibility. Although MoMA was still a preferential site in the performance of a Latin American culture it was an unstable site in which to champion such culture. As Barr underscored in 1947,

Our international program must maintain our Latin-American relations but should concentrate at the present time upon western Europe. Eventually if we are to have peace we must come to some cultural understanding and tolerance of the USSR.619

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619 Ibid.
The idea of cohabitation with the Soviet Union, predicated on the notion of tolerance, was part of early postwar relations with the USSR and a key element of Truman’s policy of containment. As Scott Lucas and Kaeten Mistry argue, George Kennan’s significant contribution to the early Cold War “lay not in the development of US strategy but in the pursuit of operations in the absence of one.” This meant that behind Kennan’s idea of containment was “the integration of every possible method,” even tolerance, under the rubric of “psychological warfare.”

The sense of collaboration and tolerance, however, dissipated quickly, as in 1950 the Korean War heated up the Cold War and fueled the ascendancy of conservatism under Eisenhower and the bleak bi-polar world of his Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, who revived the policy of intervention in Latin America. The world of reconstruction, cooperation and peaceful cohabitation turned into one of competition and ideological warfare. This world required a clear definition of the scope and aims of the museum, and in this context the International Program was being forged as an autonomous branch of MoMA. In this world of ideological warfare the cultural prestige of the United States became paramount and a central concern for Barr. As he communicated to d’Harnoncourt in 1950:

Since the end of World War II Americans have just begun to realize at what a disadvantage we are in competing with the British and French, not to mention the Russians, on the cultural front. The British and the French, and even the Belgians, have beaten us hands down because they take the problem so seriously. The Russians, except for music, have little to export but they have been extremely effective in their attacks on American

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culture, attacks which we have done little to counteract.  

It is important to note that, for Barr, these shortcomings “abroad” were in Europe, not in Latin America. That Europe was perceived in the early 1950s as the main stage of cultural competition and warfare, as the key site of the cultural Cold War displacing Latin America, is no surprise. This paralleled political imaginaries that saw Latin America as a secondary Cold War stage at best, if at all. The 1948 fall of Czechoslovakia, the Italian Election crisis, the Berlin Airlift crisis; the 1949 fall of China, and the developing crisis in Iran, which provoked US covert intervention in 1953, clearly displaced US concerns away from Latin America. Barr’s comments revealed the overlap between political and cultural initiatives and articulated a clear European stage for the actions of a soon to be created International Program. It also made clear that the cultural prestige of the United States was to be played out, above all, in Europe. At the same time, however, the use of Latin America as a testing ground to gage public reaction as in the case of the 1953 Built in the USA integrated the region into this central stage of the cultural Cold War. Furthermore, new global pressures, the 1955 Asia-Africa or Bandung Conference that initiated the Non-Aligned Movement, for example, would complicate the performance of US cultural prestige and challenge the primacy of the European stage and articulated a more complex scenario. It is not sufficient then to simply locate Latin America in the backstage of the early cultural and global Cold War.

Two years after Barr’s comments on the deterioration of US cultural prestige, McCray, commenting on the formation of the International Program, articulated a surprising view of Latin America. For McCray, it was not that the region was a secured

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stage in the cultural battle of the period as a testing ground of US culture abroad, as it clearly was, but rather that, as he highlighted to MoMA’s Junior Council in 1952, Latin America had become “unfamiliar.” It is difficult to unravel what exactly McCray meant by “unfamiliar;” was this the same anxiety that guided the museum’s endeavor on Brazil Builds, or had the growing anti-US sentiment that d’Harnoncourt had identified in 1945 intensified? The generalized impression in Latin America during this period was that the United States had abandoned the region. Had this situation rarified Latin America to US interests? It is important to highlight that McCray’s statements came less than two years after MoMA had established a formal relationship with the Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo, headed by industrialist Francisco Matarazzo Sobrinho and organizer of the most important art biennial in the region. Since the early 1950s, US corporations such as ALCOA, PPG, Dunham Heating Systems, Monsanto, National Gypsum Company, Dupont, Raymond Concert, Sloan Valve Company, Schalge Lock Systems, etc. used images of buildings built in Latin America by US and local architects to promote their products in US architectural journals such as Forum, Record and Progressive Architecture (Fig. 4.8; 4.9; 4.10; 4.11). Although such practice concentrated primarily in the traditional “back yard” of the United States—the Caribbean, Central America and Mexico—these ads, from aluminum panels to toilet flushing valves, constructed a clear and recognizable image of a widespread dominant architectural postwar modernity that embraced the region. “As in so many other places in the world,” AETNA Steel, proudly

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stated, was “In South America too”⁶²⁵ (Fig. 4.12). For US business, Latin America was not unfamiliar. Was McCray’s unfamiliar terrain a product of the region’s familiarity with US corporate business and its architecture? More importantly, how could the region be “unfamiliar” when its architecture was being widely published in the United States and Europe?

By the early 1950s, the influence of Brazil Builds was in full swing. Architectural journals published article after article on the region’s architecture. This exerted a claim on a modern architecture that MoMA had introduced to Western architectural culture. Competing sites in the production of architectural cultural forms challenged MoMA’s centrality and the hegemony of modern architectural culture in the United States; so was the museum as the key site in the articulation of the correct image of Latin American architecture and, perhaps more important, of postwar architecture as a whole. MoMA’s 1943 celebration of Brazilian modernism had opened the possibility of a “third way” modernism. In this sense, Latin American architecture, as well as postwar modernism, had indeed become completely “unfamiliar.”

⁶²⁵ See: Architectural Forum, July 1956, p. 233. I would like to thank Mabel Díaz who developed this theme for her final research presentation in my seminar on Latin American architecture at the City College of New York in 2010.
Chapter 5

Architectural Infections: the Latin ethos in the United States

The diverse and complex forces molding US postwar architectural culture developed within a resurgence of regionalism as a local adaptation of metropolitan modernism that recalled “American” agrarian-republican themes of an integrated organic local culture amidst a growing domestic cultural and economic imperialism centered in New York. As Lewis Mumford stressed, the task at hand was “to decentralize power in all its manifestations and to build up balanced personalities.” Architects had to respond to the “one-sided specialization that had disintegrated the human personality, and [to] a pursuit of power and material wealth that has crippled Western man’s capacity for life-fulfillment.”

The Architectural Forum’s September 1947 issue on “Seven Post War Houses” demonstrated that regionalist concerns that unfolded climatic as well as stylistic questions had penetrated the US home (Fig. 5.1). Dividing the United States into seven regions (Northwest, Southeast, Northeast, Southwest, Middle Atlantic Region, Midwest, and Pacific Coast), Forum highlighted how local architects were able to produce clear regional identities within a flexible modern idiom.

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628 "Seven Postwar Houses," Architectural Forum 87, September (1947). The article illustrated a modern house for each region, highlighting specific aspects of US postwar architectural culture: diversity of materials and constructions methods, comfort and restraint, technological advancement, and adaptation to climate and topography. All houses were single-family homes in small cities like Sarasota, Florida, or Weston, Massachusetts, except for one in Los Angeles, then, still a medium-sized city.
The international attention to modernism in Brazil had fueled the regionalist imagination. US architects were interested in seeing how “transplanted European forms [and] alien concepts not yet fully assimilated into the new environment” were developing into a “genuinely exciting architecture” across Latin America.\(^{629}\) In US journals, Brazilian architects were celebrated for their “organic continuity” with tradition and the environment, exhibiting a “cultural maturity” beyond their actual “technological wealth.” In other countries such as Argentina, US architects could find works “highly reminiscent of a residential idiom [in wood and stone] now current in the United States.” Making patent general trends that brought together North and South American architectural ideas and projects, US architecture journals confronted “North Americans, smug in their technological wealth” for whom the region’s architecture should be “especially interesting.” To these and other US architects *Architectural Forum* posited a critical question: “How does it happen that a ‘backward’ country [like Brazil] can suddenly produce so vibrant and up-to-date an architecture?”\(^{630}\)

The tensions between the province and the metropolis, the regional and the international, the local and the national in the United States had their parallel in the international postwar political spectrum. Even in an international body like the United Nations, regional unification crept in as the United States and the Soviet Union attempted to construct spheres of influence outside United Nations jurisdiction. Latin America, as a cohesive regional block, played a key role in this emerging postwar world image. As Samuel Bleecker highlights, the hegemony of the United States over the United Nations organization during the early years of its formation and workings depended on a Latin


American coalition, one assembled by Nelson Rockefeller to counter Soviet dominance over the international body. The creation of regional alliances outside the sphere of UN Security Council intervention—the acceptance of the 1947 Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance also known as the Rio Pact—which had been delineate in the 1945 Mexico City Inter-American Conference (the Chapultepec Accord)—set the foundation for a Cold War world of regional coalitions such as NATO (1949), SEATO (1954), the Warsaw Pact (1955), and the European Common Market (1958), which operated outside UN jurisdiction and interference.\(^631\) Regionalism was not simply a matter of a domestic living scale that offered a retreat into coziness and domesticity; it also played an important role in the macro organization of the early postwar world. This geopolitical world helped consolidate the idea of Latin America as a cultural and political region.

Latin America as an identifiable region played an important role in US postwar architecture culture. Examinations of the question of regionalism in Latin American architecture have traditional focused on the notion of identity as the development of an appropriate/local response or style to international modernism through adaptive and reinterpretative strategies that recuperate local perspectives, materials and traditions within a modern world, producing a synthesis between tradition and modernity, between the local and the universal. The Mexican Luis Barragán remains the most celebrated figure of this synthetic regional modernism.\(^632\) This chapter departs significantly from this analytical frame for, although productive in other ways, it contains the problem of regionalism within hermetic geo-cultural areas eliminating the borderlands and the


\(^{632}\) As is well known Kenneth Frampton was key in the appraisal of this synthetic regional modernism. See: Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*, World of Art (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), especially Chapter 5: Critical Regionalism: modern architecture and cultural identity.
dynamic flow of images and ideas that characterized the 1940s and 1950s. This chapter argues that the vast circulation of images and the production of articles on the region’s architecture helped define regionalism in the United States by offering not only clear architectural examples but also the figure of a humanist architect.

Latin American architectural modernism continues to be usefully examined within the synthesis of the arts movement. As Barry Bergdoll argues, the region’s modern architecture helped MoMA assess the postwar development of the International style within the heated debates over pictorial abstraction in the United States and as part of the international discussion around the idea of the synthesis of the arts. The idea of Latin American modernism as a type of postwar Gesamtkunstwerk reveals the space of the art museum and its elite cosmopolitan aesthetic culture. This chapter adds to this scholarship by shifting the field of inquiry to the “American” home, another critical debate happening at the same time, and shows how that the region’s architecture penetrated deep into US architecture culture at the level of the everyday within the debates over taste making and the aesthetic battles that, as Russell Lynes posited in 1947, brought “the highbrow, lowbrow and middlebrow” in intense social confrontation.

MoMA had engaged with Latin American architecture culture since its 1943 Brazil Builds. The newly created Department of Manual Industries and the position of Vice President in Charge of Foreign Affairs both headed by René d’Harnoncourt added new perspectives from which to developed museum strategies for the entire region. It is important to stress that initiatives aimed towards the region helped conceptualize and test

an expanding cultural program that included and helped identify other regions, and that one of these world regions was “America” itself. As Philip Goodwin pointed out in 1945, “the Museum has widened its range as far as Paris, Cairo and Rio de Janeiro; London and Stockholm; Mexico City and Toronto.” Key to this expanded cultural program was “to show the growth of an authentic modern American style, its relationship to the American background and its debt to, as well as its reaction from ‘the International Style’.” As Lefaivre and Tzonis argue, the early postwar period was favorable for the development of an “American” regionalism, albeit the knee-jerk reaction against it present at MoMA; the museum was a contentious site in which to develop a regionalist interpretation of international modernism. The museum’s 1944 *Built in the USA*, developed by Philip Goodwin and Elizabeth Mock (both had worked on *Brazil Builds*) was an auspicious beginning. By 1947, however, the polemic over regionalism in the United States reached a boiling point with Lewis Mumford’s celebration of the San Francisco Bay Region style that provoked an official reaction by MoMA with its 1948 symposium *What is Happening to Modern Architecture?* The resurgence of Philip Johnson in the museum, who curated a show on Mies van der Rohe in 1947 and, in 1949, returned as director of the Department of Architecture and Design marked this turning point.

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Both, champions of regionalist and International Style architecture mobilized examples of modern architecture in Latin America in a cultural battle galvanized in the United States by the expansion of the suburbs and the shifting centrality of architectural production away from cities. In the midst of these debates MoMA’s Department of Architecture and Design engaged the work of Oscar Niemeyer in the United States, within variegated endeavors spanning from the furniture of Charles Eames to experiment in standardization, that aimed, as Goodwin argued, to define an “American” style. MoMA’s 1949 exhibition *From Le Corbusier to Niemeyer: 1929-1949* organized by Philip Johnson for the Department of Architecture and Design and curated by Peter Blake and Ada Louis Huxtable with Henry-Russell Hitchcock as consultant, unfolded the presence of a Latin American ethos in the cultural imaginaries of US postwar architecture culture and articulated a clear shift away from regionalist adaptation in architecture into a synthetic formalism of postwar aesthetic culture.

**Domestic Manipulations**

One of the key cultural strategies of Nelson Rockefeller’s Office of Inter American Affairs had been the development of culture initiatives that incorporated popular US home journals into the war effort. Such popular culture spheres paralleled people-to-people diplomacy that letter campaigns by Garden Clubs throughout the United States, for example, provided. The “highbrow” yet widely read fashion magazine

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639 See: Mies van der Rohe (September 16, 1947-January 25, 1948) organized by Philip Johnson and Architecture in Steel: An Experiment in Standardization organized by Konrad Wachsmann (February 5-March 6, 1946)

640 This mobilization of the ground base of US society continued during the postwar, as the letter-writing campaign to stop communism in Italy during the key 1948 elections exemplified. On the garden clubs in the 1950s see: Kenneth Alan Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 2006). p. 238-39.
*Vogue*, for one, had done much to celebrate Pan American unity, sending its staff to tour the region and producing article after article highlighting mutual understanding, sympathy and friendship in “Americana” issues that literally wove the continent together as a photo montage that merged New York City and Rio de Janeiro demonstrated (Fig. 5.2; Fig. 5.3). Art was mobilized for these purposes; *Vogue* celebrated the artistic independence of painters across the region, who like Candido Portinari, “suddenly tired of following French masters…and developed their manner and inspiration from the history, soil, ethos and mythology of their own lands.”

641 As Wallace K. Harrison had stated, the Cultural Section of the OCIAA, which he headed, closely worked with “women’s magazines…[such as] *Vogue*, *Bazaar*, *Harpers*, *Mademoiselle* and *Town & Country*” to have “American design” influence the region. 642 This cultural engagement, however, worked both ways opening new avenues of exchange.

After the international success of Brazilian modernism, the communication channels created by the OCIAA enabled the independent use of Latin American modernism in the home journal industry. The Latin American ethos crept back into US popular culture. The December 1950 issue of *House Beautiful*, for example, featured Lucio Costa’s apartment building complex in Rio’s Guinle Park (Fig. 5.4). Costa’s architecture was enlisted by Elizabeth Gordon’s *House Beautiful* to “help you improve your living at home.” US readers were told how Brazilians “have learned one thing that we North American have been very slow to grasp: They have discovered the trick of how to live comfortably in hot weather, or how to temper the fierce sun of a tropical

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summer.” This article, part travel piece as well as shopping guide, aimed to educate readers by giving them a clear picture of sun control devices, highlighting the elements of passive sun control: balconies, cross ventilation and sunshades in diverse materials—horizontal or vertical, fixed and mobile. “Nearly all streets in the better residential areas” of Rio, the article stressed, “could serve as a lesson in ways to keep the sun out.”

Although clearly indebted to *Brazil Builds*—it highlighted the Ministry of Education, “a forerunner of the UN Secretariat,” the ABI Building, as well as other new buildings, such as the Roberto Brothers IRB building—the article failed to mention the MoMA exhibition. Like the beautiful tropical butterflies that *House Beautiful* readers “will take home and mount to suit their own décor,” the sun shading devices of Rio would help the “American” house become a home. This article and others—like “Peru is for Pleasure” (1950) and “Vacation in Another World” (Dec. 1949), which painted Mexico as the “perfect escapist’s paradise”—brought Latin America into the US home and its everyday practices.

During the late 1940s and early 1950s (1949-52), Elizabeth Gordon created “House Beautiful’s Climate Control Project.” Through articles and examples in the recurring section titled “Climate Control,” the journal attempted to divulge information, popularize techniques, and educate a general public, consisting primarily of

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643 Peter J.H. McAllister, “Take a Trip to a World of New Design,” *House Beautiful* 92, no. 12 (December) (1950). Peter J.H. McAllister, "Take a Trip to a World of New Design," *House Beautiful* 92, no. 12 (December) (1950). The piece celebrated the Brazilians along exceptionalist lines (“Brazilians are interesting and original because there is no other group like them.”) that resonated with US ideas of individualism and originality. The piece used comparisons and parallels between the United States and Brazil elaborated during the war, by stating, for example that both were settler societies. It also articulated the myth of Brazilian racial democracy. p. 88.

644 Ibid. p. 168.

housewives.\textsuperscript{646} \textit{House Beautiful}'s interest in Latin American architecture clearly fell within this education campaign on passive solar control systems. It also overlapped with one of \textit{Brazil Builds}' key contributions, modern architecture's relation to the past. “If you feel new ideas such as Climate Control always lead to bizarre forms,” a piece on Gulf Coast living stated, “then study this house. See how well it blends the best of past and present” (Fig. 5.5). Featuring a flexible combination of curtains, glass, louvers, and insect screen that “allows you to actually \textit{filter} the weather,” the house incorporated cross ventilation into its design, creating a “handsome, friendly house…Cool to look at and to live in.”\textsuperscript{647} Climate control also “comes naturally to a [150-year-old farm] house” in New Jersey that incorporated vertical blinds to control the glare of the sun (Fig. 5.6).\textsuperscript{648} The legacy of \textit{Brazil Builds} lived on in the popular home journals of the United States at the moment of intense debate over the nature of regional modernism.

The mobilization of the region’s architecture and culture through the pages of popular magazines in the United States went beyond questions of human comfort, technical efficiency, and household economy. The educational campaign launched under \textit{House Beautiful}'s section of “Climate Control” paralleled the debate over the “American” house carried through Gordon’s magazine in other sections such as “Pace-Setter houses,” or through unconcealed nationalist articles, like “What is Truly an American House.”\textsuperscript{649} Through the writings of Mary Roche and Jean Murray Bangs, \textit{House Beautiful} tried to define the “American” home on stylistic and spiritual grounds.

\textsuperscript{646} See for example: Wolfgang Langewiesche, "How to Manipulate Sun and Shade," \textit{House Beautiful} 92, no. 7 (July) (1950).
\textsuperscript{648} "This Modern House Is 150 Years Old," \textit{House Beautiful}, November (1950). p. 240.
For Roche, the “American” style was a style free from exhibitionism and dogmatism. For Bangs, it was a style suited for “American purposes, which are in themselves different from those of other people, just as our living habits are different.” The specificity of an “American” style relied on the identification of other people’s style and ethos. In one article, *House Beautiful* asked (somewhat less rhetorically): “How does the American Style differ from European or Asiatic or Latin-American Styles?” With this, Gordon’s journal unwittingly went against the articulation of a differentiated regional culture champion through climatic adaptation and the agency of a critical consumer. Although still an “emerging style,” such articles articulated an “American” style founded on cultural and social homogeneity, on the need for privacy, efficiency and democratic individualism expressed in both the house and the garden. Bangs warned homemakers to ask their homes, “What are you telling people about me and my family?” Such questions, asked within the period’s paranoia of communist infiltration and contagion, had a clear political intent. Cultural infection was also a danger.

The cultural pluralism, developed by Franz Boas and his students—such as Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict and Edward Sapir—in the United States had seeped into popular culture during the 1930s and 1940s countering Anglo-Saxon cultural supremacy and Puritan culture’s claim to a monopoly on virtue. The onset of the Cold War made cultural boundaries more susceptible to ideological warfare and cultural difference as Bang’s articles for *House Beautiful* clearly suggest. During the early postwar the ongoing

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process of defining “America” was conditioned by fears of communist infiltration, strategies of “domestic containment” and the need to sell “America” abroad. At the same time, however, Latin America was far from being imagined as a dangerous place, and was imagined instead as a friendly exotic locale to visit, even full of useful household lessons, as the article on Guinle Park demonstrated.

Modernism unleashed

In the October 11, 1947, issue of The New Yorker, US architecture critic Lewis Mumford published an article simply titled “Status Quo.” Part of his regular contribution to the “highbrow” New York literary and cultural journal edited by Harold Ross, Mumford’s views appeared under the unapologetic urbane title of his column “The Sky Line,” a column for which he had written since 1931. There had been a considerable gap between his last contribution in May 23, 1942, when the column disappeared, and its reappearance in October 11, 1947. Having written last on the Museum of Modern Art’s 1942 exhibition Wartime Housing (April 22–June 21, 1942)—an exhibition he deemed “perhaps less remarkable for what it says than for how it says it”—it was clear that Mumford had much to say on the new postwar context. At the same time, Mumford’s 1942 article, titled “War and Peace,” appeared to forecast the debate to come on the nature of architectural modernism in the early postwar period. He ended his May 1942


column with a review of Hitchcock’s book, *In the Nature of Materials*. This “remarkable study” of Frank Lloyd Wright’s work, Mumford pointed out, “marks a further stage in Hitchcock’s growth as a critic and scholar”; in it, Hitchcock had stepped out of “the shadow of Spengler’s arid defeatist philosophy” and embraced Wright’s vitality and exuberance, fully espousing an “American tradition.” As a sign of the work to be done, Mumford suggested Hitchcock should “carry his research to the West Coast and follow the thread that leads directly from Richardson, through Gill and Maybeck and Howard, to the robust school of modern architects that now flourishes from Portland to Los Angeles.”

In 1942, Mumford had already delineated what in 1947 would be known as the Bay Region Style, a centerpiece of US postwar regionalism, and had asked Hitchcock to establish a narrative of “American” modern architecture that would challenge his and Johnson’s 1932 European-centric International Style.

