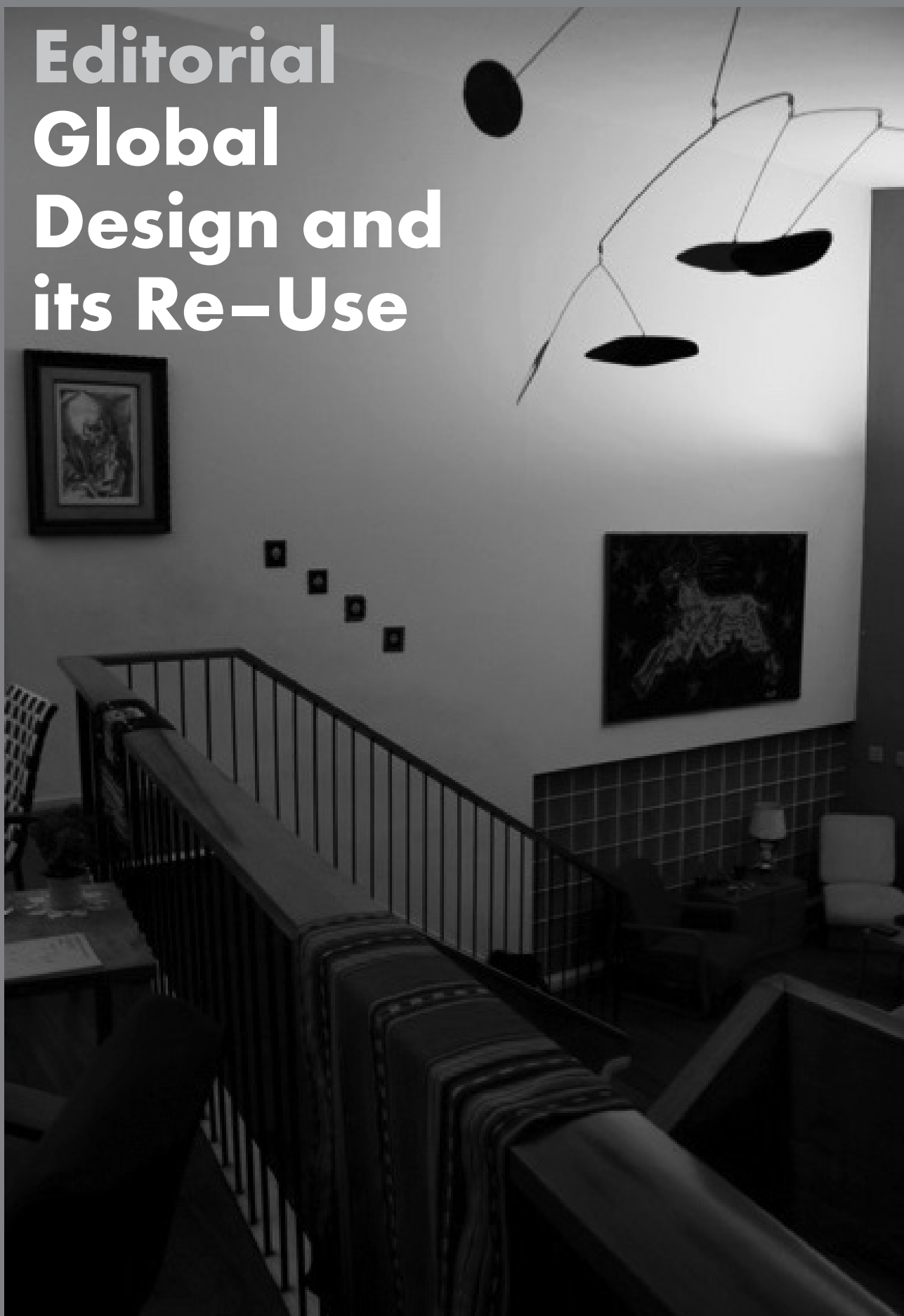


# Editorial Global Design and its Re-Use

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**T**he study of Modern interior space and furniture is reinforced with this second 2012 **docomomo** Journal. The variety, complexity and preservation case studies; or the discussion on materiality and techniques, explains the argument of this Journal: Global Design.

Coming back from the 12<sup>th</sup> International **docomomo** Conference held in Tapiola at the Espoo Cultural Center **docomomo** wishes to stress the Conference theme "Survival of Modern, from Coffee Cup to General Plan". Following Richard Neutra expression "Survival through Design", and Gropius statement "design from the cup of coffee to the general plan" ability, the aim is to face the new worldwide challenges. In fact, I am sure that **docomomo** commitment and effort made through a competent network of professionals is each time more valuable, more necessary, and more imperative! We all know that times are changing, times are changing at high speed!

Thanks to Finland, the motto "Survival of Modern" justifies going deeper in the relation that connects form and function, esthetics and ethics. That's also why the argument is Global Design. The aim of this collective and interdisciplinary reflexion is to contribute for the discussion that relates Modern heritage and interior space, common daily life and *musealization* of Modern Interior Spaces, gathered underneath a global strategy to better understand and preserve these delicate monuments. In fact, the interior space with all devices and furniture pieces is frequently neglected as an essential matter in safeguard interventions.

This issue wishes, in a certain sense, to pay tribute to education and pedagogic skills, to preservation and re-use approaches, in order to enlighten the relevance of sensorial and tactile comfort, economy and beauty, utility and simplicity; and at the same time, improving regional roots in order to fulfill the sense of the place.

Indeed, the small scale was an important theme at the International **docomomo** Conference 'The Survival of Modern, from Coffee Cup to General Plan', which, together with the Workshop and the Docotours, took place in Espoo, Finland, between August 2 and 13. During the Council Meeting, celebrated at the Espoo Cultural Center, a proposal to create an ISC on Interior Design was also discussed and hopefully it could be created in 2014. Seven new **docomomo** Chapters were also accepted: China, Georgia, Hong Kong, Macau, Iran, Lebanon and Ukraine, and the candidacy of **docomomo** Korea to organize the next International **docomomo** Conference in Korea in 2014, was approved. It was also an opportunity to strengthen links with the UIA, the *Fondation Le Corbusier* and ICOMOS 20<sup>th</sup> century committee. In the next two years, the International Specialist Committees will also have important challenges as you can read in their plans of action which have been presented in the **docomomo** Newsletter which has been retaken. In this Journal you will find a summary of the contents of the Conference, the Workshop and the Tours, written by their organizers, Timo Tuomi, Tommi Lindh, Olli Hakanen, Sirkkaliisa Jetsonen and Aino Niskanen. Finally, the keynote presentations by Juha Leiviskä, Juhani Pallasmaa, John Allan, Mikko Heikkinen and Anthony Vidler, reinforced the connection between **docomomo** and architectonic production. In this occasion we would like to thank Anthony Vidler for allowing us to publish his lecture on 'Learning to Love Brutalism'.

Finally, I wish to thank Bárbara Coutinho who so powerfully helped us acting as guest editor of this 'Global Design' Dossier, continuing the work of the previous "Designing Modern Life" Journal, together with the involvement of architects, art historians and restorers who have generously shared with us their wide experience and their thought and theoretical reflection on the issue.

Ana Tostões, Chair of **docomomo** International



# The Modern *Gesamtkunstwerk* and its Preservation

By Bárbara Coutinho

10 Interior design had a major relevance for Modern Movement and Modern Living. Actually, for the fully understanding and experiencing of Modern spatiality, interior design is determinant. Furthermore, the study of interiors is now marked by an increasing interest, with recent literature that emphasizes interior spaces globally and summons architecture, design and fine arts in an interdisciplinary approach. Despite all this, interior design is still a subject that requests a more in-depth study and a more extended debate in order to improve appreciation, understanding and preservation. Questions like modernity, privacy, efficiency, economy, comfort, utility, beauty in daily life or consumption need to be discussed when talking about interior space design. Product design, new materials and techniques, equipments and devices also have to be considered. In fact, Modern interior design engages these and many other issues, demanding a multidisciplinary study that stresses Modernity's encounter with interiority and acknowledging the importance of its conservation. It is fundamental to expand the discourse on interiors beyond traditional boundaries with a plural perspective, either thematical or geographical.

Moreover, interior design has to be, by nature, a synthesis of all the arts, particularly in the Modern Movement, where it also meant the demand of new aesthetics in response to new technology and *gesamtkunstwerk*, a total artwork that embraces all the expressions into a Unitarian (and also utopian) environment for Humanity. Therefore, interior design can give us a complete expression of Modernity itself. The ideal of a *gesamtkunstwerk* as a perfect unity between all types of art, including painting, music, architecture, literature and so on, into a work where the whole is larger than the sum of its individual parts is not new. We recognized this ideal of the interior as an integral feature, for instance, in Baroque churches where architecture, visual arts and music created a dramatic and theatrical scenario for the triumph of the Catholic Counter-Reformation. Some kind of unity between buildings and their inner spaces is also visible in *Art Nouveau*. In

Victor Horta's interiors we recognize a strong and coherent style, resulting from a unity between architecture, interior design, decorative arts, furniture, utilitarian objects, cutlery, textiles and light. The same spirit is present in many of Antoni Gaudí's interiors, Adolf Loos' houses or Fischer von Erlach's spaces. Special reference must also be made to Henry van de Velde and his *Havana Cigar Store* (Berlin, 1899) or the *Family House* (Uccle, 1895) where he achieved a complete synthesis of all the arts, including costumes for his wife, with the same decorative motifs and sinuous lines of the interior space<sup>1</sup> creating an absolute unity. This higher unity is also demanded by Peter Behrens, Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Gerrit Rietveld, among many others. Russian Constructivism also helped the new society and men to propose a new and coherent aesthetic, recognized from the smaller utensil to the urban plan. Even Albert Einstein held the belief that "all the individual arts were supposed to give up something of their own nature in order to create a higher unity".<sup>2</sup> Frank Lloyd Wright deserves a prominent place: Fallingwater House, Robbie House, Larkin Building or the Unity Temple as perfect paradigms of the way Wright conceived each place as a total *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

A distinctly approach to the concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk* emerged in the Bauhaus. The vision of a union between art and design is visible in Gropius' *Proclamation of the Bauhaus* (1919), where he described a utopian craft guild combining architecture, sculpture and painting into a single creative expression, in each object designed, but also in the craft-based curriculum that would spin around workshops of artisans and designers capable of creating useful and beautiful objects for a new world.<sup>3</sup>

**docomomo's** Conference, which took place simultaneously with Helsinki as the World Design Capital 2012, focused on what Walter Gropius conveyed "design from the coffee cup to the urban plan". In **docomomo** Journal 46, published during the conference which took place last August, the articles aimed to address the multiple ways in which Modern heritage has been claimed, presenting dif-

ferent and complementary perspectives of preservation, highlighting recent examples and successful case studies. It was important to discuss the method and extension of each intervention, the material, formal or ideological authenticity regarding the original program, durability, and anticipate future needs. Emphasizing housing as the central theme of study and innovation, two essays explored the recently restored *Tugendhat House* by Mies van der Rohe and the coherence and unity of Charles and Ray Eames' work and thought was also analyzed. Two other articles focused more directly on Modern furniture and its relation with Modern architecture, concentrating on the complementarity between design and architecture. Focusing on Finnish Modern design, Journal 46 emphasized the role of Alvar Aalto, stressing the way he represents a different path in Modern Movement, one which is more organic, prefers bending wood and seeking cosy and comfortable environments with as much natural light as possible. Two other articles stressed a more global perspective between furniture and interior designer: Clara Porset—stressing the way she linked Modernity with local Mexican tradition and crafts in her interior designs—and Belgian architect Gaston Eysselinck. The Journal also intended to look at the legacy of ethics and Modern philosophy, namely Dieter Rams' importance for the praxis and ethics of nowadays design.

The diversity and importance of this theme justified a second Journal. In this issue, the common denominator is the *Gesamtkunstwerk* philosophy and its different embodiments. Consequently, we invited **Monika Markgraf** to write a paper about the Bauhaus and Ulm Schools, exploring the pedagogical strategies towards the creation of a global design, emphasizing the practice-based training and the interdisciplinary work in order to develop a synthesis of all forms of artistic activity. **Thomas Danzl** focuses on Bauhaus Master Houses' painting scheme, stressing the guidelines, methods and strategies developed in their restoration. Moreover, he questions the authenticity and theoretical principles that are behind the different options of recovery, restoration or conservation. Three examples demonstrate how this idea of a total work of art can be expressed in different fields and typologies. **João Paulo Martins** signs a paper about Portuguese schools, putting the emphasis on the way they materialize the concept of global design, seeking formal coherence and a close functional and ideological articulation between all components. **Susana Constantino's** essay on Alberto Pessoa's furniture design, focuses on the Central Library and the building for the Student's Facilities of the University of Coimbra, proving how Pessoa used construction details and furniture design to bridge the gap between the different scales of the project, thus becoming a funda-

mental element in the building's formal and plastic characterization, in the pursuit to deliver a *gesamtkunstwerk*. The third example comes from Werner Max Moser and the New Alstetten Church. **Arthur Rüegg** and **Silvio Schmed** show how Moser achieved a total work in the church interior where everything is designed down to the wide-span benches, the lighting fixtures and the bronze door handles, linking this goal with the subsequent space restoration. **Sander Nelissen** and **Mariël Polman** write about Duiker's Open Air School and the questions that informed its restoration and rehabilitation, seeking to ensure the color scheme and the interior-exterior space relationship. Underlining also the need of an interdisciplinary approach to develop a sustainable action of restoration, **Rossend Casanova** writes about Casa Bloc, an important residential building built between 1932 and 1936 in Barcelona, focusing on its recent musealization as a strategy to increase our knowledge and appreciation of the design of objects and spaces as a total work. Also related with Casa Bloc, **Antonio Pizza** stresses the importance of GATEPAC's AC magazine in Modern edition and as the affirmation of the Modern Movement. Still reinforcing the role of GATCPAC, the Catalan section of GATEPAC, **Mercè Vidal** writes a paper about the perspective of Le Corbusier, focusing the question in furniture design and its contribution to the integral harmony of each space. **Ariadna Alvarez** explores the work of Le Corbusier, Pierre Jeanneret and their disciples in Chandigarh, one of the most important examples of global design. Finally, in order to evaluate the significance of *collect, curate and exhibit* for the preservation and communication of Modern architecture/design we interviewed **Alexander von Vegesack**, founding Director of Vitra Design Museum, freelance curator and collector of industrial furniture. The aim was to be aware of the most suitable strategies to communicate and present Modern Movement in all its diversity and global approach.

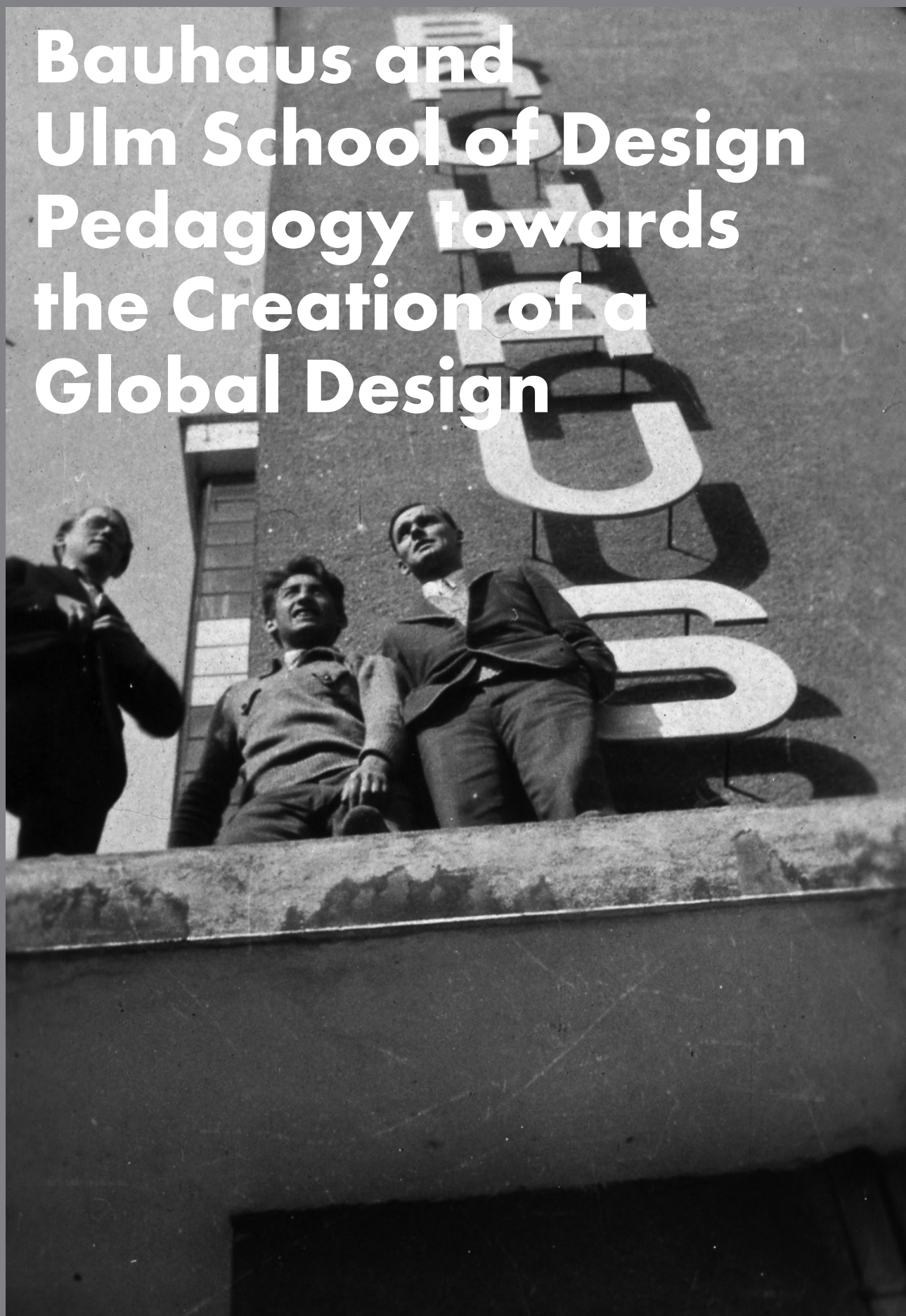
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#### Bárbara Coutinho

Director of MUDE-Design and Fashion Museum, Francisco Capelo's Collection—since 2006 and member of Francisco Capelo's Collection Management Board. Invited Assistant Professor at the *Instituto Superior Técnico* and collaborator in the Curatorial Studies Master in Lisbon University. Master in Contemporary Art History, at present she is developing a PhD on the phenomenology of the contemporary exhibition space. She has signed essays and articles on contemporary creation, design, architecture and museology and has participated in conferences, juries and seminars. Curator of *Centro Cultural Belém*, 1998–2006.

# Bauhaus and Ulm School of Design Pedagogy towards the Creation of a Global Design



The relevance of the Bauhaus and the Ulm School of Design to the development of a global design is widely acknowledged. With the inclusion of the Bauhaus on the UNESCO list of World Heritage sites, this received worldwide recognition, and thereby acknowledged not only the architecture, but also the pedagogical concept. Since a comprehensive analysis of the pertinent issues far exceeds the parameters of this contribution, I would like to focus on two aspects: a brief exposition of the Bauhaus building and the Ulm School of Design as built manifestoes of their pedagogical concepts and the dissemination of these concepts by the institutions' students and educators.

By Monika Markgraf

The pedagogical concept of the Bauhaus involved practice-based training for a new type of designer who worked in an interdisciplinary way and collaborated on life reform: "the primary aim for the development of the Bauhaus was the synthesis of all forms of artistic activity, the unification of all manual handicrafts and technical disciplines as the indispensable parts of a new architecture, that is, an architecture conducive to the spirited life".<sup>1</sup> Before beginning their training, the students attended the obligatory preparatory course, in which they were to emancipate themselves from formal conventions. At the Bauhaus, the design of products was not to be based on formal criteria, but was to grow out of the 'essence of things'. "Everything is defined by its essence. In order to design it so that it functions as it should, its essence must first be investigated, because it must completely serve its purpose, that is, practically fulfil its functions, be durable, inexpensive and 'aesthetic' [...] but a harmonious and rational functioning of everyday life is not the ultimate aim, but merely a prerequisite in order to attain a maximum of personal freedom".<sup>2</sup>

The Bauhaus building is regarded as a built manifesto of the Bauhaus concept of its founder, Walter Gropius. It is divided into parts which assimilate various functions, such as working, learning and living, and in which the volumes, façades, spatial structure and surfaces are designed differently according to these functions. The architectonic quality thrives on simple elements, balanced proportions and nuanced details. Industrial products are integrated as given elements in the design, and the collective of *Bauhauslers* in the workshops participated in the décor and furnishing of the building. In this way, functionality and aesthetics merged into a single entity, as was called for in the program of the Bauhaus.

Since its foundation, the Bauhaus was engaged in an ongoing process of reform. As such, Hannes Meyer, the director who succeeded Gropius, developed a pedagogical concept for the training of architects, in which the design process was based on systematic and detailed analyses, such as the precise calculation of the positions of the sun or the investigation of domestic processes, and incorporated aspects from sciences such as sociology or psychology. The balcony access houses in the Dessau-Törten estate and the ADGB Trade Union School in Bernau, built collectively by the Bauhaus Building Department, are regarded as built manifestoes. The programmatic layouts successfully realize the functional concept in the architectonic clarity and the practical design through aesthetic discipline.

With the third Bauhaus director, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, the curriculum became more streamlined and specialized in the sense of a school of architecture, whereby the preparatory course was also dispensed with. Unlike Gropius and Meyer, Mies did not realize his goals by means of a systematic pedagogical concept. The Bauhaus finally closed in 1933 in Berlin after the National Socialists came to power.

The Bauhaus was succeeded in Germany by the Ulm School of Design (HfG), which opened in 1955. Max Bill, who had studied at the Bauhaus Dessau from 1927 to 1929, played a significant part in its foundation and in the development of its pedagogical program. Its founders Inge Aicher-Scholl, Otl Aicher and Max Bill adopted the subtitle of the Bauhaus Dessau 'School of Design', built on the ideas of the Bauhaus and developed an interdisciplinary education program with departments for architecture, product design, visual communication, information and film (the 'Ulm model'). New insights from sciences such as ergonomics, cybernetics or information theory were incorporated into the work: "Ulm's entire approach is essentially an enlightening one, namely the attempt to establish an organic connection between society and culture on the one hand, and science and theory on

< Three *Bauhauslers* on a canopy of the Dessau Bauhaus building in 1929 (Walter Gropius, 1926).

Photo by Arie Shanon, Bauhaus Dessau Foundation.



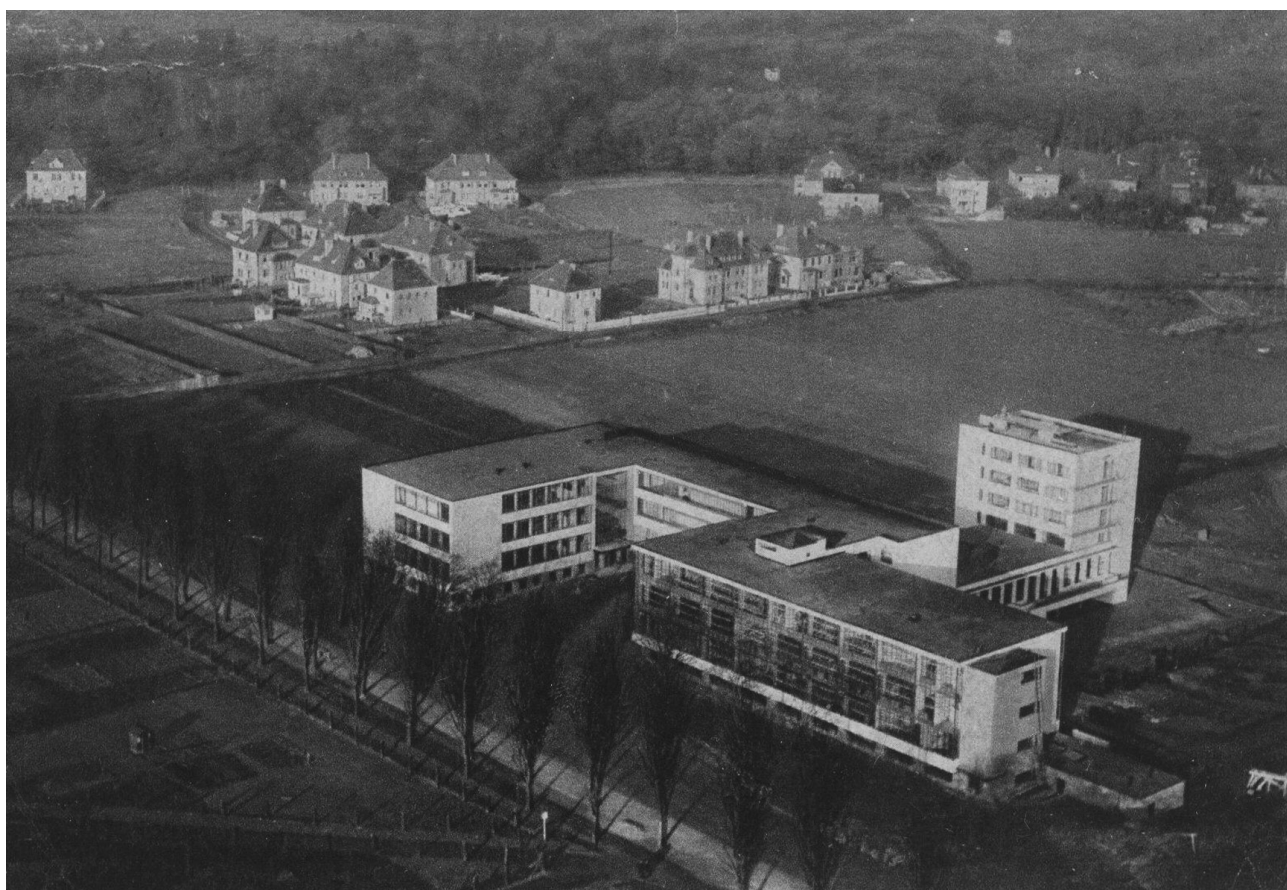
Figure 1. Aerial View of the Bauhaus Building in 1926 (**Walter Gropius**, 1926). Postcard by Junkers Luftbild. Photo author unknown, Bauhaus Dessau Foundation.

Figure 2. Ulm School of Design in 1955 (**Max Bill**, 1955). Photo by Sisi von Schweinitz, © HfG-Archiv, Ulmer Museen, Ulm.

Figure 3. Federal School of ADGB in Bernau near Berlin, inner courtyard with pergola, ca. 1930 (**Hannes Meyer**, **Hans Wittwer** and Building Department of the Bauhaus Dessau, 1930). Photo by Walter Peterhans, Bauhaus Dessau Foundation, © Museum Folkwang, Essen.