In 1947, Mumford returned to *The New Yorker* criticizing the bleak and backwards situation of architecture in New York. The New York skyline, like that of other major US cities, he told his readers, “came to a halt about fifteen years ago.” In all, cities had not recovered from the 1929 economic crash, a rupture that had bankrupted the skyscraper. The vitality of Manhattan, of a skyline that had been changing every year since 1904, ended in 1930. Mumford presented a critical change in architectural scale. “What I am getting at,” he clarified, “is that the interesting modern construction in New York during the last fifteen years has mostly involved buildings under fifteen stories.”

This change in scale allowed for a greater appreciation, for a clearer view of what was happening in other parts of the country; it was as if a great screen had been lowered

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656 Ibid. p. 58.
allowing for a view of the rest of the country. The death of the skyscraper was concomitant with the revival of “the boom towns of the Southwest and on the Pacific Coast.” Skyscrapers had become objects of another generation, exceptions, like Rockefeller Center even the United Nations project, to the main architectural developments of the period. The skyline of the metropolis, Mumford emphasized, “has solidified.” The implications were severe. The center of vitality of postwar architecture in the United States had shifted away from the traditional city, and with this the architectural hegemony of New York had ended.

In the end of the article, Mumford delineated the contours of an architectural style he called the Bay Region style. His celebration of the local development of modernism in the US Pacific North West served as the key stimulus for MoMA’s 1948 symposium *What is Happening to Modern Architecture?* The first section of the article on the stagnant architecture of New York, which has generally been forgotten, laid the foundations of Mumford’s celebration of West Coast architectural vitality, as well as the new cultural postwar order and is key to understand Mumford’s position on regionalism. The loss of urban vitality was central in understanding the need for a “native and humane form of modernism” that “permits regional adaptations and modifications” as it manifested outside the traditional center of culture in the United States.\(^{658}\) At the heart of Mumford’s 1947 article was a postwar architectural production that expressed the full vigor of a US-led postwar which had shifted away from New York. Although Mumford’s change in scale implied a change of architectural object and a move towards the single family home and the suburbs, this interpretation gained momentum after the MoMA

\(^{658}\) Ibid. p. 108
symposium, eliminating the complex regionalist dynamic in Mumford’s argument.\textsuperscript{659} Although the US suburbs were the new site of modernity in the United States, and domesticity was the language and scale of its development, Mumford articulated a far more complex cultural dynamic as the foundation of a “far more truly a universal style than the so called International Style.”\textsuperscript{660} It appeared then that the critical question to ask was not only what was happening to modern architecture, as MoMA did a year later to confront Mumford’s ideas, but also, where was it happening?

Mumford returned to this postwar cultural dynamic in a 1949 article for The Architectural Review. Re-elaborating his earlier 1947 argument after he had been confronted by the New York architectural establishment at MoMA, he highlighted how in the current conception of the International Style one discovers, not internationalism, but the covert imperialism of the great world Megalopolises, claiming to dominate the culture of their time, and rejecting all forms of art except those which have been created by the few to whom it has given the stamp of approval.\textsuperscript{661}

The city itself, however, was not necessarily an agent of elite cultural control; it served as a place where “the main stream [of] various regional experiments” gathered, bestowing it a passing and ephemeral dominance—“now with Chicago dominating, now with Brussels

\textsuperscript{659} Even in New York, Mumford stated, if “any important changes are coming, they will probably take place in Long Island City, on the Brooklyn waterfront, and on Staten Island;” although these areas of New York were clearly outside the traditional high-density urban core, compared to other suburban areas of the country, there were hardly suburbs with the exception of Staten Island. \textemdash, “Status Quo/the Sky Line (Bay Region Style),” The New Yorker, no. October 11, (1947). p. 104.

\textsuperscript{660} Ibid. p. 108.

or Paris, now with San Francisco or Rio de Janeiro. Mumford included Rio as a key site of modernism, a center that had coalesced a regional experiment in modernism; under Mumford’s regional lens, the legacy of *Brazil Builds* transformed into a Latin American regional condition, echoing the macro-regional organization of postwar international political culture.

Mumford reinforced this regional character of the modernist experiment in Latin America by articulating other developments in the region, in particular that of Uruguayan architect Julio Vilamajó. When Mumford highlighted the home as the key site of postwar modernism in his 1947 article, he did so by paraphrasing Uruguayan architect Julio Vilamajó: “A house, as the Uruguayan architect Julio Vilamajó has put it, should be as personal as one’s clothes and should fit the family life just as well.” The reference to Vilamajó seemed poignant yet, perhaps today, somewhat bewildering. Architectural journals in the US had not focused on Uruguay until 1948, when *Architectural Forum* published a comprehensive overview of that country as part of a series of surveys of contemporary architecture in South American countries the journal had started in 1946 (Fig. 5.7). Mumford’s knowledge of Vilamajó’s work most likely came from Chloethiel Woodard Smith who he had known since the 1930s and was the author of *Forum’s* South American surveys (Fig. 5.8). In 1947, Vilamajó, one of the consultants of the United

662 Ibid. p. 177.
Nations design team headed by Wallace K. Harrison, presented a foil to the better-known Oscar Niemeyer, also a member of the UN design team and a central figure in the debate on the international nature of modern architecture.\(^6\) Niemeyer had arrived in New York in March 1947 to work on the United Nations for several months. In the short time in between his participation in the UN and the MoMA symposium of February 1948, he was denied a visa and refused re-entry into the United States because, as Talbot Hamlin pointed out in the MoMA symposium, of his political convictions.\(^6\) In 1947, *Time* magazine had attacked Niemeyer as an “Extremist,” both in architecture and in politics, “working diligently at being a Communist.”\(^6\) Vilamajó, then, also represented an important political foil to the radical Niemeyer. Mumford’s selection and employment of Vilamajó struck at MoMA’s official celebration of modernism in Latin America, centered on Brazilian modernism as the key exponent of the International Style’s adaptive potential. It contextualized the symposium’s defense of Le Corbusier’s Errazuris’ house by celebrating a different modernist tradition in the region.

\(^6\) The design team was composed of N.D. Bassov (USSR), Gaston Brunfaut (Belgium), Ernest Cormier (Canada), Le Corbusier (France), Liang Ssu-Cheng (China), Sven Markelius (Sweden), Anne-Claus Messager (France/United States), Oscar Niemeyer (Brazil), Howard Robertson (United Kingdom), G.A. Soilleux (Australia), Garrett Gruber (United States), and Julio Vilamajó (Uruguay).

\(^6\) Alfred H. Barr, Jr. et al., “What is Happening to Modern Architecture?,” *The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 15, no. 3 (1948). p. 17. The point was made by Talbot Hamlin; he did not fully explain the situation. Hamlin highlighted that Niemeyer had been invited to lecture at Yale, an invitation other members of the UN Design Board, such as Chermayev, had received. These were a series of lectures and involved more than a one-time visit. Although it is not clear that Niemeyer was to be invited to the MoMA symposium the overlap between the Yale lectures and the symposium, and Hamlin’s insistence that the symposium offer a formal protest to the State Department’s refusal to let Niemeyer into the US, suggests he would have been asked to participate. On Niemeyer’s participation in the United Nations design see: George A. Dudley, *A Workshop for Peace: Designing the United Nations Headquarters* (New York, N.Y. Cambridge, Mass.: Architectural History Foundation; MIT Press, 1994).

If Mumford pointed to Vilamajó as an ideological support for the regional development of the US postwar home, the US architecture critic would be at pains to identify the detached single-family house as the key site of architectural production in Latin America or, for that matter, Europe. This may be why Mumford’s reference to the Uruguayan architect remained elusive. By 1947, few modern single-family houses from Latin America had been published internationally; one would have to turn to Woodard Smith’s surveys to find most of them (Fig. 5.10). Urban apartment buildings, *multifamiliares* and condominiums, dominated the housing question in this rapidly urbanizing region. The city, the traditional high-density city to be exact, not the suburb, was the key site of architectural production in Latin America. As Liernur argues in the case of Buenos Aires and Flaherty in that of Mexico City, one of the key aspects of the early postwar in those two cities was the enactment of the “Ley de Propiedad Horizontal” or Condominium Law that ensured the development of the apartment building. Linked to high levels of land speculation in Latin America, such laws manifested the attempt to develop an urban housing market with private capital.

Mumford’s strategic mobilization of Vilamajó unfolded a complex cultural battle within US architectural culture. Mumford could have easily called forth the work of Swedish architect Sven Markelius, another UN project architect, and a leading figure in

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668 In October 1948, *Arts and Architecture* published Oswaldo Bratke’s own house and studio and, in June, *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui* published Amancio Williams’ Casa Puente (Bridge House). I would like to acknowledge the work done by students in my seminars on Latin American architecture at the City College of New York from 2008 to 2011 who engaged in researching the architecture of Latin American in US and European journals.

the New Empiricist trend developing in Sweden. The Finish architect, Alvar Aalto, was completing the Baker Dormitory at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Mumford’s selection of Vilamajó can be explained by the extensive presence of the modern architecture of Latin America in US architectural journals, and the historical presence of Spanish colonial architecture in California.

In a follow-up article on the Bay region style, the *Architectural Review* pointed out the presence of a Latin American ethos. In 1947 Mumford had defined the style as the meeting of “Oriental and Occidental architectural traditions.” The *Review* elaborated on his views. “As for the real contribution of the Occidental” tradition, the *Review* pointed out, “this—as one might expect—was a matter of plan, and was due… to the Spanish settlers in the New World.” The *Review* cited the work of Jean Murray Bangs, who, as already noted, became a leading advocate for an “American style” in *House Beautiful*. As the debate over the Bay Region style developed in the United States, other traditions were added to this architecture, such as the “Mediterranean style,” a development of “the Spanish heritage” and its “sensible meeting of climatic needs.” A specific historic and cultural pattern perhaps too obvious for Mumford to mention with respect to California came to the surface of the debate; it also unleashed a cultural imaginary that tied Latin America to the Mediterranean.

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670 See: "The New Empiricism, Sweden's Latest Style."
What is Happening to Modern Architecture?

In February 11, 1948, the Museum of Modern Art organized a symposium to assess the growing complexity of postwar modernism. Although called forth in reaction to Mumford’s “Bay Region style,” the symposium, titled *What is Happening to Modern Architecture?*, aimed at addressing a broader international architectural scene, presenting other stylistic development such as the “New Empiricism,” a term the British journal *The Architectural Review* had used in 1947 to explain postwar architectural developments in Sweden. Niemeyer would have participated in the symposium. His presence would have completed and fully triangulated the condition of international postwar modernism by offering a voice from the region on the development of postwar modernism in that part of the world. The interpretation of the region’s architecture remained in the hands of those who had never seen it or produced it. Unlike other expressions of modern culture in the region, such as Mexican muralism which have had always to contend with the presence of the Mexican artists in the United States, Latin American modern architecture had found no local interlocutor in the United States. The geographical distance of South America manifested in the absence of its architectural figures from international symposia and other events.

As the MoMA *Bulletin* dedicated to the symposium later reported, the idea was to juxtapose two groups, those representing the International Style and those standing for a reaction against this style, one identified as a two-pronged humanist response developed

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674 Present in the symposium were: Lewis Mumford, Alfred H. Barr, Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Gerhard Kallmann, Christopher Tunnard, Frederick Gutheim, Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer, Ralph Walker, Mario Torres, Edward Durell-Stone, Walter P. McQuade, Philip Johnson, Albert Mangonensson, Peter Blake, Eero Saarinen, George Nelson, Carl Koch, Serge Chermayeff, Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., John McAndrew, Isamu Noguchi, Matthew Nowicki, and Vincent Scully. The lists tend to vary somewhat depending on the course see: Barr et al., "What Is Happening to Modern Architecture?" Also: "Coziness is All Right but Architects Think Functionalism has Quite a Future Ahead," *Architectural Forum*, no. April (1948).
in Sweden and in the US West Coast, disregarding Mumford’s clear reference and link to other regional developments such as that in Uruguay. The idea of reaction to the International Style undergirded the discussion, a dialogue that, the museum’s Bulletin commented, was dominated by a concern over style and standards and the fear of all labels and “isms.” In the end, “No conclusion was reached.” The evening, the Bulletin stated, failed because the question remained unresolved. Many issues unfold from this debate. The symposium’s central aim, however, was to re-center the debate by changing the site and terms of the conversation. I want to focus on how modernism in Latin America was mobilized in the symposium.

At MoMA, Barr and Hitchcock presented the International Style as “broad and elastic,” loose and tolerant. They offered a nuanced definition of the International Style by attempting to recover particular strategies of formal adaptation present in the work of the architects of MoMA’s 1932 Modern Architecture exhibition. Latin American modernism was central to this recovery of flexibility and adaptability in the early International Style through the figure of Le Corbusier. As Hitchcock pointed out, and the Bulletin highlighted through an illustration and tag line, Le Corbusier’s “Errazuris house in South America certainly shows some of the essential characteristics of the new Cottage Style.”

This “cottage style” was Barr’s renaming of Mumford’s Bay Region style. For Barr and Hitchcock, the masters of the International Style had already addressed Mumford’s argument for local adaptation in the early 1930s at the domestic scale; they had answered it with the tall office building in the Rio ministry, also illustrated in the Bulletin (Fig. 5.9). By mobilizing these examples, the symposium re-centered the question of adaptability away from the frame of the single family and everyday culture in

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675 Barr et al., "What is Happening to Modern Architecture?" p. 9.
the United States. For those representing a cosmopolitan international culture, the Bay
Region style championed by Mumford as a tradition independent from European
functionalism and rooted in the everyday was but a further “domestication” of the
International Style and its masters, proving the style’s continued vitality. There was, then,
no possibility of reaction against it; the International Style remained vigorous and alive.
The modernism in Latin America was enlisted in the ensuing US debate over the nature
of postwar architecture at all scales, both sides in the United States actively claiming it
for their own purposes. The architecture of this region was closely woven within the US
architectural scene.

At the MoMA symposium Barr had voiced a general concern over the
management of modern architectural culture by stressing the question of language. The
predicament, as he pointed out, was one of general misconception and a
misunderstanding of the term “International Style.” The difficulty was in the misuse of
terms and the need for their correct use, since, “in spite of every effort on our part,” Barr
noted, “the term has often been used interchangeably with the word ‘functionalism’.”

The concern over the correct use of language was perceived by practicing architects in
the US as “learned distinctions made by sophisticates…by peddlers of words,” revealing
an elite management of architectural culture. Although such comments, as voiced in
Progressive Architecture, revealed a conservative turn against modernism by
“reactionaries and anti-intellectual opportunists,” as Christopher Tunnard argued, these

676 Barr et al., "What Is Happening to Modern Architecture?" p. 6
677 "Architecture — Not Style," Progressive Architecture 12 (1948). p. 120. When Barr pointed out the
misuse of language, implying this to be a confusion brought about by the profession, Progressive
Architecture retorted by underscoring the “misunderstanding of the roles of the architect, the critic and the
historian. [...] At present time architects are acting as critics, and critics are prematurely attempting to write
architectural history.” In architecture, Progressive Architecture concluded, there was a lack of “true
critics,” unlike in drama and literature. "Architecture — Not Style." p. 120.
remarks also articulated a concern over dogmatism and the threat to uninhibited creative expression defended by professional US architectural journals.\textsuperscript{678}

Behind the veil of a correct terminology defended by Barr hid the search for standards and the normative condition of style deployed as a bulwark against popular commercial culture. If style “smacked of the Beaux Arts, of academic, superficial, and introspective,” Barr argued in 1948, if style was “somehow felt to be a menace to the individual freedom of the architect and to the free development of architecture itself,” now, in the context of the postwar, to follow the “so-called” International Style was not to entertain a dogmatic straightjacket but to follow “a frame for potential growth.”\textsuperscript{679} In the postwar, “American” vitality needed to be channeled in and through the International Style. By following this frame for potential growth, deployed and put in place early on by MoMA, talented progressive architects could engage in a vital (and contained) architectural expression. Barr offered the International Style as an aesthetic and formal flexible language that would harness the vital individual energies of US postwar invention. The key example of the effects of this harnessing and of the continued vitality and adaptability of the International style, advanced at the symposium, was modernism in Latin America, the Ministry of Education in Rio, being the clearest example.

But much had happened since the late 1930s and early 1940s when that singular example of modernism had been celebrated as part of a dynamic and positive “infectious spirit” that could guide US architects into the ways of modern architecture. The continued celebration and publication of architectural examples from Brazil and the region proved


\textsuperscript{679} Barr et al., "What is Happening to Modern Architecture?" p. 7.
the sustained development of the International Style, but also the independence of Latin American architects, as these experimented with the tall office building, as in the case of Amancio Williams’ Suspension-Frame Office Building, or build in steel, as in the Roberto Brothers Caterpillar Headquarters in Rio de Janeiro.  

An American Infection

In its April 1947 issue on Brazil, *Progressive Architecture* pointed out the influence of Brazilian modernism in the United States. In their introduction, the editors highlighted how:

> Four years ago a book titled *Brasil* [sic] *Builds* caused a great furore in design circles in this country. We were familiar with advanced work that had been done in Europe, and we were beginning to be pleased with our own progress, particularly in technical and engineering matters. Here was shown to us South American work so free and yet so sure, based on a knowledge of reinforced concrete design apparently so superior to ours, covering so many types of structures, that it made us sit up and take notice. The inevitable copying began...  

The editors of *Progressive Architecture* articulated the similarities and differences between the Brazilian and US architectural scene, the profits for US designers from the “fresh method of approach but also the significant differences such as building codes, education and even age.” What is important for this argument is that, in 1947, Brazilian modernism was already singled out as something that was being copied. Under the

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pressures of a postwar building boom, it was already transforming from a language of vital formal expression into a language of formal repetitive clichés. The postwar building boom had augmented the craze over the brise-soleil; journals published article after article on sunshade devices and strategies for tall office buildings. *Architectural Forum* had singled out SOM and Holabird & Root & Burgee as “pacesetters” of this trend.682

At the MoMA symposium, New York architect and AIA president Ralph T. Walker voiced his alarm. Representing the US professional establishment, Walker warned about the extensive use of “slabs on pillars” brought about by photography in architectural magazines and noted how even a design for the Giraffe House at the London Zoo “looks exactly” like the Ministry of Education in Rio.683 Although such copying went beyond mere formalism, for Walker it signaled a greater threat. This “unthinking uncritical acceptance of things” manifested the beginnings of a turn against Brazilian modernism, a manner that could be seen, Walker also pointed out, even in the design of the United Nations building. Embedded in the conversation unleashed by MoMA’s symposium was not only the clash between suburban and urban cultures as it took from in the United States, but also the definition of a hegemonic international architecture culture that, following material processes other than in reinforced concrete, articulated a humanist cultural construct in opposition to the developments of modernism in “Latin

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683 Barr et al., "What is Happening to Modern Architecture?” p. 13. “Functionalism of materials has blazed our thinking around the world because you will find that the building in Rio for the Education Ministry looks exactly like a building that was designed for a giraffe in the London Zoo, and it looks exactly like the building that has been designed for the United Nations. In other words, you have a cover of unthinking uncritical acceptance of things.”
The unified Western geography of variation and adaptation that Barr and Hitchcock had argued as exemplified by the region’s architecture had clear cultural fractures. As German-British architect Gerhard Kallmann pointed out at the symposium, “the practitioners of the New Empiricism will find a greater meaning in the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and Alvar Aalto than in the form world of Le Corbusier and his South American disciples.” Beyond these cultural differences, by 1947, the regions’ architecture symbolized by the work of Niemeyer had become dangerous; a menace that Max Bill would give full voice in his 1953 assessment of the situation in Brazil during his lecture at the São Paulo Bienal.

The copying that the editors of Progressive Architecture had highlighted as merely beginning, bloomed in California. In 1951, in its “Contemporary Architecture in the World” issue, L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui published a house that vividly illustrated what, in 1947, had perhaps been only a warning. Located in the city of Orinda, California, just east of the Berkeley hills, was a house that could somewhat easily be confused with a work by Oscar Niemeyer (Fig. 5.11; Fig. 5.12). Designed by William R. Everitt, this house exhibited the free-form organic concrete slab that Niemeyer had vibrantly developed in the early 1940s at Pampulha. It was affected, however, by a symmetrical disposition that reduced its lyricism and revealed the influence of Francisco Bolonha’s Sulphur Springs Pavilion in the town of Araxa, Minas Gerais (Fig. 5.13)—a

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684 See for example Giedion who insisted on the relationship between Brazil and Finland as centers of new discoveries in modernism. S. Giedion, A Decade of New Architecture (Zürich: Girsberger, 1951).
685 Barr et al., "What is Happening to Modern Architecture?" p. 17. In 1944 the Architectural Review compares Niemeyer’s works to that of Aalto, the entrance of Pampulha Casino being as remarkable as “that of Alvar Aalto at Paimio” (p. 118), and to that of the Swedes, the Cavalcanti House, “out-Swedes the Swedes.” p. 134.
building that had also appeared in every major international architecture journal.\textsuperscript{687} This “charming construction,” as 	extit{Architecture d’Aujourd’hui} called Everitt’s house, was evidence of the creeping formalism inspired by architectural journals that endangered the vitality of postwar architectural expression—both outside and inside Brazil.

\textbf{Niemeyer in California}

As the debate over the positive and negative contribution of Brazilian modernism began to heat up, Niemeyer was invited to design a house in Santa Barbara, California. Being one of “the world’s top ten architects” involved in the design of the headquarters for the United Nations, his reputation had caused him to become somewhat of a household name in the United States thanks to popular magazines like \textit{Time}, which continued to carry the message deployed in MoMA’s \textit{Brazil Builds} during the early postwar.\textsuperscript{688} Commissioned by Burton and Emily Hall Tremaine here coalesced many themes debated within the pages of US architecture journals and at MoMA. As previously noted, Niemeyer’s house appeared in a dedicated exhibition at the museum; it also appeared in US architectural journals and in Hitchcock’s 1948 book, \textit{Painting Toward Architecture} and Stamo Papadaki’s 1950 monograph, \textit{The Work of Oscar Niemeyer}.

Originally construed as a pragmatic presentation of an architectural project to open just one month after the controversial symposium \textit{What is Happening to Modern Architecture?}, the Tremaine house was finally exhibited a year later under the title \textit{From


\textsuperscript{688} See: "Brazil: On Stilts."
Visitors to the exhibition saw two works by Le Corbusier, “Still Life,” an oil painting from 1920, set against the canonical 1929-31 Ville Savoye, represented through three plans and a model—the same one presented in the seminal 1932 Modern Architecture show. Le Corbusier’s oeuvre confronted Niemeyer’s California project, which had been dated 1948-49, represented through five composite drawings and one model,690 (Fig. 5.14). Mediating both architectural works, on the south wall of the main floor’s northwest gallery, was an unidentified landscape by Roberto Burle-Marx (which seems be a gouache for the Praça Arenz Peña project, in Rio de Janeiro) juxtaposed with Jean Arp’s 1938-39 relief in wood, a piece inspired by an earlier 1934-35 work691 (Fig. 5.15). As Niemeyer’s project was added to the architecture collection, all work exhibited was from MoMA’s permanent collection.692

689 Niemeyer’s Tremaine House model was to be originally exhibited in the Theater Arts Gallery from May to June 1948. Memo Re: Exhibition Schedule, from Mr. Wheeler, May 13, 1948. Exh. 400 REG, MoMA Archives, NY. The problems with the Niemeyer exhibition started in early May when the exhibition, scheduled to open May 14, was postponed to the 25th, and later cancelled altogether. Memo Re: Exhibition Schedule Note Changes in Exhibition Schedule, from Mr. Wheeler, May 5, 1948. Exh. 400 REG, MoMA Archives, NY. In a Memo from Mary Barns to Monroe Wheeler dated May 13th, Barns explained that the Niemeyer house model “cannot be shown at this time [because] the house will not be built in anything like its present form. [Emily Hall Tremaine] apparently asked for a small weekend beach house (4,000 sq. ft.) and got back a design for a large house of 12,000 sq. ft.” The Tremaines had asked for a redesign. Memo Re: Niemeyer Model Exhibition, Mrs Barnes to Monroe Wheeler, May 13, 1948. Exh. 400 REG, MoMA Archives, NY. The same memo alludes to the possibility of exhibiting both schemes once the house is re-designed.

690 Niemeyer’s project was never built. The Tremaines asked MoMA to withhold their name. Telegram, Emily Hall Tremaine to Ada Louise Huxtable, February 14. Exh. 400 CUR, MoMA Archives, NY. Papadaki also omits the Tremaine’s name. He however dates the project to 1947. See: Oscar Niemeyer and Stamo Papadaki, The Work of Oscar Niemeyer (New York: Reinhold, 1950). p. 182.

691 Why Burle Marx’s landscape design for the Tremaine house was not exhibited, other than in the model, remains a mystery. The exhibition was held in the northwest gallery of the main floor of the museum. Niemeyer’s work was still highly considered. The model was added as an Extended Loan to “Division III, Exhibition Material, Model Collection of the architecture collection” in April 26, 1949, number ML-7. Four of the ten drawings sent to the museum where also catalogue under Division III. The six remaining drawings were added to Division II, Museum Study Collection. Memo Re: Extended Loan of Niemeyer Tremaine house model and drawings, from Ada Louise Huxtable to Bett Harris, April 26, 1949. Exh. 400 CUR, MoMA Archives, NY.

692 See: Memo, Ada Louise Huxtable to Bett Harris, Extended Loan of Niemeyer Tremaine house model and drawings, April 26, 1949. Exh. 400 CUR, MoMA Archives, NY.
The Niemeyer exhibition continued the debate of the symposium, rearticulating the tenets of modernism deployed in 1932 by highlighting the adaptability of a still-vibrant International Style. The exhibition recalled MoMA’s 1932 *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition*. Set against Le Corbusier’s house manifesto, Niemeyer’s work presented the developmental arc of the style into the postwar and corrected the geography of modernism—which had been limited primarily to Europe and the United States—making it clear that, as Barr had declared in 1932, the style had indeed been a “world-wide” phenomenon. Interwar themes and aims that Barr had highlighted in 1932, such as the exhibition’s normative intent to correct “the deluge of ‘modernistic-decoration’” that interwar commercialism had unleashed clearly resonated in 1949. The “capriciousness and uncertainty of our architecture,” as Barr noted in 1932, seemed to have returned with postwar architecture. Commercialism offered a point of contact between both periods. The confusion of the present seemed to necessitate the return, or at least a back glance, to the formative period of the “development of a conscious style,” when painterly movements such as Neoplasticism and Expressionism, in Holland and Germany respectively, and Purism in France guided the aesthetics of architectural modernism.

The exhibition grounded Niemeyer’s work in European artistic developments. Aesthetically, the forces of disintegration in the “exuberant reaction” of 1920s expressionism—a reaction that, in 1932, Johnson argued, made architects indulge “in arbitrary curves...breaking down all formal discipline, traditional or structural”—seemed to have returned under the tropicalist wave that *Brazil Builds* had internationalized and in the formal experimentation that new postwar techniques enabled and society

demanded.\textsuperscript{694} The return to Le Corbusier and to an aesthetic tradition of Purism that had been spared the influence of neoplasticism and expressionism—“There was no movement in France comparable”—revealed the normative side of the Niemeyer exhibition, addressing the copying of architectural forms that \textit{Progressive Architecture} had noted earlier. At the same time, however, the summoning of the house as manifesto, recast the Tremaine house as such, and elicited a genre associated with European avant-gardes.

Visitors were informed that Niemeyer’s house “represents today’s final synthesis of two important twentieth century stylistic trends: the strict mechanical formalism of Le Corbusier and the Cubist-Constructivist movement, and the organic shapes and free-form fantasy of the tradition of Miro and Arp.”\textsuperscript{695} The exhibit underscored how Niemeyer’s house “raised above the ground on stilts, derived directly from the purism of Le Corbusier.” The free-forms, on the other hand, abandoned the “tightly geometric curves that were part of Le Corbusier’s precise architectural idiom,” being “replaced…by the less restricted, free shapes of Miro and Arp.”\textsuperscript{696} Grounding Niemeyer’s formalism in Corbusian post-Cubism, on Purism’s mechanical rhythms, and on the organic reaction of Arp and Miro that tempered this “extreme geometrical austerity,” located Niemeyer’s work firmly in the French school.

In this narrative, deployed by Hitchcock, free-form came into Brazilian architecture much in the same way as it did in Europe, through painting. Free-form, then, was a pictorial tradition, not the development of an architectural form that sprung from building techniques in reinforced-concrete. What was particular to the Brazilian case, the exhibition argued, was that this pictorial tradition came first through the gardens of

\textsuperscript{694} Ibid. p. 20.
\textsuperscript{695} Exhibition Captions, Exh. 400 CUR, MoMA Archives, NY.
\textsuperscript{696} Ibid.
Burle-Marx. Reduced to a flat canvas, Burle Marx’s garden was framed within the dynamics of pictorial formalism without offering any comment on Burle-Marx’s use of color. The temporal and material nature of Burle Marx’s gardens were also disregarded. The two-dimensional forms of Burle-Marx gouaches reached three-dimensionality first in Arp’s reliefs and later in Niemeyer’s organic concrete slabs such as those in Paumpulha (Fig. 5.16). This three-dimension concrete form, however, was independent from concrete vault construction and bore no relation with a building tradition that went back to masonry construction. Although Niemeyer’s California house also mobilized this tectonic tradition with the presence of its triple arch car garage the exhibition completely ignored it. Hitchcock later celebrated this triple-arching form in *Latin American Architecture since 1945* as it took shape in Pampulha’s São Francisco Church (1943).

This particular shape, Hitchcock also later pointed out, was responsible for the modern appearance of Latin American cities. The “curved skylines” of Latin American cities, however, were also present in the United States; in Texas, for example, the Brazilian triple-arch form had expanded to a monumental nine-bay entry for West Columbia Elementary School, a project included in MoMA’s 1953 *Built in USA: Post-war Architecture* (Fig. 5.17).

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697 This was, of course a reductive argument, for it disregarded the complex field of artistic relations excluding more problematic painterly traditions such as German Expressionism, which Burle-Marx himself had recognized, but also non-painterly forces such as the tropical flora itself, which Burle Marx had discovered in Berlin. In all, Hitchcock flattens the rich cosmopolitan scene in which Burle-Marx developed. See: Conrad Hamerman and Roberto Burle Marx, "Roberto Burle Marx: The Last Interview," *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 21 (1995). Also: Valerie Fraser, "Cannibalizing Le Corbusier: The MES Gardens of Roberto Burle Marx," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 59, no. 2 (2000). Also: Nancy Leys Stepan, "Tropical Modernism: Designing the Tropical Landscape," *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 21, no. 1 (2000). Burle Marx’s garden design for the Ministry of Health and Education in Rio appeared in 1938. It first manifested as an architectural floor slab in the 1939 Brazilian Pavilion’s mezzanine.
Hitchcock denied Niemeyer the synthesis of an architectural tradition; for the US architectural historian and critic, the Tremaine house project was the synthesis of pictorial traditions in architecture. It was a form of genius, but one that drew clear differences with the early modern masters. Niemeyer’s beach house project “demonstrates the successful architectural integration of these complex and varied influences from the related arts.” Functionality, in the rectangular volume of the elevated second story, confronted the free-form organicism of the ground floor; twenties modernism confronted the late thirties development, accuracy confronted irregularity, precision looseness, etc., in all, reason confronted expression and more important architecture confronted painting. Such synthetic works that highlighted “cross-fertilization,” visitors were told, “remain a mystery.” Works like the Niemeyer house suggested but did not explain how architects had arrived to this point. Creative synthesis remained in the hands of genius. If five years earlier, Hitchcock had, in his review of Brazil Builds, cautiously celebrated Niemeyer’s work as simply being “Corbusian in character,” in 1948 his architecture was approaching the characteristics of genius, as Hitchcock had defined in his 1947 article for the Architectural Review, “The Architecture of Genius & the Architecture of Bureaucracy.”

698 “Captions, From Le Corbusier to Niemeyer: 1929-49,” n/d Curatorial Exhibition Files. Exh. 400 CUR, MoMA Archives, NY.
699 “The rectangular prism of the main volume of the Niemeyer house, raised above the ground on stilts, derives directly from the purism of Le Corbusier. The tightly geometric curves that were part of Le Corbusier’s precise architectural idiom in the twenties, and which were expressed both in his buildings and his paintings, have been replaced, a generation later, by less restricted, free shapes of Miro and Art.” “Captions, From Le Corbusier to Niemeyer: 1929-49,” n/d Curatorial Exhibition Files. Exh. 400 CUR, MoMA Archives, NY.
700 Ibid.
701 Ibid. “The process of cross fertilization by which creative influences are transmitted in the arts remains a mystery despite all that is written about them. Yet the study of the models, paintings and drawings in this exhibition may help to suggest how contemporary architecture has arrived at its characteristic visual forms.” Ibid.
Niemeyer’s architecture, as Hitchcock had argued in the *Review* for the case of the Wright’s Guggenheim, was not a mere assembly of disparate parts, but an integrated synthetic organic whole. This architecture was the product of an “artistic gamble” but one that disregarded the tectonic tradition of architecture itself.\(^{702}\) In all, Niemeyer’s genius was a different kind of genius. As Barry Bergdoll argues, the Tremaine house exhibition helped MoMA assess the development of the International style within the heated debate over pictorial abstraction in the United States and as part of the international discussion around the idea of the “synthesis of the arts.”\(^{703}\) The exhibition clearly attempted to recast Brazilian architectural modernity as an offshoot of modern European painting and as synthesis of a modern Western pictorial tradition.\(^{704}\) With this interpretation, however, it moved against the earlier understanding of Brazilian modernism that Goodwin had elaborated in *Brazil Builds*. In 1943 *Brazil Builds* had presented Brazilian modern architecture singularly through architecture and as a tectonic tradition.\(^{705}\) Goodwin’s argument, as already presented, revolved around technical adaptation in architecture both as a technique (reinforce concrete construction) and as a regional variation. Brazil’s “great original contribution” Goodwin had enthusiastically stated “is the control of heat

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\(^{702}\) Henry-Russell Hitchcock, "The Architecture of Bureaucracy and the Architecture of Genius," *Architectural Review* 101, (Jan.) (1947). p. 5. The celebration of Niemeyer’s genius was of course tampered by Hitchcock ability to recognize the elements of the synthesis, something impossible in Wright.\(^{703}\) See: Bergdoll, "The Synthesis of the Arts and Moma."\(^{704}\) Hitchcock highlighted that “Le Corbusier’s forms do not ‘derive’ from those in his paintings; they are more clearly dependent on the ferro-concrete construction he consistently used.” Exhibition Captions, Exh. 400 CUR, MoMA Archives, NY.\(^{705}\) *Brasil Builds* performed the final conversion of Portinari into an industrial artist, who delivered designs to be mass produced by Osirarte de São Paulo. Murals are then made from tiles. The company, owned by Paulo Rossi Osir, specialized in folkloric imagery. Through this subject matter, the company stated, the art of azuleijos “found what differentiates our [Brazilian] decorative art from that of Portugal, and from other American peoples.” Catalogue, *Exposição de Azuleijos, Osirarte de São Paulo*, Museu Nacional de Belas Artes do Rio de Janeiro (July 13 - 27, 1943). Folder 144, Series C, Box 17, Record Group 4, NAR Papers, RAC.
and glare on glass surfaces by means of external blinds.” This form of adaptation was the foundation of its postwar regionalist meaning. Thus, the Tremaine house project was used to place Niemeyer’s work within the synthesis of the arts. By emphasizing a purely formalistic reading, the exhibition helped erased the narrative of regionalist adaptation through, for example, climatic response. In this displacement, the Tremaine house exhibition made clear a moment of historical inflection. The celebration of Brazilian architecture which found its raison d’etre in the brise-soleil was particular to the early 1940s, and became obsolete as the brise-soleil transformed, in the views of critics of the late 1940s and early 1950s, into a cliché, to the point that any direct reference to this particular sun control device disappeared from the Tremaine house exhibition.

This shift towards painting, which made the exhibition a more elaborate discourse on the aesthetic sources of modern architecture, can be attributed to Hitchcock’s later involvement in the project. Hitchcock’s intervention and his pictorial grounding, fundamentally changed the original idea of the show, to the point that an alternative title, “Painting — Architecture Show,” was considered. In 1947 Hitchcock had addressed the synthesis of the arts in his “Painting, Sculpture and Modern Architecture,” which can be read as the companion piece to the Review’s article “The Architecture of Bureaucracy & the Architecture of Genius.” In this article, published in the British Architects’

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707 In a letter of January 7, 1949, Hitchcock suggested Blake to incorporate the museum’s “very important [Ben] Nickolson’s [sic], Lissitzkys and Gabos,” and “If you could barrow from Nelly van Doesburg one of the stained glass cartoons by her husband, or possibly introduce one of the photographs of the Oud house at Katwijk [aan Zee], those could be distinct with van D tile floor [hand written] additions I think.” The idea of using Jean Arp also appeared: “In Boston we showed the new Aalto Senior House at MIT in a blow-up in connection with the Arp relief.” Letter, Henry-Russell Hitchcock to Peter Blake, Curator, January 7, 1949. Exh. 400 CUR, MoMA Archives, NY.
Yearbook, edited by Jane B. Drew, Hitchcock argued that abstract art had created a clear separation between architecture and art; two forms of plastic abstraction could not co-inhabit, since “a [modern] building was intended to be in itself an Abstract plastic composition.” He turned to Wright’s 1914 Midway Gardens to illustrate how the US architect had not turned to the arts (painting or sculpture) but had rather developed complete aesthetic control, refusing any form of collaboration. This “psychological approach” was present in Wright’s (still unbuilt) Guggenheim Museum—a key piece of Hitchcock’s argument in the Review. The architecture of genius was not that of the integration of the arts, a form of teamwork like the architecture of bureaucracy, but rather “an artistic gamble” that made architecture a work of art itself.

The collision of two forms of modern abstraction, art and architecture, could be resolved, Hitchcock pointed out, through the principle of “contrast.” Abstract painting gained “additional breath … in traditional settings” and “less proto-architectural and more pictorial [works currently in vogue such as] Surrealism, Neo-Romanticism [and] Social Realism… might find” their place in modern architecture. To illustrate this point, he brought forth the Ministry of Education in Rio. He highlighted the “non-spatial” character of the Portinari tiles as a predominantly “allusive and symbolic decoration…dislocated in scale form the scale of the architecture.” This dislocation was also present in Lipchitz’s “Prometheus,” a non-essential piece on a wall “quite satisfying in relation to the total design” without this figure. The sculpture was “potentially…a concise symbol…more like a coat of arms…to indicate even to the illiterate the

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governmental function” of the building. The use of works of art in architecture—like in the Ministry, or in Tecton’s Highpoint II in London and Niemeyer’s Yacht Club in Pampulha—may be explained in the light of Surrealism and Neo-Romanticism. This, however, remained “somewhat irrelevant to the issues” of painting and sculpture, which aimed at full independence from architecture. Hitchcock’s views on the integration of the arts, although not particularly positive, revealed a cultural field in which he mobilized Brazilian modernism (he also mobilized Mexican muralism), and articulated a more complex postwar architecture culture.

Postwar Practices

Hitchcock inserted Brazilian modernism within a particular narrative web that reinforced a formalist reading. Considering that “The Architecture of Bureaucracy & the Architecture of Genius” presented a fundamental postwar geographic imaginary (European reconstruction) and cultural order (US technological advances), this epistemological organization of architecture established clear normative interpretations and discursive categories. Hitchcock’s 1947 article in the Review suggested a new order in normative behavior. Where did the talented and progressive postwar architect fit in Hitchcock’s bi-polar world of bureaucracy and genius? In his views, youthful and impetuous architects simply needed to consolidate the gains of the modern masters. This was their postwar historical mission. Hitchcock’s categories served to establish correct

711 Ibid., "Painting, Sculpture and Modern Architecture." p. 15.
712 Hitchcock stressed how young impetuous architects interrupt such rhythm “attempting to emulate the startling innovations of the founders of modern architecture they sometimes essayed fantastic drastic solutions of structural and planning problems which were already satisfactorily solved in principle and merely required coherent development. Instead of being content to develop the fruits of a particular architectural revolution which had already taken place, they aimed at a sort of permanent revolution, just at the time when the passage of years began to make evident that the revolution of the twenties rather required
generational filiations and stylistic associations, something useful for the historian or the
critic, but they struck as doctrinarian, restrictive and reactionary to architects.
Hitchcock’s dichotomy set implicit rules of behaviors, guides to architectural practice
tantamount to a veiled containment strategy aimed at channeling creative forces and
controlling experimentation. This management of the creative impulse was crucial
because, for Hitchcock, the architecture of genius was not a consequence of mere trial
and error—which was the core of technical and material experimentation—it involved an
“artistic gamble,” which was not always productive.713 To gamble, to speculate in a
period of extreme material need and political instability, was morally irresponsible. This
was why it should be the realm of the masters. But there was more to this, since such
normative behavior may have been appropriate for war-devastated Europe, but not so for
the United States. In a period in which the creative revolutionary architect of early
modernism was the figure of a concluding tradition, any attempt to revive the
“architectural revolution which had already taken place” threatened dissolution and chaos
by falling into market exhibitionism. In the postwar, the claims of revolution, technical or
stylistic, would become a form of professional and personal advertisement.

If the architecture of bureaucracy, the architecture of “large-scale architectural
organizations, from which personal expressing is absent,” as Hitchcock argued, reveled in
a postwar world under US economic and technical hegemony, the architecture of genius,
the architecture of artistic gamble, revealed a more complex and global postwar
architecture culture that escaped US control. The United Nations project was the product
of teamwork that challenged the idea of the single genius architect in postwar

patient consolidation of its initial gains.” ———, "The Architecture of Bureaucracy and the Architecture of
Genius." p. 4.
713 Ibid. p. 6.
architectural monumentality; this and other examples complicated Hitchcock’s
dichotomy. Resistance to a US-led architecture culture was present even in the
architecture of bureaucracy of the London County Council. As Joan Ockman points out,
the London County Council, with its department of architecture, served as an early
postwar model of bureaucratic architecture, one that struck a balance between the
“orthodox positivism of CIAM and the empirical, populist and domestic qualities that the
English so much admired in the social welfare architecture of Sweden.” This
domesticated modernism buttressed by humanist views countered a US-led technological
industrial world. This subtle opposition, this cautious resistance to “American”
technocratic culture, as Ockman points out, was not broken until the late 1950s. Latin
American modern architecture was a key agent mobilized in European architecture
journals as a foil to US technocratic culture, a shield against the “pistol the US holds to
the stomach of Western civilization.” Examinations of the early postwar have missed
this triangulated cultural construct, which justified the ample circulation of Latin
American projects in international architectural journals during this time.

As Jorge Francisco Liernur argues, the tropicalist wave initiated in Brazil but it
soon fanned out in the United States in the 1940s and created a refuge within the growing
technical and bureaucratic impulse of a US-led postwar. Since 1944, the year that the
Architectural Review published its theme issue on Brazil, the Review, under editor J.M.
Richards, had routinely published modernism’s development in Brazil. It was not until
October 1950, however, with its first “Report on Brazil,” that the Review voiced some

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716 Jorge Francisco Liernur, "Vanguardias versus expertos," Block, no. 6 (marzo) (2004). p. 29.
faint reservations on the influence of Brazilian modernism, which had “countless
imitators.” Because of the circulation of “photographs all over the world,” a situation the
Review had contributed too, “Almost anyone could have designed a building with some
new sun-screening device.” The problem, Alf Byden pointed out in the Report, seemed
to be in the drive for novelty, which distorted “our understanding of modern Brazilian
architecture.” At the same time, the Review’s outlook on the United States was not
positive. Its December 1950 special issue aimed to explain and “investigate the mess that
is man-made America.” Attempting to avoid generalizations in such a complex
geography and varied admixture of races, as well as to debunk myths—such as those
surrounding the youth of the country—the Review highlighted the differences and
similarities of these “Siamese twins” that were Europe and America, and take account of
the “American Dream” as a model for the “European whose American dream was always
for a Europe purged of its materialism.” This spiritual America was Latin America.