Figure 4. Ulm School of Design terrace in 1960. Photo by: Claus Wille, © HfG-Archiv, Ulmer Museen, Ulm.

the other".<sup>3</sup> Training lasted four years, the first of which was spent on the preparatory course. The first lecturers included, alongside the former *Bauhaus*ers Josef Albers, Walter Peterhans, Johannes Itten and Helene Nonné-Schmidt, young lecturers such as the Ulm graphic designer Otl Aicher, the Dutch national Hans Gugelot and the Argentine national Tomás Maldonado. Guest lecturers from all over the world, such as Charles and Ray Eames in 1958, enhanced the school's program. In 1956 Max Bill left the school, because his Bauhaus-influenced vi-



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sion of the designer at the centre of the designing process was no longer accepted. Tomás Maldonado formulated the new position, which embraced a more scientific approach to design: "the mainspring of our curiosity, our studies and our theoretical endeavors was our desire to create a solid methodological foundation for the work of design".<sup>4</sup> After funding was withdrawn, the school closed in 1968, incidentally the very same year that the large touring exhibition '50 Jahre Bauhaus' opened in Stuttgart.

The architecture of the Ulm School of Design is, like

the Bauhaus building, part of the school's substantive program and documents, in both the spatial organization and the material details, the general concept of the school where working, learning and campus life merged into one. Form and materiality articulate Modernity and an emergence into a better society, whereby both space and décor are adapted to interdisciplinary work and flexibility. The distinct design vocabulary of the cubic building, its austere materiality and its great openness, are consistent with the analytical and purist approach to design.



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Figure 5. **Josef Albers** teaching at the Black Mountain College, 1944. Photo by Josef Breitenbach. Creditline: Josef and Anni Albers Foundation.

Figure 6. **Walter Gropius** teaching in Harvard University, 1944. Photo by Jerry Cooke/ PIX Inc., New York, Bauhaus Archive Berlin.

Figure 7. Members of the **Hannes-Meyer** Group in Moscow in front of the Arbatsky-Place. 1/2 Flat 3.

From left to right: **Nutza Katalan, Tibor Weiner, Pin Tolziner, Konrad Püschel, Margret Mengel, Lili Polgar, Antonin Urban**, 01.05.1932. Photo author unknown, Bauhaus Dessau Foundation.

Figure 8. Students of the Building Department in front of the Bauhaus, 1932 (**Walter Gropius**, 1926). Photo by Stella Steyn, Bauhaus Dessau Foundation.

Figure 9. **Max Bill** and **Charles Eames**, 1958. Photo by Ernst Hahn, © HfG-Archive, Ulmer Museen, Ulm.

Figure 10. **Tomás Maldonado** teaching *Grundlehre* (preparatory course), 1955. Photo by Ernst Hahn, © HfG-Archive, Ulmer Museen, Ulm.

Although the Bauhaus closed in 1933 and the Ulm School of Design in 1968, their influence was by no means over. The dissemination of the pedagogical concept was intended in the training, although the formal adoption of design elements was rejected. Walter Gropius was not alone in his vehement repudiation of a 'Bauhaus style': "the goal of the Bauhaus is not a 'style', system, dogma or canon, neither formula nor fashion! It will be dynamic, as long as it does not depend on the form, but seeks the aura of life itself!"<sup>5</sup> At the Ulm School of Design, too, the form of a thing was to evolve from the precise analysis of all its aspects, and not from the reproduction of forms.

At the same time, a certain homogeneity in design emerged internationally, which was also apparent in the Bauhaus products since the Bauhaus exhibition of 1923 under the slogan 'Art and technology—a new unity'. In 1925 in his book *International Architecture* Walter Gropius presented this similarity of formal elements, based on selected buildings from different countries. In a brief introductory text, he explains: "a homogeneity of the Modern building form resulting from world traffic and world technology, which transcends the natural boundaries to which peoples and individuals adhere, breaks fresh ground".<sup>6</sup> From this, he extrapolated the term 'International Architecture', which is characterized by elements such as precise form, simplicity in multiplicity, organization according to



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the functions, limitation to typical basic forms and series and repetitions of these. Hannes Meyer also referred to this international development in 1928 in the journal *Bauhaus*: "this functional-biological notion of building as the shaping of life processes leads logically to pure construction: this constructive world of forms has no fatherland. It is the expression of an international spirit of building. Internationality is one virtue of the epoch".<sup>7</sup> With the book *International Style: Architecture since 1922*, which was published in 1932 to accompany the exhibition 'Modern Architecture: International Exhibition' in the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the term 'International Style' became commonplace. While the architecture of the Bauhaus, which was also presented there, was not given the



title 'Bauhaus style' as such, it was nevertheless branded as a 'style'. In fact, the design methodology was rarely understood or implemented, and formal elements of the 'style' were copied instead.

The pedagogical concept of the Bauhaus and the Ulm School of Design was disseminated and became highly influential worldwide, essentially through the work of the *Bauhauslers*—a circumstance, which is now receiving more attention in research.<sup>8</sup> While a comprehensive description of the diverse paths taken and their numerous interconnections exceeds the scope of this contribution, some aspects must nevertheless be addressed.

International mobility was already part of the program at the historic Bauhaus, because it was closely intertwined with the cultural movements in Europe and further afield. The educational program, too, not only had an interdisciplinary character, but also an international one, since many of the masters and students at the Bauhaus had come together from several different countries, such as the USA, Japan, Hungary, Russia, Switzerland or The Netherlands. The guest lecturers, too, came from different parts of the world, including, for example, El Lissitzky from Moscow, Rudolf Carnap from Vienna or Karel Teige from Prague. Some *Bauhauslers* worked for a time in other countries, such as Hinnerk Scheper, who, with his wife Lou and Erich Borchert, collaborated in Moscow on solutions to the artistic and technical problems of color design in architecture. After completing their time at the Bauhaus, the masters and students acted in diverse ways as multipliers and contributed significantly to the global dissemination of the Bauhaus ideas.

The closure of the Bauhaus in 1933 and the for many *Bauhauslers* threatening situation in Germany also initiated a process, in the course of which numerous *Bauhauslers* emigrated to other countries in order to work or teach there in the sense of the Bauhaus. Some of the approximately 50 *Bauhauslers* who ended up in the USA became highly influential. The erstwhile Bauhaus directors Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe, for example, continued their work in Harvard or, respectively, Chicago, as professors and practicing architects; Anni and Josef Albers worked in Black Mountain College, Asheville, and László Moholy-Nagy endeavored to set up a 'New Bauhaus' in Chicago. The approximately 40 *Bauhauslers* who emigrated to the Soviet Union were faced with more challenging conditions. The members of the 'Red Bauhaus Brigade' led by Hannes Meyer, for instance, were initially welcomed and worked in the state planning office. However, with the onset of repressions under Stalin's rule, the situation changed. Some *Bauhauslers*, such as Hannes Meyer or Konrad Püschel, were able to leave the country again, while others such as Antonin Urban

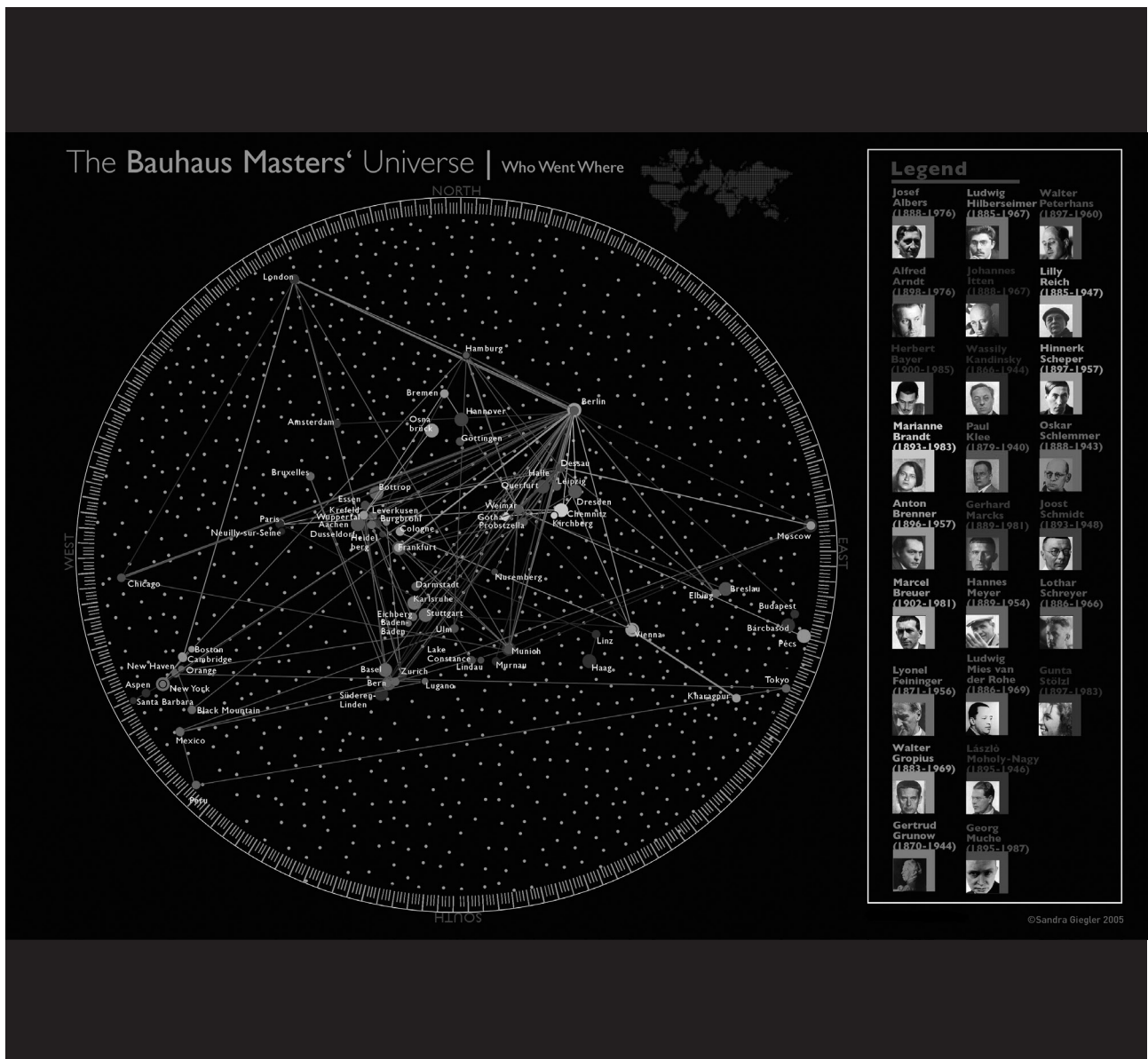
or Philipp Tolziner were murdered or, respectively, sentenced to many years' imprisonment. Many *Bauhauslers* carried the Bauhaus concept to European countries and to Palestine, such as Hans Fischli as the director of the Zurich School of Arts and Crafts in Switzerland, Paul Citroen as head of the *Nieuwe Kunstschool* in Amsterdam in The Netherlands, Arie Sharon as an architect in Tel Aviv or a lecturer in Haifa and Ruth Kaiser as the head of weaving workshops in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem.

The Ulm School of Design was likewise an internationally aligned institution, the contribution of which to the competitiveness of German products on the international market is widely acknowledged. The global dissemination of the 'Ulm concepts' also occurred to a large degree thanks to the international mobility of the lecturers and students. As with the Bauhaus, many of Ulm's students came from other countries—44% of them in fact, a proportion that was not found at any of the other art schools in Germany. A majority of the 'Ulmers' came from Switzerland, others for instance from the USA, Japan or Italy. All those who actively practiced their professions and attracted international attention with their products were multipliers. Their products included, for example, the M125 furniture system designed by Hans Gugelot, devices for the company Braun, or the Carousel Slide Projector for Kodak. The graphic designs that Otl Aicher developed, for instance for Lufthansa's visual presence or the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich, provide a further example. Early surveys by the 'club off ulm' have found that some 18% of the members of the Ulm School of Design subsequently took up teaching, half of those outside Germany, for example in Milan or Paris. The documentation of and research into the career paths of the Ulm students and lecturers has only just begun.

The global mobility of the *Bauhauslers* and the 'Ulmers', as well as their integration in international networks, supported the global dissemination of their pedagogical concepts and thereby the development of a global design. Their work methods and the buildings and products realized according to this systemic provided important impulses for the global development of pedagogical concepts, design methodologies and design in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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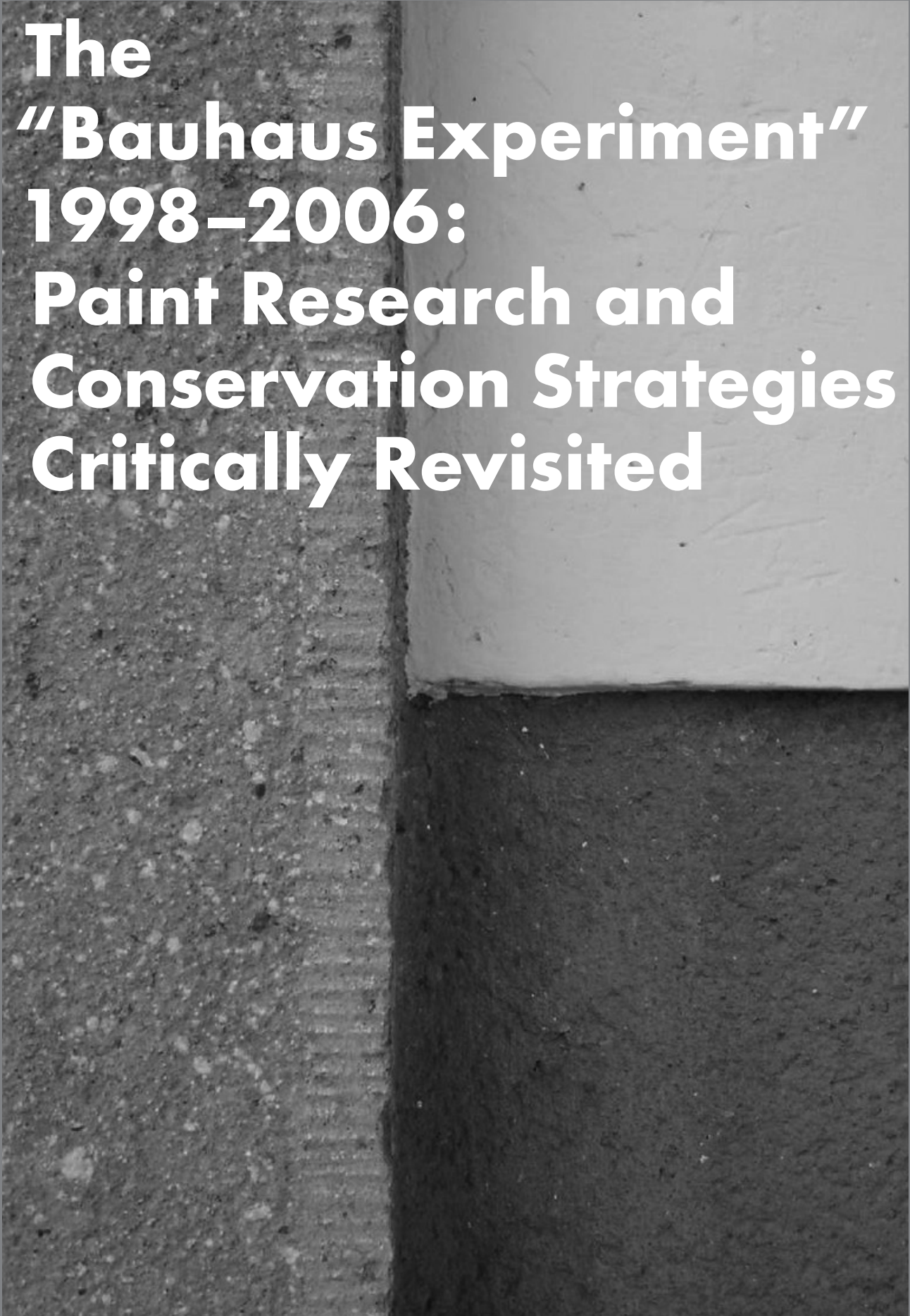
Figur 11. The Bauhaus Masters' Universe – Who Went Where. © Drawing by Sandra Giegler, 2005.

4. Tomás Maldonado, "Ulm im Rückblick", Lindinger, Herbert, Hochschule für Gestaltung Ulm. Die Moral der Gegenstände, Berlin, 1987.
5. Gropius, Walter, *Bauhausbauten Dessau*, Munich, 1930, reprint Mainz, 1974.
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7. Hannes Meyer, "Bauen", *Bauhaus*, year 2, n° 4, 1928.
8. Among others the research platform 'Impuls-Bauhaus', which since 2008 has been compiling a databank on the Bauhaus' social network and its global impact and presenting it on an interactive website: <http://impuls-bauhaus.de>; the 2009 conference 'bauhaus global', the contributions of which were published in 2010: Bauhaus Archive Berlin (Ed.): *Bauhaus Global*. Berlin 2010; a 2011 confer-

ence, the proceedings of which will be published in 2012: Hansen-Schaberg, Inge; Thöner, Wolfgang; Feustel, Adriane, editors, *Entfernt. Frauen des Bauhauses während der NS-Zeit-Verfolgung und Exil*, Munich, 2012.

#### Monika Markgraf

Architect, since 1997 scientific associate in historical building research and monument preservation at the Bauhaus Dessau Foundation. Main focus: research, documentation and preservation of the Bauhaus Buildings in Dessau and other MoMo Architecture, development of a building research archive. Several exhibitions and publications. Member of ICOMOS and **docomomo** International, Chair of **docomomo** Germany between 2005 and 2010.



# **The “Bauhaus Experiment” 1998–2006: Paint Research and Conservation Strategies Critically Revisited**



Nearly fifteen years after the beginning of the first systematic documentation works in the so-called “Masterhouses” in Dessau and actually with a distance of six years time since the inauguration of the restored “Bauhaus” school– building it seems to be useful to draw a critical résumé for further leading discussions. This is especially desirable because the guidelines, the methods and the strategies developed and finally realized during the conservation works were at the time without doubt at an experimental state.

By Thomas Danzl

### The Starting Point of the Debate

As various, often conflicting theoretical approaches to the conservation and presentation of heritage sites exist, it is not surprising that the treatment of ‘Modern’ monuments was and is still problematic as the recent conservation works at the Tugendhat House in Brno (2010–12) may proof. It can be taken for granted that the color investigation of the Bauhaus buildings in Dessau reopened in 1996 paradigmatically the confrontation between ‘conservation’ and ‘restoration’ in the field of conservation of the “Modern” not only regarding the architectural surfaces but also the built structures.

In this place should be attempted to illustrate that effective “project management” based on a shared and transparent theoretical fundament is able to bring about a conciliation of these apparently diametrically opposed opinions and concepts. The conservation and repair of the original, planned and surveyed by the restorer/conservators and other conservation professionals, offers the possibility of a restrained reconstruction within the limits of the potential of the surviving remains.

Especially the concept of “repair”—instead of mere reconstruction “ex novo”—bases in a first place on the respect for the “traces of time”—or better—for alterations due to aging of the materials and the critical evaluation of the value of posterior interventions. Generally, reconstructions projects neglect this last aspect eliminating as a consequence more recent layers and structures. On the other hand a conservation concept that tries to illustrate the history of a building ends up to risk an orchestration of a synchrony of the in contemporaneity in the contemporaneity that might influence the originally intended aesthetic and structural appearance.

The parameters of this mentioned critical process have to respect the material, historic and aesthetic premises of

the monument. In this perspective it seems to be generally accepted to decide a positive discrimination of one or two aspects if the decision making process is reproducible.

Strongly connected to this approach is the method of “minimal intervention” to preserve the maximum of authenticity. For sure there must be criteria that allow a critical process during interpretation of the historical data preserved by all the materials added in the monument’s lifetime from its origins up to now. This necessary process of selection influences and—at the same time—it is influenced strongly in a first step by the esthetical perception and in a second step by the theoretical preparation—and depending on this—by the importance given by the actors involved in the conservation process at a certain time.

In any way every conservation project adds a new layer of materials and time linked aesthetic values to the monument, which can be considered to a certain extent reversible. The crucial moment remains the act of dismantling or demolition of historical strata as a irreversible act of interpretation the monument’s history.

Already in 1996 a conference organized in Leipzig by the German National Committee of ICOMOS posed the question ‘Conservation of Modern Architecture?’ and followed two aims: the first was to overcome the perception of an eternal Modernity which presumes a phenomenological identity and conformity of the materials, and the second was to gain a historic distance and an appropriate practice in conserving artifacts of the Modern Movement. Although Modern monuments were not awarded a “special status” and it was emphasized that “these are to be treated in the same way as any other monument”, the preservation of architectural surfaces, plaster and colors significantly still played a secondary role in the debate.

### The Professional Role of the Conservator–Restorer

One reason can be found in the simple fact that the attention for these relics of a material culture were still considered to be replaceable being “sacrificial” or “maintenance” layers, the other consists in the restor-

< Materials used on the façade. On the left: reinforced concrete treated as an artificial stone. On the upper right hand: lime based plaster, conserved and repaired and then painted a fresco. The third image: scratched “Terranova”—plaster showing its content of mica and shale particles, 2006. Photo by Thomas Danzl.

ers general professional status at the time and somewhere still today—working in the field of conservation of historical monuments and not only on the buildings of Modernism—were less equal partners than better craftspersons.

It is essential to note, that until today in most of the European countries the profession of the conservator/restorer is not to be found in a juridical definition nor in a legal recognition which means a nearly complete lack of specific regulations to cover anticipate conservation—restoration activities and fail to stipulate the quality of the activities. The absolute need for qualified professionals and for a legal status, for an evaluation of the dynamics in a conservation—restoration project and finally of an analysis of the essential methodological steps of the conservation project require evidence of professional responsibility, competence and qualification.

The situation in Southern and Central Europe seems to differ significantly from the Northern countries. While the latter base their activities on a common professional code of ethics, which has a normative value with nearly no impact on national legislation, Southern Europe produces an abundance of legislative rules, guidelines and close frameworks that cause difficulties in their implementation.

Since the 90s fortunately this fact has been partly improved by the fact that conservation professionals (and not only conservators/restorers but also architects, “building archeologists” and last but not least conservation scientists) became academic (PhD level) and increased in professionalism. Recent conferences as in Copenhagen in 2005 on ‘Architectural Paint Research’ and in Brno in 2006 on ‘Materiality’ had a pioneering international character, not least because the restorer, in accompanying the construction work, was hereby awarded the role of an inter—and trans—disciplinary mediator.<sup>1</sup> The high degree of professionalism reached by the body of restorers over the last 10 years will have played no insignificant role in this.

Building research and the restoration sciences in combination with a new knowledge about almost forgotten materials are today able to reveal sedimented and mostly undiscovered information in the so-called “material culture” that is often enough only found in the materiality.

### The Practice

Auxiliary means are therefore the establishment of appropriate building material archives, the safeguard of restoration-related findings, and the experimental material-based reproduction of historical working methods and materials. In this perspective, the monument is preserved as a source of information for the so-called “material culture”, and by means of the principle of minimal interven-



tion, becomes a lasting resource for the conservation of materials and energy.

This is decisively aided by the special development of layers that could protect from wear and tear and “puffer” or “sacrificial” layers, which are compatible with the precepts and demands of monument protection, have the capacity to protect the original surfaces and may also be applied to the (materially identical) color reconstruction.

But as time showed the way from theory to a commonly shared practice can be long and full of stones. Fortunately the general attention of conservation specialists for the importance of respecting the authenticity of materials and especially of color schemes during conservation/res-



toration has been raised since then.

The decision-making process established contemporarily and more or less respected in conservation-restoration projects can generally be summarized as follows:

- Initiative
- Preliminary examination, diagnosis and decision to intervene
- Project formulation and final approval
- Selection of service providers
- Execution of the conservation-restoration intervention
- Control and monitoring of the conservation-restoration intervention
- Documentation
- Maintenance and preventive conservation

Figure 1. South-west façade of the so called *Werkstattgebäude* (workshop wing) with the “curtain wall” (reconstructed in 1976 and conserved during the 2004 restoration) and the southern staircase plastered with a stone-grey “Terranova”, 2006. Photo by Thomas Danzl.

Without doubt a desirably increased transparency in the decision-making process and in the management structures would lead to an equally increased public accountability of the conservation-restoration issues.

### **Reconstruction versus Conservation?**

The recent discussion on the reconstruction of the “Villa Gropius” in Dessau shows that the “concepts of reconstruction” and the alternatives to it are still obscured by obviously persisting elder taboos. The nearly general verdict of reconstruction in Western Germany after World War II





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Figure 2. Flooring conserved and repaired "Xylolith" in the "service area", 2005.

Figure 3. The need of programmed maintenance: salt efflorescence and biological attack to the stairway of the so called "studio building".

Figure 4. Eastern façade detail in light raking of the conserved and repaired plaster and limewash, 2006.

Photos by Thomas Danzl.

and the predominance of the “International Style” blocked an open discussion about this argument for decades.

Only with the generational change and—paradoxically—because of the supposed failure of Post-War Modernism the desire for traditional values and historical continuity could favor the paradigmatic change and facilitate as a consequence the reconstruction of an old and nearly lost identity by (re)constructing—interpretating Viollet-Le-Duc—a building “to a finished state, which may in fact never have actually existed at any given time”.<sup>2</sup>

It is interesting to notice that with the fall of the Berlin Wall reconstruction could evolve from a taboo to a new option in architectural history. With the decision of the German Parliament to reconstruct the completely lost Berlin Castle also the last taboo of the reconstruction “ex novo” of a monument “how it was and where it was” fell down. The state authorities of monument care ignored this socio-cultural evolution for a long time stating generally that reconstruction doesn’t represent an integral part of conservation–restoration—a pious lie as we easily could tell examining the history of restoration.

Obviously the transition between the different levels described by the act of conservation, restoration, repair, renewal, partly or complete reconstruction is fluent and the general acceptance of reconstructions increases or decreases with the knowledge about the lost monument and the connected expectations of the spectators towards its reconstruction.

The always present conflict between a justifiable demand of use by the future user of a partly or completely in surface or structure reconstructed monument, the requirement of the preservation of the inventory (conservation/restoration) and the entirely understandable wish to revitalize the largely lost surface characteristics (reconstruction) of the Bauhaus Color scheme found finally—in the case of the Bauhaus buildings—a methodical solution in the approach of “conservative reconstruction”.

This means that analysis, evaluation and interpretation based on the building research, natural and restoration sciences is assumed as a first indispensable step in the development of a conservation concept. This furthermore interdisciplinary and process-orientated procedure enables therefore a flexible response to new knowledge and problems.

The formulated aim of the reconstruction of the Bauhaus Color scheme proscribes that the treatment of the surfaces should be reversible to the greatest possible extent. This is not only in the interest of the preservation of the authenticity of the handed down historic surfaces, but also allows the option of repeated analyses and evaluations in the face of fresh problems, and in the light of new knowledge.

The color understood as a building material, through the varied combination and concentration of its constituents—pigments, binding agents and aggregates—with its own structure, became in the 20s an autonomous visual medium. By means of the nature of the surfaces or the texture of the backgrounds, the degree of the density and glossiness of the color, and not least by means of the way in which the color is applied, innumerable variations come into being.

These qualities of the color were first sampled by restorers and then subjected, in specific material analyses, to micro chemical analysis. Finally, by means of the experimental recreation of the mixture ratios by hand, the colors were reconstructed with their original virtues. During the work in the entrance area of the Bauhaus in 2004, the limits of such experimental color reconstructions—particularly based on secondary sources—became clear: based on black and white photographs taken by Erich Consemüller in the 20s, the corresponding color values were extrapolated by means of computer simulation, thus allowing faulty areas to be adequately finished.

## The Guidelines

The decision-making process adapted finally to the special case of the Bauhaus can be summarized as follows:

1. Prioritize the needs of conservation, restoration and/or reconstruction against the intended use of the building and the needs of future maintenance.
2. Prepare documentation (graphic, photographic, written) recording the present state of preservation combined with a preliminary stratigraphic research on supports and paint layers in order to establish a relative chronology wall by wall and room by room.
3. Interpretation and classification of the paint layers using cross-section and micro-chemical analysis. Creation of an archive for all samples and conservation of stratigraphic “in situ” exposures. The proposal of one or more historic color systems for use in the representation project.
4. An in depth examination of the proposed presentation by correlation of the historical data concerning the architectural form and color by an interdisciplinary committee.
5. Quantitative and qualitative assessment of “*lacunae*” or knowledge gaps in the proposal. In the case of the Mücke/Schlemmer Master House, which was heavily damaged in World War II, some rooms were presented in a “neutral” whitewash on a repaired plaster that still shows traces of time in a subdued way. As above mentioned tests have been undertaken to analyze and to interpret black and white photographs of

the foyer in the Bauhaus Building in order to complete the “lacunae” in the color scheme there.

6. Codification of the agreed color scheme with the Natural Color System. Further tests and verification by cross-sections and micro-chemical analysis are carried out to establish original pigments, binding mediums and additives. Reproduction of NCS rated colors on acid-free paper by the restorer for documentation and to help the decorators.
7. A description of the proposed materials and working methods to be drawn up by the restorer which will enable decorators to reply to an invitation for tender and understand the scope of the project.
8. Decorators to prepare trial samples of decorative finishes. Inspection and approval by an interdisciplinary committee.
9. Reconstruction work goes ahead.

As in every reconstruction, we have to keep in mind, the result can only be approximate and it reflects the relative knowledge, the sensibility and the possibilities of a certain period! But in our case of the Bauhaus buildings in Dessau it is not foreseen to be a final result, but a continuous adaptation to the latest scientific findings during regular maintenance and repair works.

## Open Questions

The completion of the conservation-restoration works in 2006 poses finally the urgent question of the organization of the maintenance and preventive conservation of all the Bauhaus Buildings in Dessau. The prerequisite for this is unlimited accessibility to and rapid evaluation of all documentations, which is sadly—despite all the engaged initiatives of Monika Markgraf, *Stiftung Bauhaus Dessau*—still a desire.

In this context the following questions provoked by conservation needs of the authentic and reconstructed surfaces have to be—in my opinion—answered firstly:

- Which degradation phenomena are acceptable under the functional and aesthetical point of view of the user?
- How can we define a concept of “patina” for the original and reconstructed surfaces?
- How can we conserve and treat structurally aged or too much damaged materials that were left unprotected in use (i.e. authentic floor coverings)? When is it necessary to put them in the material archive and to change them with equivalent materials?
- Which type of damage is to be found regularly and where? How can we avoid it?
- How often can the reconstructed color scheme be repaired only partially? When is it absolutely necessary to reconstruct it again, possibly under revised scientific parameters? In case of a new reconstruction, do we repaint surface af-

ter surface, following the special need for reconstruction of the specific surface or do we have to repeat the treatment always and exclusively only completely?

And finally the questions that have to be answered right from the start of a conservation project:

- Who does what, why, where, with what and how?

## Epilogue

The theoretical debate over decades about concepts of “best practice” in preservation of 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture (“Reconstruction Versus Conservation?”) seems to have reached recently a new climax in occasion of the re-restored Tugendhat House by Mies van der Rohe in Brno (2008–2012). The author, member of the consultant group of experts (THICOM 2009–2012) will report, together with the other members of the group, a case-study in a special publication. As far as it can be seen, the mentioned debate is still far away from a solution able to conciliate these diametrically opposed positions.

## Notes

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2. Viollet-Le-Duc, Eugène, *The foundations of architecture*, New York, 1990, 195 (translated by Kenneth D. Whitehead from the French original, 1854).
3. “Rekonstruktion versus Konservierung? Zum restauratorischen Umgang mit historischen Putzen und Farbanstrichen an den Bauhausbauten in Dessau” (*Denkmalpflege Sachsen-Anhalt*, 7, 1999, Heft 1, 100–112); “Farbe und Form. Die materialtechnischen Grundlagen der Architekturfärbigkeit an den Bauhausbauten in Dessau und ihre Folgen für die restauratorische Praxis” (*Denkmalpflege Sachsen-Anhalt*, 9, 2001, Doppelheft 1/2, 7–19); “Restaurator und Denkmalpfleger-Zusammenarbeit bei der Sicherung von Architekturoberflächen” (70. Tag für Denkmalpflege. Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Denkmalpflege für das Leben. Fachtagung Denkmalbestand und Denkmalbetreuung Jahrestagung der Vereinigung der Landesdenkmalpfleger in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland vom 17–21 Juni 2002 in Wiesbaden, Arbeitshefte des Landesamtes für Denkmalpflege Hessen, Bd 4, Stuttgart 2003, 137–140). “Zur Konservierung, Restaurierung und Rekonstruktion von Architekturoberflächen am Doppelhaus der Bauhausmeister Georg Muche und Oskar Schlemmer in Dessau” (Gebeßler, August, Hrsg., *Gropius. Meisterhaus Muche / Schlemmer. Die Geschichte einer Instandsetzung. Reihe „Baudenkmale der Moderne“ der Wüstenrot Stiftung*, Stuttgart 2003, 152–182). “Kunstputz (Edelputz)-Kunststein (Betonwerkstein)-Kunststeinputz (Steinputz). Die Bedeutung und Erhaltungsproblematik materialfärbiger Gestaltungen an Putzfassaden des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts” (Porsche, Jürgen, Hrsg., *Historische Architekturoberflächen. Kalk-Putz-Farbe/Historical Architectural Surfaces. Lime-Plaster-Color*,





Figure 5. The main entrance hall in the Werkstattgebäude (workshop wing). Photo by Thomas Danzl.

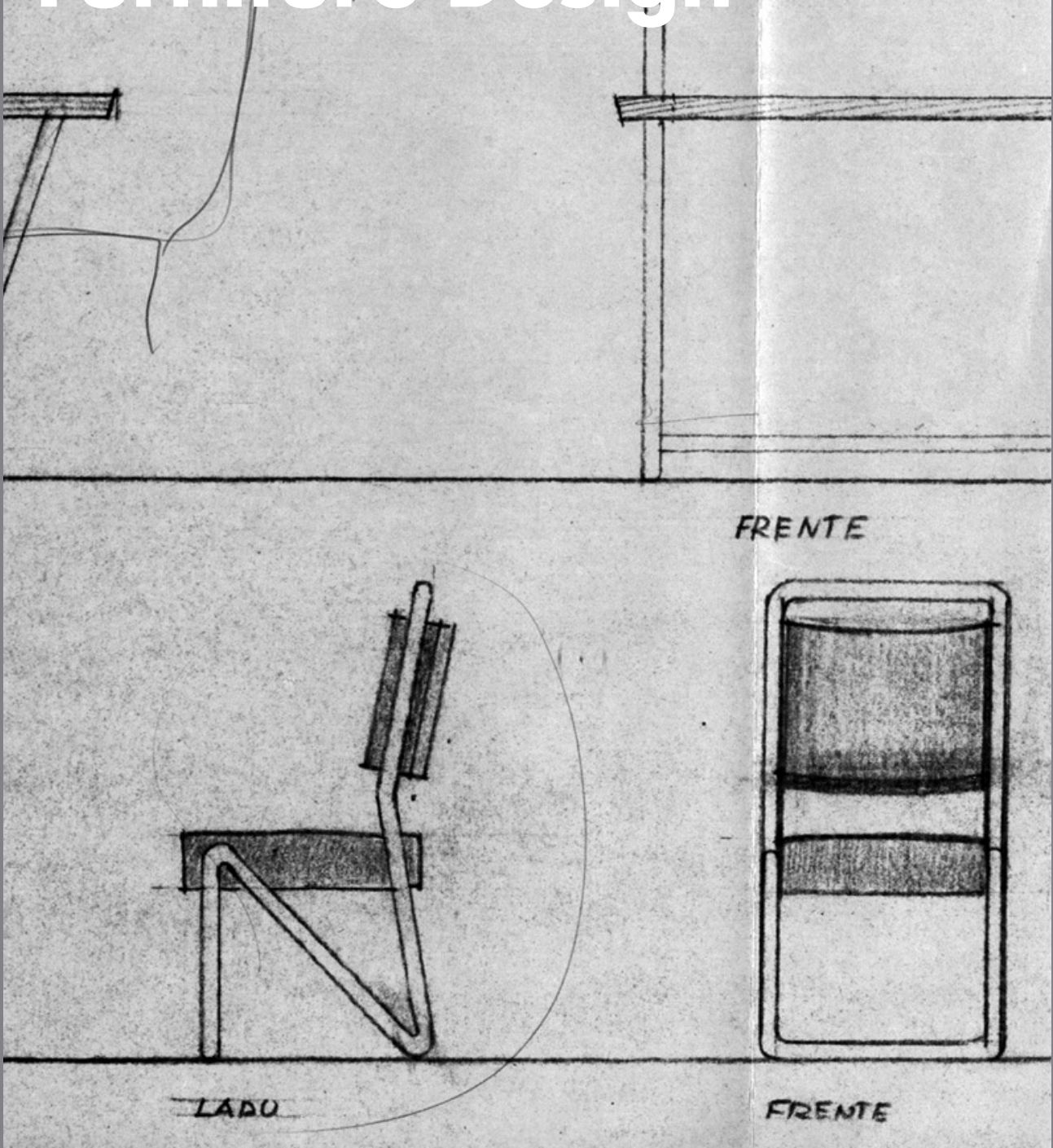
*Internationale Fachtagung des Deutsche Nationalkomitees von ICOMOS und des Bayerischen Landesamtes für Denkmalpflege, München, 20.-22. November 2002, Hefte des Deutschen Nationalkomitees, XXXIX, Munich 2004, 146-159).*

*"I materiali costitutivi degli edifici del Bauhaus a Dessau tra tradizione e innovazione. Sviluppo di un metodo di restauro conservativo (1998-2004)" (Biscontin, Guido; Driussi, Guido, Hrsg., Architettura e materiali del novecento. Conservazione, restauro, manutenzione, Atti del convegno di studi, Bressanone 13-16 luglio 2004, Venice 2004, 105-118).*

#### Thomas Danzl

Prof. Dr. phil., Conservator/Restorer, Art Historian, Professor at HfBK University of Fine Arts in Dresden, Head of the Department of Conservation and Restoration, Architecture and Art Conservation at the Bundesdenkmalamt (National Heritage Agency) in Vienna. He is the author of several articles and publications<sup>3</sup> on conservation and restoration and was member of THICOM.

# Architecture and the *MESAS DO CATÁLOGO* Gesamtkunstwerk: Alberto Pessoa's Furniture Design



In the post-war disciplinary discourse, the theme of architecture as a synthesis emerges evoking the idea of *gesamtkunstwerk*, this time associated with society's collective spaces. This debate sought the integration of functionalism with a more humanist approach as an attempt to bring together architecture and society.

Using as support two projects designed by Portuguese architect Alberto Pessoa (1919-1985), this text will explore the architect's design of furniture as a fundamental token in the search for a Modern global design, to discuss one instance of how the idea of modern architecture as a synthesis of several disciplines was pursued.

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By Susana Constantino

In 1969, when the headquarters and museum of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation were inaugurated in Lisbon to a project designed by Alberto Pessoa, Pedro Cid and Ruy Athoughia,<sup>1</sup> this ensemble became praised as a reference of a cultural facility embedded with the values of the "new monumentality."<sup>2</sup> On the one hand it epitomized a building for a civic institution related with the notion of a collective representation of the *zeitgeist*. On the other hand, it was the sheer materialization of the Modern notion of *gesamtkunstwerk*. Architecture, landscape, art and design were conflated in this building searching for the total integration of the disciplines. Therefore, it became associated with the "affirmative moment of a global design approach".<sup>3</sup>

This concept of global design resonates with Modern avant-garde's notion of a total work of art, defined by László Moholy-Nagy as "an attempt to bring together into one entity singular works or separate fields of creation that were isolated from one another. This entity was to be the 'Gesamtkunstwerk', architecture, the sum of all the arts."<sup>4</sup> Further, Moholy-Nagy argued already in 1925 what would become a banner of the post war re-conceptualization of the modern: that the synthesis of the arts should go beyond individual achievements, include symbolic values and be concerned with community life. Hence, the theme of the synthesis of the arts in the global design is thus defined as a means to foster the humanization of Modern architecture.

An attempt to deliver a global design approach had already been made by Alberto Pessoa. In fact, in his projects since 1945, especially in those for public buildings, the equipment and the furniture were not thought of as aesthetically autonomous but as an integral part of the architectural design as a global project.

In this article, two of these projects, the Central Library and the building for the Student's Facilities of the University of Coimbra, will be analysed. Supported by this analysis, I will argue that Pessoa uses the construction details and the design of the furniture to bridge the gap between the different scales of the project, thus becoming a fundamental element in the building's formal and plastic characterization, in the pursuit to deliver a *gesamtkunstwerk*.

### Crafting the Space

The outset of the construction of the new University of Coimbra campus, the so-called *Cidade Universitária*, was marked by a set of buildings designed by Alberto Pessoa,<sup>5</sup> among which the case of the Central Library is noteworthy. Taking advantage of the structure of a former educational building, which had itself been built on the foundations of the 18<sup>th</sup> century students theatre, from 1944 until 1946 the project was focused on renovating the façades "in order to integrate this building's architecture in the architectural type foreseen for the *Cidade Universitária*."<sup>6</sup> Once the interior layout was settled according to a pre-defined program, from 1954 to 1955 Pessoa thoroughly designed all the building's details, including lighting equipment and furniture.

The layout of the furniture was deliberately used to organize the space in relation with the building's structure. Likewise, the furniture's detailing resonates with the spaces hierarchical position concerning its representation value.

In the case of the main reading hall, Pessoa took advantage of the furniture layout—especially the double set of the cluster chair/table/lamp in waxed oak wood and *Formica*—to emphasize the proportion and the scale of the space, a reminiscence of the former theatre room. Moreover, the semi-circular shape is underscored by the incorporation next to the room's main entrance of a concave ceramic panel created by the artist Jorge Barradas. Hence, the furniture, both freestanding and recessed components, highlights the reading hall's spatial structure, which is further accentuated by the detailing of

< Preliminary design of the furniture, 1955, Alberto Pessoa.



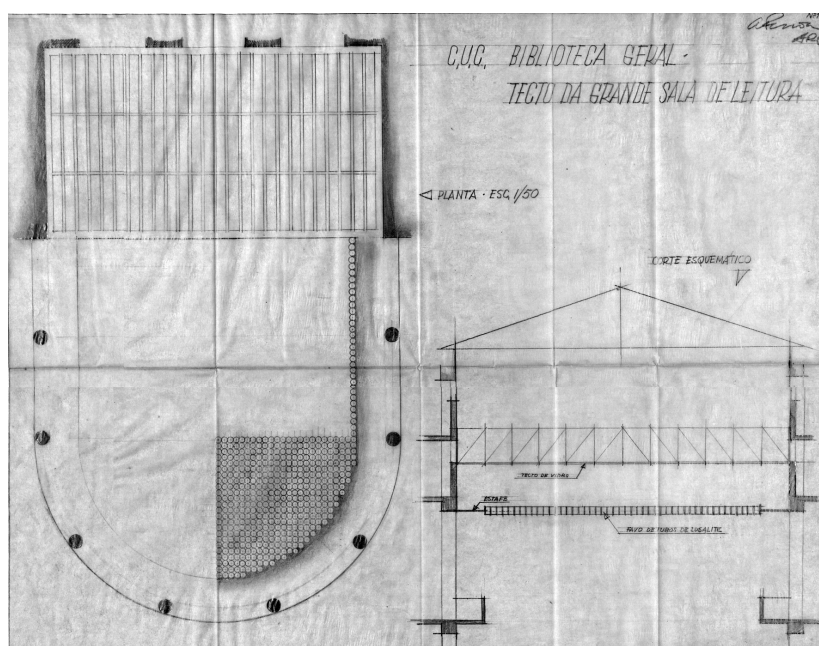
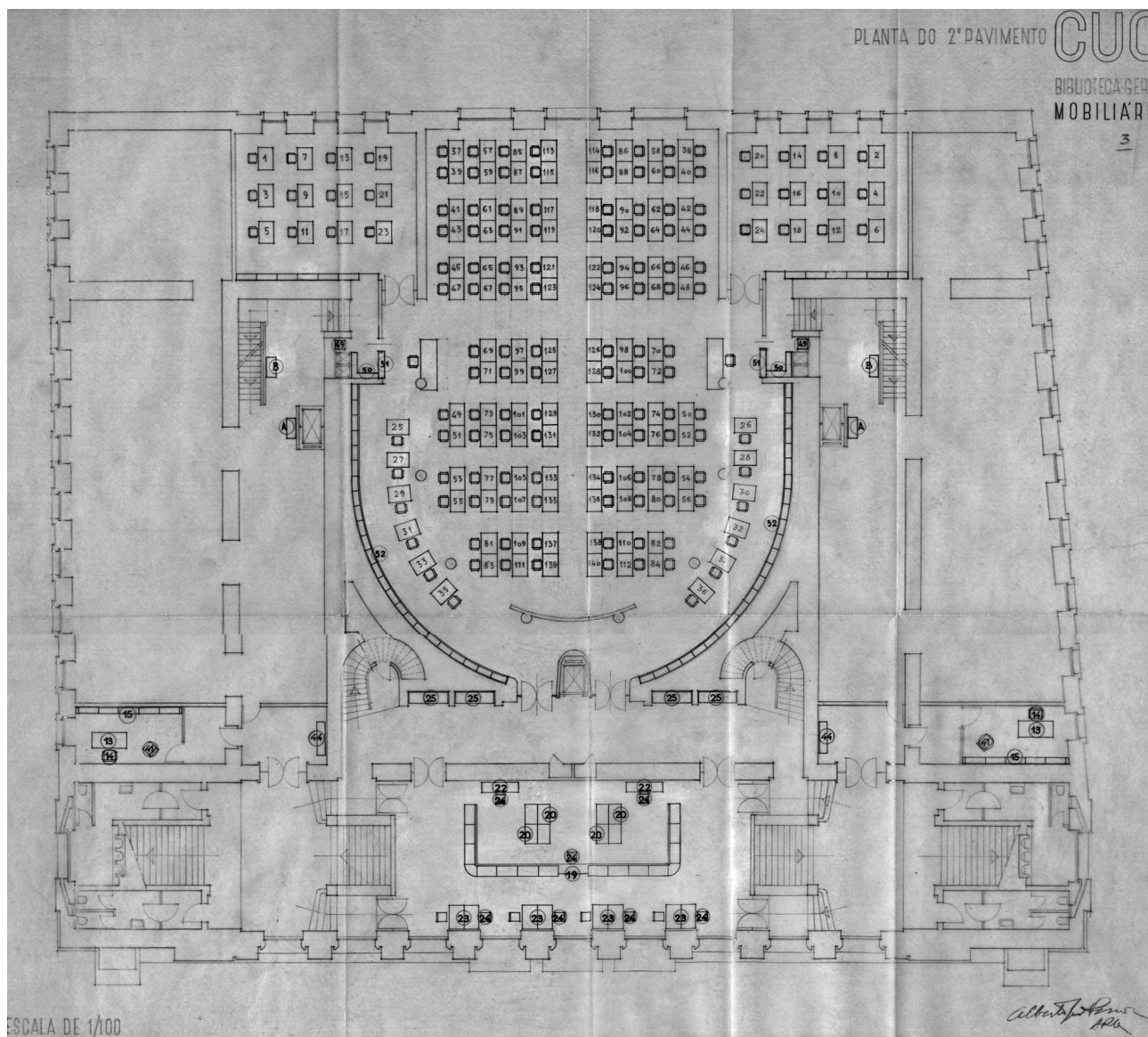


Figure 1. Central Library, Coimbra. Layout of the furniture: 2<sup>nd</sup> floor plan. Preliminary design of the furniture, 1955, **Alberto Pessoa**. Source: Arquivo da Universidade de Coimbra. CAPOCUC. CUC2008-138.

Figure 2. Central Library, Coimbra. Ceiling of the main reading hall. Construction detail, 1955, **Alberto Pessoa**. Source: Arquivo da Universidade de Coimbra. CAPOCUC. CUC2008-49.

Figure 3. Central Library, Coimbra. Main reading hall. Photo by Susana Constantino, 2012.

Figure 4. Central Library, Coimbra. Type 1 and 2: table and chair, Main reading hall. Preliminary design of the furniture, 1955, **Alberto Pessoa**. Source: Arquivo da Universidade de Coimbra. CAPOCUC. Processo 384.

Figure 5. Central Library, Coimbra. Type 23 and 24: table and chair, catalogue room. Preliminary design of the furniture, 1955, **Alberto Pessoa**. Source: Arquivo da Universidade de Coimbra. CAPOCUC. Processo 384.

the ceiling, which includes a skylight offsetting the limits of the room, made with a grid of fibre cement cylinders.

As for the furniture of the catalogue room, it shows, somewhat surprisingly in that context, references to Modern furniture,<sup>7</sup> combining the chairs' and desks' structure in curved tubular steel with seats in green leather and wooden desktops, creating a formal connection with the other furniture in the room, namely the central desk, the recessed displays or the file drawers cabinets.

### Conflating Furniture and Spatial Structure

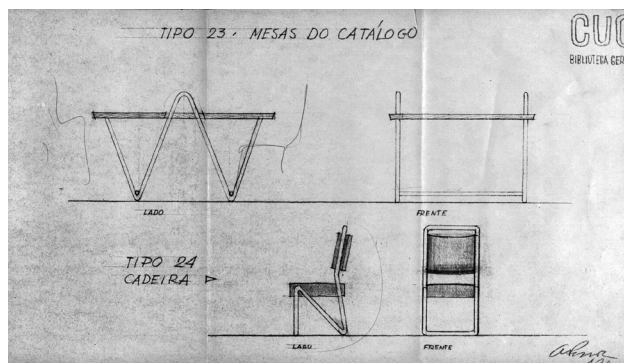
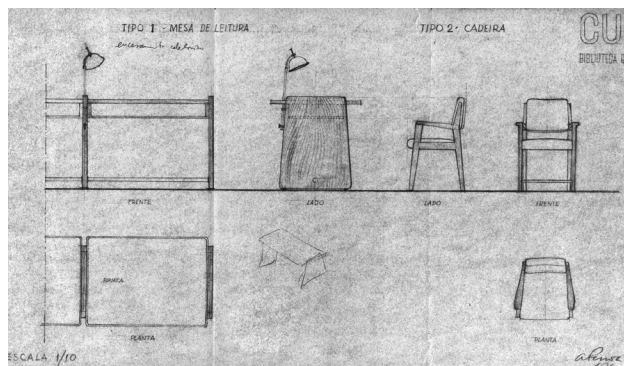
The students' facilities ensemble of buildings at the University of Coimbra was co-authored by Alberto Pessoa and the architect/artist João Abel Manta, and designed between 1956 and 1959. This building belongs already to a new paradigm of Modern architecture, suggesting a more intertwined design approach conflating several disciplines: architecture, landscape and design. Triggered by the components of the programme, which included a canteen, a gymnasium, a theatre and several students' cultural sections, the ensemble was organized in separated volumes articulated around a garden, organized according to a hierarchical assessment of their representation value.

Pessoa and Manta also proposed two ceramic panels covering a large part of the buildings' façades facing the main streets around the ensemble,<sup>8</sup> which they regarded

as "architecture's constituent elements," thus revealing their interest "in accomplishing a global design, from the building's conception, its functioning and decorative equipment, until the Integration of the Arts".<sup>9</sup>

In the interior of the buildings, Pessoa reiterates the idea of highlighting the building's spatial structure by the layout and detailing of the furniture. Once again different materials are used according to the purpose of each space and the assessment of its representation value, with some exceptions, though. Technical areas such as workshops and laboratories were equipped with curved tubular steel furniture, a material also used in vitrines and displays of more noble spaces, such as the academic museum. Further, this material was also combined in several furniture components with wood and *Formica*, thus revealing a conscious conflation of references taken from Nordic design and Modern steel tube furniture.

In the theatre building, the design of the furniture goes beyond spatial organization: the ticket office, the coat hangers, the bar of the cafeteria at the foyer and especially the chairs and the materials of the auditorium, they are all part of an integral architectural conception. The characterization of the space is deeply determined by the character and the materials specified to those elements. Even in more secluded areas, such as dressing rooms and other areas of the backstage, several furniture elements are recessed, designed for a specific location.





## Architecture and the Arts Conflated into a Single Plastic Intention

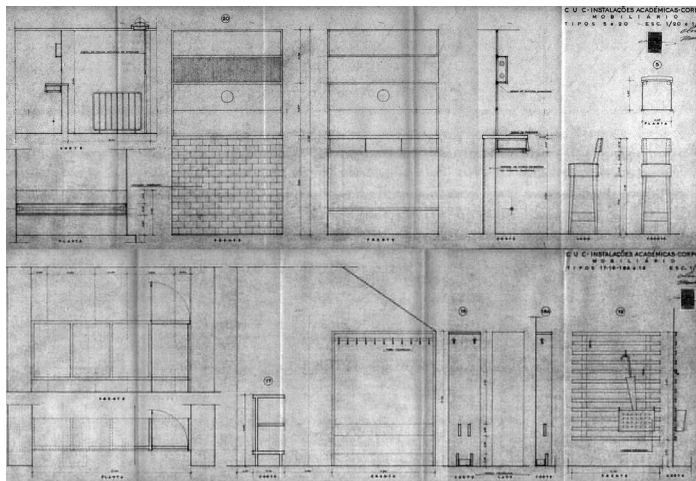
Hence, in the projects analysed, a system can be observed where distinct elements—furniture, equipment and finishing materials—are related through the unifying agency of the architectural project. In the case of the central library one can see that system working in the internal spaces of the building, autonomously to its external characterization. In fact, according to José António Bandeira, the Central Library is a “work of compromise,” which brings about Pessoa’s “subjection to the conditions of the *Cidade Universitária* plan and its language,” of which he would be emancipated in the “sublime definition of the detailing and, especially, in the design of the furniture”.<sup>10</sup>

Otherwise, in the Students’ Facilities ensemble, the conflation between the overall design and the detail is almost complete. Here, Pessoa delivers the idea of *gesamtkunstwerk* through the concept of the ‘Synthesis of the Arts’, a central notion in Modern architecture’s discourse. This ensemble, the author argues, “resonates with a perfect integration of the Arts, i.e.: with the cohesive and simultaneous conception of the whole and the detail, of architecture and decoration, conflated into a single plastic intention”.<sup>11</sup>

Alberto Pessoa brings about, as already suggested in 1925 by Moholy-Nagy, the idea of the conflation of the various artistic and design disciplines to create a unitary atmosphere, a total design. In Coimbra, a decade before the buildings for the Gulbenkian Foundation, Pessoa embraces a disciplinary synthesis where architecture works as the privileged medium towards the construction of an humanized habitat, and the framework in which it works together with the arts, landscaping, and building techniques as indissoluble components of a global composition from the structure to the furniture.