Site Unseen: The architecture of material luxury

The emphasis on the sphere of the arts helped celebrate a humanistic spiritual
tradition in Brazilian modern architecture. It, however, also brought to the forefront the
question of extravagance and appropriateness that struck at “American” middle-class
pragmatic sensibilities. The highbrow aesthetics of the synthesis of the arts found easy
reception in the Director of the Department of Architecture and Design, Philip Johnson,
and his curator Peter Blake—since 1947 Blake had been engaging Jackson Pollock’s
work, designing exhibitions and even an independent glass pavilion to show his mural

size canvases. In 1949 Mumford highlighted MoMA’s elite artistic context, arguing that it was the key to understanding the International Style, since the style “owed more to the painter than it did to the engineer.” MoMA’s From Le Corbusier to Niemeyer helped recontextualize Brazilian modernism by locating its chief representative within a particular “highbrow” ideological camp, one the 1948 symposium had clearly revealed, and within the question of inherent architectural quality imbedded in Mumford’s argument, since in the end “the direct effect of painting upon building,” he claimed, “is a bad one.”

When presenting the Tremaine house to its readers, the California based journal Arts & Architecture chose to replicate much of the MoMA exhibition using materials sent by the museum itself (Fig. 5.18; 5.19). Although it avoided visual references to Le Corbusier and Arp’s paintings, and focused solely on Niemeyer’s architectural project, leaving out Le Corbusier’s Ville Savoye, the narrative linking the house to painting remained the same. John Entenza’s journal, however, performed a subtle contextualization by underscoring that two California architects would be in charge of detailing and execution, these being: Lutah María Riggs and Arvin Shaw. Riggs and Shaw received second billing under Niemeyer, displacing Roberto Burle-Marx altogether. This emphasis on architecture can be explained as a gesture to the booming California architectural profession. However, by the time of the project’s publication in Arts & Architecture, it was already known that the house would never be built.

721 Ibid.
Stamo Papadaki disagreed with the pictorial and formalist narrative deployed around the Niemeyer project. He highlighted the climatic and site conditions that enabled this “unique example for ‘total living.’”\footnote{Niemeyer and Papadaki, \textit{The Work of Oscar Niemeyer}. p. 182.} After this nod to Le Corbusier’s “maximum existence,” he underscored the performative quality of a house that engaged “the whole site.” Niemeyer had gone beyond a climatic adaptation, something the house clearly achieved, producing a clear social environment. The Tremaine house ground floor, Papadaki pointed out, was dotted with “different focal points of activities;” one found bars, dance and lounging areas, a pool, “refreshments posts,” a “space for banqueting,” a small art gallery and sculpture garden, not to mention a small cabana by the ocean.\footnote{Ibid.} This was indeed no simple beach house, as the Tremaines had asked, but rather a complex set of leisurely activities orchestrated in the landscape. Landscape, Papadaki told his readers, was no longer a “separate activity but direct architectural planning.”\footnote{Ibid. p. 184.} Papadaki, however, failed to acknowledge Burle-Marx. Niemeyer had grounded his architectural solution on the Tremaine’s “living requirements” as Niemeyer saw them. He had emphasized a functionalist reading of the project that helped re-write the house program along US postwar ideas of abundance and luxury.

Niemeyer’s project brought forth the question of luxury in postwar modernism. The New York based \textit{Interiors} offered a critical account on this complex question (Fig. 5.20; 5.21). Overall, it praised Niemeyer and the design, calling it a “milestone in modern architecture,” synthesizing two “concepts—one esthetic and one functional—that have long been taking shape.”\footnote{“Design for a Vacation House by Oscar Niemeyer," \textit{Interiors} 108, no. 9 (April) (1949). p. 97.} In this, \textit{Interiors} did not depart for MoMA’s emphasis on the
synthesis of the arts. *Interiors*, however, moved away from MoMA’s narrative by a clever and poignant comment on the type of architectural practice and client that this house entailed. “It is considered fundamental,” the journal wrote “that a designer should never precede with any project without first becoming thoroughly acquainted with both client and site—at first hand. Niemeyer,” the journal stressed in the opening paragraph of the article, “failed to comply with the letter of this rule…”727 If *Arts & Architecture* hinted at the possibility of a post-design contextualization by underscoring construction development by local architects, *Interiors*, which avoided any reference to Riggs and Shaw, would have none of it. This project, the journal highlighted, was “mail-ordered” architecture. “Nevertheless,” the journal continued, “New York’s Museum of Modern Art had seen fit to exhibit the model and the plan of this house.”728

*Interiors* did not address why Niemeyer had not visited the site nor met with the client, a question that had been addressed at the MoMA 1948 symposium. The journal did, however, ask why was a local architect not chosen “since California is not exactly lacking in local talent.” The question was rhetorical; *Interiors* answered it by highlighting the client’s “enormous admiration” for Niemeyer’s work and their desire to have “an example of it right at home.”729 Private individual initiative was praised, for here one found “intelligent clients” and a “first rate architect” who had produced an “exhilarating example” on a “beautiful site.”730 All being said, however, something clearly had gone wrong since in the end the house, the journal stressed, would not be built. The significance of the project then remained theoretical, and, as the journal underscored, it

727 Ibid. p. 96.
728 Ibid.
730 Ibid. p. 98.
can best be gathered only by turning to the museum’s exhibition not to the architecture. But here, after unfolding the basic idea of the exhibition and the debt to Hitchcock, the journal highlighted the social sphere of the debate Mumford had unleashed. Niemeyer’s project “may indicate the nature of the architecture that will spring up, as well as how we will live when that day comes.” But for now, *Interiors* stressed, such formal experiments are “only for the very very rich.”

*Interiors*’ presentation of Niemeyer’s work, which carried the subtitle “Produced site unseen,” unfolded a key and hidden sphere of International Style architectural production, which, as Mumford later elaborated, was connected to the complicity of the “connoisseurs,” and the sins of “adroit financial manipulators,” who following “the Caesars and the Borgias and the Napoleons,” looked for “esthetic securities.” Although Mumford was referring to the period of early 20th Century economic liberalism when metropolitan financiers looked for “already established [values] in the market place,” the Tremaine’s actions rang equally suspect, since they acted no longer as builders of architecture but as buyers of commodities. The mail-order process revealed the correlation between commercial transaction and artistic gamble. *Interiors* hinted at a little known fact that the Tremaines were collecting architecture. The Niemeyer project was part of a larger cultural effort by the Tremains. As Kathleen Housely points out, in 1947 the Tremaines hired five architects, Lutah Maria Riggs, Buckminster Fuller, Frank Lloyd Wright, Philip Johnson and Niemeyer, for a series of projects. The Tremaines, however,

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731 Ibid. p. 105. 
rejected every architectural design cost being the deciding factor. This collection of international (Niemeyer), national (Wight, Fuller and Johnson) and local (Riggs) architectural projects exemplified the panorama of US postwar architecture under the sponsorship of the captains of industry.

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733 Kathleen L. Housley, *Emily Hall Tremaine: Collector on the Cusp* (Meriden, CT: Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation, 2001). p. 105. The only project that saw fruiting was Johnson’s fluorescent lighting system design.
Chapter 6

Staging Latin America in the Mid Twentieth Century

The Museum of Modern Art’s endeavors with architectural modernism in Latin America came to fruition in *Latin American Architecture since 1945*, which ran from November 23, 1955, to February 19, 1956. In this exhibition, for the first and last time, the museum ventured to identify the region and examine the development of an architecture it had helped internationalized in 1943. By mid-twentieth century, however, metonym, had given way to a general survey. No longer was it possible for one country to stand for the region itself. The exhibition was commissioned by MoMA’s International Program, directed by Porter McCray, and developed with the cooperation of the Department of Architecture and Design. Its curator, Arthur Drexler, “assembled and organized” the show, which was originally scheduled to open in March as part of the museum’s 25th Anniversary Year Program in a yearlong celebration that started in October 1954. McCray commissioned architectural historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock and photographer Rosalie Thorn McKenna to perform the architectural survey. Hitchcock and McKenna visited 10 Latin American countries—Mexico, Panama, Colombia, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Venezuela and Cuba—and one US protectorate:

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Puerto Rico. The trip through “Central and South America” lasted six weeks.\textsuperscript{737} From this trip, Hitchcock and McKenna gathered the information for what Drexler called “the Museum’s second survey of Latin American Architecture”—the first one being the influential 1943 \textit{Brazil Builds}.\textsuperscript{738}

The show—as described in the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Year Final Report—was “a testimonial to the extraordinary quantity and quality of recent building in Latin America. [It] served also to demonstrate certain characteristic features of contemporary Latin American architecture.”\textsuperscript{739} Concurrently with the exhibition, the museum published a book with an explanatory text by Hitchcock with the same title. This book was “seen through the press” by Drexler and Mildred Constantine (Associate Curator of Graphic Design for the Department of Architecture and Design), “owing to the author’s absence abroad.”\textsuperscript{740}

After its successful showing in New York, \textit{Latin American Architecture since 1945} toured the United States and Canada until 1957, when it was withdrawn from domestic circulation to be shown in Mexico City, Mexico. It was later sent to Havana, and Caracas, in 1958. Upon its return to the United States, it was shown at the Art

\textsuperscript{737} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{738} Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Museum of Modern Art (New York N.Y.), \textit{Latin American Architecture since 1945} (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1955)., p.8. In the Preface to the book/catalogue Drexler states 1939 as the year of the first Latin American architecture survey, that being the \textit{Brazil Builds} exhibition of 1943. In a letter from Drexler to Hitchcock of November 23, 1955, he noted the error, and its correction in the errata slip. Exh. 590 CUR. MoMA Archives, NY. The 1939 date is not insignificant, since that was the year Costa and Niemeyer’s Brazil Pavilion opened at the New York World’s Fair. Paul Lester Wiener served as consultant on the building.
\textsuperscript{740} Ibid.
Institute of Chicago from August 1 to September 8, 1959, after which the exhibition was dispersed. A smaller panel version continued to tour the U.S. until January 1961.741

**Assembling the Region in the United States**

_Latin American Architecture since 1945_ can be seen as the conclusion of a desire for a series of surveys of the architecture of the region, a project that had been proposed in 1942. MoMA’s “second survey” of the modern architecture of the region, unlike its first, was fraught with complications and delays that point to the complex topology created by the multiple institutional spaces at MoMA (the International Program, the Department of Architecture and Design, the Exhibitions and Publications Department), the various actors that overlapped in this project and the trajectory of Latin American architecture in the museum as inaugurated by _Brazil Builds_. Its Cold War context sets an important difference with _Brazil Builds_. The 1943 exhibition, however, remained a constant reference point throughout the endeavor. The delay of the original March 1955 opening was part of a series of compromises that marked the show, first being “Rollie” McKenna not being the original photographer of choice. In a letter dated May 28, 1954, from Philip Johnson, Director of the Department of Architecture and Design, to Phillip Goodwin, Johnson stated his desire to have G.E. Kidder Smith as photographer for the exhibition. Kidder Smith was the logical choice for the “second” Latin American architecture survey, since he had been the photographer for the seminal _Brazil Builds_, curated in 1943 by then Chairman of the Department of Architecture, Philip Goodwin. In Johnson’s thinking, the connection between the two shows was clear from the start.

Kidder Smith wanted nine months for this new Latin American survey. Johnson lamented

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741 Latin American Architecture since 1945 (Panel Version) 56-11. Circulating Exhibition (CE), II.1 69(2) LA45 1/1. MoMA Archives, NY.
that: “Unfortunately, we have already scheduled Russell to do the show by next March so that we can catch the anniversary year […] I imagine we can find a less gifted photographer, but it would have been ideal to have Geks.” Since Hitchcock was taking “special leave from Smith [College] for that semester we don’t see how we can easily change.”

Immediately after Kidder Smith turned down the offer, Johnson contacted Rollie Thorn McKenna to accompany Hitchcock to “Mexico and South America to take photographs of post-war modern architecture.” The selection of a “less gifted photographer” was pressing. Although Thorn McKenna had shown interest in photography early in life, she only started her professional photographic career in 1951. The Latin American show was then a major enterprise for a budding photographer. This, however, was not her first encounter with architectural photography. On her return to Smith College in 1948 for an Art History degree (McKenna had attended Smith for her undergraduate studies in the late 1930s) she worked closely with art historian and German émigré Richard Krautheimer. Encouraged by Krautheimer, McKenna traveled to Italy from 1950 and 1951 to produce a survey of Renaissance architecture. Her intention was to “sell the pictures as slides and study prints to schools and colleges that taught art history or architecture.” With these images, McKenna also produced an exhibition: *Three Renaissance Architects: Alberti, Brunelleschi and Palladio.* McKenna’s main interest, however, was portraiture, a passion she pursued until her death (Fig. 6.1).

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745 See: Letter, Henry-Russell Hitchcock to John Bayley, March 6, 1953. Hitchcock Papers, Box 5, Correspondence B, 1953, Archives of American Art (AAA). In this letter he did not mention the name of
Although a less seasoned or “gifted” photographer in Johnson’s view, McKenna was not completely alien to architecture, nor to the world of art history and architecture that had New York and New England as its main arena. At Smith, she had met Hitchcock; she also had many contacts and friends in the New York literary and cultural scene, as well as its architecture world, being a close friend of Marcel and Connie Breuer.\textsuperscript{746} Porter McCray was a good friend of her ex-husband, Henry Dickson McKenna; the two had studied architecture together at Yale.\textsuperscript{747} One can assume that when Kidder Smith turned down the offer, McKenna’s name sprung from several sources.\textsuperscript{748} McKenna, however, was not the only possibility. Since mid 1953, Hitchcock had been working on a guidebook of Boston architecture that included photographs by architectural photographer and later architecture historian Wayne Andrews.\textsuperscript{749}

Johnson wanted Hitchcock and McKenna to start the trip as early as possible.

Johnson’s concern for an early departure to South America found no echo in Hitchcock the exhibition; however, one can assume it was \textit{Three Renaissance Architects}, which was first exhibited in 1952. See the chronology of McKenna’s works in the end of her autobiography: Ibid. Also: Martha Kreisel, \textit{American Women Photographers: A Selected and Annotated Bibliography} (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999).

\textsuperscript{746} For a brief account, which excludes any connection of McKenna with the Latin America show, see: Wolfgang Saxon, "Rollie Mckenna Dies at 84; Photographed Literary Elite," \textit{The New York Times}, Sunday, July 13, 2003, NY/Region, Section 1, p. 31. From March 1 to May 13, 2001, the National Portrait Gallery, London, held a retrospective exhibition of McKenna’s work titled: \textit{Rollie Mckenna: Artists and Writers}. Other than the photograph of Elizabeth Bishop, taken in 1954 at her Petropolis house in Brazil, there were no other portraits taken during her Latin American trip in this show. In fact, the chronology in the catalogue makes no mention of the trip. This exhibition was organized with McKenna’s help, and includes only British and U.S. artists and writers. See: Rosalie Thorne McKenna et al., \textit{Rollie Mckenna: Artists and Writers} (London: The National Portrait Gallery 2001). Also see: ———, \textit{Artists at Large: Photographs by Rollie Mckenna} (Manchester (New Hampshire): The Currier Gallery of Art, 1982). Although the chronology in the catalogue of this exhibition does mention the Latin America trip, it does not include any portraits taken in Latin America.

\textsuperscript{747} For a self-biographic account see: McKenna, \textit{Rollie Mckenna: A Life in Photography}.

\textsuperscript{748} In a letter dated June 4, 1954 to Henry-Russell Hitchcock, McKenna implied that it was Hitchcock who recommended her name to Johnson in regards the Latin America show. Henry-Russell Hitchcock Papers, Box 6, Correspondence M, 1954, AAA.

\textsuperscript{749} I have found no epistolary exchanges between Hitchcock and Wayne Andrews, in relation to the Latin America show. Hitchcock did not want any photographs in his Boston guide: "My idea on the illustration was to use maps, plans and old prints entirely as the book is to be used in the field, I saw no point whatsoever in including photographs, but the publishers where very insistent." Letter, Henry-Russell Hitchcock to Robert Duemling, July 9, 1954. Hitchcock Papers, Box 6, Correspondence D-E, 1954, AAA.
who was busy with several projects. He was finishing the term at Smith, as professor and curator of its museum, preparing everything for a leave of absence. Latin America, however, was not completely absent from his mind. In late May 1954, he wrote to Colin Rowe, who was at the University of Texas at Austin, informing him that he would be going “south of the border,” asking him to make suggestions on “what I ought to see and whom.” From mid March to mid April, Hitchcock left for a trip to the Canadian and US Northwest, giving several lectures in Oregon. During the summer, he was preparing an article on Philip Johnson’s work for The Architectural Review, among other projects, and setting up the new house he had bought that April. The most pressing project, however, was correcting the proofs of his Victorian architecture book promptly, so that he could go abroad. Hitchcock left for Europe in July for a “five to six week”

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750 By mid April it was clear for Hitchcock that he would not be going to Latin America until October. Letter, Henry-Russell Hitchcock to Vincent Scully, April 15, 1954. Hitchcock Papers, Box 6, Correspondence S, 1954, AAA.
751 Letter, Henry-Russell Hitchcock to Colin Rowe, May 24, 1954. Hitchcock Papers, Box 6, Correspondence R, 1954, AAA.
752 For his itinerary see: Letter, Henry-Russell Hitchcock to Marion Ross, March 3, 1954. Hitchcock Papers, Box 6, Correspondence P, 1954, AAA. Hitchcock gave a total of five lectures, which paid for his Western trip; one of these being “The Rise of Commercial Architecture: 1800-1900.”
753 Letter, Henry-Russell Hitchcock to Robert Duemling, April 25, 1954. Hitchcock Papers, Box 6, Correspondence D-E, 1954, AAA. Late September 1954, MIT Dean Pietro Belluschi approached Hitchcock to revise his text for an old pamphlet: “Education of Architects and City Planners at MIT.” The intent was to use “your beautifully written” text and take “advantage and prestige of your words” to introduce the changes to the school, all this under a new design by György Kepes. Hitchcock replied that he could possibly complete the revisions by the end of 1954. See he correspondence between Hitchcock and Belluschi: Hitchcock Papers, Box 6, Correspondence A, 1954, AAA. See also: Henry-Russell Hitchcock to Pietro Belluschi, Jan 11, 1955. Hitchcock Papers, Box 6, Correspondence B, 1955, AAA.
trip to England, France, Italy and Switzerland, returning mid September. Before leaving for Europe, he traveled to Boston for his 30th class reunion at Harvard, and to present *A Guide to Boston Architecture* at the AIA convention. He also attended and was asked to produce the final remarks for the “Thin Concrete Shells” conference at MIT. There, he had the opportunity to meet Félix Candela. Latin America was certainly on his mind since, during this hectic summer, he started proposing the architecture of the region as a possible theme for future talks at the Carnegie Institute, Georgia Tech, and, in New York, at the Society of Architectural Historian’s 8th Meeting, for its Latin America Session.

While at Boston, he got “to work with the magazines [in Harvard library] to make a preselection and to decide what countries it would be important to visit.” It would then be possible, he wrote McKenna, to set a general itinerary, which he expected to discuss with Johnson, and “wind the thing up with six weeks rather than two months.” Hitchcock’s concern over the length of the Latin America trip had to do with his commitments in London, which anteceded the Latin American endeavor. Back in 1946, Hitchcock had agreed to produce a volume for the Pelican History of Art—a series edited

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755 Letter, Henry-Russell Hitchcock to Passport Division, Department of State, June 11, 1954. Hitchcock Papers, Box 6, Correspondence P, 1954, AAA.
757 The Conference was in June 21, 1954. Hitchcock was asked to summarize the remarks of the presenters, which included: Serge Chermayeff, Philip Johnson, Félix Candela, Bob Newman, Stanly McCandless and “and engineer named Whitney.” Letter, Henry-Russell Hitchcock to Robert Duemling, June 25, 1954. Hitchcock Papers, Box 6, Correspondence D-E, 1954, AAA.
759 Letter, June 9, 1954. Henry-Russell Hitchcock to Rollie McKenna. Hitchcock Papers, Box 6, Correspondence M, 1954, AAA.
760 Ibid.
by Nikolaus Pevsner—that would eventually see publication in 1958 as *Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*.\(^{761}\) By early 1954, Pevsner was pressuring him to meet his January 1955 manuscript deadline. Hitchcock was concerned over the overall quality of the book, “If I am to produce such a book [of Summerson’s caliber], I know I cannot do it in the interstices of other labors.” Explaining his situation to Pevsner, he commented

> There is ... a considerable chance that [MoMA] will be sending me to Latin America next fall to get material for a "Built in Latin America" show, paralleling last year's "Built in the USA" show. Had I thought I could possibly accomplish anything on the book for you on top of my college work during the fall, I would not have said that I was available for the Latin America junket.\(^{762}\)

Although Hitchcock was able to move the manuscript deadline to the following year, his commitment with Pelican continued to press on his MoMA endeavor, preventing him, for example, to see the finished exhibition, something he later deeply regretted. It is important to underscore that the Latin America trip changed the nature of Hitchcock’s book, as he commented to Fiske Kimball, “How large the world had become as regards architecture in the 19\(^{th}\) Century had just been further impressed upon me by a trip through Latin America—a continent and a half with which I had previously had no contact.”\(^{763}\)

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\(^{761}\) See: Letter, Nikolaus Pevsner to Alfred Barr, October 11, 1946. Folder 1216, Box 125, Subseries L, Record Group 4, NAR Papers, RAC.


\(^{763}\) Letter, December 13, 1954. Henry-Russell Hitchcock to Fiske Kimball. Hitchcock Papers, Box 6, Correspondence I-K, 1954, AAA.
What first appeared as two independent projects (the Pelican book and MoMA’s exhibition) started to come together after Hitchcock returned from Latin America.

Hitchcock’s research at Harvard’s library proved somewhat unproductive, due to its “poor collection” of Latin American architecture journals. As he commented to Paul Rudolph,

I am shocked that Harvard library has such a poor coverage. I have been through the files of two Argentine magazines and one Cuban one with little edification to date, but of course I was already aware that Mexico, Brazil, and after them Colombia and Venezuela have the best stuff. The Mexican and Brazilian magazines are at Yale, and I shall be going through them shortly. So far, I have been unable to locate any Colombian or Venezuelan magazines.\(^764\)

His comments recalled those made in 1942 by Janet Henrich on the general lack of information on the architecture of the region as MoMA considered its first architecture survey. Hitchcock made no comments on the coverage of region’s architecture in US and European journals. Focusing on Latin American journals, he turned to James Grote van Derpoole, librarian at Columbia’s Avery Library. “You may have,” he asked van Derpoole, “periodicals from several countries that I believe to be active architecturally, whose work is not represented either at Yale or Harvard; I mean notably Colombia, Venezuela, Chile and Uruguay.”\(^765\) Columbia’s collection, however, proved to be useless, since most of the titles where not current; as Hitchcock informed van Derpoole, “I doubt


\(^765\) Letter, Henry-Russell Hitchcock to James Grote van Derpoole, June 25, 1954. Hitchcock Papers, Box 6, Correspondence T-V, AAA.
if I am interested in the files before 1950." In order to “see the later years,” he would have to go to the Pan-American Union’s library. It is not clear, however, if he did. In mid-September, he met with Jose Luis Sert, John McAndrew and George Kubler. He intensified his trips to Boston, New Haven and New Canaan. Hitchcock was still working on the Johnson article for the Review, and assisting William Jordy with additions to his architecture bibliography; a project Jordy had been working on since April 1954.

Hitchcock was not the only one preparing the Latin America trip. MoMA mobilized its resources and prepared a comprehensive document that manifested a network of individuals associated with varying degrees of distance to the museum and to the region. The “Data on Personalities in Latin American Countries Prepared for the Use of Henry-Russell Hitchcock and R. Thorne McKenna,” compiled by FCR and RRK and organized by country, assembled a list of prominent personalities in Latin America, from US embassy personnel to local art collectors, industrialists, intellectuals and

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766 Letter, Henry-Russell Hitchcock to James Grote van Derpoole, July 21, 1954. Hitchcock Papers, Box 6, Correspondence T-V, AAA. Columbia had Ingeniería y Arquitectura, 1939-50 and Proa 1946-49 from Colombia; the Chilean Arquitectura y Construcción, 1945-50, and Arquitectura from Uruguay, “through 1941.” Letter, James Grote van Derpoole to Henry-Russell Hitchcock, June 28, 1954. Hitchcock Papers, Box 6, Correspondence T-V, AAA.


769 It is possible that RRK is Rose Kolmetz, Secretary and Research Assistant, International Program. FCR may be Francis Rosett, Administrative Assistant for Administration, Circulating Exhibitions and the International Program. I extrapolate this from the personnel list in the 25th Anniversary Bulletin, p. 35. "Data on Personalities in Latin American Countries Prepared for the Use of Henry-Russell Hitchcock and R. Thorne McKenna," n/d, unpaginated. CE, II.1. 69(1) 3/5. MoMA Archives, NY.
architects. Porter McCray figured prominently in this document, recommending figures like Carlos Raúl Villanueva in Caracas, and Gilbert Chase, US Cultural Attaché, in Buenos Aires. John McAndrew also played an important role in bringing together various personalities from across the continent. McCray and McAndrew contributed most names to this document. However, other US architectural and MoMA personalities participated in assembling this elite Latin American intelligentsia. Josep Lluis Sert, Eduardo Catalano, Leopold Arnaud, Monroe Wheeler, René d’Harnoncourt, Paul Lester Weiner, Edward Durell Stone, and Harmon Goldstone, provided names of friends and acquaintances that revealed a complex network of influences and relations to Latin America in the United States. Conspicuously absent from this list was Nelson Rockefeller.

Absent Rockefeller

In early 1953, Nelson Rockefeller had returned to Washington, DC, to serve under President Eisenhower as chairman of the Committee on Governmental Organization. The Committee covered various government agencies as well as the entire executive branch—Presidency, State, Defense, Treasure, Interior, Labor, Agriculture and Commerce. Rockefeller, for example, was involved in the reorganization of the Department of Defense. He also actively participated in the creation of a new government agency, the Health, Education and Welfare Department (HEW), approved by Congress in

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770 The columns of the document are: Name & Address; Recommended by; Comment; Correspondence. The names in this list were traced to their contacts in the US, and were accompanied by a comment next to each one that allowed for a relational field to be established.  
771 His name appears in several forms. There is a P.A.M. abbreviation throughout this document, which stands for Porter A. McCray.
April 1953, for which he would serve as under-secretary until December 1954.\textsuperscript{772} As Darlene Rivas points out, it is important to remember that Rockefeller never abandoned his personal interest in Latin America, and that this interest was the foundation of his view that the United States needed to play a more active role in the economic and social improvement of the developing world. As Rivas poignantly argues, the reorganization of the US government spearheaded by Rockefeller was premised on the need for the government to do more at home and abroad.\textsuperscript{773}

To this effect, Rockefeller had, since the 1950 agreement with the Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo, supported the creation of a network of modern art museums in Latin America (Fig. 6.2). Set within the floundering cultural policies of the US government and Congress’ attacks on modern art, this private network of cultural management served as the context and background to MoMA’s International Program. In the latter months of 1953, as Rockefeller—still a MoMA Trustee—was actively involved in the Eisenhower administration, Monroe Wheeler toured Latin America. In January 1954, Wheeler, Director of Exhibitions and Publications, wrote Rockefeller reporting back to him on an expanding network of modern art museums. Wheeler enthusiastically pointed out how

My trip to South America was a revelation to me. The need for what we can provide is immeasurable. Wherever I went, a museum of modern art began to spring up under my feet, and in each capitol [sic] they implored


me not to leave, but to stay and help them. I arranged exhibitions of our publications in each of the seven countries I visited, and ascertained the best auspices for our circulating shows.

Wheeler’s enthusiasm recalled that of d’Harnoncourt in 1945. The ability of the museum to bring together a vast, variegated and unknown territory, its capacity to send its representatives to plow the earth to discover a budding modernity under their feet and to channel funds into the creation of a network of modern art reveals Rockefeller’s missionary drive, one that encompassed every field of modern culture and aimed at recruiting like-minded individuals. In Chile, industrialist and media mogul Arturo Edwards had formed the Institute of Modern Art, a “completely Private Institution.” In Colombia, Wheeler’s visit had sparked the interest and action of the Centro ColomboAmericano in Bogotá that wanted to know “what has been done in Caracas and in Brazil, and what assistance … might be expected from [MoMA].” In Puerto Rico, Wheeler and the President of the University, Jaime Benitez, collaborated to open the University’s art gallery, for which MoMA’s International Program contributed an exhibition in late 1953.

In the early 1950s, Rockefeller had just come out of the floundering of President Truman’s Point Four Program, a foreign assistance program to the developing world aimed at countering criticism of the administration’s overall focus on European reconstruction and its ideological fight against communism. Rockefeller had been an enthusiastic defender of Point Four.774 Since 1947, with the creation of the International Basic Economy Corporation (IBEC), Rockefeller had been involved in establishing a

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private development organization along the lines of what he termed “Creative Capitalism.” Bringing his 1940s OCIAA experience, a zeal for governmental organization and more importantly, a deep belief in the key role of free enterprise in the development of democracy, Rockefeller championed the responsibility of the free citizen to their community. In an attempt to marshal private enterprise into the field of development, Rockefeller was able to create a corporation that, as he highlighted, imbued social objectives with capitalist incentives: “American business needed to look to the missionary tradition in the United States.” Rockefeller’s initiatives were not limited to poverty eradication programs; IBEC programs also aimed at creating a middle class consumer in Latin America. As Evan Ward points out, through IBEC, Rockefeller aimed at creating a consumer market to raise the standards of living. The building of supermarkets (Automercados, Fig. 6.3) and shopping centers in Venezuela and Peru during the late 1940s and early 1950s, as models for the entire region, deployed a new consumer culture along US lines; more importantly, it mobilized modern architecture in a complex relational network between local and US architecture firms to promote, expand and define the practices and aesthetics of modern mass consumerism. The 1955 MoMA show would make a clear overture to this budding consumer and private enterprise world with, for example, Vega and Galia’s Edificio Polar in Caracas, which incorporated commercial amenities such as a home furnishings store and a Chrysler sales showroom across the street (Fig. 6.4). Rockefeller sponsored initiatives mobilized modern culture at all levels. MoMA’s 1955 show, although not directly part of

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775 This was the title of an unpublished book that would have explained the IBEC philosophy. Rivas, Missionary Capitalist: Nelson Rockefeller in Venezuela. p. 176.
776 Ibid. p. 183.
Rockefeller’s IBEC initiatives should be considered within this multi-tier method development. This complex approach to modernity came together in their normative intent.

_A Normative Exhibition_

A network of modern art museums was part of a complex management of modern culture at every level guided by a marked missionary tradition within the context of US Cold War hegemony over the region. As in Brazil, local industrialists across Latin America were taking the initiative to extend the network of modern art and establishing alternative competing centers. As Edwards bluntly pointed out to Wheeler, “our intention is to contact [sic] a chain around New York, São Paulo and Perú, where something similar is already starting.”

Local initiative, however, prompted a clear response from Wheeler, who saw the need to establish standards of excellence, thus making MoMA the central or validating node of this expanding network. Wheeler concluded his January 1954 letter to Rockefeller by pointing out,

Another important thing we can do is to help establish standards of excellence in modern architecture, by singling out the finest things they have done. I have suggested to Philip Johnson that we do a book called “Built in Latin America,” and he has agreed to go down to make the selections, if we can find the funds.

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779 Letter, Monroe Wheeler to Nelson A. Rockefeller, Jan 9, 1954. Folder 1597, Box 157, Subseries L, Record Group 4, NAR Papers, RAC.
Contrary to *Brazil Builds*, which was fundamentally organized along the lines of *reconocimiento*, that is, of acknowledgement and praise, and more importantly, on the US need to learn from Latin American culture as set by the OCIAA, the 1955 exhibition had a normative intent aimed at the region itself. Although the notion of acknowledgement was still present in the final exhibition, a clear demarcation line manifested itself in the preparations of the 1955 show. This subtle yet significant difference conditioned the exhibition. Latin American culture then manifested a particular form of foreignness in line with the International Program’s directive to prepare exhibitions “on other areas of the world to be presented in the US.” This difference with a US context was later highlighted by Drexler, who in a letter to Hitchcock, commented on how, “The general reaction [to the exhibition] among [US] architects is almost one of relief on discovering that Latin-American work does not impose on them the need to abandon whatever they have been doing and declare themselves followers of still another revolution.”

This was no *Brazil Builds*.

The relational Pan-American territory created under the guise of a Western Hemisphere was being taken apart. As Wheeler’s comments to Rockefeller revealed, the Latin American architecture show had an ambivalent audience, being organized for a US public but aimed at a Latin American one, a perspective shared by Hitchcock, who insisted on the need to send the show to the region. This orientation was in place even well before the exhibition itself. As Hitchcock wrote in December 1954, ten days upon return from the region, “I came more and more to feel that the work of comparison I was undertaking of current architecture in the various Latin-American countries might well be

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of more interest to people down there than up here.” It appeared then that the show was to be crafted for a dual audience, both present and absent. As Hitchcock wrote to architectural historian James Ackerman on a lecture he was to give on the region’s architecture at the Society of Architectural Historian in early 1955, “I will be talking to absent South American friends.”

The normative context established by *Built in the USA: Post-War Architecture* guided the formation of the museum’s second Latin American architecture survey. This was clearly present in Hitchcock’s answer to van Derpoole regarding Avery Library’s Latin American journal collection and his indifference to any work prior to 1950. As an exhibition “paralleling [the 1953] ‘Built in the USA’ show,” it highlighted an important pressing context that clearly positioned Latin America in the postwar, not to mention the Cold War. In the end, however, Arthur Drexler, who curated the show, objected. In a later debate over the correct title for the Latin American show, Drexler argued “against using post-war in the title, since it is a disagreeable phrase and I do not feel it has any real relevance to this particular book.” For Drexler, Latin America was outside the primary context of the early 1950s postwar, and any title for the exhibition that hinted at any such context was, in his mind, “downright mis-leading.” When Drexler cited *Built in the USA: Post-war Architecture* in the preface of the *Latin American Architecture since 1945* catalogue as an example of the Department’s important activity “to call the attention of

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781 Letter, Henry-Russell Hitchcock to Shippen Goodhue, December 12, 1954. Hitchcock Papers, Box 6, Correspondence G, 1954, AAA.
782 Letter, Henry-Russell Hitchcock to James Ackerman, January 11, 1955. Hitchcock Papers, Box 6, Correspondence A, 1954, AAA.
783 Letter, Henry-Russell Hitchcock to Nikolaus Pevsner, February 12, 1954. Hitchcock Papers, Box 6, Correspondence P, 1954, AAA.
outstanding architectural work in all countries,” he stated that the 1953 show represented the “quality and significance of the moment.” He may have been simply citing the last major architecture show at MoMA. Yet, he did not mention The Architecture of Japan exhibition, which he organized in 1953-54, and better served to highlight the “outstanding work in all [other] countries,” and the International Program’s role in the Latin America show.

What this apparently minor scuffle over the title of the 1955 exhibition revealed—beyond Drexler’s personal views on the nature of Latin America and/or its architecture in the Cold War—was a clash between the position of the Architecture Department and the needs of the International Program with its efforts to mobilize MoMA’s cultural products within an global stage. What is important, however, is that the contours of the show had been defined even before Hitchcock had left for the region. This need for a normative approach—a need to establish clear standards and norms for the architecture of the region—had a clear and poignant predecessor in the 1953 São Paulo Biennial.

In 1954, The Architectural Review published its second “Report on Brazil.” This one, however, was framed by the II São Paulo Bienal and, because of the international caliber of architectural critics engaged in, it was deemed to be the “first really authoritative report on the situation” in South America since Brazil Builds. Much had been published in European and US journals on this “boom-province of the Modern Movement” (Fig. 6.5). What was needed, the Review argued, was an authoritative eyewitness report since “the movement’s masters have hardly visited since Le Corbusier

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lent his authority and support.”788 The call for a definitive report based on an eyewitness authoritative judgment, so as not to “rely on photographs and inflated newspapers stories,” outlined a problem that Alf Byden had identified four years earlier in his first report for the Review. If in 1950, as Byden commented, the drive for novelty had distorted “our understanding of modern Brazilian architecture,” by 1953 this drive had infected Brazilian modernism itself, producing, in the views of Hiroshi Ohye, one of its eyewitnesses, buildings designed “chiefly for effect and to look well in photographic reproduction.”789

The main line of critique was launched by Swiss designer Max Bill and Italian Architect Ernesto Rogers. At the center of the controversy was Niemeyer, and, in particular, his 1953 house at Canoas (Fig. 6.29). Bill’s critique, launched in a public lecture and reproduced in the Review, centered on the vocation of the architect and his/her social responsibility. Bill told his Brazilian audience how “architecture in your country stands in danger of falling into a parlous state of anti-social academicism.”790 He dissected the elements of Brazilian architecture to unravel how these “embody the academic spirit modernized.” Free-form was a purely decorative and painterly expression tied to Kandisky and Arp. “In Europe,” he argued, “one comes across [it] in decoration, in textiles, in advertising and in terrible exhibition stands.” These free-forms, he insisted, had “nothing to do with serious architecture” (Fig. 6.6). The “all-glass wall,” another of the elements of Brazilian modernism, remained “impractical in the absence of air conditioning and very careful technical services,” according to Bill (Fig. 6.7). The brise-soleil, which gained functional reason only because of the “mania for the all-glass walls”

788 Ibid.
in such latitudes, had impeded “new solutions,” and now, present in all façades, it had become a mere formalist expression, a cliché (Fig. 6.8). It was the piloti, however, on which Bill focused his most acerbic criticism (Fig. 6.9). “Initially the pilotis were straight, but now they are beginning to assume very baroque forms. At first glance,” Bill asserted, “they may strike one as an indigenous mode of construction, but it is one which has now become purely decorative.” Pointing to an example he saw in a street of São Paulo, Bill was angered to see piloti construction […] carried to extremes one would have supposed impossible. There, I saw some shocking things, modern architecture sunk to the depths, a riot of anti social waste, lacking any sense of responsibility towards either the business occupant or his costumers. […] what it illustrates to me is the utmost possible abuse of freedom of form and most fantastic possible employment of pilotis.

“Here,” Bill concluded, “is utter anarchy in building, jungle growth in the worst sense.”791 How was this “barbarism” possible, Bill asked, in a country with a CIAM group; in a country where international congresses were held and quality journals were published. Such works exhibit “a spirit devoid of all decency and all responsibility toward human needs.”792

Ernesto Rogers followed suit, first criticizing Giedion for “failing to perceive [how this architecture] had degenerated into license and caprice.” He echoed Gropius, who had pointed out that such exuberance “can be understood only if one knows Rio.

791 Ibid. p. 238.
792 Ibid. p. 239.
There,” he emphasized, “one can do the craziest things unpunished.” Rogers added an apparently fitting geographical and cultural analogy. “Brazilian women,” he stated, make a great show of their bracelets and other innumerable trinkets; they would be striking even if you met them in Engadina [Switzerland]; but against that background of Alpine glaciers you might be inclined to take exception to their ostentatiousness; yet if you saw them at Copacabana you would have to admit that they are in perfect keeping with their background.

“The same,” Rogers concluded, “may be said for the best work of Oscar Niemeyer.” Localism, however, had had an ill effect, for unforgivable faults followed “this capricious artist.” Niemeyer’s work, nonetheless, was, Rogers insisted, valuable because it had “understood a number of typical values of his country,” values that “may be deduced by analogy from its physiography.”793 This physiographic frame, which emphasized the visual representation of the world, had been a staple in European ideas on the tropics since the early nineteenth century.794

The Review published its report in October 1954—while Hitchcock was traveling through the region. It is possible that Hitchcock, with ample connections to the Review, had knowledge of a debate that had occurred in December 1953; there is, however, no evidence to this effect. At the same time, this general conversation over the need to contain formal experimentation had already been articulated at MoMA’s 1948 symposium, What is Happening to Modern Architecture? The questions of postwar

793 Ibid. p. 239-40.
standards and the inheritance of early modernism was a central theme in São Paulo. The 1953 Biennial exhibited in its special rooms a retrospective exhibition on Gropius’ works, organized by Gropius and Boston’s Institute of Contemporary Art. The hall of the United States showed MoMA’s *Built in the USA: Post-war Architecture*. In the United States, the discussion over “standards of excellence” both embraced and went beyond MoMA. In April 1955, the Barnard College Committee on American Civilization held a conference, titled “A Search for New Standards in Modern America,” in which both Hitchcock and Philip Johnson participated. Hitchcock’s lecture, “Modern Architecture in the Third Generation: A Living Tradition,” consisted of a series of comparisons of well-known European and US buildings. What was significant was that in these comparisons he included some of the buildings he had visited in Latin America. A month later, he refined this lecture, focusing the comparison to the United States and Latin America in a talk he titled “Modern Architecture in the Two Americas: The Third Generation.” If Wheeler had envisioned the project as a way to guide standards in Latin America, with his lecture, Hitchcock demonstrated that such standards of excellence as developed in Latin America could participate in this larger postwar conversation, highlighting modernism’s still vibrant adaptation and internationalist vocation.

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796 See the numerous letters to and from Henry B. Parks. Hitchcock Papers, Box 6, Correspondence B, 1955, AAA.
797 “Modern Architecture in the Third Generation: A Living Tradition,” Hitchcock Papers, Box 6, Correspondence B, 1955, AAA. The lecture is not among Hitchcock’s papers; there is only a list of buildings he used.
798 See the correspondence with John F. Helm. Hitchcock Papers, Box 7, Correspondence K, 1955, AAA. The lecture was part of the Fine Arts Festival Centennial Arts Program, at Kansas State College, May 1955.
Latin American Architecture since 1945

Although originally planned to be a two-to-three-month survey of the architecture of the region, the expedition was condensed to six weeks. This, however, did not impede the collection of a vast amount of material on which the museum started preparations for its second Latin American architecture survey. In late December 1954, Hitchcock and McKenna met with McCray, Drexler and Johnson to start arranging the show. An early February 1955 deadline was set to meet the intended March opening; by mid January, however, it was clear that it had to be postponed. This was the first of a series of postponements and complications that plagued the show. Upon his return, Hitchcock was engaged with lectures, his teaching responsibilities and preparations for a 15-month sabbatical that would take him to London to work on his book for the Pelican press. Hitchcock’s main priority was going “abroad” so that he could settle in London to work on it. He had planned to sail immediately after the Latin American show opened in June. Delays with the show started to worry him. The catalogue, Hitchcock commented, was being complicated “by a stupid decision to print it abroad and a possibly more sensible decision to make it bylingual [sic].”

Drexler was equally busy. By the summer of 1954, Johnson had resigned as Director of MoMA’s Architecture Department, leaving him with all administrative and

799 He gave two lectures at the University of Delaware in first week of March. See: Letter, Henry-Russell Hitchcock to Frank Sommer, February 23, 1955. Hitchcock Papers, Box 7, Correspondence W-Z, 1955, AAA.
800 See: Letter, Henry-Russell Hitchcock to John Hoag, April 19, 1955. Hitchcock Papers, Box 6, Correspondence H, 1955, AAA. Hoag, who was working on his dissertation on Rodrigo Hil de Hontañón in Spain had offered to do “any research you might have wanted done here in Spain.”
801 Letter, Henry-Russell Hitchcock to Robert Duemling, March 12, 1955. Hitchcock Papers, Box 6, Correspondence D, 1955, AAA.
curatorial responsibilities.\textsuperscript{802} At this time Drexler was overseeing the final details of his *Architecture of Japan* book, which accompanied *The Japanese House* exhibition that opened at MoMA in June 1955. Over the first part of the summer he had gone to Europe to gather materials for a Le Corbusier show to open in 1956, it, however, did not materialize.\textsuperscript{803} Now that Drexler “is back from around the world in pursuit of Le Corbusier,” commented Hitchcock in May, “and the production people are at work on the layout of the book,” the Latin American exhibition, “seem[s] to be moving forward.”\textsuperscript{804} Shortly after, however, in mid-May, it was decided to postpone the exhibition again, this time until November; this, would release it from “the limitations of space during the summer” and “allot it considerable more space.”\textsuperscript{805} Hitchcock was clearly perturbed at the continued delays. On early June 10, having completed the text for the catalogue and “the plans for installation worked out,” he wrote McCray that his work for the Latin American show was “effectively completed.” He would remain “in close touch.”\textsuperscript{806} He sailed for England the next day and, immediately upon arriving, left for Greece and Turkey, following with a three-week tour of Italy before settling back in London.\textsuperscript{807}


\textsuperscript{803} Letter, Henry-Russell Hitchcock to Robert Duemling, March 12, 1955. Hitchcock Papers, Box 6, Correspondence D, 1955, AAA.