### Notes

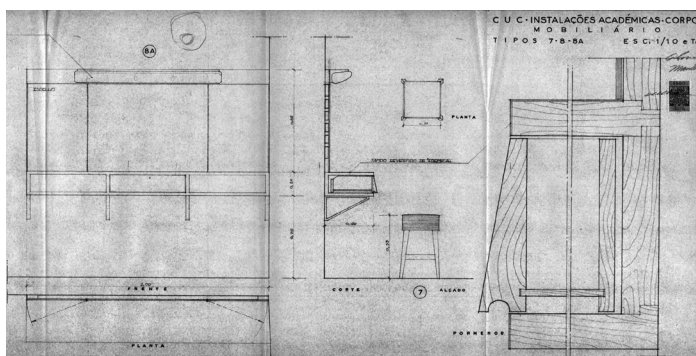
1. The winning project for the Headquarters and Museum of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation resulted from a competition where the candidates were invited and the winner was selected by a committee of consultants formed by, among others, Lesley Martin, Franco Albini, Carlos Ramos and Keil do Amaral. The winning team of architects would eventually be joined by technicians from other disciplines, such as the interior designers Daciano da Costa e Eduardo Anahory. For more information about this project, see Ana Tostões, ed., *Sede e Museu Gulbenkian: Ensaios*, Lisboa, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 2006.
2. This was a central theme in the reconceptualization of Modern Movement’s discourse, triggered by the publication in 1943 of the



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Figure 6. Student’s Facilities, Coimbra. Theatre, Ticket Office and Coat Hangers. Construction detail of the Furniture. 1960. **Alberto Pessoa and João Abel Manta.** *Arquivo da Universidade de Coimbra.* CAPOCUC. Processo 539.

Figure 7. Student’s Facilities, Coimbra. Theatre, Dressing rooms tables. Construction detail of the Furniture. 1960. **Alberto Pessoa and João Abel Manta.** *Arquivo da Universidade de Coimbra.* CAPOCUC. Processo 539.



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Figure 8. Student’s Facilities, Coimbra. Library. *Biblioteca de Arte da Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian.* *Coleção Estúdio Horácio Novais.* CFT164 160934.ic. Photo by Horácio Novais. 1960s.

Figure 9 Student’s Facilities, Coimbra. Drawing Room. *Biblioteca de Arte da Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian.* *Coleção Estúdio Horácio Novais.* CFT164 160955.ic. Photo by Horácio Novais. 1960s.

Figure 10 Student’s Facilities, Coimbra. Theatre, Foyer. *Biblioteca de Arte da Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian.* *Coleção Estúdio Horácio Novais.* CFT164 160949.ic. Photo by Horácio Novais. 1960s

Figure 11. Student’s Facilities, Coimbra. Theatre, Auditorium. *Biblioteca de Arte da Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian.* *Coleção Estúdio Horácio Novais.* Photo by Horácio Novais. 1960s.





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manifesto "Nine Points on Monumentality". See Josep Lluís Sert, Fernand Léger, and Sigfried Giedion, "Nine Points on Monumentality" in Joan Ockman, *Architecture Culture 1943-1968. A Documentary Anthology*, New York, Rizzoli, 1993, 29-30.

3. Ana Tostões, "A Arquitectura Como Imagem Gulbenkian," Tostões, Ana, ed., *Sede e Museu Gulbenkian: Ensaio*, Lisboa, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Serviço de Belas-Artes, 2006, 40.
4. Moholy-Nagy, Laszlo, *Painting, Photography, Film*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 1967, 17. (1st edition 1925).
5. The first constructed buildings are the University's Archive (1948), the Faculty of Letters and the Central Library (1956). The works for Coimbra's "Cidade Universitária" started in 1943 on a building site which was the result of an enormous operation of demolition of the medieval urban fabric. The general plan was designed by Cottinelli Telmo, and it was influenced by Salazar's regime political agenda, thus following as references the campuses of Madrid and Rome.
6. Alberto Pessoa, "Memória Descritiva do Projecto de Arquitectura da Biblioteca Central. Junho 1944", *Arquivo da Universidade de Coimbra*, CUC 2008-97.
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8. In fact, only one of the panels would eventually become part of the façade; the other panel was sent to the interior of the garden, mounted on a wall built on purpose to the design of the architects.
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#### Susana Constantino

Architect from the Department of Architecture, Faculty of Science and Technology of the University of Coimbra (1992-1999). Master in Rehabilitation of Built Space at the Department of Architecture and the Department of Civil Engineering of the FCTUC (2009) with a dissertation entitled "Arquitectura de Cine-Teatros: evolução e registo [1927-1945]. Equipamentos Culturais e de lazer em Portugal no Estado Novo". ("Architecture of Cinemas-Theatres: evolution and register [1927-1945]. Cultural and leisure facilities in Portugal in the New State." Author and co-author of projects and works in different categories such as housing, rehabilitation of civic spaces, commercial and public buildings and ephemeral constructions. She participated as Monitor at the International Seminar on Urban Rehabilitation of Mindelo in Cabo Verde, organized by the Centre for Studies of the Department of Architecture of FCTUC, Atelier MAR e Mindelo International School of Art. She collaborates with the Center for Studies in the Department of Architecture of FCTUC (2009-2011).

# Duikers' Open Air School: Re-Use or Contin-Use?

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Even more than eighty years after its inauguration in 1930, Jan Duiker's 'First Open Air School for the Healthy Child' in Amsterdam remains in use as an elementary school for the education of children between 6 and 12 years old. The building has recently undergone substantial restoration works, including some changes that were necessary to keep up with current regulations. Some 1950s interventions have been retained which posed particular challenges regarding the colors and finishes. The clear cut appearance of the building seems to ignore the complexity of the design decisions that had to be made to grant this building a second lease of life. Restoration architect Sander Nelissen (Wessel de Jonge architects, Rotterdam) and architectural paint researcher Mariël Polman (Cultural Heritage Agency) worked closely together on the restoration of the building and its interior.

By Sander Nelissen and Mariël Polman<sup>1</sup>

### Building Restoration

The Open Air School is actually accommodated in two buildings: a main building is located in a yard enclosed by some housing blocks of Berlage's famous 1915 urban plan for Amsterdam Zuid, and another building along the street (Cliestraat) bridging the entrance gate. The restoration of these buildings is even more special because the original function as an open air school is maintained. As both buildings were designed by Jan Duiker (1890–1935) as tailor-made suits, relying on his characteristic functional design approach, their continued use has been a great advantage. At the same time, 80 years on, the school has quite different demands on the buildings in terms of teaching methods, comfort, sustainability, fire safety and so on. Our challenge as restoration architects was therefore to integrate all these aspects as well as possible into the school building while maintaining the original design principles of Duiker.

The brief given to us by the school board was primarily focused on the very necessary major maintenance, the improvement of the indoor environment and the reduction of running costs. Not only the interior was worn out and sometimes downright dirty, the buildings' casco also showed defects: cracks in the concrete construction, poor water drains, heavily corroded steel windows. For the children and teachers it was too hot during the summer and sometimes they had to wear their coats in the classroom in the winter. Services were outdated and consuming too much energy.

The main building had only one staircase for seven classrooms, a gymnasium and facilities, spread over four floors. Under the current rules and regulations this no longer meets the required level of fire safety.

The functioning of the school had to be improved on several points. Separate rooms were requested for the staff, for the administration office and for coaching individual pupils. All of these functions were crammed in the ground floor classroom. For the education, there was a need for a mediatheque and individual study spaces for each classroom.

In addition, the school had the desire for a full or partial restoration make visible and tangible the schools' monumental qualities.

We started with workshops with the client, users, consultants, municipal authorities and the National Department for Conservation to examine what different solutions there were for each subproblem. Thus we were able to weigh all interests (functional, technical, cultural) from the start. Based on the results of the workshop we made a design for renovation and restoration of the school. After approval by all parties, the works started in the autumn of 2009 and they were completed in December 2010.

We were able to solve the functional and spatial needs within the existing building volumes. Financially as well as monumentally additional structures were not an option. So, in order to provide the necessary space it was required to relocate the existing kindergarten group to elsewhere in the neighborhood. Further the decision was made to teach crafts in each classroom instead of having a dedicated crafts classroom. This has created space for a staff room, an administration office and a private space for coaching individual pupils. As a result the classroom on the ground floor became available for a library/mediatheque. On the outdoor loggias, next to the toilet units, we have projected small glazed study cells. Here, two pupils per classroom work independently under the supervision of the teacher via the open connection to the classroom. The subtle glazed spaces are situated as far back from the façade as possible and, as seen from the schoolyard, do not interfere with the school's

< The Hoofdgebouw (main building), Jan Duiker, 1930.



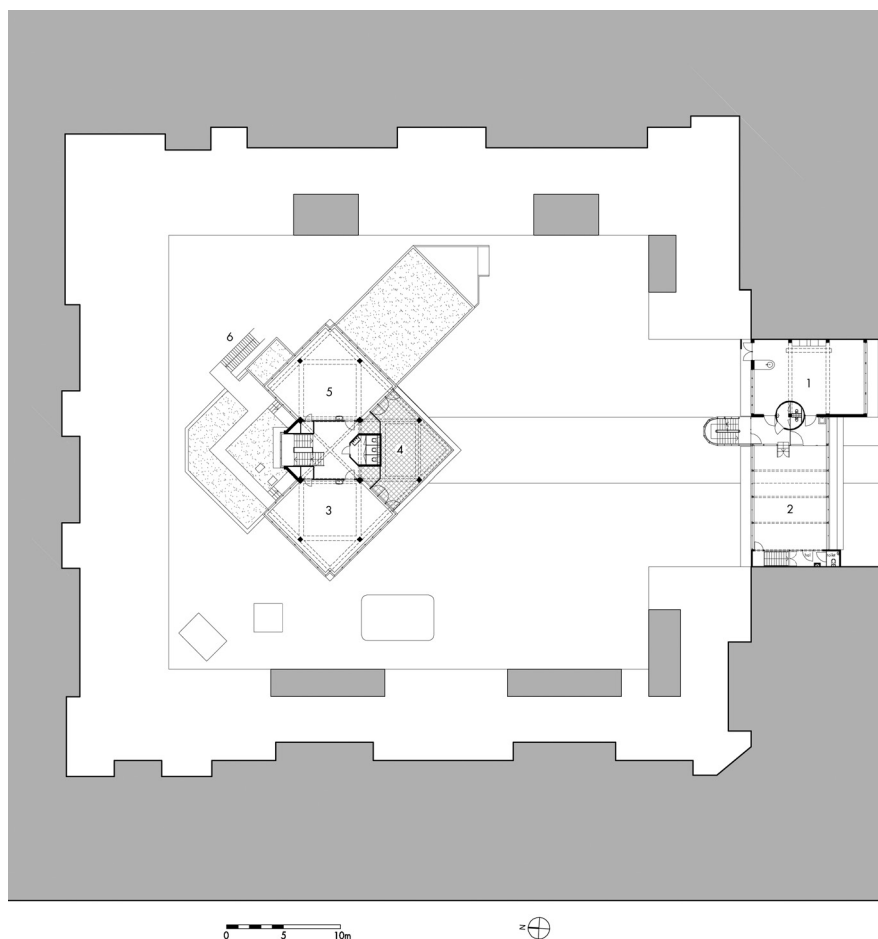


Figure 1. Situation. The first Open Air School for ordinary children consists of two buildings fit in a housing block in South Amsterdam. "It is entirely fit to let in light and fresh air, by means of south-pointing loggia's, roof terraces and [vertical pivoting] windows for all classrooms in glazed curtain walls [...]" Duiker used a minimum of materials by precise calculation of the concrete construction—with tapered cantilevering beams, narrowing columns—and a maximal attention to practical details. Because of its clear functionalist architecture the "two buildings of the school [...]" had a compulsory backward location within the perimeter block of brick-work houses." (Sharp & Cooke ed., *The Modern Movement in Architecture. Selections from the docomomo registers*, Rotterdam, 010 publishers, 2000).

© Drawing by wessel de jonge architecten

**Poortgebouw** (gate building)

- 1 classroom
- 2 crafts classroom

**Hoofdgebouw** (main building)

- 3 classroom
- 4 open-air classroom
- 5 classroom
- 6 emergency staircase

architecture, both day and night.

To meet the fire safety requirements for the main building we have created an independent fire escape from the two rooms on the first floor. In case of an emergency pupils and teachers can escape via two new exterior doors to the roof of the 1939 extension at the backside of the school. From there a new flight of stairs leads to ground level. For the other classrooms, the existing staircase supplies adequate capacity for escaping.

### **Frisse Scholen (Fresh Schools)**

In the Open Air school also in the winter the windows had to be opened as much as possible so that the sunlight and fresh air could come in. The UV radiation stimulated the production of vitamin D. Duiker thought the best choice for heating at such an amount of ventilation was to apply radiation heating from the ceiling. His system consisted of steel heating tubes in the poured concrete floors in which warm water was circulated. The disadvantage of such a system is that it responds very slow and cannot adjust fast enough to the changing weather conditions in The Netherlands. In the winter, the entire construction of the (unisolated!) buildings had to be heated. And in

case of sudden sunshine the rooms warm up very quickly through the large glass façades. Indeed, shortly after the opening roller blinds were installed on the inside of the glass façades.

During World War II the heating system was put out of order for lack of fuel, and drained. Heating stoves were then installed per classroom. During a major renovation of the buildings in 1955 (to solve a variety of structural problems) the concrete floors had to be repaired due to cracks caused by the corrosion of the steel heating tubes. Simultaneously a central heating system was installed for each building with radiators along the parapets and partly on the ceilings (i.e. the gymnasium).

In The Netherlands since 2009 all schools are included in the so-called "Frisse Scholen" project (fresh schools), aiming at a lower use of energy (lower cost, more sustainability) and at improving the indoor environment (better educational performance, well-being). This standard has also been applied in the renovation of the Open Air School. To improve air quality and energy performance we have chosen to install mechanical ventilation with heat recovery. From the heat recovery units on the roofs the conditioned air is led to the classrooms by



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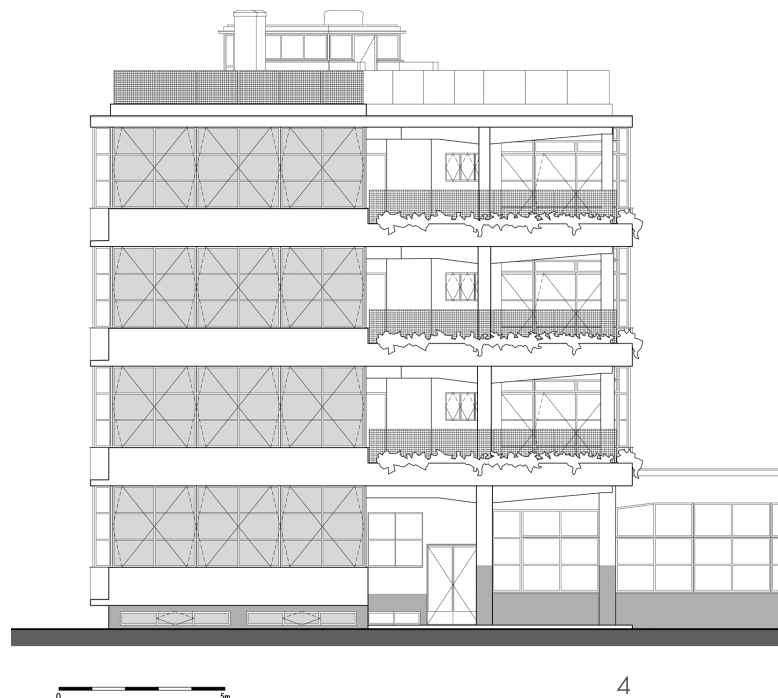
Figure 2. The Hoofdgebouw in 2010. / Figure 3. Street façade of the Poortgebouw (gate building) in 2010. © Photos by T. van Elst.

ducts in the existing closets. An air duct on the “work-wall” above the (digital) blackboard distributes the air, causing overpressure in the classrooms. Simultaneously under pressure is created in the central staircase. The air thus flows from the classrooms through an open space above the closets and soundproof ventilation grilles to the staircase and from there back to the heat recovery-units. The ventilation system is CO<sub>2</sub>-controlled per classroom. And when, as originally intended, the windows are opened for fresh air, the system shuts off.

### Duiker-Komter-de Jonge

After completion in 1930 the Open Air School has known a number of modifications and adjustments. As a result, at the start of the restoration design in 2009 Duikers’ original design and the associated use of materials and detailing were no longer clearly recognizable throughout the building. In 1939 the main building was extended by architects Jos and Pierre Cuypers with an office for the headmaster and a classroom for crafts. In 1944 and 1975, the two original residences in the gate building were already converted into three classrooms. In a subsequent renovation in 1986, a staircase was added in the courtyard.

For the façades of both buildings, the renovation of 1955 by one of Duikers’ former employees, architect Auke Komter (1904–1982) had a big impact. The huge steel-framed vertical pivot windows (without central mullions!) that Duiker had designed for the main building had proven to be very critical in use. Operating the windows was quite difficult and gradually the windows did not close properly anymore, resulting in regular leaks and serious drafts. In the gate building had sliding windows for which the steel original profile system was not really suitable. As a result, similar problems occurred. So in 1955 all steel window frames were replaced, after a thorough study since 1951 and with great respect for Duikers’ original design and detailing. However, Komter



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completely changed the subdivision and detailing of the windows. This is most visible in the façades of the classrooms that were originally fitted with three double sets of vertical pivot windows over the full height, with only two mullions when fully opened. These six units were replaced by eight single vertical pivot frames of just three quarters of the original height, with seven bulkier mullions, over a lower section of fixed lights. Much heavier profiles

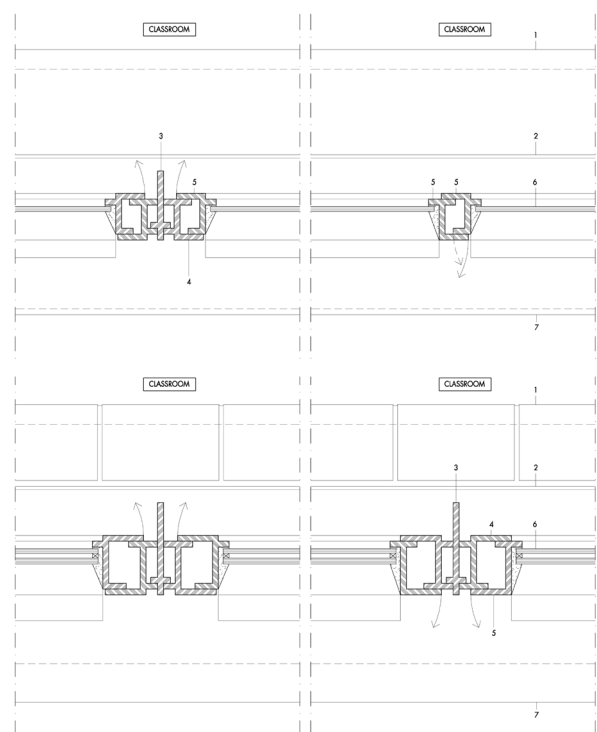
Figure 4. Comparison of southwest façades: on the left **Duiker** 1930, on the right **Komter** 1955.

Figure 5. Horizontal façade details

| Original condition (1930)        | Current condition (1955/2010)           |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| 1 oak windowsill                 | 1 ceramic tiles windowsill (1955)       |
| 2 steel condensation gutter      | 2 steel condensation gutter (2010)      |
| 3 steel fin                      | 3 steel fin (1955)                      |
| 4 steel window frame             | 4 steel window frame (1955)             |
| 5 steel vertical pivoting window | 5 steel vertical pivoting window (1955) |
| 6 drawn single glass             | 6 double glazing 2x Float Glass (2010)  |
| 7 steel ledge                    | 7 steel ledge (1955/2010)               |

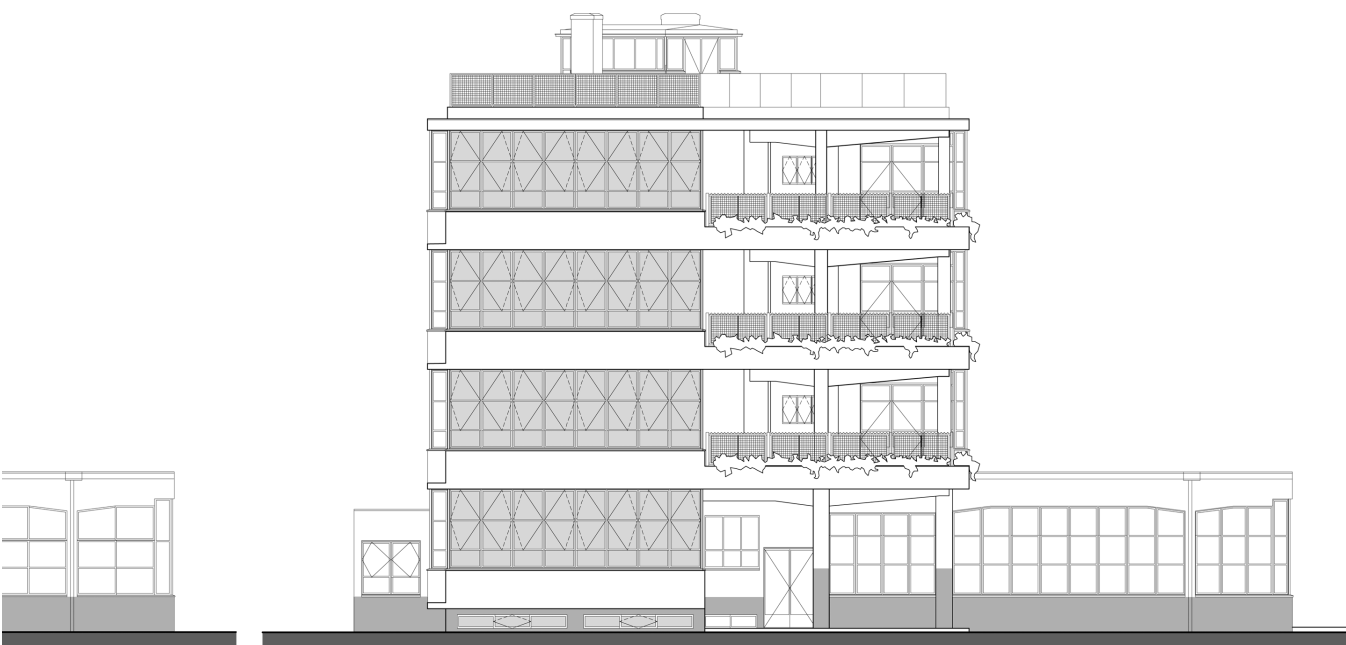
© Drawings by wessel de jonge architecten.

Figure 6. Classroom in 1930 seen from the outdoor class.



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than before were used and in the upper and lower details teak glazing beads were added. At the same time Komter adopted a different color scheme for the façade. The plaster façade and columns, painted aluminum in Duikers' design, and the unpolished black granite plinth, were painted white respectively black. The blue windows and frames were painted a darker blue color.

The restoration confronted us with the question of what to do with the façades and in particular the window frames: 'maintaining Komter' or 'back to Duiker'? For a proper comparison, we had a mockup built with an original window unit. The present series of steel profiles were used for this, which are similar but a bit heavier than the profiles from 1930, and the vents were slightly reinforced without losing their slender image. This turned out to be very convincing as far as the outstanding transparency of Duiker's original was concerned. However, it appeared that the usability was just as difficult as in 1930 and in time the same problems with leaks and drafts were to be expected. As new window units were also estimated about twice the price compared to re-using the existing ones, and because of the good condition and functioning of the 1955 window frames, it was decided to maintain the existing frames.

All doors and also the steel fences have been removed and were treated and, where necessary, repaired in the workshop. Window frames, doors and fences then were put back in place and glazed with thin and extra bright double glazing float glass (Planibel Clear Vision). We did not choose for an outer pane of drawn glass, like at 'Zonnestraal', because the original and almost flat quality is no longer available. Also the available drawn glass showed a distortion that was unacceptable to the school. The glass is glued with sealant and then sealed with a plastic agent to replace the original putty finish. The window frames and fences are repaired and provided with a first coat of primer in the workshop. They are painted in-situ with the brush, because even such details are decisive for the final result.

### Does Duiker follow Color?

The reconstruction of the original color schemes to strengthen the quality of the architecture was not easy. On the exterior, Komter's windows visually dominated. Furthermore, Komter's exterior with stucco and white painted walls, black painted plinth and dark blue windows gives a typical image of Modern Movement architecture after World War II.

On the other hand, the building's archeological research and the architectural paint research by Suzanne Fischer, Mariël Polman and Luc Megens, indicated that in the interior the original qualities of Duiker were intrinsic-

ly present. These qualities concerned both the architecture and the finishing. Therefore we chose to reconstruct the exterior color scheme by Komter and the interior color scheme by Duiker.

In the interior, the color and the application of materials by Duiker was varied. The colors included white, blue, yellow, green, red, orange, yellow beige, brown and black. The finishing included paint, tiling and Dermas.

The background color was white and the upper wall surfaces and ceilings were painted white, as well as the inside of the wall frames and the inner frames and internal doors. The expression of movement and silence was designed in the polychromy. The central hall contained almost all colors and materials. The hall and the entrance were tiled with white tiles and from there several steps covered with brownish yellow Dermas lead to the other levels: downwards to the sunken gym and to the basement and upwards to the higher level with the room of the director and a storeroom. The main stairs led up to the first, higher level classroom, and from there up through the light stairwell.