\textsuperscript{805} Letter, Henry-Russell Hitchcock to James Webb, May 17, 1955. Hitchcock Papers, Box 7, Correspondence W-Z, 1955, AAA.

\textsuperscript{806} Letter, Henry-Russell Hitchcock to Porter McCray, June 10, 1955. Hitchcock Papers, Box 7, Correspondence, Museum of Modern Art, 1955, AAA.

\textsuperscript{807} See: Letter, Henry-Russell Hitchcock to Henrique Mindlin, June 6, 1955. AAA, Hitchcock Papers, Box 7, Correspondence M, 1955.
Latin American Architecture since 1945 was composed and installed by Drexler, with help of Mildred “Connie” Constantine, Associate Curator of Graphic Design. It presented 47 buildings by 56 architects selected primarily by Hitchcock, through “large-scale photo panels and plans supplemented by three-dimensional color slides in individual viewers.” Unlike Brazil Builds, no models or mock-ups were exhibited. The 49 color, three-dimensional images that “supplemented” the black-and-white photographs were the supporting evidence of the importance of color in Latin American architecture. Unlike Brazil Builds, however, the catalogue had no color images. Like Brazil Builds, the Latin American show was originally intended for the ground floor galleries of the museum but later was moved to the third-floor gallery, which provided for a “better space and allowed a much more effectively controlled exhibition.” Drexler had discussed the original layout for the ground floor galleries with Hitchcock; the final third floor layout being “fairly close” to the original one. If one considers the layout of the two gallery spaces, however, it is difficult see how the final layout of the exhibition could be installed in a fairly close manner in the first-floor gallery. One must

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808 Drexler was involved in “a graphic design exhibition, a glass exhibition, the Latin America book and finally the Latin America show.” Letter to Henry Russell Hitchcock, presumably from Arthur Drexler, November 23, 1955. CUR Exh. 590 CUR, MoMA Archives NY. Mildred Constantine was no stranger to Latin America. During World War II, she organized an exhibition on posters from Latin America for the William Morris Agency, exhibited in Rockefeller Plaza and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. See: Letter, Porter McCray to Henry Allen Moe, March 3, 1949. AAA, Porter McCray Papers Papers, Box 9, previously unfolded (personal). Carleton Sprague-Smith, long acquaintance of Nelson A. Rockefeller, recommended Constandine to MoMA. See: Memo, Lawrence Levy to Nelson A. Rockefeller, October 1, 1947. Folder 144, Box 17, Series Countries, Record Group 4, NAR Papers, RAC.


810 The photographs of the exhibition can be categorized in three ways: those supplied directly by the architects, the black and white photographs taken by Rollie McKenna, and the stereo color photographs taken by McKenna but owned by the Department of Circulating Exhibitions. Memo from Drexler to Bernard Karpel, February 3, 1956. Exh. 590 CUR, MoMA Archives, NY.


assume then that in his letter to Hitchcock, Drexler referred to a similar idea governing the design of the exhibition, one that could then be adapted to the new space for the exhibition.

The third-flood gallery was reconstituted into two rooms, a long rectangular hall, named “the corridor,” open at one end from which one would enter the exhibition, and a smaller adjacent rectangular space, named “the cork room” (Fig. 6.10) The most salient feature of the corridor was its dropped, luminous ceiling (Fig. 6.11) Large-scale black-and-white photomurals, mounted on 8-feet-high panels, inhabited the corridor under the white light of the ceiling’s Synskin panels. The cork room was made of cork panels (12” x 36” by 1 ½” thick) glued to the walls, and laid out to resemble a masonry wall in which photo-panels were inlaid (Fig. 6.12). This room was noticeably darker than the corridor, the photos being illuminated with spotlights. The two rooms had opposing characters: The dark cave-like experience of the cork room contrasted the white walls and luminous ceiling of the corridor (Fig. 6.13). The juxtaposition was “stunning,” recalled Agnes Gilchrist, “[the] first part is all white and a low ceiling and the blow-ups are immense and there is not much room owing to free standing panels and so the spectator is hurled right into the buildings.” Like the dropped ceiling, the cork room appeared to have been Drexler’s idea. It had a much higher ceiling than the corridor and, painted brown, tended to disappear, making the space feel “loose.” The cork panels where noticeably brown and added a material character that caused visitors to confuse it with “cinder

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813 Carpentry, Latin American Architecture, Nov. 1955. Exh. 590 CUR, MoMA Archives, NY. It was constructed from 1” x 6” pieces of white pine with 1” x 3” strips on the side to support frames with Synskin panels of pure white.
block.” Stereo viewers were located at the threshold of the two rooms, creating “an interlude [...] which show the buildings whole as tiny holes of colored blocks in the atmospheric distance with hills and mist or pleasant blue sky.”

The exhibition was “beautifully staged by Drexler,” commented Philip Goodwin to Hitchcock, “with such excellent photographs [...] Almost you would persuade me that your lady friend was as good as Geks Smith.” Almost as good as Kidder Smith perhaps because, upon arrival, the visitor was assaulted by 22 large-scale photomurals mounted on rectangular panels that reached from the floor to the luminous ceiling (Fig. 6.14). After being confronted by an initial large, blank white panel that overwhelmed the five short paragraphs of explanatory text (Fig. 6.15), the visitor would be drawn into the long, luminous corridor and see at its end the largest image of the exhibition that covered the entire back wall: an overall panoramic view of the hills of Caracas with the 1954 Cerro Piloto housing blocks. It was as if 22 of the 48 housing mega-blocks of Cerro Piloto had descended the hills of Caracas, marching into the corridor. At the other end of this stampede, containing its blunt force, was Niemeyer’s 1943 São Francisco Church in Pampulha (Fig. 6.16). Visible upon initial arrival, Niemeyer’s church marked the other pole of Latin American architecture. Niemeyer’s lyrical vaults were juxtaposed with the productive and economic rationality of modern architecture channeled through governmental housing projects. The corridor presented a complex play of visual and

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817 Ibid.
819 This image, “the most striking that Mrs. McKenna took anywhere,” made the project “at least appear completed,” thus hide the fact that its inclusion violated the guidelines of the exhibition which had to include only finished works. Letter, Henry-Russell Hitchcock to Carlos Benacerraf, January 14, 1955. Exh. 590 CUR, MoMA Archives, NY.
formal juxtapositions. Niemeyer’s church, for example, was juxtaposed with the back facade of Carlos Raúl Villanueva’s Aula Magna in Caracas (Fig. 6.17; Fig. 6.15). Villanueva’s temperate back façade showed singular technical restraint. This, however, was a peculiar way of exhibiting this building. Villanueva himself had sent a large format photograph of the Aula Magna interior to be used at the exhibition. This was used, however, as a small image accompanied by a ceiling plan specially made for the exhibition; it did appear, nonetheless, as a main image for the Aula Magna in the catalogue.\(^{820}\)

Smaller photographs with plans and diagrams accompanied the large-scale photomurals, meant to explain the unfolding juxtapositions to visitors. Max Borges’ “melodramatic” vaults of the Tropicana Cabaret in Havana “rivals in autochthonous Latin American quality the work of Niemeyer”\(^{821}\). This statement must have been visually clear, for, although it made it into the catalogue, it had been erased in the captions of the exhibition—the caption compared the Tropicana vaults with the “industrial buildings of Mexico and Colombia.”\(^{822}\) A Brazilian project, Castro de Mello’s 1952-53 swimming pool in São Paulo, was “rather clumsily detailed architecturally” to be close to Niemeyer’s lyrical vaults.\(^{823}\) Located deep within the corridor, next to the Cerro Piloto housing blocks, it would remind visitors—as noted by the caption—that the “ubiquitous curves of Brazilian modern architecture [...] have, as in Niemeyer’s church, structural

\(^{820}\) Letter, Henry-Russell Hitchcock to Alexander Calder, Dec 19, 1955. AAA, Hitchcock Papers, Box 6, Correspondence C, 1955. Calder wanted to use this photograph for a show on his work at the Klaus Perls Gallery, New York, opening Feb. 6, 1956. This image was not credited to any photographer or photo service, and must be the one Villanueva sent.  
\(^{822}\) CR 10776, 11-10-55, [Exhibition Captions] Exh. 590 CUR, MoMA Archives, NY.  
\(^{823}\) Hitchcock and Museum of Modern Art (New York N.Y.), *Latin American Architecture since 1945*, p. 100. This statement was voided in the exhibition caption.
Borges’ Tropicana vaults faced those of Mello’s pool (Fig. 6.18).

At the end of the corridor, next to the large Cerro Piloto photomural, was a composite collage of urban façades. Composed of 16 buildings from across the region, this collage made visible a general impression about “the striking contemporary air of most Latin American cities” (Fig. 6.19) Drexler highlighted this duality—between actually being modern and the appearance of modernity—and stressed that the quantity of current buildings in the region gave “the appearance… of predominantly ‘modern’ cities.” This, Drexler concluded, gave “the opportunity to observe effects that which we ourselves still only anticipate.”

Composed as a “main street modern USA,” the collage brought to light three dominant categories: the “common alternating horizontal strips of window and cement” typical of modern architecture “all over the world since the 1920s;” the “Latin American specialty” of the brise-soleil, and the “sheathing of buildings with various combinations of glass and opaque panels.” This last category revealed the influence of the United States, and the presence—if not of full steel construction—at least of “continuous metal chassis-frames” in tall building façades. It also manifested the presence in the region of the stylistic language of Mies van der Rohe.

Opposite the luminous space of the corridor, the cork room—with its dark high ceiling space—signaled, as noted by visitors, a change from the public to the private. The combination of large and small images in the cork room drew visitors in: large images lured them, while smaller ones prompted a closer proximity for examination. The

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824 CR 10776, 11-10-55, [Exhibition Captions]. Exh. 590 CUR, MoMA Archives, NY.
cork room presented a total of 30 works organized along three walls in clusters (Fig. 6.20). Public buildings—such as Harrison & Abramovitz’s US Embassy in Havana, the Roberto Brothers’ Rio Airport, Torro & Ferrer’s Caribe Hilton hotel and UNAM’s Olympic Stadium in Mexico City—grouped all on one wall exemplified public buildings (Fig. 6.21; Fig. 6.22). Opposite this wall were eight examples of private homes that included Luis Barragán’s own studio house in Mexico City, Le Corbusier’s Casa Curruchet in La Plata and Niemeyer’s house in Canoas, this being the largest image in the group (Fig. 6.23). The connecting wall, longer than the other two, had a center of gravity anchored by Costa’s Guinle Park apartment building being counterbalanced with a another Rio design, this one smaller: the private complex of Jorge Moreira’s Ceppas Apartment Building. Next to Moreira’s building was Affonso Reidy’s school for the Pedregulho complex, which articulated the field of public buildings (Fig. 6.24). Overall, the theme of housing in its broadest sense—from private house to housing block—dominated the cork room. Examples of private homes appeared on all walls, public housing projects in two, and private apartment buildings on one, the longest of the walls.

The corridor housed complex visual juxtapositions that illustrated the “remarkable range and vitality,” as proclaimed in a concise, five-paragraph description at the beginning of the exhibition (Fig 6.15). “The quality of Latin American architecture,” visitors were instructed, “reflects both the mature authority of such masters as Costa and Niemeyer in Brazil and O’Gorman in Mexico, and the vigor of several younger talents trained in their own countries or in the United States.”826 All this energy and passion, however, was subdued under the all-encompassing homogeneous light of the corridor.

The luminous ceiling was used as a formal device to highlight a uniform style. This staging revealed the normative intent of the exhibition. As Goodwin commented, upon visiting the show, the architecture of the region “seems to be settling down into monotonous uniformity.”

This space, with its dropped luminous ceiling, exemplified what would become the quintessential space of postwar US corporate modernism. Saarinen, Saarinen and Associates had used it extensively for the first time in the 1951 General Motors Technical Center, a building included in the 1953 *Built in USA: Post War Architecture*, and thus known to both Hitchcock and Drexler (Fig. 6.25). Another important precedent was Skidmore, Owings and Merrill’s 1953-54 Manufacturers Trust bank in New York (Fig. 6.26). As Mary Anne Staniszewski argues, MoMA was no stranger to commercial design forces. In the *Good Design* series, museum exhibitions came close to becoming commercial showrooms. The 1952 *Good Design* show, designed by Paul Rudolph, used a similar Synskin dropped ceiling as the one used by Drexler in 1955 (Fig. 6.27). There were clear formal differences between Rudolph’s dropped ceiling and Drexler’s, for example, one could see the linear light sources in Rudolph’s. The 1955 exhibition, on the other hand, was conceived as more homogeneous and diffused, creating a luminous field that pointed to newer developments in commercial spaces such as the Manufacturers Trust bank in New York. The play in contrast between dark and bright spaces—which Rudolph developed in the series of installations he designed for MoMA and the Chicago

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Merchandise Mart, where *Good Design* was also held—present important parallels with the spaces created for the Latin American exhibition. The theatricality of the juxtaposition of the two spaces recalls the play between light and dark spaces that, as Staniszewski points out, was brought to MoMA in the 1953 *Good Design* show (September 22-November 29, 1953) designed by Alexander Girard; this show even had a cork floor.\(^{830}\)

The contrast between light and dark, as elaborated in the juxtaposition between the corridor and the cork room, helped highlight the visual character of the show, which was announced at the very beginning of the exhibition by drowning the brief explanatory text in the immense white panel. Unlike *Brazil Builds*, in which some buildings received protracted textual explanations, the 1955 explanatory captions were brief and concise, even in the catalogue. The abstract light that bathed the corridor and the dark and tactile character of the cork room—a material visitors confused with cinder block—helped accentuate the primacy of visual information.

The staging helped bring forth the question of context. The stereo viewers with their three-dimension color images aimed at addressing this question. These images must have highlighted the dominant decontextualizing character and strategy of the exhibition (Fig. 6.28). Although photographs at times helped contextualize some of the buildings in their sceneographic context, for example, the spectacular setting of Niemeyer’s house (Fig. 6.29), few buildings had site plans, much less an urban locator (Fig. 6.30). Although the exhibition focused on the architecture of key cities, it made no attempt to locate them within such cities; as a case in point, the Venezuelan examples were all located in Caracas (Fig. 6.31). The University Cities, both in Caracas and Mexico, suffered from

\(^{830}\) Ibid. p. 188-89.
this decontextualizing strategy even more intensely (Fig. 6.32). The exhibition included two buildings from each, yet made no gesture toward the site of the overall campus.

Decontextualization helped recontextualize the region’s architecture by emphasizing a regional style. This point was best illustrated in the urban façades. The urban façades revealed a contemporary tendency. The “flatter mode inherited from the 1920s,” the caption argued, had been superceded by the “articulated façade,” by buildings with brise-soleil. The “continuous metal chassis-frames” were the next step in this evolution. The exhibition refrained from verbally articulating this next step in the evolution of tall buildings, leaving it implicit. The juxtaposition of a clear Corbusian language with a budding Miesian style, with new glass tower developments, helped frame the collage as a temporal march into a future clearly dominated by US technical development. However, if read as simultaneous developments in tall building construction in Latin America, the urban collage presented—as the text of the exhibition underscored—harmony without monotony. This kind of “aggregate,” as already pointed out, made Latin American cities “appear” modern. The urban collage was the product of a violent decontextualization aimed at clearly articulating new trends. This was clear in the lingering tension between “the aggregate” and the singular buildings, the “independent works of art.” The collage included buildings, like the Torre Polar, which had been given a status as an independent “work of art” in the corridor (Fig. 6.14).

Reception: What the Critics Thought

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831 The catalogue included aerial views of downtown Caracas, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Mexico and Havana.
The exhibition was a success. “It has continued to draw large crowds,” Drexler wrote to Hitchcock, “and in fact this Christmas holiday week it has been filled with visitors.” The Architectural Forum, edited by Douglas Haskell, had asked early on for exclusive rights to introduce the exhibition to a national architectural public. This piece never materialized; in the end, Forum ran a brief note on Hitchcock’s book in its May 1956 edition. Architectural Record, which had published a detailed article on Brazil Builds in 1943, did not carry the exhibition at all. In its April 1956 issue, it published an article by Carleton Sprague Smith on the architecture of Brazil that presented the overall development of Brazilian modernism since the beginning of the twentieth century—without mentioning MoMAs’ latest effort. Overall, the architectural press in the United States gave the exhibition somewhat of a cold reception; on the other hand, it had been carrying examples of the region’s modern architecture since the mid 1940s, and many of the buildings included in the exhibition had been already published in Record, Forum and Progressive Architecture. If Architectural Forum did not carry a review of the exhibition, the mass-market Time magazine did. In “The Latin American Look,” Time, repeating Hitchcock’s general views on the region, highlighted how the exhibition portrayed a “decade of tumultuous growth.” The region’s explosive development, however, was not to be seen as problematic. The political section of the issue brought this point across. If other “somnolent, hot, [and] primitive” regions of the world such as the Middle East or India, were under the sway of Communism—a “critical mass” ready for “violent

833 Letter, Henry Russell Hitchcock to Douglas Haskell, April 9, 1955. AAA, Hitchcock Papers, Box 6, Correspondence H, 1955. Haskell proposed to do “a conscientious book review” based on the “close-knit story” that had been sent to him by the museum. It is most likely that this was Hitchcock’s introduction to the catalogue. See: Letter, Douglas Haskell to Henry Russell Hitchcock, March 31, 1955. AAA, Hitchcock Papers, Box 6, Correspondence H, 1955.
reactions”—in Latin America, the situation was “friendship as usual.” Latin America exhibited the correct kind of explosive and uncontrolled development (Fig. 6.33).

The *New York Times*’ November 27, 1955, review of the show by Aline Saarinen, spoke of a “handsome and eye filling exhibition.” It was a “three-part fugue,” in which a “white gallery” was set against a brown room with insulating cork “like some rich Mexican organic decorative material;” the “stereopticon views” completed the presentation. Saarinen set the overall tone of her review by first highlighting the juxtaposition of the luminous ceiling against the clear reference to O’Gorman’s library in Mexico City. The thrust of the exhibition, Saarinen argued, was the unfolding of the essential quality of Latin American architecture, it being “the most photogenic [architecture] in the world.” This essence manifested in “the extensive use of color in buildings;” in the vivid contrast between light and shadow created by “imaginative louvers and grilles;” in a sensuality expressed through “voluptuous curves in plans and parabolic vaulting system;” and, if all this where not enough, architecture had to contend with exuberant nature itself. Even if a building was in simple “white concrete,” Saarinen pointed out, set against a “Technicolor-vivid blue sky and greenery” it would propel the spectator down the vortex of photogenic ecstasies. It is important to stress that this intense color fantasia was present only in the minute holes of the three-dimensional viewers. It seemed that the sensual character of the architecture was inescapable. The

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relationship between the photographer and this photogenic and colorful architecture (and by extension between the viewer and the show) was one of seduction, best represented, as Saarinen stressed by “what Marilyn Monroe is to the Hollywood camera man.”

The exultation of color in an exhibition dominated by black-and-white photography seems peculiar. Saarinen was not alone in this celebration of color. New York Times art critic Howard Devree, who had published an earlier note on the show, underscored the use of color as one of the three main characteristics of the region’s architecture, the others being “the widespread use of concrete [and] devices to help control temperature in hot climate.” The general effect, Devree concluded, was “to make our northern architecture seem drab and stereotyped by comparison.” Such comments appeared to have been echoed by the visiting public. As Drexler commented to Hitchcock, “The general public… seems to regard the exhibition as proof that life is richer and more beautiful down there: ‘they live better.’” The stereoscopic color images left a lasting visual impression.

Saarinen’s enthusiastic embrace of the photographic nature of Latin American architecture recalled the earlier critique launched against Brazilian architecture at the 1953 São Paulo Biennial. Saarinen’s views effectively extended the relationship between camera and building—a critique originally aimed primarily at Niemeyer—to the architecture of the entire region. Exhibitionism in Latin American architecture became a common perception (Fig. 6.34; Fig. 6.35). Saarinen stressed Niemeyer’s exhibitionism, his “overstatements” and lack of discipline had been surpassed by others; vices had turned into virtues in the hands of Reidy, Moreira and Villanueva. Their work surpassed

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that of Niemeyer’s “in site planning, interior planning, spatial relationships, detailing, logic, restraint and imaginative use of color.” The same, however, was not the case in Mexico, where the University City had created “more [an] amazing than [an] admirable” architecture, these buildings being pictorial rather than architectural, “entertaining and curious,” rather than enduring (Fig. 6.36) For Saarinen, Latin American architecture had an identifiable “vocabulary of concrete and color and curves;” it was, however, identifiable only when the architects acted “with coherence and restraint.” Only then would this be a “dramatic architecture.” Haunted by excess, it would devolve, as in Niemeyer, into formalist exhibitionism or, as in O’Gorman, into a pictorial one.

The normative intent of the show was clearly echoed in Saarinen’s review. Moreover, she criticized Hitchcock for not including more works of engineering, highlighting the influence that such projects have had in the region. For Saarinen, the exemplary figure of the engineer-architect was Felix Candela, whose “marvelous expressionist chapel is as much cribbed as buildings of Wright and Mies” (Fig. 6.37). Saarinen’s review was driven by her own knowledge of the region’s architecture. As Drexler pointed out to Hitchcock,

Aline’s article in “The Times” was in its way a triumph, considering that she wrote the entire thing without having seen the exhibition. In fairness to Aline I must admit that she went through the galleries with me before any of the photographs were in place and she later phoned me twice from Michigan. The details concerning Candela were, of course, explained to her but Aline thinks Candela is the greatest thing and that is that.

Two weeks before the closing of the show, in February 4, 1956, Lewis Mumford published his review in *The New Yorker*. For Mumford, the architecture in the show was a relief from the mediocrity and sterility that affected New York architects, a theme he had stressed in his 1947 celebration of the Bay Region style. The “vigorous architectural work [... ] being done elsewhere in both North and South America,” was set against the “smooth mediocrity” and disastrous New York experiments exemplified by the West Side Airlines Terminal building and Harrison & Abramovitz’s Socony Mobil Building.840 The exhibition revealed that there were a “remarkable number of good buildings” in the region, “combined with a freshly awakened social consciousness.” 841 High-quality living, as in the apartment houses by Lúcio Costa in Guinle Park, who created “outdoor rooms shielded from the sun and reasonably private,” had their counterpart in Reidy’s “good looking” public housing in the Pedregulho complex (Fig. 6.38).

Mumford was highly critical of the general decontextualized presentation of the buildings in the show; “the old fashioned treatment of a building as an abstract entity, without even a hint of its orientation and setting,” he argued, “deprives the exhibition of half its educational value.”842 Mumford was surprised that such a “learned scholar and critic as Professor Hitchcock” would have failed to produce “a more comprehensive and penetrating view of architecture itself, even considered as a pure aesthetic experience.” Mumford continued his critique, asking MoMA to “set a sounder standard for its work in [the architecture] department.”843 What was needed, he concluded, now that modern forms prevailed, was “sufficient official discrimination between what is merely

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841 Ibid. p. 83.
842 Ibid. p. 85.
843 Ibid.
fashionable and what is excellent.” In this way, Mumford echoed Wheeler’s initial intent to set standards of excellence, but rather than aiming such efforts at the region, Mumford aimed them at MoMA itself.

Mumford’s critique of the overall strategy of decontextualizing buildings in the show had been highlighted early on by the Brazilian press. In a November 30, 1955, article (seven days after the New York opening) published in the Correio da Manhã (a prominent newspaper in Rio de Janeiro), art critic Jayme Mauricio channeled the views and opinions of Niomar Moniz Sodré, who was present at the New York opening. After celebrating the quality of the installation and the lighting, Moniz Sodré criticized the thinness of the exhibition. “The exhibition was quite poor. What I know of Brazil and Mexico,” Moniz Sodré highlighted, “is bad, not only in the photography but also in the selection of views and details. What is best [in the exhibition] are the color ‘slides’ shown in viewers. The Pedregulho and the Guinle Parke came out beautifully, with accurate color and abundant luminosity.” Moniz Sodré found the survey lacking. Her comments were unique for she criticized both the surveyor (Hitchcock) and the photographer (McKenna). The overall narrowness and incompleteness of the survey remained, in her eyes, highly problematic. She used her knowledge of Brazilian architecture as a guide to what had been omitted in other countries. This was not necessarily a quantitative measure, but rather a qualitative one, which had to do with “the views and details

844 Ibid. p. 86.
845 Moniz Sodré was director of the Museu de Arte Moderna (MAM) in Rio, as well as co-owner of the Correio da Manhã along with her husband Paulo Bittencourt.
selected.” Moniz Sodré was not speaking from the perspective of a dilettante, but as the
director of Museu de Arte Moderna (MAM) in Rio de Janeiro, which had organized an
exhibition on Brazilian architecture in August 1952. MoMA, she pointed out, had
produced an elegant exhibition, a magnificent installation, remarkably well made, “com a
maior técnica e bom gosto—with the highest technique and good taste.” It had not
produced, however, a sound exhibition.

In Peru, *El Arquitecto Peruano*, published a “book review” by architect Luis
Vera, who highlighted how “at the exact moment in the evolution of a Latin American
architectural movement when experiments have ended and maturity has started,” MoMA
presented yet “another exhibition” of the region’s architecture. Vera contextualized
the 1955 exhibition within the evolution of the museum’s 1932 international and 1943
Brazilian shows. If MoMA’s first engagement with the region’s architecture had been “a
sorpresa para todos—a surprise for all,” this time, however, MoMA was catching up with
what was already well known. Vera repeated the criticism on the decontextualized
presentation of the buildings, and stressed the limited nature of the survey. Forty-six
examples from here and there, he stressed, were not sufficient; they might express the
“spirit” but not the evolution of the architecture of the region. Vera accused Hitchcock of
sustaining “false clichés” by hiding behind forms of seemingly high quality. In this, Vera
took aim at Villanueva’s University City, which he found “cold and vulgar, its forms
unresolved and confused.” Vera clearly echoed Mumford who, in his *New Yorker*

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847 Letter, Niomar Bittencourt to Nelson A. Rockefeller, August 8, 1952. Folder 1465, Box 148, Subseries L, Record Group 4, NAR Papers, RAC
848 Mauricio, "Inaugurada a Exposição de Arquitetura Latino-Americana em Nova York."
850 Ibid.
review, had launched a similar evaluation against the exterior of Villanueva’s Aula Magna (Fig. 6.39). Vera was not bashful on borrowing from Mumford; he cited the US critic directly in reference to Caracas’ Cerro Piloto, and extended Mumford’s critique to other buildings such as the “unrefined and mannered” Cancer Hospital by Rino Levi, and the “decidedly foreign” US Embassy in Havana by Harrison & Abramovitz (Fig. 40; Fig. 6.41). In all, Vera criticized the selection of buildings made by such an experienced, erudite scholar as Hitchcock, a selection that remained “incomprehensible” because it was neither representative of the contemporary architecture of a country, nor of the work of the architects exhibited.

Vera’s critique, which had clear parallels with Moniz Sodré’s comments, was founded on the difference between the 1955 show and Brazil Builds. If the architecture of the region was unknown in 1943, it was not in 1955. As sub-director of the Division of Housing and Planning of the Pan-American Union, Vera was quite aware of the building boom throughout the region, and must have developed an ample network of relations. His review appeared in the Argentinean journal Nuestra Arquitectura, four months after its publication in Peru. It’s printing in Argentina revealed the existence of a publication network in Latin America through which the architecture of the region circulated. Hitchcock had pointed this out in his introduction, but had given it a center of gravity in Brazil around the journal Habitat at the time edited by Italian émigré Pietro Maria Bardi and Lina Bo. Vera’s article revealed a more complex network. In the same issue as his critique for example, there was an article on Mexican architect José Villagrán García that had first appeared in the Mexican journal Arquitectura headed by Mario Pani. Vera’s

negative reaction to MoMA’s endeavor had to do perhaps with the impression that MoMA was arriving late in the game, and that the insistence on a Brazilian center of gravity was already old hash. His opening sentences underscored a general mood present in the region: “Quienquiera que haya observado—Whoever had observed)” that is, anyone who had paid attention to the region would have noticed that its architecture had been developing for some time now. Development, not discovery was the key to the region’s architecture.

**Hitchcock on Latin American modernism**

MoMA’s 1955 exhibition made clear gestures to the development of modernism in the region past its 1943 moment of discovery; that was indeed the point of the exhibition. Hitchcock had first approached Latin American modernism in his 1943 review of *Brazil Builds*. Since then, he only had had a casual interest in the architecture of Brazil, much less of the region. In 1947, as previously noted, he had identified the Ministry of Education in Rio as an important site of the postwar dynamics on abstract and figurative art. In Rio’s building, he saw art as a “semi-independent accessory, a focus of interest” rather than as fully integrated with architecture.\(^{852}\) This lack of synthesis—art works could be simply attached to an already finished architecture as the “Prometheus” sculpture clearly showed—revealed the immaturity of Brazilian modernism. This sense of dislocation between art and architecture was also patent in Orozco’s intervention at Dartmouth, an intrusion sustainable only by the sense of humor of “American” students and faculty. In his 1955 text, Hitchcock returned to the two general themes he had quickly illustrated in 1947, to an architectural synthesis that revealed a mature

\(^{852}\) Hitchcock, "Painting, Sculpture and Modern Architecture." p. 20.
architecture and to the specificities of a Latin American cultural production that differed from that of the United States. He, however, stayed clear of the synthesis of the arts debate, focusing on a formal and stylistic architectural synthesis, and made no direct reference to painting. In 1955, he developed these two themes—architectural synthesis and cultural difference—in the first part of the essay for the catalogue by articulating general views on the region based on its history, its industrial development (or lack thereof), its building traditions, its climate, and its psychological character. After highlighting these general conditions, he proceeded to examine each country individually. This focus attempted to give a detail explanation and presentation of the general themes as they took form in each country. The general views deployed in the first half of the text, served as a common cultural ground for local formal articulations.

Hitchcock argued that the architecture of Latin America was “not unknown to the history of architecture.” For Hitchcock this “history” was the development of a building tradition, not a historiographic practice. He highlighted how “great prehistoric cultures have left behind monuments” that awoke awareness of the Indian past and the need for continuity with this past in modern culture, the strongest case being that of Mexico and Peru (Fig. 6.42; Fig. 6.43). He also identified the colonial period as an important period of architectural production and the Catholic Church as a key architectural patron of that era. In the colonial period, he also found a connecting thread between past and present since the Catholic Church provided the foundation for a “cultural homogeneity” that still ruled Latin American society. Hitchcock proposed the Church and Catholicism—albeit its “little direct effect on [modern] architecture”—as the

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clearest forms of a common “Iberian cultural background,” one that defined the region and helped counter-balance Communism.\textsuperscript{854} Other general cultural forms, such as “Iberian temperament” or “psychological” factors were left ill defined.

The nineteenth century, Hitchcock argued, was marked by the hegemony of French culture, which lasted well into the twentieth century as the Ecole des Beaux Arts remained entrenched in architecture schools, and conservative social circles still built private mansions in that anachronistic style. Two positive aspects of the Beaux Arts tradition in the region were the development of “skillfully modeled stucco” and the sound education of modernist masters such as Villanueva and Costa. French influence had helped developed the tradition and technique of stucco, and instilled a deep cosmopolitanism in local progressive architects helping them embrace modernism. Because of this, modernism was able to “arrive” and take root in the 1930s, and, in the mid century, develop an autochthonous response. Dependence on French culture had prevented early “autochthonous developments”—the region had “no Wright, no Perret, no Brehens”—and this explained why “modern architecture when it came to Latin America should have from the first a Latin and even a French accent,” modulated by Le Corbusier.\textsuperscript{855} Dependence to French modernism continued in the early twentieth century, albeit modified by a new context, because the leaders of the modern movement (Villagrán in Mexico, Larrain in Chile, Costa in Brazil and Villanueva in Venezuela) where relatively young; Uruguayan Julio Vilamajó being the only exception. Hitchcock’s architectural selections then celebrated a coming of age of Latin American modernism, the end of earlier French influence and dependence with the transformation of earlier

\textsuperscript{855} \textit{———, Latin American Architecture since 1945}. p. 17.
apprentices into “masters.” The architecture of this now older generation presented the conclusion of a tradition. This form of architectural maturity implied a cultural and political maturity as well.

Hitchcock did not give a temporal frame to this newfound maturity, in all he did not use the term postwar. Hitchcock, nonetheless, emphasized the cultural shift from Europe to the United States effected by the war, and celebrated US exceptionalism. He transitioned from the early twentieth century into this postwar period by first acknowledging the “positive contribution [of] Spaniards” (Candela, Bonet, Bianco and Delpini) and Germans (Cetto and Linder) “fleeing…the Nazi regime;” these, however, were minor figures compared to Gropius, Mendelshon and Mies. He also highlighted other “non-Iberian” contributions. His reference to the war context (and obliquely to the Spanish Civil War) helped him transition from historian to critic and tackle a pressing question, US influence and contribution to present-day Latin American modernism. Although he had pointed out nineteenth century “influence from New York and Chicago,” as well as “the [contemporary] prominence of certain structures designed by North American firms, the [recent] contribution of the United States,” he stressed, “has been of a different and less direct order,” being that of a professional architectural education. Instead of going to France as before, Latin American architects completed their education in the United States. This form of education, Hitchcock argued, “could nor should” develop dependency on the United States. “It is a tribute to our schools that

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856 He forgot that in 1939 Hannes Mayer went to Mexico; however, unlike Mies and Gropius he was not able to develop a successful career, leaving Mexico in 1949 for Switzerland. See: Jorge Francisco Liernur, “La síntesis dialéctica: Regionalismo, Indigenismo y Clasicismo en el pensamiento maduro de Hannes Mayer,” in Escritos de arquitectura del siglo XX en América Latina, ed. Jorge Francisco Liernur (Madrid; Sevilla: Tanais, 2002).
857 Hitchcock and Museum of Modern Art (New York N.Y.), Latin American Architecture since 1945, p. 20
they have given to Latin Americans a training so broad that it could readily be applied
under very different local conditions. Even the influences of the great masters, Wright
and Gropius and Mies,” Hitchcock pointed out, “are rarely very noticeable.” To make
clear the difference between this form of education and the earlier Beaux-Arts and French
accented modernism, he stressed how, unlike Niemeyer, no other local prominent
architect “has established so sharply a personal style;” this, he concluded, pointed to
“Gropius’s ideal of an impersonal anonymous architecture.”

Mid-century Latin American modernism then revealed a new expression fully rooted in postwar
developments, and radically different from that articulated in Brazil Builds. Although not
yet fully formed and still developing it was, for Hitchcock, clearly identifiable having
produced high quality buildings as Vega and Galia’s Torre Polar in Caracas, a building
“little related to other Latin American works” and de Robina and Ortiz Monasterio’s
Edificio Valenzuela in Mexico City that avoided “the usual flatness” of modern façades
without the use of a brise soleil (Fig. 6.44).

Contemporary Latin American maturity and independence was emancipation
from modernism with a French accent as developed in Brazil. Mid Century Latin
American modernism had surpassed the Cariocan school that had dominated the region
since Brazil Builds. In this point, however, Hitchcock who argued as a historian turned
critic, embodied a new subjective transformation, the critic turned oracle. As he wrote to
Colombian architect Dicken Castro, “Everyone is looking forward with interest to seeing
what your generation will be able to accomplish. Certainly you have made an excellent

beginning. For Hitchcock, the center of development of Latin American modernism had moved to Colombia and Venezuela; this area happened to coincide with Rockefeller’s IBEC development focus, an economic force and US influence absent in Hitchcock’s account.

Two intertwined conditions characterized the Latin American architectural scene as a whole: climate and building materials. Hitchcock highlighted how the “dominant [climate] is warm-temperate rather than tropical.” High altitude and, in the seaboard areas “outside the Caribbean,” latitude location far from the Equator made cities “not characteristically tropical.” The “sun,” heat and glare, rather than “humidity,” air and land, was the main problem to be overcome. This presented an important repackaging of Goodwin’s earlier narrative, for although it appeared that Hitchcock followed Goodwin in the problem of heat and glare, he abandoned the question of cross ventilation, which was part of the coordinated response to the tropical sun presented in Brazil Builds. As in Goodwin, Hitchcock celebrated, now for the entire region, the use of concrete as the main building practice due to the lack of structural steel and timber. The extended use of concrete enabled and determined the need to address the external surfacing materials of buildings; this, in turn, brought climate and building materials together under one consideration. A common problem that sprung out of concrete construction, produced local variations, be it stucco in Lima’s dry climate or glazed tiles in Rio’s damper one. What brought these diverse practices together, what was common to all as an architectural response was the use of color—permanent paint, mosaics, tiles, natural

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859 Letter, Henry-Russell Hitchcock to Dicken Castro, May 26, 1956. AAA, Hitchcock Papers, Box 7, Correspondence C.
rocks, etc. These various forms of “wallpaper” came together under the idea of polychromy. It is important to highlight that Hitchcock saw the use of color primarily as a solution to the problem of glare brought about by light conditions; this was, he argued, a “physical factor” that gave “consistency of character” to Latin American architecture. The use of color as a response to a physical condition generated an aesthetic practice that developed and responded to a Latin American character. In the exhibition, the dialectic between the large black and white photomurals and the diminutive holes of the stereo viewers in which three-dimensional buildings appeared in vivid color manifested the cultural valence of polychromy. This clear contrast deployed in the exhibition, was, however, lost in the book, which included no color images.

Concrete construction enabled a particular formal practice, the use of shell vaults. Noting a debt to Spanish and Italian engineers, and to “an innate sympathy” for these shapes in countries that had a tradition of masonry vaulting, Hitchcock pointed to the “curved skyline” of Latin American cities, a silhouette “far more common than elsewhere in the world.” This formal three-dimensional expression was accompanied by the extensive use of “the curve [in plan]…more frequently used in Latin America than in the United States.” Although Hitchcock stated that this was “characteristic of the personal manner of Niemeyer,” he pointed to a general Latin American ethos. “A certain lyricism—of which color and curved forms are both important ingredients without being by any means universal—seems to have a continuous appeal to the Iberian temperament.” Another physical factor, the predominance of reinforced concrete construction, generated an aesthetic practice that developed and responded to a Latin American character.
Modern architecture in the region, according to Hitchcock, also responded to both material and “psychological” factors. This physical disposition and psychological predilection for lyricism was not a historical factor, that is, a condition brought about by historical baroque architecture. Hitchcock’s idea of “Iberian temperament” was contradictory. Founded on the “sumptuous ecclesiastical architecture of both Spanish and Portuguese colonies,” it could not offer continuity with modern culture, which was essentially a secular culture. With this, he returned to his earlier criticism of *Brazil Builds*. The baroque past could not generate a modern culture. Hitchcock rejected any possible sign of modernity other than the one rooted in the Enlightenment. The “Iberian temperament” was something to be contained and surpassed. The maturity of Mid-Century Latin American modernism, for example, had to contend with an Iberian temperament that was entrenched in the single-family home, “discouraged apartment buildings” and was responsible for “the curious imbalance between the living and the sleeping and services areas.” Emancipation, however, was well underway in the “growing North American influences in domestic architecture.” On the other hand, a more positive Iberian temperament for lyrical forms was in full force in a modern architecture still considered an art form, one that had the government as its greatest champion. In Latin America, Hitchcock pointed out, public authorities “turn to architecture as a principal expression of cultural ambition.” University cities that “achieved monumental results…in almost every Latin American country” through “team work,” as in Mexico or through “single men” as in Caracas, revealed a positive aspect of the Iberian disposition. Hitchcock celebrated the “high standards of official taste” in public projects and

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861 Ibid. p. 28.
cautiously and only very schematically noticed their political background. In his 1956 lecture for the Royal Institute of British Architects Hitchcock modified this positive contribution of the Iberian temperament by clearly articulating a negative political context behind these projects. Recurring “political disturbances” and endemic changes of régime had a clear impact on architecture. He noted the negative effects that Perón had on modern architecture in Argentina; and how, in other countries, modern architecture had found an important patron in the government. Hitchcock pointed out how “there is no question that the President-Dictators have generally seen in architecture, like the sovereigns of the European past, a means of personal aggrandizing.” The modern case in point was the “famous University City in Mexico,” a monument to President Alemán. Public housing, he added, seemed to be “restricted to political considerations.” What had been an incipient critique present in the book, a “self defeating” monumental drive behind governmental sponsorship, was clearly articulated in London as a negative authoritarian impulse inbedded in the culture of the region. Hitchcock offered a solution: to completely “disregard the political background and its social results” as it was not of real interest “for the outside world.” The outside world and in particular the United States, however, was keenly interested in the political grounds of such projects, as revealed in Time magazine’s earlier consideration of the Mexican campus that, as already noted, drew a sharp critique of the governmental bureaucratic expansion under President Alemán.

Hitchcock’s attempt to identify an “Iberian temperament” was guided by the need to establish a clear difference with modernism in the United States without offering a

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rupture of the relationship between the region and the North American Republic. The tall-building served as the key image of this differentiated relationship. The considerable influence of the United States, “the large numbers of Latin American architects who have…completed their education [there] and the familiarity with North American production provided by both the local and imported professional magazines, as well as by exhibitions,” was countered by “the solidity of the local cultural tradition.” In all, Hitchcock pointed out, “it is surprising that there is no more influence from the United States.”

Modernism in the region remained Latin American thanks to the Iberian temperament. The clearest architectural production in which to test the independence of Latin American architects was “the tall business building [a] generically North American” type. Could the Iberian temperament manifest in the tall building? Hitchcock pointed out that the bulk of Western postwar architectural production, the “building boom,” had taken place in the region. This made Latin American cities acquire a modern “flavor” and had made the region the prime site for architectural experimentation and the production of commercial tall-building architecture in the world. This clearly demonstrated the inroads of the United States within the world of Iberian temperament. Hitchcock did not resolve the tension between postwar “Americanization” and the traditions of the Iberian temperament; he simply offered the nine images of the “urban façade” as the architectural demonstration of the peaceful cohabitation of both. For Hitchcock, the notion or the reality of Latin America, of a unified cultural and economic geography, had been initiated if not by the United States certainly under the period of US hegemony. Only with the advent of aviation, Hitchcock pointed out, had Latin America

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surpassed its own internal fragmentation and international remoteness. Airports brought the region together and linked it with an international commerce under US hegemony. Latin America emerged as a unified geography in connection to the United States.

Drexler elegantly staged this complex relationship with the juxtaposition of the luminous ceiling in the corridor and the dark, haptic space of the cork room. In the exhibition, however, this relationship was visual and experiential. This, as well as other visual relationships made in the exhibition, was predicated on the agency of the visitor, on his or her ability to recognize the relationships being displayed. Although such visual arguments were inherently open, when made in print, this openness vanished and acquired the nature of an authoritative statement. What was made as a visual and formal allusion in the exhibition transformed within the context of the book into a closed textual argument. This transformation of visual information into a textual one changed the nature of the examples, as the dynamics of architectural form changed into that of cultural-national competition. A case in point was Guinand and Benacerraf’s apartment building in Caracas, which was exhibited in the cork room next to Max Cetto’s house and Stone’s Panama Hotel and described in the exhibition caption simply as a skillfully planned and well-articulated building that was attentive to sun control techniques. In the book, however, it was also described as an example of “Brazilian ideas…in the handling of the tile grill” as exemplified in “Costa’s and Moreira’s Rio apartments.” In the exhibition, the connection to the Brazilian examples, which were also in the cork room but on a different wall, were implicit and left for the visitor to construct. The catalogue then froze

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864 He left the idea as mere image that, in the 1950s, would have stressed the influence of the United States and specifically that of Pan American World Airway. In actuality, the age of the airplane in Latin America had been facilitated by US and European air transport companies in the early 1920s.

the interpretation, however correct it might have been. This change in registry—from architecture to culture, from form to ideas performed by the transformation of visual information into text—permeated the entire catalogue. Hitchcock’s general assertions inhabit a thicker cultural field, for example, a still active nationalism that would raise eyebrows throughout the region. To declare a building built in Venezuela to be “Brazilian,” was not simply a formal argument; statements that were loose and ambiguous in the exhibition gained a new cultural and political solidity once when transformed into textual arguments.