The doors and wall frames of the entrance, the gym and the enclosed porch were bright blue, like the dado with a black border, running up the staircase to the premises. Back to the gym and basement, the dado was yellow with a black border. The blue and yellow dados came together in the hall. The staircase railings were painted aluminum with a natural wooden railing. The coat hooks, connected to the heating, were also painted aluminum, marked with black stenciled numbers on the wall. The parapet beneath the outer windows was yellow beige with similar colored window tiles. The parapet ran in yellow beige through the classrooms, so the shell was independent of the arrangement which was followed. The room of the director had a soft orange dado, with a red border. In the basement and the toilets the windows were of a bright yellow! Duiker may have consciously applied bright yellow in these relatively dark rooms, opposite to the blue color in the central staircase and the interior space on each floor.

The classrooms also had color. Besides the yellow beige with the oak balustrade sill, there was the dado behind the blackboard, between the door and the closet door, painted in a grayish green and trimmed with a red-painted picture frame. The floors in the classrooms were finished with the same earthy brown and yellow Dermas like the stairs. As it was not possible to apply Dermas as flooring, linoleum was chosen in the same colors. These colors reinforced each other, but remained modest in tone. Moreover, the grey-green color gave a calming effect on the eyes of the pupils. The red color was repeated in the red-white striped sunblind. The outdoor premises were



Figure 7. Original coat rack with integrated heating. Color research (2009) at the position of class number "1". © Photo by wessel de jonge architecten.

< Figure 8. Entrance hall in 2010. © Photo by T. van Elst.

#### Notes

1. The first part of the text which includes "Building Restoration, *Frisse Scholen* (fresh schools) and *Duiker-Komter-de Jonge*" has been written by Sander Nelissen while the second part, "Does Duiker follow Color?", has been written by Mariël Polman.

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- [www.verbouwingopenluchtschool.blogspot.com](http://www.verbouwingopenluchtschool.blogspot.com) (all the photographs of the restoration)

#### Sander Nelissen

Graduated from the Technical University of Delft in 1993. He is increasingly involved in the restoration and re-use of Modern Movement (and other) heritage, currently at Wessel de Jonge architects (Rotterdam, The Netherlands). Their work includes the Van Nelle Factory and Duikers' Zonnestraal and Open Air School.

#### Mariël Polman

Graduated in 1992, having her doctorate from the Technical University of Delft with the thesis *The Colours of the Modern Movement in the Netherlands during the Interbellum Period. Materialization of an Ideal*, 2011. She is a specialist in Color and Painting at the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands and a freelance architectural paint researcher at POLMAN Colour & aArchitecture, Amsterdam. Her work includes the Van Nelle Factory and Duikers' Zonnestraal and Open Air School.

covered with red tiles. Thus, all colors made up a whole.

The wholeness of Duikers color scheme turned out to be the drawback in the argument of our approach. In the columns, we were faced with the ingenious interplay between interior and exterior that is typical for Duiker. The columns were painted aluminum, creating a relationship with the exterior. That put us in a dilemma, because the exterior would not be painted aluminum. We decided to match the columns with Komter's white façade.

In Duiker's color scheme though, white is a background color. This is to be recognized in the columns which have become less evident and expressive being white. It is also recognizable in the new digital white boards, making the rooms a bit too white and less expressive.

The architecture, including the polychromy, has been restored and reconstructed. The school is up and running again, full of life and colors, which is great. That's what we were after! Being architects we hope though, that now and then the school will be in a shipshape manner, in order to quietly enjoy the unexpected balance of the building itself.



# Global Design Schools in Portugal

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Since its very beginning, the design of educational spaces is strongly connected with issues on pedagogy, hygiene, order and discipline, collective identity (hence with history, traditions, modernity and innovation). To materialize the concept of global design, seeking formal coherence and a close functional and ideological articulation between all components, furniture design is fundamental as is the role of fine arts. Addressing the relationship with the context implies considering the links established with all other objects which form the school system in its several degrees (nursery, primary, secondary, superior) and scales (the neighbourhood, the city, the country).

By João Paulo Martins

The issue of educational spaces became a recurrent subject among the Portuguese elites from the 60s onwards. The growing awareness over this topic was supported by up-to-date information and participation in the international debate on education, pedagogy and hygiene. The official initiatives followed one another: survey and analysis of existing conditions, theoretical reflection, projects and construction. Since the first initiatives aimed at promoting the construction of schools in a systematic way and based on rational and functional premises, doctors, educators and legislators enunciated the appropriate conditions for the performance of teaching and learning under the form of rules set. The functional program of spaces was defined in accordance with the number of pupils and the teaching methods adopted. In addition, lighting, ventilation and isolation from the surroundings were considered fundamental. Furniture should enable pupils to maintain contact with the teacher and promote proper physical posture (a succession of standard measures corresponding to different age levels was given). These were to achieve efficiency and order, discipline and control. The architects were expected to translate these constraints in an architectural way, as type-projects to be actually applied.

A project competition, held in 1898, for primary school buildings, with a brief made by the Association of Civil Engineers, advocated regional characterization by adopting local materials and techniques. The selected proposal, by architect Adães Bermudes, identified schools clearly as civic buildings: a bell upon the front door, some ornamental ceramic tiles on the façades, a volume with two levels for the teacher's house. Meanwhile, the existence of legal rules supports the industrialization of school furniture production by specialized companies, such as the one founded by professor Albino de Matos, around 1899, in Paços de Ferreira.

The first Fröbel school in Portugal, in Lisbon (by architect José Luís Monteiro, inaugurated in 1882), was a wooden chalet wide open to its surrounding nature. It included furniture designed to match the scale of the children in accordance with the Fröbel system. The law that was to regulate buildings for kindergartens (1911) would also prescribe that the classroom walls should be covered with slate, to encourage the practice of drawing. Since its first implementation in Coimbra (1911), the network of *João de Deus* kindergartens was linked to architect Raul Lino, who always gave special attention to ornamentation, often including tile panels and mural painting in his works, as he did in the primary school for Alcântara neighborhood, Lisbon (1916–17). In *Escola Camões*, Entroncamento (1923–28), architects Cottinelli Telmo and Luís Cunha made a similar exercise of extending project to *azulejos*, mural painting and sculpture.

The facilities for secondary and technical education deserved less attention to early legislative and normative agents. Given the lack of previous examples, the few cases actually built ought to interpret this unprecedented typology and demanded projects to extend to all equipment and specific functional elements. In Lisbon, *Escola Industrial Marquês de Pombal* (1886–88, by architect L. C. Pedro d'Ávila) preceded the construction of *Liceu Passos Manuel* (1882–1911, by architects J. L. Monteiro, and R. Carnevalheira). In this city, architect Ventura Terra designed *Camões* (1907–09), Pedro Nunes (1908–11) and Maria Amália (1913–33) high schools in a strict, sober formal language that one can see as a standard to Alexandre Herculano (1914–1931) and Rodrigues de Freitas (1918–32) high schools, in Oporto, by architect Marques da Silva.

The Medical-Surgical School of Lisbon (1890–1905, by architects J. M. Nepomuceno and Leonel Gaia) is the ultimate expression of the Beaux-Arts academic conventions regarding the articulation between the arts, with an iconographic program that was subject to extensive collaboration by artists. Quite differently, the Normal Primary School of Lisbon (1913–19, by architect A. Bermudes),

< The complex of the *Instituto Superior Técnico*, in Lisbon by architect Pardo Monteiro, 1927–41.





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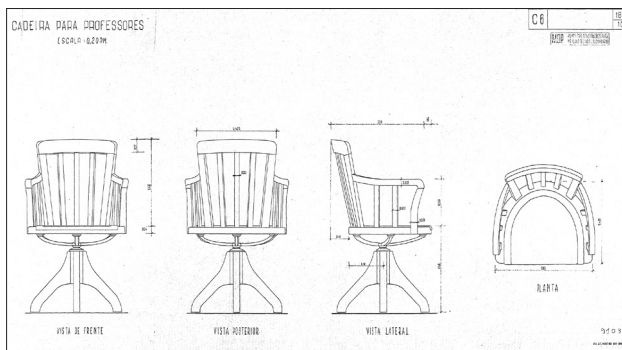
already built under the republican regime, sought to re-interpret national traditions (the baroque period) on an academic compositional base.

The authoritarian nationalist and conservative regime that came out of the political coup of 1926—the “Estado Novo”—developed the systematic building of civic facilities all over the country, centralizing official production in the Ministry of Public Works. At first, primary schools had a wide range of projects, specially designed for each location, some adopting a regional characterization, others following the Modern lexicon. The high schools of Beja (1930–37, by architect Cristino da Silva) and Coimbra (1930–36, by architects Carlos Ramos, Jorge Segurado and Adelino Nunes) result from competitions launched in 1930. They reflect the Modernity contained in their program and are extraordinary examples of adherence to the international Modern Movement (and

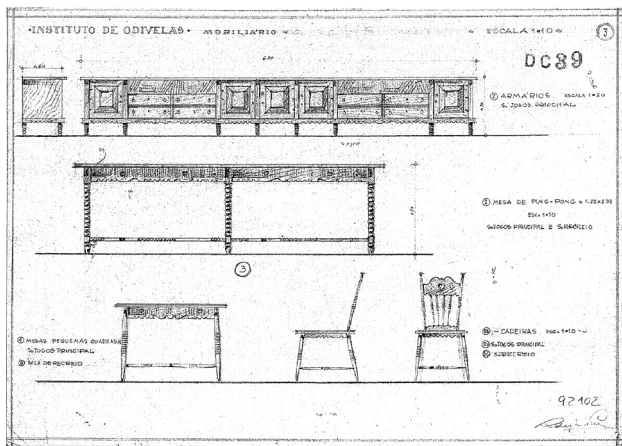
criticized as such by the more conservative wing of the Portuguese society of that time), including some furniture that was specially designed for that purpose. The complex of the *Instituto Superior Técnico*, in Lisbon (1927–41, by architect Pardal Monteiro), also responds to Modern principles, despite its more evident debt to the formal conventions of *Art Déco*. An exceptional case of formal coherence in all scales in the scope of the international style was the *Ninho dos Pequenininos*, a nursery school in Coimbra (project from 1934 by architect Luis Benavente), with furniture built in steel tube, adapted from central Europe examples and produced by local industries (a kind of Modern object that would spread all over the country, from healthcare facilities to shops, cafés and hotels).

From 1935 on, primary schools had type-projects with different regional characterizations (by architect Rogério de Azevedo for the districts in the north and center





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Figure 1. High school by **Pedro Nunes**, 1908–11.

Figure 2. The *Ninho dos Pequenos*, a nursery school in Coimbra by architect **Luis Benavente**, 1934.

Figure 3. The high school of Beja by architect **Cristino da Silva**, 1930–37.

Figure 4. Drawing of professor chair.

Figure 5. The *Instituto de Odivelas*, a school for girls by architect **Rodrigues Lima**, 1950–51.

of the country; by architect Raul Lino, for the south), that the government planned to build in large numbers but the application of which was unsystematic. The 'Plano dos Centenários' for large-scale construction of typified primary schools, was launched in 1941 and followed without breaks or significant innovations until 1969. The wooden benches designed to furnish those several thousands of classrooms under construction were based on a careful anthropometric study (1943–46). This centralized policy also allowed that, between 1934 and the late 60s, 29 buildings for secondary schools and 69 for technical ones (for industrial, commercial and agricultural teaching) were designed and built, including their furnishings and equipment, rigorously systematized and standardized. The monumental rhetoric, characteristic of authoritarian regimes of the time, was a dominant feature in the projects of the University of Coimbra (1941, coordinated by archi-

tecs Cottinelli Telmo and Cristino da Silva), with extensive use of academic statuary and painting, but allowing, exceptionally, some Modern interiors, as in the General Library (1950–54, by architect Alberto Pessoa). In the University of Lisbon (1935–61, coordinated by architect Pardal Monteiro) however, the global project was decidedly more Modern in all the engaged scales and disciplines (urban planning, architecture, furniture, fine arts).

Two exceptional cases may serve as an illustration for some opposite orientations existing prior to the profound transformations that the 60s would bring (in architecture and the arts as well as in pedagogics). At the *Instituto de Odivelas*, a school for girls in the realm of military institutions (1950–51, by architect Rodrigues Lima), one seeks to recreate an imaginary rural past through the use of reinvented traditional furniture. At the same time, primary schools promoted by the municipality of Lisbon (1948–56, various authors) claim to be part of international Modernity through its geometric and strict architecture with a close integration of the arts.

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## João Paulo Martins

Architect (FA-UTL, 1988), MA in Art History (FCSH-UNL, 1995), PhD in Architecture (UTL, 2006). Professor at Faculty of Architecture, Technical University of Lisbon. Principal investigator in the project "Móveis Modernos. A Actividade da Comissão para Aquisição de Mobiliário no âmbito da DGE MN. 1940–1980", Centro de Investigação em Arquitectura, Urbanismo e Design.

# Werner Max Moser's New Altstetten Church 1936–1941

Restoration: *Arbeitsgemeinschaft*  
Silvio Schmed and Arthur Rüegg,  
Zurich 2006-2012



For George Everard Kidder Smith, the Protestant Church at Altstetten (a former Zurich suburb, integrated in 1934) was “unquestionably the finest Modern church in Switzerland, and possibly anywhere else”.<sup>1</sup> In his famous anthology of Swiss architecture from 1950, he points out that it embodies on the one hand “almost all the church building philosophy which both the protestants and catholics have sought: one room of simplicity and dignity, binding the pulpit and the altar to the congregation in respectful unity”. On the other hand, he was interested in the fact that the church, built on the edge of a low hill, seeks a subtle relationship with an old village church that the congregation had outgrown. Instead of destroying it, Moser “carefully preserved and related it to the new by the angle and space relation between them and by the repetition of a mutual eave height.” With a few words, Kidder Smith succeeded in capturing the double interest that Moser’s building represents even today. As a matter of fact, the church center’s interiors are, as well as the exteriors, wonderfully calibrated, fragile compositions that fascinate us for their typically undogmatic combination of modern and conventional materials and (decorative) forms, but also for Moser’s informal but precise dealings with the architectural heritage.<sup>2</sup> It is immediately understandable that renovating and extending this building complex was quite a challenge.

By Arthur Rüegg and Silvio Schmed

### A Question of Balance

**A** co-founder of the *Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne* (CIAM) in 1928, Werner Max Moser (1896–1970) used to be one of the hard-core Modernists among the Swiss avant-garde. Having built the Budge Retirement Home in Frankfurt in 1928–1930 together with Mart Stam, he propagated the ribbon development as the *new form* of urban settlement for some years and initiated in 1928, together with his friends Max Ernst Haefeli and Rudolf Steiger the *Werkbundsiedlung Neubühl* in Zurich–Wollishofen. Although he didn’t go as far as his father Karl Moser, who proposed to demolish the old city center of Zurich in order to replace it with ribbon buildings even as late as 1933, he was clearly not interested in the historical context. It is all the more surprising to discover the finesse and sensitivity of the project he did together with Max Ernst Haefeli and Rudolf Steiger in 1936 for the Zurich *Kongresshaus*—a major new building complex on the lakeside—and their sudden decision to perfectly fuse their intervention with the existing historicist concert halls. That same year, Werner Max Moser entered the competition for a new church in Zurich–Altstetten with two projects: one with and one without the old church from around 1300. If we can believe his own statements, he fought vehemently for the integration of the old parish church into the new building complex. His project breaks thus, as did the one for the

*Kongresshaus*, an important taboo of Modern architecture and announces a new interest for the existing as well as a concentration on concrete situations. It is no accident that the *Freunde des Neuen Bauens* (Friends of Neues Bauen) began to work on a declaration of principle with the Zurich *Heimatschutz* (the local Heritage Association) in the course of the same year.<sup>3</sup> If the progressive architects primarily meant to clear out the notorious reservations of the *Heimatschutz*, their sensibility in regard to cultural values of the past was finally sharpened as well.

Moser dealt with the question of how to fuse the old and the new with the help of numerous project alternatives, but also on a theoretical level. Art historian Adolf Max Vogt has shown in a brilliant essay how Moser formulated the relation of old and the new not as an “either-or” problem, but as a question of balance.<sup>4</sup> In view of a “coexistence without any diminution of either part”, Moser established a five-point program that proclaimed the preserving of the existing topography, the separation of epochs, the stylistic autonomy of each part, the coordination of the different scales, and the tuning of the materials—all in all an exemplary mixture of dialectical opposition and morphological harmonization. The carefully balanced equilibrium of old and new parts is one of the most important legacies of this architecture. The other one is the new sensuality of the materialization that turns the new building into a “mirroring response” (Vogt) to the old village church. That this labor-consuming and loving detail work was done under the premises of wartime economy makes the achievement all the more impressive.

<. Parish hall after restoration. Old (above) and new (below) ventilation grills. New lighting fixtures designed for the church center. Photo by Michael Wolgensinger, gta Archiv, ETH Zürich.



## To Show or to Hide?

The harmonious effect of the ensemble was, in other words, the result of a careful orchestration of the location, the form and the materialization of each part of the new complex in relation to the preexisting situation. Moser took profit from the hill site for his church as well as for the wing that abuts it at an obtuse angle, by putting large parts of the program—the parish hall as well as two classes—further down on the garden floor. In this way, he kept a low profile on the hill top, an effect that he considerably enhanced by dividing each one of the two roof sections in a lower and a higher part, the lower parts corresponding in height with the roof of the old church.<sup>5</sup>

To intervene within such a fragile composition is highly risky. Yet the parish demanded a great deal of this renovation, even without having an exactly defined program. As an example, a new generous glazed entrance pavilion was discussed that would have served as a cloakroom, a garage for prams and as information center. In the course of the planning process, we were able to integrate an outside ramp in order to improve accessibility, but also to find other solutions for clothes, prams, and information systems inside the existing building. In order to accommodate the church-based youth work, we even went as far as proposing lightweight structures on an adjacent piece of land, until we were able to offer the former technical rooms on the garden floor for reuse. Yet the new toilets, the storage and workspaces as well as the heating unit definitely didn't fit in the old envelope. They were all concentrated in a slim two-story underground addition that found its place just in under the humus soil of the church yard.

In this way, the masterful equilibrium of old and new buildings remained entirely intact. On the other hand, the upper floor of the classroom and service wing underwent a serious transformation, since the apartment of the caretaker had to be replaced by a cafeteria. The small apartment windows seemed inadequate for the new use, so that the idea of a more decided orientation towards the church yard was formulated very early in the process. This idea resulted in a relatively simple operation: the cutting away of the window sills. To introduce a narrow cantilevering balcony in front of the new glazed doors connecting the access ramp with a small terrace and the garden stairs, was just a logical consequence of this decision. One may take his distance from such supposedly careless dealings with the barely preserved precious building substance. But all in all, the stronger relation of the interior and the exterior at this precise spot sharpens the idea of the existing ensemble considerably.

## To Mend....

There is no doubt that the success of such an operation depends to a large degree on the way it is implemented; we remember the qualities of Moser's construction, the precision of his choice of materials and the subtleties of the details that make this complex a "mirroring response" to the historic village church. He had the finely structured exposed brickwork—consisting of specially made warm-colored ribbed lime-sand stones—tuned not only to the whitish concrete surfaces, but also to the chalked roughcast of the old church. The slight variations in color and the varying ornamental textures of the brick bonding produce a slight vibration of the wall surfaces, and break the scale of the massive volumes up.

How should one then formulate the new window openings for the cafeteria? The saw cut in the brickwork might have been shown as such, or a frame in wood, metal or stone might have been applied in connection with decidedly contemporaneous window detailing. We soon understood that all of this would have disturbed Moser's equilibrium. For that reason, we chose to "mend" the enlarged window openings with lime-sand-stones specially produced for the occasion, and to use the existing windows as a model for the larger new ones. This was all the more reasonable since we had to reconstruct the windows of the entrance part anyhow according to the instructions of the Preservation of Monuments. Even the detailing of the narrow balcony and its railing refers to the grammar of Moser's building, but there is no doubt that on a second regard, the new interventions can be made out without any problems.

Moser sought the balance between traditional and modern detailing in the interiors as well. The woodwork is executed in conventional soft pine panel construction. The door openings are smoothly plastered with rounded edges and painted white, whereas the walls themselves are roughcast and painted in pastel colors (blue, green, ochre). The restoration of these details and the reintroduction of the original polychromy produced a surprisingly fresh atmosphere that we took care not to disturb with all the newly introduced elements that were due to comfort, fire and climate requirements. We even found a way to mend the wonderful clinker floors that had been laid out in the most ingenious patterns.

Whereas the new parts (mainly sanitary and technical facilities as well as the rooms for youth work) were treated in a logic of their own, we continued to use Moser's materiality and colors in the cafeteria. But there, we tried ourselves with relish to do the splits between old and new by using the buffet, the curtains, the specially designed lighting fixtures, and the furniture for some interesting contrasting effects.

## The Church, a *Gesamtkunstwerk*

Fortunately, the interior of church itself has been almost perfectly preserved. This is a piece of good fortune because this interior has all the marks of a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Everything was specially designed, down to the wide-span benches, the lighting fixtures, and the bronze door handles. Kidder Smith points out that “considerable sensation of space is achieved through the diagonal entrance instead of the more prosaic axial doorway. This feeling is further augmented by the slight change in level of the pews on the north side, the plasticity of the pierced ‘glare’ screen, and the absence of right angles in ceiling and end walls, both of which are slightly canted, in addition to increasing the sensation of space, each of these elements contributes to better acoustics”.<sup>6</sup> In fact, the church is frequently used for concerts. The informal arrangements of elements was also important for the innovation in protestant church building. The formerly axial placement of font, pulpit, and communion table was replaced by a free organic composition that is underpinned by the placement of the organ on the right hand side and held together by the large horizontal wooden board designed by Swiss typographer Ernst Keller. The huge cross

was also a novelty for protestant churches, but has since become a recurrent element.<sup>7</sup> All in all, the Altstetten church set a new standard in Swiss church building.

We found the whole inner skin of the church intact but quite soiled. Professional restorers cleaned the wall surfaces in several steps. The original ochre-white plaster had been scratched off according to a pattern of six by six centimeter squares. When cleaned, this relief-like surface was shimmering again like mother-of-pearl. Together with the fresh grey of the concrete surfaces, the naturally treated soft wood, the bronze parts and the clinker floor, it produces a warm, finely fashioned impression. In addition to this sensory effect, the church interior seems more intimate today since some of the benches in front and in back were removed. The now wider entrance area got a better definition by way of a linear multi-functional wooden sideboard. Finally, we carefully reconstructed the lost original wall light fixtures. Only the equally lost “somewhat unsatisfactory gourd-shape” (Kidder Smith) hanging lamps were replaced by long opal-white glass cylinders that convey an elegant yet very discrete touch of contemporary elegance to Moser’s mainly beige and brown *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

Figure 1. The old Altstetten church (right) and the new church complex designed by **Werner M. Moser** (left); the parish hall is on the garden floor. Photo by Michael Wolgensinger, gta Archiv, ETH Zürich.





## Notes

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## Arthur Rüegg

Architect ETH SIA BSA, Professor Emeritus ETH Zürich. Born in 1942 in Bülach, Switzerland, he has worked in Zurich, Paris and Boston and has his architectural office in Zurich since 1971 (ARCOOP-Ueli Marbach and Arthur Rüegg from 1971 to 1998). Associate Professor of Architecture and Technology at ETH Zürich from 1991 to 2007 he has been the author of several publications on Swiss architecture and design, especially on Sigfried Giedion and Le Corbusier. He has also been involved in several important exhibitions, such as "Synthèse des Arts" (Karlsruhe 1986), "L'Esprit Nouveau" (Zurich/Strasbourg/Berlin, 1987), "L'aventure Le Corbusier" (Paris 1987), and "Le Corbusier. The Art of Architecture" (Rotterdam, Weil, Lisbon, Liverpool, London, Berlin, 2007–2010).

## Silvio Schmed

Architect BSA SWB, Member of the Swiss Association of Architects since 1996, he has been in charge of several restorations such as Villa Schönberg by architect Friedrich Bluntschli (1888), Villa Langmatt by architect Karl Moser (1912) and the Zürich-Altstetten Church by architect Werner Max Moser (1940), together with Arthur Rüegg. He has also been the editor of several publications such as *Villa Mooser-Nef. Raumkunst original*, Zurich, Gta Verlag, 2006 and *Villa Schönberg. Entstehung und Erneuerung*, Zurich, Museum Rietberg, 2003.



Figure 2. **Moser's** church after restoration. The new lighting fixtures designed for the church can be lowered by means of built-in machinery. Photo by Heinrich Helfenstein, Zurich.

Figure 3. The classroom and service wing in its original condition. The caretaker's apartment is on the church yard level. Photo by Michael Wolgensinger, gta Archiv, ETH Zürich.

Figure 4. One of **Moser's** built-in ceramic fountains. Used in circulation areas. Photo by Michael Wolgensinger, gta Archiv, ETH Zürich.

Figure 5. Historic «Zwingli Room» with its original table and chairs; new double door with original detailing; in the back is the new cafeteria. Photo by Heinrich Helfenstein, Zurich.

Figure 6. The classroom and service wing in its present condition. The caretaker's apartment was transformed into a cafeteria. New windows; new ramp, balcony and terrace. Photo by Arbeitsgemeinschaft Silvio Schmed and Arthur Rüegg, Zurich.



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# Cinémas Choisis

The selection of cinemas featured in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* magazine, 1930-1939, and its contribution to the characterization of the European cinema architecture.



This essay analyzes the cinemas that were featured in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* from 1930 until 1939. This being one of the most influential magazines for the spread of Modern Movement ideas, its editorial line focused on the adaptation of building to function and on the distinction between European and American cinemas. Theoretical texts separated classic live theatre from cinema design since programme and features were completely different. Far from American euphoria and classic theatre sobriety, how was architecture for cinema envisaged?

By Joana Gouveia Alves

*Est-ce à dire qu'une salle de cinéma n'est assimilable qu'à une épicerie? Presque. Mais, elle est une épicerie qui se doublerait d'une salle à manger; car c'est dans la salle de cinéma que se vend et se consomme le spectacle en conserve.*<sup>1</sup>

In the 30s European entrepreneurs were seduced by the scale and glamour of American cinemas, such as the Roxy, that often screened to full houses. However, due to the post WWI economic restraints, all they could build were poor replicas which were multiplied throughout Europe. In *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, all picture-palaces connected with the Hollywood's fantasies, such as Egyptian or Mediterranean atmospheres, were systematically excluded from publication. And yet, the construction system of these buildings was already avant-garde: metal framework, prefabricated components, concrete explored to the limits of its properties. As an illustration, the Rex Cinema (Paris, 1932), which was one of the first John Eberson's (1875–1954) atmospheric cinemas in Europe, had a 35-meter-span balcony without intermediary support sustained by an iron framework and incredible concrete foundations. In an article published in 1932,<sup>2</sup> photographs present the building under construction. The only photograph of Rex's interior decoration was later published, in 1933, along with Pierre Vago's (1910–2002) commentary "Rex was the first atmospheric cinema in Paris and we hope it to be the last".<sup>3</sup> When we compare *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* with its contemporary French magazine *La Construction Moderne*, it becomes evident that structure is highlighted while decorative apparatus is intentionally excluded.

The atmospheric theatre thus became a symbol of American frivolity. According to the editorial options, the only "good" American examples were Radio City Music Hall (The Associated Architects—Raymond Hood, Edward Durell Stone—for the Rockefeller Center Group,

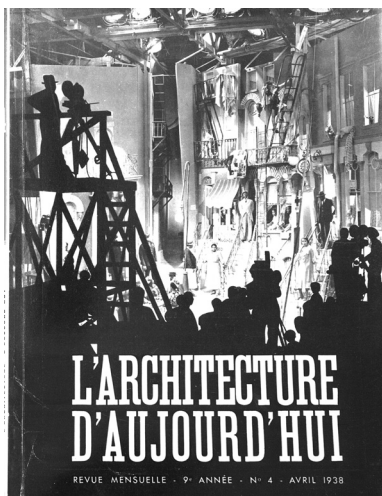
New York, 1932)<sup>4</sup> and the Earl Carol (Keiter and Balbonay, New York, 1932)<sup>5</sup>, being subject of two articles published in 1933. Further examples of American Movie Palaces were published in an exceptional article by Dexter Morand.<sup>6</sup> In this text, a sample of American and British cinemas illustrates his brief summary of their characteristics: cost-effective, large scaled (for thousands of patrons), opulent, overloaded decoration, exuberant lettering on the façades, a tower and a seductive pay booth on the sidewalk. Restaurant, bar, children playroom, car park and further facilities were indispensable. British cinemas were despised as they were considered to be cheap versions of American picture palaces. The only article on British cinemas is a two-page compilation of British cinema plans, published in 1936, without any text.<sup>7</sup>

Cinema architecture has always been criticized by modernist architects and critics, on both sides of the Atlantic, for its anachronism and eclecticism. The collage of overloaded settings, inspired in different ancient styles, in successive rooms in a same building seemed absurd. Even more because 'the seventh art' was considered an expression of modernity. It was not by chance that in order to launch the magazine, Pierre Chenal (Pseudonym used by Philippe Cohen, 1904–1990) was asked to do three short films about the new architecture: *Bâtir; Trois Chantiers; L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*.

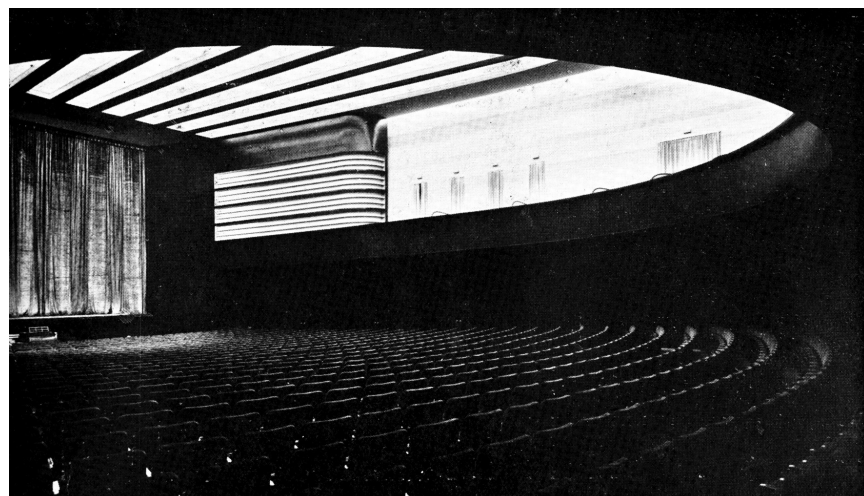
In Europe, architecture critics supported the development of new concepts in cinema design capable of reflecting the media's modernity. Julien Lepage supported this idea indirectly by criticizing the American examples. "Il n'a donc pas besoin de riches foyers et de couloirs (Gaumont). Il n'a pas besoin non plus d'un décor somptueux de la salle. Nos meilleurs cinémas (Raspail, Paris) n'offrent qu'une entrée-vestibule attrayante et une salle harmonieuse et tranquille, où tout décor est remplacé par des effets de lumière".<sup>8</sup> In brief, cinema architecture should follow function. This building type should dismiss all elements from theatre interior decoration such as curtains, boxes or proscenium arches that no longer made sense. All decorative elements should be thought to give prominence to the screen.

< Rudolf Fränkel, Lichtburg, Berlin, 1929. © Photo by Max Krajewski.<sup>10</sup>

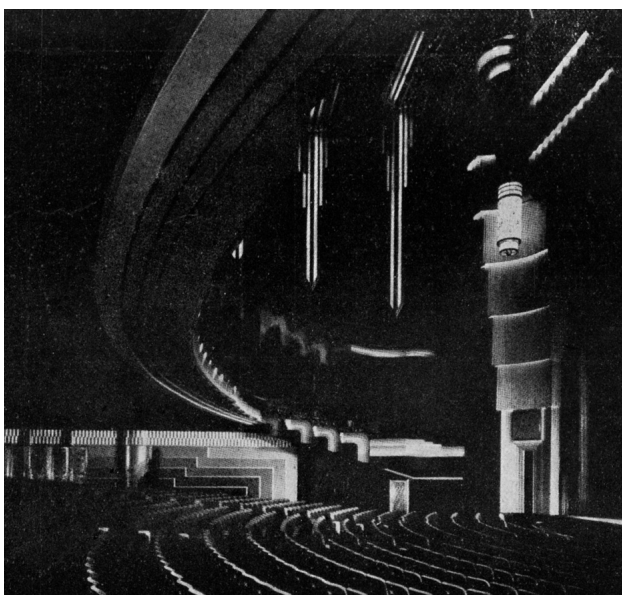




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The typology that best suited this concept was the newsreel cinema. Patrons watched short films from all over the world in continuous performance. Consequently, waiting rooms were pointless and emphasis was put on appealing features. Out of the 99 cinemas that were mentioned in the magazine between 1930 and 1939, 42 were built in France, about one-fifth was newsreel cinemas and the majority was designed by French architects. Cineac (Le Journal), Le Petit-Parisien and Paris-soir, Paris-midi, are newsreel cinemas associated with popular daily newspapers. Charles Siclis (1889–1942) and José Imbert designed cinemas with clear geometrical plans and auditoria with plain walls and exotic upholstered seats. Regarding the waiting walls and entrances, they played with dynamic stairs and corridors, indirect geometric lighting effects, neon signs and lettering. Pierre de Monteaut (1892–1974) and Adrienne Gorska (1899–

1969) developed the most coherent chain of this kind: the CINEAC.<sup>9</sup> They published at least ten of their newsreel cinemas and theoretical texts about their characteristics and what they called publicity publicity architecture.

Also called *night architecture*, it named buildings that had an extravagant expression at night due to the lighting effects with colorful neon signs. This could be also achieved through the glazing façades so that passers-by could be seduced by glamorous ambiances. The *Métropole* in Brussels was given much attention, not only because of its important structural work in concrete but also because of its curved glazing façade. Another example is Rudolf Fränkel's (1901–1974) *Lichtburg Cinema* (Berlin, 1929) where a cylindrical tower works as a bright-lit beacon. Undeniably, the underlying principle had a strong American influence. The chain's name in bright characters helped to identify the building with the company which was associated with distinguishing features.

The editorial line praised cinemas from central and northern Europe particularly the designs of Fränkel and Uno Ahren (1897–1977). As Germany was suffering from

restrictive economic measures, theatres were designed, with a great economy of means, to reach remarkable effects with a minimum of decorative elements. They were often located in existing buildings such as housing and office blocks, circuses and theatres. German cinemas were referenced as state-of-the-art buildings, especially after the publication of Zucker's book *Lichtspielhauser und tonfilmtheater* in 1931.<sup>10</sup> A book review was later published in 1932.<sup>11</sup>

An important aspect focused on several articles was the surfaces' bareness. Ceilings were often decorated with indirect lighting lines directed to the screen. These lines were intended to sharpen perspective and put focus attention on the most important element: film. Absence of decoration highlighted geometry and proportion. Ceiling curves and parapets also gave away a dynamic perception of space.

*L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* had a doctrinaire approach to cinema construction. After all, cinemas were buildings devoted to a new technology. Reels came in tins which were served through a machine to an audience of consumers. As soon as this machine became obsolete, architecture followed. Among the cinemas we analysed and were able to locate, we realized that most of the free-standing cinemas had been demolished. The *Métropole*, as many others, was converted to retail space. Usually well ventilated spaces without natural light, conversions from cinema to night club, casino or bingo are recurrent. However,



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er, most of the interior design has been destroyed. The Rex cinema is an exception to this: the big auditorium was kept with its atmospheric Mediterranean decoration, even if the services in the basement have not escaped being turned into a multiplex. Ironically, the best preserved cinemas are those now dedicated to live theatre performances.

#### Joana Gouveia Alves

(Coimbra, 1982) works at the Laboratory of History and Theory of Architecture (LTH2), École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne and is doing the IST-EPFL Joint Initiative Doctoral Programme. Previously, she studied architecture at the University of Coimbra and École Nationale Supérieure de Paris-La Villette (Erasmus) and worked as an architect at PMKJ Architects and Orange architecture in Coimbra. She is interested in the research fields of conservation and conversion of modernist buildings (in particular cinema theatres) and sustainability in architecture. During her studies she has always been interested in architectural theory: she wrote her final thesis about sustainable architecture theory and worked for Nu magazine (redactor and editor).

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2. Bluysen, Ebersson, "Nouveau Cinéma, à Paris Boulevard Poissonnière", AA n° 1, 1932, 39-45.
3. P. Vago, "Les Grands Cinémas Parisiens", AA n° 7, 1933, 31-35.
4. J.P., "Music-Hall International dans la Cité Rockefeller à New York", AA n° 7, 1933, 67.
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6. D. Morand, "Le Cinéma en Angleterre et USA" AA, no. 7 (1933), 59-63.
7. Anonymous, "Plans comparatifs de quelques salles de cinéma en Angleterre", AA n° 2, 1936, 46-47.
8. J. Lepage, "Tendances actuelles dans la construction des salles de spectacles", AA n° 7, 1933, 3-5.
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Figure 1. Cover of *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, April 1938.

Figure 2. **Uno Ahren**, Flamman Cinema, Stockholm, 1929. *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* n° 7, 1933.

Figures 3, 4. Radio City Hall by architects **Hood** and **Foulhoux**, New York and Earl Carol by Architects **Keiter** and **Balbonay**, New York, 1932. *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* n° 7, 1933.

Figure 5. **Bruno Elkouken**, Studio Raspail, Paris, 1932. *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* n° 7, 1933.

Figure 6. Façades by **Pierre Monteaut** and **Adrienne Gorska**. *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* n° 8, 1938, 38-39.



# Contemporary Activity. The GATEPAC Magazine (1931-1937)

DOCUMENTOS DE ACTIVIDAD CONTEMPORÁNEA

# AC

# 1

PUBLICACIÓN DEL G. A. T. E. P. A. C.

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## SUMARIO :

- \* Exposición de Pintura y Arquitectura Modernas de San Sebastián.
- \* Puertas "Standard" de madera.
- \* Urbanización de la Barcelona futura.
- \* Ensanche de Ceuta.
- \* San Pol de Mar (Barcelona).
- \* Habitaciones de Hotel.
- \* Fotografía-Cine.
- \* La ciudad verde de Moscú.
- \* Noticias.
- \* Bibliografía.

2,50 Ptas.



In May 1931, the first issue of the long-awaited Spanish modernity platform appeared: *A.C. Actividad Contemporánea*. Although the publication of the magazine had become an indispensable requirement for the existence of the GATEPAC,<sup>1</sup> its manufacturing process turned out to be very long and fraught with difficulties.

By Antonio Pizza

From the first steps, architect Josep Torres Clavé took a leadership role within the hierarchy of the editorial department of the magazine—a fact which became clear over the activities promoted by A.C. and which would be a crucial point within the internal division regarding responsibilities among the partners.<sup>2</sup>

In any case, since the first statements of the platform, as well as serving as a privileged way to disseminate their own ideas and projects, it also presented itself with clearly defined priorities which were to be applied in absolutely programmatic ways: the obvious defense of Modernity in all its urban and architectural aspects—although revised and corrected—and the assumption of the resources of an industrialized construction and the inevitable changes acquired with Modernity, adding current sarcastic criticism and a toughened denunciation of the inhuman living conditions of many neighbors from the old town.

Between the lines of the magazine, it is not difficult to highlight the field of international paradigms, the essential connection with social requests, prefiguring urban reforms essential to Barcelona, or the presentation of cinematographic and artistic themes claiming an inalienable interrelationship between the driving forces of the desirable cultural progress.

Moreover, A.C., a front row exponent of *another* way to raise disciplinary issues—both in the contents and the methodologies—also represents an innovative chapter regarding the use of image, participating actively in the avant-garde experiences of the 30s in Europe.

It is indisputable and also confessed, that the German *Das Neue Frankfurt* magazine (1926–1933) had a great influence. Not only its graphical presentation but also its ethical commitment in considering architecture as an activity essential to reach a harmonious civil progress; its centrality which along its pages acquires the afferent of the “city”; and its multidisciplinary opening-up program.

It is likely however that the whole history of Modern edition has a bearing on the GATEPAC initiative. Other precedents can also be found such as the Swiss ABC magazine (1924–1928) in which we find the fiery rejection of

individualism; denunciation not only of academic culture but also of the romantic myths of Modernity; the pernicious denial of “aesthetic” approaches with the explicit condemnation of the autonomy of art and finally, a selfless confidence in technology and urban planning, in the background of a clear productivist push. This header will also become a graphic model of the international press because of the use of photomontages, “erased” photos with striking crosses, the rigorous implementation of texts in columns, the frequent use of fillets and typographical variations, the accomplice tension created between word and image, with the intention to prefigure a *revolutionary* praxis through the language of architecture: a search for the essential, of the object, a zero degree of expressiveness in direct contact with life’s matter which must also be rescued socially.<sup>3</sup>

In the “graphic composition” of A.C.’s pages, it is easy to find similarities with international experiences; the use of certain photographic shoots in which diagonal tensions dominate with strongly trimmed views; off-centered perspectives; superposition and transparencies; contrast—sometimes black or white—between images which are opposed according to binary logic to illustrate in an emphatic way what can be considered *correct* and what cannot; extreme and recurrent fragmentation of the iconic units; the mix between photo and text (or directly the use of photomontages which often offer a circular vision of what is represented); the asymmetric arrangement of the whole page; all in all strategies that become part of a shared heritage with other foreign experiments, aimed at invalidating the linear order of conventional figuration.

The photomontage will prove to be, as well, a technique in consonance with the communicative intentions of the GATEPAC, repeatedly being employed not only in the magazine but also in the presentation of projects, exhibition panels or on billboards. Although established as a common practice of the avant-gardes, perhaps one can detect in the experience of Gustavs Klucis (whose prophetic work *Dinamic City* is from 1919), the basically *political* premises that seem to adapt rather well to the strategies of the GATEPAC.

In a certain way, A.C. makes the technocratic project of the GATEPAC *apparent*; the confidence in a productivist scientism (which is also transmitted to the media

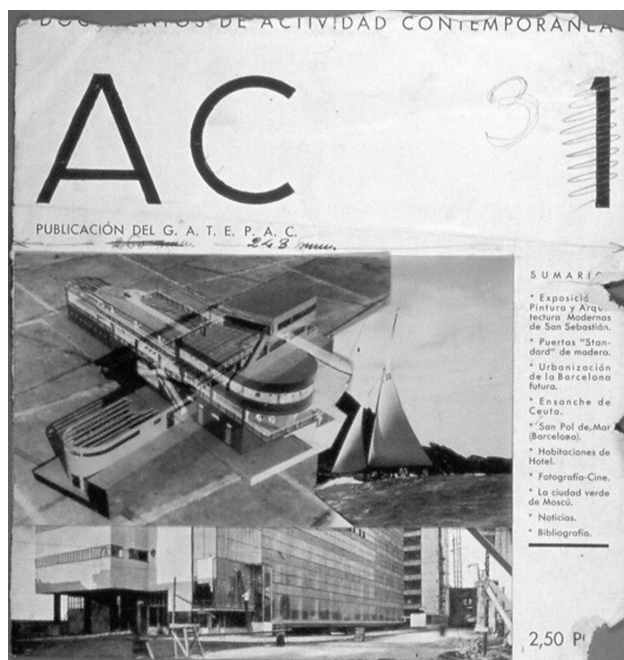


Figure 1. Cover possibilities for the first issue of A.C. magazine.

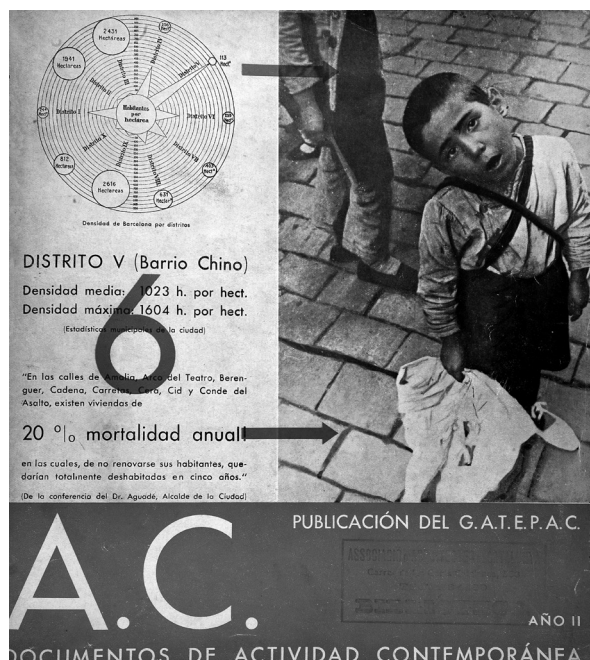


Figure 2. A.C. nº 6, 2nd semester 1932.

through which communication is canalized) results in a widespread use—in addition to an “instrumentalized” photograph for very specific purposes—of schematic tables, statistical tables, ideograms and an elementary serif typography, seeking to surround all aspects of what is said or shown with an aura of alleged *objectivity*.

The printed page is therefore conceived as an active field of graphic tensions with asymmetrical arrangements of text blocks and photos; the appearance of chromatic bands, fillets or arrows that attract and guide the reader’s attention; and with the generic introduction of composition laws in geometric matrices. It finally becomes a substantial reduction of the elements which are used, exalting their communicative articulation.

With a format that is tendentially square (23.8 x 25.8 cm),<sup>4</sup> the inspiration of *Das Neue Frankfurt* designed by Hans Lestikow—a Bauhausler—based on Herbert Bayer’s format for the 1923 exhibition catalog of *Staatliches Bauhaus*, predominates in A.C. This influence is apparent in the covers of the first issues<sup>5</sup>: a restrained grill in which there are two main bands, using adjusted white areas. The upper band contains information about the contents while the lower one uses an iconic system appreciably manipulated. The typography used in the Spanish magazine is the one forged by Paul Renner in 1928 (*Futura*), and the frequent use of crosses which vividly “erased” what was considered dissatisfied with GATEPAC’s program, besides having previously appeared in the pages of ABC, had been consecrated by Willi Baumeister in the manifesto drawn for the exhibition of the German 1927

*Werkbund Die Wohnung*, in which a flaming red cross was superimposed upon a photo of a convoluted and overloaded bourgeois interior style.

The prerogatives of A.C. will be showcased in a peremptory way. In the editorial of issue 1—in a publication in which, by definition, articles and projects are not signed individually<sup>6</sup>—the need for architecture to have a double *temporal* and *geographical* value is affirmed, having to reflect not only the new arrangements of society but also what can be determined by the climate of the region in which it is located. In this case, the reference is southern architecture, characterized by “terraces, canopies, cantilevers, filtered light” which have to interact with the tenets of functionalism.<sup>7</sup>

This is the issue where the symptomatic parallelism between the 1927 serialized houses by Oud in the Stuttgart *Weissenhof* and the houses “without architect” of Sant Pol de Mar, appear. The binary method—which architects will refer to many times, generally following a black and white opposition—is, this time, softened, becoming a suggestive parallelism between equals: the standard, the principle of maximum economy of technological and expressive means is no Modern invention, since their roots are in the clearly anthropological nature of a distant past. In this same issue an unavoidable parameter is quoted: the experience of socialist USSR architecture and, specifically, the competition of the ‘Green City of Moscow’,<sup>8</sup> a touchstone of GATCPAC’s reflection on the new city, as can be seen in the project *Ciutat del Repòs i de Vacances* (City of Rest and Holidays).





March 1932 makes the GATEPAC acquire a leading role in the international propaganda press. The group is responsible, among other things, of developing in an original way some aspects of the debate on the functional city, as reflected in issue 7 (3<sup>rd</sup> semester 1932), dedicated to new needs arising from the rights that the urban working masses had of leisure time.

With issue 6 (2<sup>nd</sup> semester 1932) two themes which would later develop extensively, appear for the first time: on the one hand the recovery of popular Mediterranean architecture—with special interest in construction and residential forms in Ibiza (“Ibiza, the island that does not need architectural renewal”)—and, on the other, the fierce denunciation of the miserable conditions in which neighbors lived in the degraded historical center of the city (“Barcelona’s *barrio chino* – District V”), with the testimony of the horrifying photos taken by Margaret Michaelis.<sup>9</sup>

Between late 1933 and 1934, GATCPAC’s statements seem to gradually opt towards new conceptualizations. Josep Lluís Sert, in a conference organized by the Alumni Association of the Barcelona School of Architecture and was transcribed in A.C., marked distances regarding the radicalisms of Nordic inspired Modern architecture, using categorical statements.<sup>10</sup> Two monographic issues devoted to popular architecture (nº 18, 2<sup>nd</sup> semester 1935) and rural architecture of Ibiza (nº 21, 1<sup>st</sup> semester 1936), are explicitly inspired by this precise ideological statement, aimed at promoting the “Modern” valorization of traditional Mediterranean tectonic forms, with specific attention to contemporary Italian production.<sup>11</sup> In issue 21, both the anthropological studies and detailed photo reports made on site by the “ex-Dadaist” Raoul Hausmann and the works by Edgar Heilbronner, will also converge.

Since the second half of 1936, the major political events affecting Spain—particularly conflictive in Catalonia—and the SAC (Union of Architects of Catalonia) professional training, are dutifully recorded by A.C. Torres Clavé’s militancy gives the magazine much more engaged roles from a political and social point of view. In an undated propaganda brochure—attributed to this period according to its content and because it is written in Catalan—one can read the following slogans: “A.C. is a fight magazine [...] A.C. is of a highly favorable extremism (...) A.C. is a magazine of clear, distinct critique”.<sup>12</sup> The contents of the new period of the magazine are even more clear in the editorial of the double issue 23–24:

*The firm and resolute struggle we have had since the formation of our group against everything established in architecture, against academic, fossil, rotten architecture to which the false professional concept of many architects had led to, will, from now on, become a close collaboration with the Union of Architects of Catalonia, whose guidance we share enthusiastically.*<sup>13</sup>

The radical metamorphosis taking place are accurately reflected in the last issue (nº 25, June 1937), which is published in three languages, Catalan, Spanish and French. Entitled ‘*Problemes de la Revolució*’ (Problems of the Revolution), the front cover shows a picture of anarchist Durruti’s funeral (1936) taken by Margaret Michaelis.

*A new era begins. What was once considered utopia, achieves reality now. Hopefully, in this society which is being formed, logical solutions we’ve come up with through our work will be addressed.*<sup>14</sup>

Illustrated with whole page images, using capital letters at different scales, composed almost as a succession of slogans and designed with a powerful and easy to read graphics, this issue emphasizes the theory that the environment determines the ways of being of the individual, its rapid and radical transformation will allow the improvement not only of people’s lives but also their existential behaviors.

It is therefore easy to understand that much of the publication is devoted to the dramatic theme of Barcelona’s “District V”. In developing the theme, after a clear explanation of the historical processes that have led to this situation of inhuman degradation, we find the illustration of the Decalogue of the measures to be taken and their various implementation stages, resulting in a radical “urban surgery”.

History condemned issue 25 to be the end point of a passionate and confident experience that was brutally cut short by a historical and personal tragedy and not the starting point of an architectural and urban revolution. Indeed, among the papers of who, at this point, was the undisputed chief editor of this forward-looking platform, Torres Clavé, we find evidence of layouts and materials for issues whose appearance was planned for the near future. Issue 26 was to insist on the serious problem of housing, fighting against the “pedantic” house of bourgeois culture and offering a series of strict operational guidelines. Issue 27 had to focus on the themes of the “functional city” targeted by CIAM 4. Of issue 28 we only have a sheet of paper with the note “Clothing and personal items, simple and practical, easy to clean, easy to carry, adapting to new life” and of issue 29, a proposed headline saying ‘Outdoor life. Entertainment’.

From this moment, culminating in the dramatic death of Torres Clavé in the war on January 12, 1939, historical events would reserve to Modern architecture and its propaganda very different routes from those that had been carefully and boldly drawn in 25 issues of this exemplary magazine of Spanish forward-looking intelligentsia.

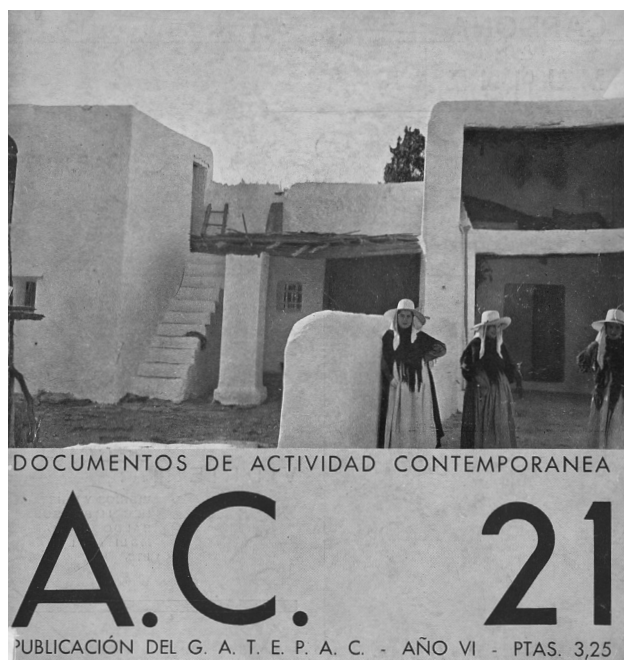


Figure 6. A.C. nº 21, 1<sup>st</sup> semester 1936.