The change in register, from exhibition to catalogue, was important; it tempered the reception of the exhibition, which became tied to Hitchcock’s views as advanced in the text of the book, and not through the visual formal relationships as deployed in the exhibition. Most assessments of the show in Latin America and abroad, as in Gillo Dorfles’ review in *Domus*, were “book reviews” that made indirect references to the show. The evaluation of “the show,” as highlighted in the subtitle of the article in the Brazilian journal *Habitat*, was predicated on Hitchcock’s text; *Habitat* went even farther by incorporating Hitchcock’s 1956 RIBA lecture in London.

In the United States, Saarinen’s review, as already noted, had carried many of the ideas contained in Hitchcock’s introductory essay: the building boom, the lack of steel and structural wood, the extensive use of concrete and of color. Hitchcock’s general views had been extended to a popular US audience by *Time* magazine. Hitchcock, however, was no expert on the region’s architecture, much less on its culture and politics. This, at a time when Latin Americans were developing their own theoretical and

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historical interpretations of their past and present architecture—as in the case of Buschiazzo in Argentina, Bayón in Puerto Rico, Ferraz and Mindlin in Brazil, Pani in Mexico, Valverde in Perú, Weiss in Cuba868—revealed a different architectural field that conditioned the reception of MoMA’s last efforts on the region’s architecture.869

Latin American Architecture Since 1945 represented the end of MoMA’s visible interest in the culture of the region, a period that Hitchcock effectively closed by predicting the region’s political and economic success, an accomplishment delivered by the United States. Mid-century Latin American modernism represented the general success of US development policies and postwar modernization. By the mid 1950s Latin America was fully integrated to the US economy. As a showcase of US policies in the industrializing world, Latin America served as a poignant example for the new nations emerging from the decolonization process in Africa and Asia. Like Brazil Builds, Latin American Architecture Since 1945 had clear political implications. As Hitchcock stated in the 1963 epilogue to Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, “Today, the problem [of modern architecture] must be posed in world terms.”870 This new “world” category signaled the expansion of the earlier limits of “the International Style” and

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869 It is also important to highlight that the US government’s 1954 intervention in Guatemala had galvanized the region’s intellectuals and tainted some forms of cultural initiatives deployed from the United States toward the region.

revealed the presence of modernization theory and its stages of development. “So far,” Hitchcock argued,

Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa have on the whole, been learners and disciples of the West. Will the countries of Eastern Europe and the new countries of Asia and Africa soon be making contributions towards a new world-style, such as in the last few decades the North Americans, then the Latin Americans, and now the Japanese have made?  

Hitchcock borrowed Walt Whitman Rostow’s idea of “stages of development” forwarded in his 1960 The Stages of Economic Growth, a Non-Communist Manifesto. This teleology of Western development was marked by the “take-off” stage, a phase in which traditional social forms that resisted development were finally surpassed thus ushering a period of sustained and uninterrupted growth. In 1963, two years after the Cuban Revolution had broken relationships with the United States and entered into the Soviet Union’s sphere of influence, and the United States begun to escalate the conflict in Vietnam, Hitchcock still defended the legacy of the 1955 MoMA show. At the same time, however, he started to distance his thoughts from this inheritance through critical textual and visual edits, eliminating images of the region’s architecture in his history of Western modernism. By the 1969 edition, this distancing had become a form of self-critique and an indictment of the heavy-handed influence that the MoMA enterprise had had on his Pelican book. As he warned the reader, the selection of architectural works that still survived primarily in the text “was inevitably much influenced by what the critic knew best at first hand. It will

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871 Hitchcock, Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. p. 435.
be evident that he had lately returned from South America.\footnote{872} What in 1958 would have been interpreted as the impossibility of leaving out the prime stage of the postwar building boom read as an apology in 1969.

Conclusion

By the late 1960s the US and European love affair with Latin American architecture had ended. The problems of social and economic development during the 1960s caused in particular by rapid urbanization, consolidated a new image of the region: “Latin American underdevelopment” becoming a category unto itself in US economic and political circles. This new image of the region at an economic and political level implied a new architectural imaginary in accordance to the region’s imagined dislocation from Western civilization; architectural production continued, but the project of its imagination in the US and Europe had ended. Under the pressures of modernization, the Pan American “family of nations” fractured as confrontations and revolutions erupted, recalling earlier conflicts such as Colombia’s 1948 popular revolt “El Bogotazo,” Bolivia’s 1952 Revolution, and the 1954 US intervention in Guatemala. State-directed modernization had proven incomplete, and US policies towards the region had sown widespread popular dissatisfaction as Vice President Nixon’s disastrous 1958 Good Will Tour revealed. The Cuban Revolution in 1959 brought a new phase of Pan Americanism that recalled a well-established tradition of US intervention in Latin America, as Cuban leaders redrew the geography of the Western Hemisphere by inserting that island nation into the Soviet block and into the geopolitics of national liberation movements across the globe. In 1961 President John F. Kennedy launched the Alliance for Progress as a palliative against social unrest and as a last attempt to boost democratic postwar modernization until the fear of communist infiltration retooled the Alliance’s goals to fit
technocratic modernization under military regimes. In January 1969, Nelson Rockefeller was sent yet again to Latin America, this time by President Nixon, to assess the overall failure of US economic policies towards the region. Latin America appeared to be at a crossroads.

New York’s Museum of Modern Art recorded this fracture of Latin America’s image as early as 1961. Two years after the Cuban Revolution, MoMA’s International Program, in laying out its new agenda, situated Latin America both as part of the circuit of international culture with the São Paulo Bienal and outside the Western hemispheric cultural geography within the “young nations” of the postwar decolonizing world:

The dramatic emergence of the 'young' nations of Asia, Africa, the Near East and Latin America has placed a heavy burden of responsibility upon the United States, to whom these countries look for guidance and assistance in many ways. Besides technical and material advancement, these areas are striving for intellectual contact with other nations and urgently need to share and communicate the spiritual values of the arts. Increasingly they are participating in important recurring international art festival such as the Venice Biennale and the São Paulo Bienal.

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This schizophrenic geography developed under a heated Cold War. MoMA voiced a new urgency; the region had to be enveloped in a feverish cultural activity to guide and assist “young nations.” Politically, there had been only two new nations in the hemisphere: Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. Putting aside the clear paternalistic stance, what strikes as significant is the institutional amnesia. The museum had been engaging Latin America’s artistic and architectural production since the early 1940s, helping create a narrative link between deep tradition and new cultural developments. The celebration and acknowledgement of the achievements of the “other American Republics,” the notion of reconocimiento fomented by OCIAA cultural initiatives, transformed into an asymmetrical relationship that re-imagined a new cultural order. This new geography in which Latin America appeared required different curatorial practices.

The International Program’s directive stressed that museum cultural exchange programs had to “offer special assistance to underdeveloped countries,” and architecture could be mobilized for this purpose.

For those countries in various stages of transition to modern technology, the Museum's proposed program includes a series of architecture and design exhibitions intended to demonstrate some solutions to problems with which these countries are particularly concerned. Such topics as city-planning and public works buildings would be emphasized, focusing primary attention on hospitals, universities, schools, civic centers, factories, markets, railway stations, airports, bus terminals, bridges and dams.\footnote{876 Between 1960 and 1962, twenty-seven new nations became members of the United Nations, only two were from the Americas: Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. See: http://www.un.org/en/members/growth.shtml (Accessed April 2012)\footnote{877 The Museum of Modern Art and its Program of International Exchange in the Arts, March 1961. Folder 3444, Box 574, Record Group 3, RBF, RAC. p. 3.}
Architecture came back into the fold. As architecture and design exhibitions were being singled out by MoMA’s International Program as tools for development, *Latin American Architecture since 1945* was forgotten. Latin America changed from being a place where architecture happened, where modernism continued to draw the contours of the contemporary world, and became a region where present architecture had yet to manifest. The paradigmatic exhibition of this new technological knowledge to be disseminated by the museum was titled *Roads* (August 14-September 17, 1961), which circulated extensively throughout Latin America until 1966. MoMA continued to participate in the United States representation of art biennials in Latin America, such as the one in São Paulo, and in other events such as the 1960 Exposición Internacional de Arte Moderno (International Exhibition of Modern Art) in Buenos Aires organized by that city’s Museum of Modern Art and the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella. In architecture, however, the shift in orientation away from a geography of common Western modern values was clear and finalized by the museum’s near absolute silence on Brasilia. The negative assessment of the region’s modernist tradition had begun.

The metonymic impulse of the 1940s, propelled by the visionary architecture of Brazilian modernism, transformed into silencing strategies that cast a long shadow on the museum’s earlier endeavors. In the early 1960s, MoMA presented a clear architectural curatorial stance that unwittingly mobilized a consolidated regional construct the museum itself had helped fabricate in the 1950s, under the new terms and geography of “underdeveloped countries.” This new geography of development was accompanied by an active erasure of the Western utopian geography still active in the region, for example,

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Mexico’s 1968 Olympic projects. Modern architecture’s utopian drive was reassessed in *Visionary Architecture* (September 29-December 4, 1960), a show organized by Arthur Drexler. Brasilia, just recently inaugurated (April 1960), was not included in the 30 ideas for cities presented in the exhibition.879 Drexler’s ideas on what visionary architecture could be struck a resonant discord with the architectural forms that had crystallized in Brazil. As Drexler wrote in the introduction of *Visionary Architecture*,

> When ideal projects are inspired by criticism of the existing structure of society, as well as by the architect's longing for a private world of his own, they may bring forth ideas that make history. These projects may be called visionary.880

The crystallization of Niemeyer’s personal forms in the Brazilian hinterland hindered Drexler’s interpretation of utopian projects as part of a regime of conceptual labor that admitted no degraded Platonic copies to materialize in actual space and, in a Cold War world overtaken by technological experimentation, insisted that such projects remain as pure conceptual machines.881 This was clear with the inclusion of Le Corbusier’s 1929 master plan for Rio de Janeiro in *Visionary Architecture* and the exclusion of Brasilia. *Visionary Architecture* circulated through Latin America until 1968.

Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco Dal Co, who advanced a brief but devastating critique aimed principally at the finale of the Brazilian modernist experiment, completed the development line that Drexler had refused to deliver. For the Italian critics, Brasilia

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was the culmination of a sceneographic proclivity that Niemeyer had first exhibited in his 1942 Pampulha buildings, which MoMA had celebrated in Brazil Builds. The new Brazilian capital, which had graced the pages of every international magazine—and fashion pictorials—, was, for the Italian historians, a “fine show,” full of gratuitous sophistication and “superfluous velleities.” Niemeyer’s work was the final expression of mannerist weakness. His buildings were “spectacles of the absurd, euphoric fragments of nature crystallized.”

Tafuri and Dal Co’s views were expressed in the wake of Niemeyer’s second wave of international exposure with his Communist Headquarters in Paris (1967-81), the Mondadori Building outside Milan (1968-75), and the University of Constantine in Algeria (1969-72), all designed during his self-imposed exile in Paris after the 1964 military coup. In all, the Brazilian modernist tradition had devolved into a “maniera commune fino alla nausea—a well known manner repeated ad nauseam” that buried any new developing tradition in the region, no matter how promising. In the region, architecture had continued to develop, and its buildings did not disappear from the global circuit as they endured in architectural journals: signature projects such as those for the 1968 Mexico City Olympics, like Candela’s Sports Palace with its experimental tensegrity dome and Pedro Ramirez Vázquez’s 1964 National Museum of Anthropology that reassessed architectural mexicanidad along abstract lines; experiments in reinforced concrete continued to be celebrated as in Clorindo Testa and SEPRA’s 1960-66 Lloyds of London in Buenos Aires and Emilio Duhart’s 1964-66 United Nations building in

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Santiago; local technologies like the use of brick in Ricardo Porro’s 1962-63 organic forms in the National School of Art in Havana, and “high-brow” aesthetic discourse like in Villanueva’s minimalist cubes for the Venezuelan Pavilion at the Montreal 1967 Expo, all appeared in most international journals, not to mention Affonso Reidy’s 1953-62 Museum of Fine Arts in Rio, Teodoro González de León and Abraham Zabludovsky’s 1977 Mexican Embassy in Brasilia and Mies van der Rohe’s 1961 Bacardi Building in Mexico City.\(^{885}\) The feverish pitch of publication of the 1950s, however, subsumed to a trickle in the late 1970s—almost stopping in the 1980s.

The continued reception of the region’s architecture in the West had to contend with a perceived codified and crystallized manner that reinforced a clear Latin American cultural pattern in the formal world of Niemeyer, or the “Aztec” monumentalism of de León and Zabludovsky. The region’s architectural production of the 1960s found a more positive reception in Japan. Makoto Suzuki, as special envoy to the region for *Japan Architect*, celebrated the sudden end of stagnation in Buenos Aires by two teams of young architects (Sánchez Elia, Ramos, Agostini, Testa, and Solsona, Manteola, Petehersky, Sánchez Gómez, Viñoly), the new works of Mendes da Rocha and Guedes in Brazil, Zohn in Mexico and Salmona in Colombia. The Argentinean historian Francisco Bullrich had pointed out these works to the English-speaking world in his 1969 *New Directions in Latin American Architecture*, insisting that “Latin American architecture is

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part of world architecture; proof of this,” he stressed, “is that architects south of the Rio Grande have been exchanging ideas with architects of other continents.” Suzuki, however, pointed out a critical historical difference that qualified the relationship that Bullrich defended. As Suzuki highlighted in 1970, there had been a significant diminishing of information on the region’s architecture; this situation, he stressed, “was immensely different from that prevailing in the fifties.” As Suzuki was acute to point out, “Latin America” had become reduced and defined by the pressures of publishing. Latin America architecture had become a cost cutting shorthand, a common use term, responsive to a new world of economic imaginaries and flows. Although the region’s architecture had surpassed the “similar design expression” brought about by 1950s economic development, and it was no longer “precisely accurate to speak in terms of Latin America”, the new global cultural patterns, as Bullrich’s book demonstrated, demanded a regional construct.

Although there were promising new works developed in the 1960s under new social and economic pressures that, as Suzuki pointed out, were dissolving the “Pan-American system initiated by the United States,” the shadow of the 1950s Latin American style loomed large and continued to be mobilized to define the region’s architecture. Few modern architects received Tafuri and Dal Co’s pithy but fulminating indictments—the modern contrabution of Latin America could be summed up briefly. Pani’s work in Mexico and Villanueva’s in Venezuela were doomed attempts to revive the International Style and combat an “architecture of bureaucracy” that had “settled

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888 Ibid.
everywhere, in Europe and America, as well as Asia,” following the work of Gordon Bunshaft (Lever House) and C.F. Murphy (Chicago Civic Center) for SOM.\textsuperscript{889} The negative assessment of the region’s modernist tradition did not fare better in Spanish language examinations. The 1982 Spanish edition of Leonardo Benevolo’s history of architecture included a chapter by Josep María Montaner dedicated to modern architecture in Latin America, which underscored the conflicts unleashed by early postwar development. Such discord and speedy modernization, Montaner pointed out, made Latin American cities pass from freshness to decrepitude without ever being old—an observation Claude Levi Strauss had made decades earlier in \textit{Tristes Tropiques} (1955).\textsuperscript{890}

The general indictment of modernist tradition in the region found a fertile ground in the balance sheet on modernism produced by architecture culture in the United States and Europe in late 1960s and early 1970s, and was accompanied by a newfound interest in the products of fast urbanization that had remained outside the canonical images of Latin American modernism.\textsuperscript{891} The barriadas in Lima, the favelas in Rio and the ranchos in Caracas became the subject of a newfound fascination and lure, as architects engaged notions of political revolution, professional relevance and social involvement; the

\textsuperscript{889} Tafuri Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco Dal Co, Modern Architecture (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1979), p. 366. The exception was Affonso Reidy’s 1947-58 Pedregulho project. Tafuri and Dal Co echo Hitchcock’s assessment of Reidy; yet, for them, the counter figure to Niemeyer was Burle-Marx who “made himself an interpreter of the expressive potential of tropical vegetation and ecology in an exuberant surrealism of landscape.” The reference to this “outstanding figure,” however, was buried in a footnote. Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco Dal Co, Modern Architecture, p. 418


Peruvian experimental housing project PREVI (1967-79), for which the Peruvian government organized an international competition, became the poster child of a period marked by economic and political instability. It was branded as a sign of Latin American architects’ inability to address social problems in their own region, an underdevelopment in architecture caused by the excessive development of formalism. A new pedagogical crusade unfolded in the United States and Europe as architecture students and schools from elite Western universities landed in rural villages and urban slums to examine and correct the ills of underdevelopment. Revolution, anti-Americanism and the informal economy became Latin America’s new contribution to cultural and academic centers in the United States and Europe, feeding the needs of postwar pop and counter culture under Western capitalism. As the architectural network of information shifted to reestablish the hegemony of Euro-American discourse, it appeared that the region’s architects were frozen in a modernist tradition, no matter Bullrich’s claims, and had little to contribute to a postmodern cultural conversation if they remained in the region.

Cultural domination has been one of the strategies of imperialism. Within the context of US hegemony, the “Coloso del Norte—Colossus of the North,” more colossal in the postwar, has exerted a complex mixture of military, political, economic, commercial and cultural muscle flexing in which Latin Americans in different countries and as a whole have participated, combated, and endured. With respect to modern architecture, New York’s Museum of Modern Art enlisted the services of Latin American modernism in its cultural enterprise. In this, the museum clearly engaged in a complex power relationship in which the United States possessed a clear economic and industrial
advantage that served old and new waves of economic imperialism with resource and capital extraction. Imperial entanglements, however, affected US culture at home, including modern architecture. Early in the twentieth century, US architect Louis H. Sullivan had obliquely pointed to this effect, when he celebrated US Western expansion and manifest destiny; “the United States kindly relieving Mexico of [the] too heavy a burden” of its northern territories enabled the prime identity construct of “America.”

Imperial expansion forced US culture to negotiate diverse racial and cultural categories as it imagined its own “Providential” culture. In the 1940s, however, imperial entanglements worked within a new Pan American web that operated critical inflections upon US architectural culture as modern architecture in Latin America and its architects enjoyed a newfound prestige that positioned them as equals and, at times, as more advanced than their US counterparts. In this sense, Latin American agency—although mediated—could be found in the astonishing works being extensively published in architectural journals.

In the field of modern architecture culture in the 1940s, the United States was at a disadvantage. MoMA’s 1943 Brazil Builds struck a resonant prophetic chord, and this harmonious melody continued well into the 1950s—until it dissipated. These reverberations of Latin harmonies within US architecture culture reversed the well-established and traditional relationship between the US and Latin America, and redrew an unprecedented world map. Not everyone agreed with this cultural order, but everyone experienced it.

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Source: Arias Montes

Fig. 1.2. José Clemente Orozco, 1923-26 murals at the Escuela Nacional Preparatoria executed in a 18th Century Jesuit monastery.
Source: Author
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Fig. 1.4. Federico Méndez Rivas, Ministry of Education, 1924; façade of the courtyard with reliefs by Manuel Centurión (left) and Rivera’s second floor frescoes (right). Source: Author
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Fig. 1.8. Black and White photographic display of murals in Mexico, *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art*
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Fig. 1.9. *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* entry to Pre-Spanish section of the exhibition.
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Fig. 1.10. Mayan stelae in the Pre-Spanish section, *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art*
Source: MoMA Archives
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Fig. 1.12. Regional Map of Mexico
Source: Catalogue, *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art*

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Fig. 1.18. Models of colonial architecture; Capilla del Pocito (right) and aqueduct fountain (left), *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art*  
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Fig. 1.20. John McAndrew’s exhibition staging; Pre-Spanish Art (left) and Popular and Folk Art (right), *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art*
Source: MoMA Archives

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Fig. 1.21. Staging of folk and primitive art at MoMA. Left, McAndrew’s staging in the Popular and Folk Art section of *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art*. Right, René d’Harnoncourt staging for MoMA’s 1946 *Art of the South Seas*
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Fig. 5.12 William Everitt, house in Olinda, California, 1950.
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Source: MoMA Archives

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Source: *Habitat*
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Source: Habitat

Fig. 6.10. Latin American Architecture since 1945, plan of the exhibition. Reconstructed from original drawings.
Removed due to copyright

Fig. 6.11. *Latin American Architecture since 1945*, view of the corridor with the dropped luminous ceiling.
Source: MoMA Archives

Removed due to copyright

Fig. 6.12. *Latin American Architecture since 1945*, view of the cork room; three-dimensional stereo viewers to the left.
Source: MoMA Archives

Removed due to copyright

Fig. 6.13. *Latin American Architecture since 1945*, contrast between the corridor and the cork room.
Source: MoMA Archives

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Fig. 6.14. *Latin American Architecture since 1945*; Carlos Raúl Villanueva and Max Borges, with their wives (left) in front of their respective buildings at the opening of the exhibition; right, panel of Torre Polar in Caracas.
Source: MoMA Archives

Removed due to copyright

Fig. 6.15. *Latin American Architecture since 1945*, entry panel to the exhibition (left) and its explanatory text (right).
Source: MoMA Archives
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Source: *Latin American Architecture since 1945*

Removed due to copyright

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Source: MoMA Archives
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Source: MoMA Archives

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Source: MoMA Archives

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Source: MoMA Archives

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Source: MoMA Archives; Architectural Forum

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Source: *Latin American Architecture since 1945*; Brilliemburg

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Source: MoMA Archives; *Brazil Builds*
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