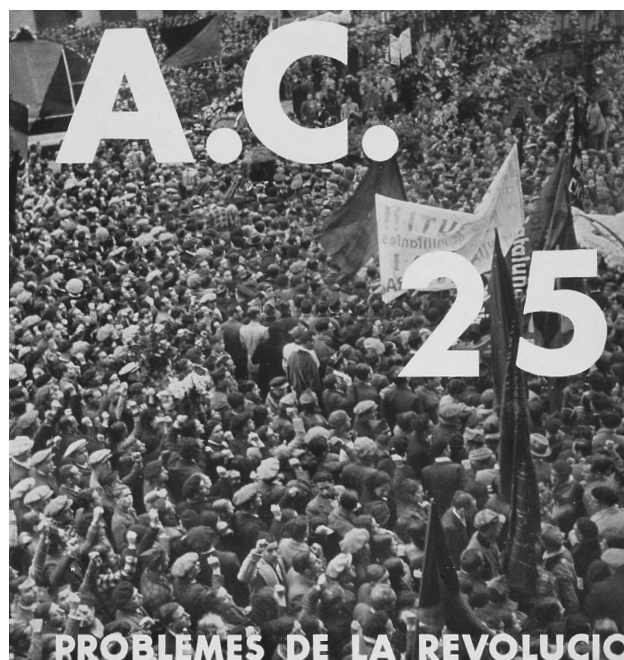


Figure 7. A.C. nº 25, June 1937.

#### Notes

1. The "Grupo de Arquitectos y Técnicos Españoles para el Progreso de la Arquitectura Contemporánea" (Group of Spanish Architects and Technicians for the Progress of Contemporary Architecture, GATEPAC in its Spanish acronym) was created in October 1930, structured in the Centre, North and East groups, becoming the latter the "Grup d'Arquitectes i Tècnics Catalans per al Progrés de l'Arquitectura Contemporània" (Group of Catalan Architects and Technicians for the Progress of Contemporary Architecture, GATCPAC in its Catalan acronym).
2. In a non-dated typed text which has been conserved at the *Arxiu Històric del Col·legi d'Arquitectes de Catalunya* (Historic Archive of the Catalan Architecture Centre, AH-COAC in its Catalan acronym) we can read: "General Editor. Torres. He will be responsible for the summary formation [...]. Once the materials are collected he will present the summary to the board and the other groups for approval. Afterwards he will arrange the composition of the issue and once he has done the format he will submit it once again for approval of the directors".
3. On the other hand, the experience of ABC (in the editorial staff of which we can find, among others, El Lissitzky, M. Stam, H. Meyer or H. Schmidt) exerted a notable influence in two Dutch magazines, *i 10* (1927-1929) and *De 8 en Opbouw* (1932-1943), which maintained contacts and propitious exchanges with A.C. -notoriously the second one.
4. The *Wendingen* magazine (1918-1931), directed and designed by H. T. Wijdeveld, was the first to adopt the square format (34,25cm).
5. Another precedent which we must not forget is the Soviet CA (Contemporary Architecture) magazine, with a cover designed by A. Gan and which was edited in Russian and German between 1926 and 1930.
6. In the October 26, 1933 meeting minutes (GATCPAC, AH-COAC archive): we read: "Works of the associate directors of the A.C. magazine. It is conveyed that all the works of the associate directors, both personal and collective, published in the magazine, will appear under the motto 'gatcpac' and never under the name of their author or authors. In the case of collaboration between an associate director and an architect who is not an associate, the motto will be 'gatcpac

in collaboration with...' [...]. GATCPAC signature: it is conveyed that the works of the associate directors of the GATCPAC, provided that the board approves it, will be signed GATCPAC." Since its second issue (1924), the ABC magazine had given up on individual identification of the authors of the articles, inspired by a thesis proclaimed by Van Doesburg in 1923, extolling the value of collective action.

7. A.C. nº 1, 1931, 13.
8. 'La Ciudad Verde de Moscú', A.C. nº 1, 1931, 32. ('The Green City of Moscow').
9. AA.VV., Margaret Michaelis. *Fotografía, vanguardia y política en la Barcelona de la República*, IVAM, Valencia, 1998.
10. "Conferencia de J. L. Sert, arquitecto del GATCPAC", A.C. nº 16, 4<sup>th</sup> semester 1934, 43-44. ("Conference by Josep Lluís Sert, architect of the GATCPAC").
11. "Lógicamente, instintivamente, los pueblos latinos son los puntales de esta diferenciación anti-nórdica del racionalismo. Diferenciación que tiende, sobre todo, a someter el funcionalismo de la materia, al funcionalismo del espíritu." (cursivas en el original) "La exposición de 'La Triennale', Milán", A.C. nº 13, 1<sup>st</sup> semester 1934, 38.  
(Logically, instinctively, Latin peoples are the mainstay of this anti-Nordic differentiation of rationalism. A differentiation which tends, over all, to submit material functionalism to spiritual functionalism (in italics in the original version).
12. "Revista A.C.", non-dated leaflet, A.C.-GATCPAC, AH-COAC Archive.
13. "El GATCPAC ante la transformación actual", A.C. nº 23-24 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> semesters, 1936, 8. ("The GATCPAC in front of today's transformation")
14. "Es el momento", A.C. nº 25, June 1937, 3. ("It's the moment").

#### Antonio Pizza

PhD Architect, Professor of History of Art and Architecture at the ETSAB-UPC, Barcelona, has collaborated actively in seminars and articles of **docomomo** Iberia. He is the author of several books such as *Arte y arquitectura moderna, 1851-1933: del Crystal Palace de Joseph Paxton a la clausura de la Bauhaus* (Barcelona, Arqitext, 1999) or *La Construcción del Pasado: Reflexiones Sobre Historia, Arte y Arquitectura* (Barcelona, Celeste, 2000) and more recently, together with Maurici Pla, *Chicago-Nueva York* (Madrid, Abada Editores, 2012).

# The Vision of Utopia

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**D**esigned in late 1932 by Josep Lluís Sert and Josep Torres Clavé, *Casa Bloc* is one of the paradigmatic works of these architects who represented the most active core of the Modern Movement in Catalonia, known as GATCPAC (Group of Catalan Architects and Technicians for the Progress of Contemporary Architecture), founded in 1930 echoing the Spanish GATEPAC. I use the word “paradigm” in the sense of a theoretical framework or set of theories. In fact, *Casa Bloc* was not only the first major social housing building in Barcelona conceived in functional terms but it also exemplifies the reception in this city of the notions of the Modern Movement and how the guidelines recently approved in the 4<sup>th</sup> CIRPAC Congress were applied.

By Rossend Casanova

**T**he ideas that emerged in Central Europe, adapted by Catalan architects, included concepts such as practicality, economy of space and material, socialisation and socially committed approaches. Those young architects under thirty were able to transmit this vision to the politicians, both the Catalan government (*Generalitat de Catalunya*) and Barcelona City Council, by calling for decisive involvement of the public authorities in that architectural innovation. A meaningful purpose, given that the Republican government established in 1931 sought to change the nature of the country and found in architecture one of the tools to achieve this goal.

In an interesting interview conducted by the journalist Irene Polo with Sert in 1933, the latter stated that *Casa Bloc* was “a first attempt at the future dwelling unit, which clearly and efficiently provides the solution to the housing problem, one of the most important and crucial issues of civilisation” (*Quaderns Crema*, Barcelona, 2003).

The first stone of *Casa Bloc* was laid on 12, March 1933. Its peculiar “S” shape –inspired by Le Corbusier’s redent–took, from a bird’s-eye view, the form of a fret structured into a total of five blocks, where the connecting elements included staircases and lifts, the latter inconceivable until then in social housing.

The architecture (pilotis, more openings, open galleries–corridors, etc.) served a social purpose (communal areas, collective spaces, squares, etc.). *Casa Bloc* was an experiment, a building designed to be reproduced in a city which was being developed according to the doctrine of social justice. However, the good intentions were truncated with the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War (1936–39), which limited the resources, first economic, later material and finally human. The work had slowed down by 1937 and came to a halt in the following year.

The defeat of Republican Spain by Franco’s troops also had negative effects on *Casa Bloc*. After a period of abandonment, the new regime decided to complete it and assign the apartments to soldiers and their families. It was painted in ochre colours, which the residents were allowed to change as they pleased. Moreover, in 1948 the so-called *Bloc fantasma* (Ghost block) was added with the aim of accommodating families of police officers and one of the squares was closed off and privatized.

With Sert having emigrated to the United States and Torres Clavé who had died defending the Republican front, *Casa Bloc* gradually deteriorated and took on the appearance of a decadent peripheral mass. The improvements would come with democracy. A first block was renovated in 1986, and the remaining four from 1997. In 2008 the *Bloc fantasma* was demolished and the two squares were recovered for the local residents. The latter was the work of architects Víctor and Marc Seguí commissioned by INCASÒL (Catalan Land Institute), and involved adapting the building to the current standards of habitability and satisfying the needs of residents (new gas, water and electricity installations, television cabling, etc).

Today, eighty years after the first stone was laid, we have opened an apartment–museum, Dwelling 1/11, in order to restore its original appearance and, using the information obtained, complete what was left unfinished in 1939 with the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War.

It has been a laborious project, undertaken over two years and developed in different stages, both at an institutional level with agreements with the owners, INCASÒL, and the *Institut de Cultura de Barcelona* (Barcelona Arts Institute) through DHUB and at a documentary and operational level with its restoration and use.

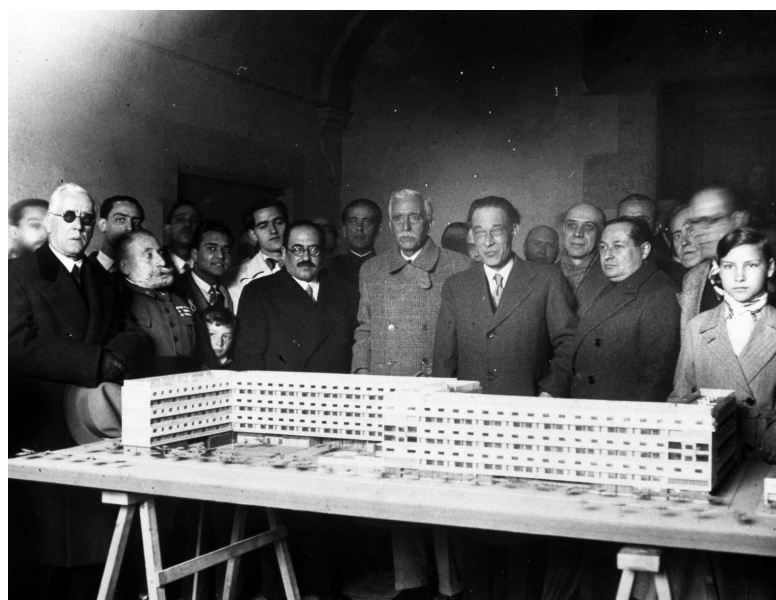
### **Barcelona has Gained a Museum Facility**

Opening Dwelling 1/11 to visitors has helped complete the city’s museum facilities. There are now several venues that can be visited, allowing us to understand how the city has been built and furnished. However, this is an

< The original restored kitchen in which a 30s range, manufactured in Barcelona by **José Mingrat**, has been placed. © DHUB. Photo by Lourdes Jansana, 2012.

exceptional case within the whole, as it is one of the few examples of the Modern Movement in Barcelona that can be seen and, moreover, is not a recreation or replica, like the German Pavilion that Mies van der Rohe built for the Barcelona International Exhibition (taken down in 1930 at the end of the event and rebuilt between 1983 and 1986) or the Pavilion of the Republic, built for the 1937 Paris International Exhibition (and rebuilt between 1991 and 1992 in the north of Barcelona). The *Casa Bloc* apartment-museum is a restored space, original in the strict sense of the term.

This initiative emerged from the very dynamic of DHUB, which studies and analyses the design of interiors and promotes knowledge about them. The apartment-museum



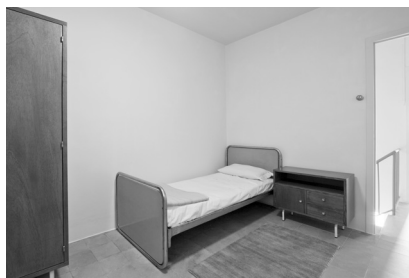
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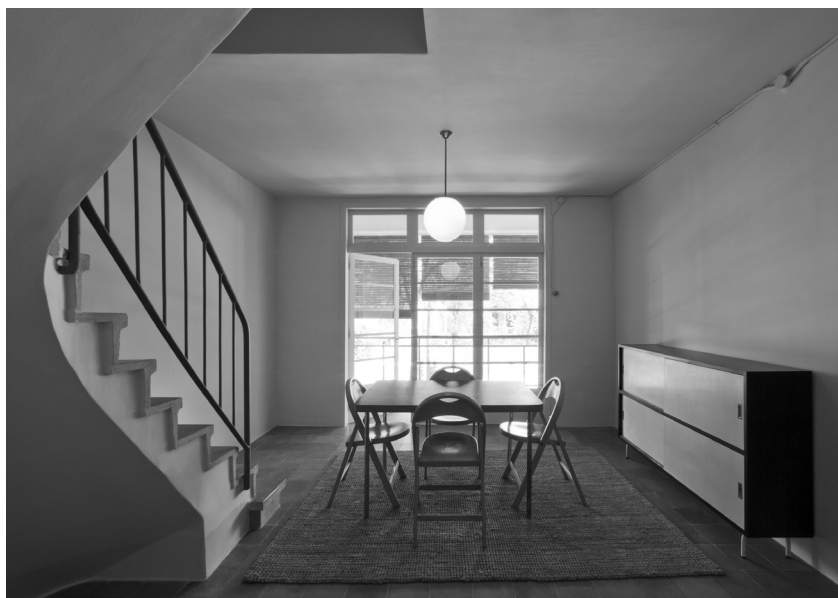




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Figure 1. The President of the Government of Catalonia, **Francesc Macià**, and the Mayor of Barcelona, **Jaume Aiguader**, in front of the scale model of the Casa Bloc on March 12, 1933, the day they laid the first stone of the building.

© Arxiu Fotogràfic de Barcelona. Photo by Pérez de Rozas.

Figure 2. View of block 2 of Casa Bloc with the apartment-museum restored on the corner.

© DHUB. Photo by Lourdes Jansana, 2012.

Figure 3. The dining room with the balcony incorporated, before the restoration.

© DHUB. Photo by Raimon Solà, 2010.

Figure 4. The single bedroom after the restoration with the purpose-made wardrobe and side table together with a 1930s German bed.

© DHUB. Photo by Lourdes Jansana, 2012.

Figure 5. The dining room and the balcony after the restoration. It is furnished with a purpose-made sideboard, the table model 91 by **Marcel Breuer** and **Thonet B751** chairs.

© DHUB. Photo by Lourdes Jansana, 2012.

Figure 6. The double bedroom after the restoration with the wardrobe, the bed and side table purposely-made following the instructions published in the A.C. Journal.

© DHUB. Photo by Lourdes Jansana, 2012.



also seeks to be a reflection on the forms and functions of the objects and spaces. It should be noted that the collections of the Barcelona Decorative Arts Museum (affiliated with DHUB) include pieces from GATCPAC and the period. Therefore, Dwelling 1/11 is an opportunity to better understand what the Modern Movement represented in Catalonia and some of its approaches.

### A Painstaking Restoration

Located in block 2, floor 1, door 11, Dwelling 1/11 is at a formal level the same as the others in the building. It is a two-bedroom duplex apartment, measuring 60m<sup>2</sup> and with a very simple layout. The lower floor consists of the entrance, a corridor leading to a space shared by the washtub and shower, the kitchen, the toilet and the dining room with balcony, and on the upper floor there are two bedrooms.

The duplex apartment had undergone some changes that were also common in other dwellings, such as the closing of the balcony to extend the dining room, the enlargement of the bathroom, the remodelling of the kitchen and the change of coverings. Therefore, the restoration began with the removal of anything that was not original, added over a period of 20 years: floorings (tiles and parquet), plasterwork, wallpaper, tiling, false walls, unoriginal woodwork, sanitary ware and modern fittings. Everything was replaced with pieces taken from the same building or with new materials but just like the old ones. For example, the five new doors were substituted with another five taken from other apartments, in agreement with their residents, so that they were from the Casa Bloc itself. In return, each resident who gave up a door were given a new one. The original ironwork was also restored, including doorknobs, hinges and blind winding. The most complicated case was on the ground floor, as it was necessary to remove 30m<sup>2</sup> of hydraulic flooring from another apartment, clean and lay the floor tiles in Dwelling 1/11, and replace the flooring in the other apartment. This was done with all the fixtures and fittings, in the kitchen, the toilet and the laundry area with shower. It should be noted that we were able to save the last shower pan left in the building, which is a very interesting industrial piece. Made of white fired enamelled steel, 80x70cm, it has some small legs that raise it up to 22cm. The legs were screwed into the pan when it was fitted, which shows that it was mass produced and when dismantled it could be transported more easily. Moreover, it is not built in, so that its economy in its manufacture, transport and fitting and aesthetics followed the design parameters of the Modern Movement.

The reconstructed elements based on data obtained in situ play an important role in this restoration. The work was commissioned, in terms of the chromatic and mate-

rial analysis, to the Department of Crystallography and Mineralogy at Barcelona University. The stratigraphic and documentary studies resolved the theme of colour, a very important aspect. The tests on plaster, wood and metal resulted in a harmonious and coherent colouring, similar to other GATCPAC works, with a light blue hue on the walls and ceilings, dark blue for the stair banister, and orange for the exterior grilles.

### Selecting the Furniture

To understand the functional elements of Dwelling 1/11 and how the spaces could be occupied, we placed pieces of furniture that closely follow the GATCPAC philosophy. We consulted the journal *A. C. Documentos de Actividad Contemporánea*, through which the group promoted its ideas, commitments and affinities. The twenty-five issues between 1931 and 1937 were published in Barcelona and the editor and chief writer was Josep Torres Clavé, one of the designers of Casa Bloc. The publication covered architecture but also interior design (among other subjects) and through its pages the group set out its objectives and programme, graphically explained with drawings, photographs and models, while showing the work of other architects close to its ideas, such as Marcel Breuer, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Walter Gropius and Otto Haesler.

The journal A.C. presented two kinds of furniture. On the one hand, by architects or specialized companies and of interest to the GATCPAC members because it was in keeping with their philosophy: pieces of furniture that were aesthetically honest and practical and that avoided any past dogma or style. On the other, furniture they called "*Mobiliario Standard tipos GATEPAC*" and suggested by the group. They are pieces considered appropriate for the needs of modern life. Tables, sideboards, chairs, shelving, beds, bedside tables or wardrobes were described, drawn and reproduced in several issues.

This furniture perfectly embodies the ideals of GATCPAC and the architects used it in their buildings. This can be seen in a house in Muntaner Street (Sert, 1930) or the studio of the architect Germán Rodríguez Arias (1931) and, above all, in simpler spaces, such as the *Colapsible beach house* (1931) or in a house for rent in Roselló Street (Sert, 1930).

Finally, we also took into consideration the furniture that GATEPAC sold in its M.I.D.V.A. (*Mobles i Decoració per a la Vivenda Actual*) shop in Passeig de Gràcia number 99, where they displayed their own ideas and those of others, such as the Finnish architect Alvar Aalto, the French company Stylclair (which sold models by the Hungarian architect and industrial designer Marcel Breuer) and the Viennese firm Thonet.

For Dwelling 1/11 we have reproduced some pieces of furniture featured in A.C. Their size, material, colour and other relevant information was published, meaning that it was possible to construct them. In total, a sideboard, two wardrobes, two bedside tables and a bed were made. Several specialists in wood, iron and paint participated in the process, always endeavouring to follow the techniques used in the 30s and using the technology present in Spain. For instance, the wooden furniture was made with tools from the period, such as the band saw and the combination machine.

In terms of the furniture by other architects or companies which GATCPAC admired, for the dining room we decided to buy a table model 91 by the Hungarian architect and industrial designer Marcel Breuer. The table was produced in 1933 by the company Embru and distributed by the firm Wohnbedarf, both based in Zurich. Its design follows the new simplicity in furniture formulated from the 20s. It is a very light and functional table. Its board is covered with black linoleum on a structure formed by tongued-and-grooved veneered chipboard on a pine frame. The frame has maple veneered chipboard along its edge. The four straight legs of chromed steel tube are screwed into the lower part of the board with metal angle bars. Linoleum enables easy cleaning and the designers of the Modern Movement advocated it as a hygienic material which also avoided the need for a tablecloth.

Another example are the folding chairs in the dining room, model B751 (1930) by Thonet. This light and highly functional chair is a piece that the GATCPAC members used frequently, both for dining room tables and desks and, even, for stands and in the M.I.D.V.A. shop itself. In the double bedroom we have also placed a period chair from the Grifé & Escoda shop in Barcelona, its main office in Spain.

We also considered it appropriate to include pieces that had belonged to a GATCPAC member. Of course, the ideal would have been a piece of furniture of Sert, Torres Clavé or Subirana, the designers of the building, but as we were unable to find any that could work in this space (let us remember, aimed at social housing), we decided to place a folding chair B61 (1930), also produced by Thonet and which came from the Barcelona apartment of Germán Rodríguez Arias, partner founder of GATCPAC and an important architect with major rationalist buildings in the city.

Among the different pieces that have helped to complete the spaces, we can mention the ceiling lamps, which were chosen following the elements advocated by the group and which they often used in other buildings and spaces. Thus, we have placed a round glass lamp with simple geometrical forms in the dining room. The bed

linen is also from the 30s, while the hand-woven wool carpets are new but made using old techniques, coloured with natural dyes, following the models published in the journal A.C.

It is worth noting that several architects specializing in the Modern Movement were advisors on the restoration, including Josep Maria Rovira and Juan José Lahuerta (08.09.11), Albert Bastardes (12.09.11), Josep Maria Montaner (29.09.11), Oriol Bohigas (5.10.11) and Antonio Pizza (21.10.11).

In short, the restoration and opening to the public of the apartment-museum aims to provide a space that invites reflection and enables a better understanding of the 30s in the field of architecture and design in Catalonia.

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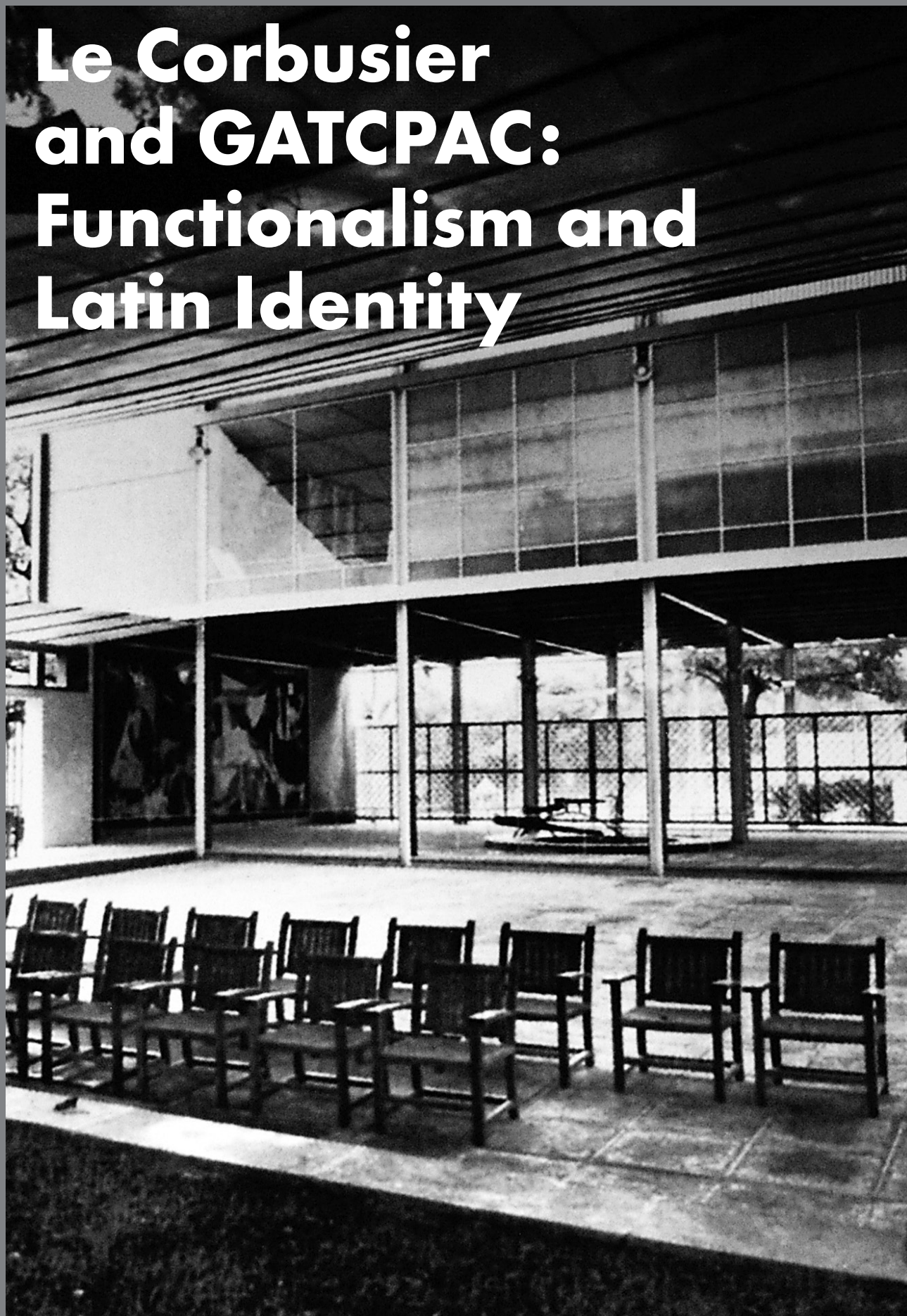
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## Rossend Casanova

Born in Barcelona in 1970, he is the DHUB (Disseny Hub Barcelona) conservator and he is in charge of the Collection of Product Design within the Department of Collections at the Barcelona Decorative Arts Museum. PhD in Art History from Barcelona University, he has specialized in late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Art History. Curator of the restoration of the Casa Bloc apartment-museum.

# Le Corbusier and GATCPAC: Functionalism and Latin Identity

68





This study presents a brief history of design in the context of historic avant-gardes. It shows that, in parallel to the more classical historiographical interpretation which followed Pevsner's ideas to "internationalize" the production of the 20s and 30s, other models with vernacular Latin roots were obviated.

By Mercè Vidal

Almost from the very beginning, in 1925, Gropius himself had brought the *Moderne Baukunst* of different countries together under the banner of "International Architecture". In 1932, the Museum of Modern Art held its first exhibition of European architecture under the significant title 'The International Style', and—as Jonathan M. Woodham has pointed out so well (2001)—hard on its heels and under the aegis of Gropius came Nikolaus Pevsner's reaffirmation of internationalism, *Pioneers*.<sup>1</sup> We cannot forget the original title of Pevsner's book, just as we cannot forget the few revisions he introduced in subsequent editions and the clarity of Pevsner's own ideological stance, reinforced this "internationalism" under the aegis of Gropius.

On the other hand, the work of a young group of Catalan architects known by the acronym GATCPAC (Group of Catalan architects and technicians in support of the progress of contemporary architecture) architects, who from 1931 to their dissolution in 1937 had disseminated furniture design along with new architectural proposals, was only initially prompted by a conception of interiors approximating the *Neue Sachlichkeit*; in time, that interest cooled, giving way to furniture and interior design that was rooted in "place" and adopted a more "humanistic" character, infused with identity through the Mediterranean vernacular. The A.C. *Documentos de Actividad Contemporánea* magazine was one of the means of dissemination of the new ideas in line with the new furniture designs.

### Furnishing the Home, between Imported and National Designs

Soon after the group was formed in 1931, GATCPAC opened a centre that could double as a meeting place and shop. The sign outside the door simply said "*Construcció i amoblament de la casa contemporània*" (Construction and interior furnishing for the Modern house), and the example of the centre shows how the notion of standard was one of the group's earliest objectives. The shop [figure 1] was in the Passeig de Gràcia, a broad avenue in the heart of one of Barcelona's most affluent

neighbourhoods, just next to Gaudí's *La Pedrera*. Its clients included the parents of former mayor of Barcelona and President of Catalonia, Pasqual Maragall. The Maragalls came here to furnish their home as newlyweds, and when I once interviewed them about why they had chosen GATCPAC, their answer was short and to the point: "because it was Modern!" Such confidence reveals something about how the media worked in this period, and the public's response. Another factor that favoured this taste for Modernity was the declaration of the Second Republic.

The display of furnishing—through firms such as Thonet, Styclclair, Artek among others [figure 3] and the own production of GATCPAC in which the idea of *standard* was applied—considered all aspects of equipping the home and took every opportunity to highlight the Modernity of its designs. Alongside the presentation of architecture and town planning, its appearance in exhibitions, fairs or in even in the stage sets of theatre plays helped to disseminate many of the furniture designs on offer during this period as well as the materials necessary for construction. Paving the way for the founding of CIAM, in Moscow, CIRPAC's meeting in Barcelona in 1932 was GATCPAC's opportunity to exhibit much of its work.

### MIDVA (*Mobilari i Decoració de la Vivenda Actual*)

Since 1931, when GATCPAC inaugurated its headquarters and shop in Passeig de Gràcia under the slogan "*Construcció i amoblament de la casa contemporània*", it had dedicated its efforts to lengthy debate about furnishing design and such issues as the import of certain models or the choice of industrial manufacturers. But in 1935, GATCPAC was replaced by MIDVA (*Mobilari i Decoració de la Vivenda Actual*) (Furnishings and decoration for today's living).

The inertia of some GATCPAC members and the working commitment of others lead to the creation, in GATCPAC's former headquarters, of the new society MIDVA. Formed by Josep Lluís Sert, Josep Torres Clavé, the young architecture student Antoni Bonet Castellana, German Rodríguez Arias, and a handful of industrialists, MIDVA played a decisive role in disseminating new models, although its activity was interrupted by the Spanish Civil War in 1936.

<sup>1</sup> GATCPAC's armchair at the Pavilion of the Republic of the International Exhibition of 1937, Paris. Josep Lluís Sert and Luis Lacasa.

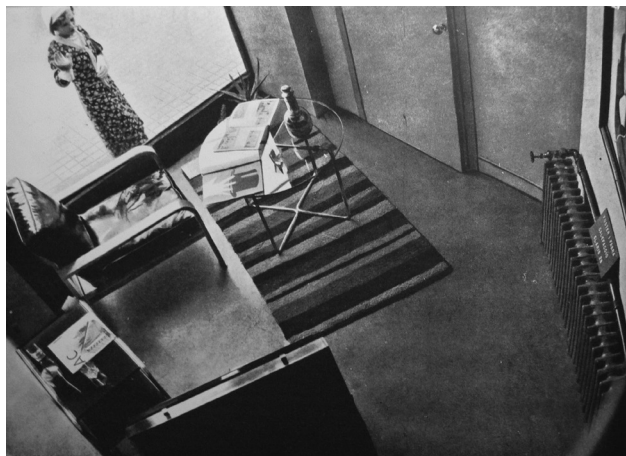
MIDVA produced a series of designed objects, including a dining table, an auxiliary table, two easy chairs with sloping armrests, one of which was adjustable, and the GATCPAC's armchair [figure 2], the most widely seen of all when it was exhibited at the Pavilion of the Republic,



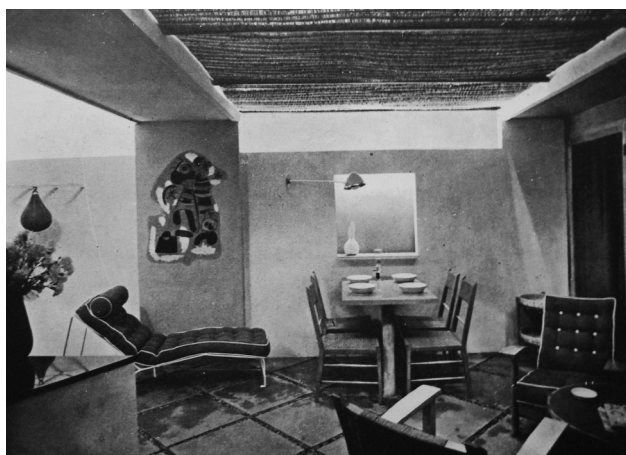
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Figure 1. A.C. cover with the meeting place and shop GATCPAC's just next to Gaudí's "La Pedrera", in A.C. n° 2, 1931.

Figure 2. Armchair produced by MIDVA (1935), Museum of Decorative Arts Barcelona. Photo by Mercè Vidal.

Figure 3. Show-window of GATCPAC's shop with the new furniture design imported from European capitals (1931). Photo by Josep Sala.

Figure 4. MIDVA's stand with GATCPAC's models. A.C. n° 23-24, 1936.

constructed by Sert and Luis Lacasa, during the International Exhibition of 1937, in Paris.

All the models were made of wood and, as reinterpretations of those anonymous pieces of Balearic furniture especially common in the style of Ibiza, they maintained a clear link with their Mediterranean vernacular roots.

MIDVA's initiative not only helped to create closer associations with foreign firms, such as Artek, but actually changed its headquarters name to MIDVA, as explained above, and then participated in the First Exhibition of Decorative Artists organized in May 1936 in Barcelona by FAD Foment de les Arts Decoratives (Organ for the promotion of decorative arts), which brought together a large number of artisans, ensembliers, technicians and designers. For Catalonia, this exhibition constituted a major step in the renovation and consolidation of the decorative arts and of design basing itself upon Modernity and national production. When within months the Spanish Civil War broke out, that advance was brought to a standstill.

### The MIDVA Installation

But MIDVA was also a direct expression of the Mediterranean current and of the Latin element that had gradually been gaining ground in Modern architecture. I therefore believe that, however briefly, it is interesting to describe the organization's installation at the FAD exhibition: as I have argued above, the fundamental role that furniture and interior design played in accentuating, altering and prompting evolutionary processes was well understood by both architects and designers, and evident at the exhibition. The stand itself [figure 4] was situated on a terrace covered by a Catalan vault, recreating different themed areas, from dining and reading spaces to leisure areas for rest and sport.

The furniture and wall furnishings defined the different functions of these individual areas within a common space. The materials were particularly significant: wicker; plated string from Palma (originating in the traditional practice of crafted chairs 'de boga'—from bulrushes or reed mace); tile and vitreous pottery (present in peasant homes and in research in the period of Catalan Modernisme or Art Nouveau); Figueres stone (also traditionally used); Melis (a kind of resinous pine used in Catalonia for beams, doors and auxiliary furniture as early as the 14th century); and fiber cement. As we can see, together these materials constituted a material culture based on local tradition and they dressed the installation in a veritable symphony of Mediterranean color: limestone white, blue<sup>2</sup> and yellow. The stand was simply completed with a cut out painting by Joan Miró put on a cement support; an earthenware vase; pottery dishes painted white and a courgette, the outline of which was reminiscent of the

more organically-shaped works of Jean Arp. The stand was made by three members of GATCPAC and MIDVA: Josep Lluís Sert, Josep Torres Clavé and Antoni Bonet Castellana.

### 3. Le Corbusier and GATCPAC, the “Latin Front”

In this last section I shall consider how the Mediterranean or Latin line in GATCPAC’s furnishing and interior design was in no way unconnected to other foreign trends which, in the current of functionalism and / or rationalism, reinforced what Le Corbusier described as the Latin Front. In the mid 30s, GATCPAC contributed to international debate at the same time that debate was being raised in other parts of the world. Its advance reaffirms that what began peripherally was brought together on common ground.

Especially through the influence of Sert, from 1928 onwards GATCPAC began to have direct contact with Le Corbusier, its initial admiration increasingly becoming an apprenticeship. During Le Corbusier’s first visit to Barcelona, in 1928, he had already observed that *“the architecture I propose is essentially Latin because it is mathematical and has clarity of vision. Do you understand why I should consider this architecture to suit your land, which has certain clear and well reasoned ideas for structural solutions?”*<sup>3</sup>

Studies have considered Le Corbusier’s interest in the Mediterranean<sup>4</sup> but I believe they view this interest as simply one more of the architect’s many preoccupations. In Paul V. Turner’s examination of Charles-Édouard Jeanneret’s earlier apprenticeship—in the days of his youth before adopting the name Le Corbusier—we are given a valuable opportunity to see that interest from another angle. The influence on Jeanneret of Charles L’Eplattenier, his teacher at the *École d’Art at La Chaux-de-Fonds* in Switzerland, was decisive in the younger man’s reflective and thorough absorption of Henry Provensal’s theory in *L’Art de demain* (1904). In that book, Provensal had discussed the need to seek “integral harmony” and he referred to this as “the Absolute”, which existed in art in three divine and eternal laws: “Unity, Name and Harmony”. These three concepts went on to play a significant role in all Le Corbusier’s oeuvre. And no less important for him were Alexandre Cingria-Vaneyre’s thoughts in *Les Entretiens de la ville du Rouet*, which reflected upon the artistic identity of the Swiss romane, rejected the notion of German influence and upheld its Graeco-Latin foundation: “our classical soul [...] can evolve only by means of a Graeco-Latin formula”, Cingria-Vaneyre wrote; “Geneva must be Graeco-Latin”. Next to these lines in the margin of his copy of the book, Le Corbusier wrote the words “I fully agree”.<sup>5</sup> And this, it would appear, partially explains why in 1911 Le Corbusier left Berlin and Behrens’ workshop

to undertake the long journey across the Mediterranean eventually described in his book *Le Voyage d’Orient*. There, he observed that *“this journey to the East leaves the lavish ornament of Northern architecture far behind. It answers the sun’s persistent cry, it reaches for the far-flung horizons of deep blue seas and the great white walls of temples: Constantinople, Asia Minor, Greece, Southern Italy—all these will serve as ideal vessels”*.<sup>6</sup>

The “idealism” in Le Corbusier’s work became a substratum from which his creation could be sustained, and this was already evident in the years of Purism. The material culture of the Mediterranean countries inspired his keenest interest and embraced the very greatest and the very finest details. The proof is the edition of Le Corbusier’s *Carnets*<sup>7</sup> which contain the account of his journey to the East. It is just at this time, therefore, during the mid 30s, when designers in Catalonia, Italy or Greece expressed their conviction that new architecture, design and interior design had to maintain the spirit of research; that without this spirit there could be no invention and new design would be conventionally labeled as just another “style”—the very one, indeed, which we now call the “International style”. To avoid this, they believed it necessary to be anchored in “place”, to maintain and share “place” with one another, and extract from it a *latin identity*.

The Fourth CIAM Congress, held in the summer of 1933 on board the ship *Patris II* as it sailed for Athens, became a touchstone for many architects and designers. At that time, the A.C. journal described the event as follows:

*The Latin contingent in this Congress is more strongly felt than it was in earlier editions. We form almost the majority and we are sailing across the Mediterranean. This will explain many of the differences between the Fourth Congress and previous meetings.*

*Modern architecture has found itself on the shores of this Sea, or more precisely, it is gathering back to its own shores the pure shapes of the Mediterranean. These shapes have influenced the constructions of Northern countries, which have allowed themselves a new building technique by using them.*

*The coastline of Greece and the Greek Islands share an architectural style with the Balearic Island of Ibiza and Minorca: the walls of their villages whitewashed with lime, the flat or arched roofs of their houses. The spirit of this architecture is essentially Modern, the continuation of the same shapes that have repeated themselves over the centuries in so many corners of the Mediterranean.*<sup>8</sup>

The opportunity to contemplate the landscape of a Latin vernacular had a profound effect on all the participants in the Congress, and many years later this return to the Mediterranean brought back stirring memories for Italian architects like Gino Pollini: *“the feeling of ancient tradition was clearly present in every soul, even though*



it could not be expressed in the work of the Congress".<sup>9</sup> Its effect was such that the Italian journal *Quadrante* dedicated an entire issue to Greece and the Fourth CIAM Congress (n° 5, September 1933), and n° 18 [figure 5], 19 and 21 of GATCPAC's A.C. ran features on popular architecture, the evolution of interior design in the home and the island of Ibiza respectively.

The force with which pictures in such journals could influence their readers has been discussed above, and this was particularly important with A.C.'s n° 19 (1935), which contained a variety of photographs related to interior design: the weekend houses [figure 6] designed by Sert and Torres Clavé between 1934 and 1935 for the coastal town of Garraf; the house designed by the architect German Rodríguez Arias in 1934 in Ibiza [figure 7]; Sert's own studio in Barcelona, as it appeared in 1931 [figure 9]; Rodríguez Arias's studio, also in Barcelona, in 1932; and the interior of the apartment and studio designed by Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret in Paris in 1934. All these photographs were accompanied by brief captions, although here I have only considered the description of Le Corbusier's bedroom [figure 8]: "*gentleman-academics of Modernity! See how perfectly Modern design can function without the usual hackneyed phrases or tubular chrome chairs, without excessively 'functional' furniture or severely 'rational' structures; look at its curving surfaces, which for some of you may be disconcerting...*" (A.C. n° 19, 1935). The same photograph had been published one year earlier in *D'Ací i d'Allà* [figure 10], which ran a special Christmas issue on 20<sup>th</sup> century art written by Sert and Joan Prats. Le Corbusier's dining room and bedroom were featured opposite pictures of different interiors designed by Werner M. Moser, from Zurich, and accompanied by the following text: "*[...] the interior of a Modern house can at the same time be friendly, intimate and entirely Latin in spirit. There is nothing cold or clinical about this room: there is no German severity. But the racial differences do become clearly evident when we compare these photographs with those on the other page*".<sup>10</sup>

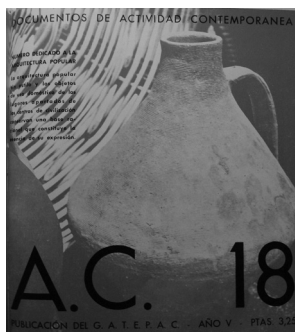
In August 1932, Le Corbusier made his feelings very clear in a letter he wrote to the architect Guido Fiorini: "your letters were waiting for me when I arrived in Spain [...] I delivered a paper in Barcelona [...] about the major projects of town planning. I have spoken at length to President Macià and met many people. I believe that the time has come for the Latin countries to act and that Latin inspiration will dominate the second era of the Machine Age".<sup>11</sup> In the period starting with the Fourth CIAM Conference and leading up to the end of the 30s, that movement rooted in the tradition of the Mediterranean vernacular gained ground, and then continued to exist beyond World War II, in the different regions of post-war Europe.

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Figure 5. A.C. nº 18 dedicated to popular architecture, 1935.

Figure 6. Weekend house designed by **Josep Lluís Sert** and **Josep Torres Clavé** (1934–1935) for the coastal town of Garraf. A.C. nº 19, 1935.

Figure 7. The interior equipping was remodelled with anonymous designs by **Germán Rodríguez Arias** in Sant Antoni (Ibiza). A.C. nº 19, 1935.

Figure 8. Apartment Block 24, *Nungesser et Coli* (Paris) and **Le Corbusier's** home (1931–1934). *D'Ací i D'Allà*, Winter 1934 and A.C. nº 19, 1935.

Figure 9. **Josep Lluís Sert's** studio in Barcelona (1931) with GATCPAC's armchair, objects from Ibiza, wicker carpet, anonymous chair and **Fernand Léger** painting. A.C. nº 19, 1935.

Figure 10. *D'Ací i D'Allà* journal cover illustrated by **Joan Miró**. *D'Ací i D'Allà*, Winter 1934.

**Mercè Vidal.** PhD in Art History, Department of Art History, University of Barcelona, 1989, she is Professor at the same department. She received the "Josep Puig i Cadafalch" Prize of the *Institut d'Estudis Catalans* in 1990 and the National Arts Plàstiques Prize of the Government of the Generalitat of Catalonia in 1991. She is a member of AICA (the International Association of Art Critics) since 1980, a member of GRACMON (Research Group of Catalan Modernisme, Noucentisme and Design) of the University of Barcelona since 1982, and she has conducted a research project at the Archives of the *Fondation Le Corbusier* in Paris since 2006.

# Chandigarh Heritage Furniture





**A**lthough Chandigarh is linked to Le Corbusier due to the urban planning and the buildings of the Capitol complex, the footprint of the tandem between Jeanneret and the Fry–Drew team goes far beyond as reflected for example in different housing typologies and the design of interesting furniture collections. These have been seldom described and evaluated, perhaps partly due to the lack of attention that the authorities have towards Chandigarh’s heritage.

By Ariadna Alvarez Garreta

**T**he history of Chandigarh is well known by all but I will make a brief introduction in order to contextualize the political background and the proposed urban scheme by architects Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret in 1950.<sup>1</sup>

In 1947 when India got its independence as a former British colony driven by a new breed of young and local politicians led by Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nerhu,<sup>2</sup> they had to accept the division of the country in two, India and Pakistan, thus giving response to the creation of a new Muslim state. Along with the creation of a new frontier, the union of the great Indian motherland had been one of the fundamental principles of Gandhi during the struggle for independence. These facts not only led to his murder in 1948, but also became a great human drama with an important exodus of refugees, confronting religious communities that had lived peacefully for centuries. The Sikhs were left in the hardest hit by the fragmentation of their territory, Punjab, and the loss of its capital Lahore, which became part of the new state of West Pakistan.

The new 20<sup>th</sup> century India was provided with a constitution and it was established as a federal republic, currently comprising 28 states and 7 territory unions (Chandigarh as the capital of Punjab and Haryana being one of these unions). The new government with Nerhu as prime minister wanted to compensate the people of Punjab due to the “partition”<sup>3</sup> with the creation of a new capital, which in turn would symbolize the new spirit of the Indian nation. A socialist, secular country that wanted to be prosperous and modern with a delicate balance between the weight of tradition and the new trends which came from Europe and that Nehru, who had studied in England, wanted to import. With this spirit, the new government began to make international contacts to design the project of the new city. It wanted an architect involved in the most advanced planning theories of the time. The commission went to Albert Meyer who made a proposal, but eventually he had to leave its construction in 1950

when his collaborator Matthew Nowicki, the architect who had to implement the project in India, died in a plane crash. As a result, Nerhu’s commission continued searching for an architect and finally Le Corbusier was chosen. Once he accepted, the commission proposed Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew, English architects and members of CIAM, to carry out the basic ideas of Meyer’s master plan, teaming up with Le Corbusier. From that moment, a “great architecture adventure” began. Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret started working and gave Meyer’s preliminary proposal an important shift. In 1951, once the construction works began, Jeanneret traveled to India where he lived until 1965, overseeing the project and designing the city’s new public buildings (housing and facilities) together with Fry and Drew. Jeanneret was named chief architect of the state of Punjab and first director of the school of architecture of Chandigarh. With the creation of a technical office to carry out the projects, eventually Jeanneret also designed some private houses, street furniture and even the furniture inside the buildings. Although Chandigarh is linked to Le Corbusier due to the urban planning and the buildings of the Capitol complex, the footprint of the tandem between Jeanneret and the Fry–Drew team goes far beyond as reflected for example in different housing typologies and the design of interesting furniture collections. These have been seldom described and evaluated, perhaps partly due to the lack of attention that the authorities have towards Chandigarh’s heritage.

### **A New Architecture for a New City**

The architects of the Modern Movement were convinced that the new architecture would lead to a new way of life, an opportunity to create a new fairer and more egalitarian society. Following these topics, Le Corbusier and Jeanneret fully agreed with Nehru—who had a socialist ideology and a political commitment for public services which would make a city for everyone. The planning of the city followed this philosophy, making one of main characteristics of the city that, on paper, there is no spatial division between social classes. Inhabitants are divided into sectors<sup>4</sup> (districts) according to the location of the different housing typologies allocated to public

employees, from judges, high and medium class government employees and reaching the less skilled workers. Each sector has public and private housing so that, with the exception of the high court judges and ministers, and for safety reasons, there is a social mix. The city was launched with government funding, allowing the construction of infrastructure (roads and services), facilities (schools, universities, hospitals, museums, libraries, and government buildings), and part of the housing. The rest of the housing space was reserved for private initiative.

To develop the construction of the city and all its design aspects, a team of architects and engineers was organized: led by Pierre Jeanneret and P. L. Varma as architect and chief engineer of the State of Punjab. Housed in a simple and functional building<sup>5</sup> designed by Jeanneret, a team of local architects worked under the lead of Jeanneret, Fry and Drew. Among this team there was M.N. Sharma, B.P. Mathur, U.E. Chowdhany,<sup>6</sup> A. Prakash, A.R. Prabhawalkar, J.S. Dethe and N.S. Lanbha, as well as G. Rattan Singh who had an important role as a modelist. This team, known as the Capitol Team, made the

construction of the city possible, conducted by the tireless and prolific Jeanneret. They developed projects that ranged from the avenues' large scale to the small scale (choosing the trees for every street), developing different housing typologies and the buildings of the Capitol complex. These architects, disciples of Jeanneret who are unknown outside their country, are the authors of most of the city's buildings once the master left the cabinet and closed the technical office. They also succeeded him as chief architects of the State and deans of the school of architecture of Chandigarh, educating with their legacy the current generation of architects, writing the history of the city and struggling to preserve its architectural heritage (even presenting a candidacy to UNESCO in 2008 with international support). They have been the ones who have left this Modern legacy as a representation of the avant-gardes.

### Furniture

As the buildings were built in the city they needed to be furnished. The local market did not have the appropri-

Figures 1, 2, 3, 4. Different examples of tables and chairs by **Pierre Jeanneret**. Photos by Ariadna Alvarez, 2012.



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Figure 5. Chair structure by **Aditya Prakash**. Photo by Ariadna Alvarez.



Figure 6. Committee Chair by **Pierre Jeanneret**.

ate furniture as India had hardly developed a tradition of utilitarian furniture, and the most common was derived from the English colonial style. Jeanneret designed for over almost ten years—depending on the needs—a large and varied range of furniture, from seats (chairs, armchairs, sofas, lounge chairs, stools), beds, tables and desks, bookcases and screens, lighting fixtures for the new buildings as well as signage and street furniture. The catalog is extensive and includes more than two hundred models aimed at all types of buildings and locations from university campus to the libraries or private homes, and the public spaces with concrete basins, fountains or bus stops. Le Corbusier was involved in the design of some elements such as the concrete light fixtures of Lake Shukna and the Capitol buildings, the cast iron manhole covers and some metal light fixtures. Jeanneret designed the more utilitarian furniture while Le Corbusier concentrated most of his efforts in the Capitol building (the Assembly or Vidhana Sabha, the Parliament or Hight Court and the Secretariat) and the Yacht Club where he took part in all aspects, from materials to colors. The furniture was often a customization of Jeanneret's designs, although sometimes they designed it together. The use of color as an element of the design is one of his important contributions.

They are bright and vibrant and we can find them both in architectural elements—like in the three green, yellow and red columns of the Hight Court—in the carpets and chairs inside the Parliament, in all the furniture of the Assembly building and the Emanel Door mural, and in the pillars in the dining room of the Secretariat.

A special peculiarity of Chandigarh's furniture is that despite being hand-made—as well as the concrete and brick used in the buildings—the designs were thought to be serialized. In Chandigarh we find a symbiosis between avant-garde European culture and local Hindu tradition. Le Corbusier and Jeanneret chose techniques and local materials to build their Modern architecture, concrete for the bigger programs and some urban furniture, brick for housing and solid wood was the predominant material for most of the furniture.<sup>7</sup> Jeanneret experimented with all kinds of materials (wood, iron, bamboo, rattan grille, rope, etc.) in the furniture that he built for his house<sup>8</sup> when he arrived in 1951. This furniture could be called "ethnic" and rudimentary, inspired by local handicrafts. They are unique pieces, prototypes and experiments for his enjoyment and personal use, which soon also occupied the houses of his closest collaborators, leading to the development of a series of large-scale furniture, the low cost



furniture, to furnish the city's houses. This furniture was in tune with the 40s and 50s designs' in Charlotte Perriand's *l'Équipement de la Maison*—Modern and cheap furniture with easy and quick manufacturing—the BCB catalog, and Prouvé's *Maison Métallique Préfabriquée*. Furniture designs were simple and functional, with the same 1929 spirit in which Le Corbusier and Perriand presented the LC4 or *chaise longue*, the LC5 chair, and the LC9 stool made of steel tube and skin, at the *Salon d'Automne* in Paris, containing the revolutionary principles of the *Spirit Nouveau*. If architecture had to leave behind artisan procedures and the construction process had to be standardized, also furniture had to be produced serially. But in the 50s, India was not a very industrialized country, and it was not possible to mass-produce furniture. However, Jeanneret designed furniture which met the basic premises: it was economical, easy to implement and fast to produce. At the same time, this furniture adapted to the lifestyle of Hindu culture and its relationship with the furniture.

Hindus perform almost all activities at ground level, and as most of Asia, they have developed other ways to lie. Until the arrival of Europeans in India, the only piece of furniture that they had used was the *charpoy*, the traditional Indian bed with a wood structure and a cotton seating for sitting or to rest.<sup>9</sup> This element is carried from the inside to the outside of houses according to the weather. Jeanneret, who had a great respect for Indian culture, design his own series of charpoys adapting it to the new homes. Furniture also had to adapt to the human body and he recovered the design of the Scissors 92 chair<sup>10</sup> from 1947, and with the local technique, he created the V-leg armchair in 1950, a predecessor model of the Chandigarh series. Different models have no name, but they are often designated by their typology (V, X, Y and Z according to the type of leg or structure) or the place for where they were intended (office chair, advocate chair, Senate chair, etc.). Some furniture does receive a name like the Kangorou lounge chair (type Z) from 1960, or the easy and cross chairs developed from 1952 to 1956.

Apart from the wooden structure and the straining of the more utilitarian and simple furniture (chairs and desks in the classrooms of the university; the drawing tables, the stools and other furniture of the College of Art; or the entire series developed for libraries that includes tables with reading lamps, exhibitors or files, and the furniture of the technical office of the chief architect), he also designed a series of sofas and armchairs with a skin<sup>11</sup> finishing for the most representative areas such as the meeting rooms and different areas of the High Court or the judges and director's offices for whom he develops a multiple variety of desks, tables and shelves, all with high quality wood and good finishes.

## Chandigarh 1970–2000

We can clearly distinguish two phases in Chandigarh's furniture, an initial one supervised and with the designs of Jeanneret and his team, with well elaborated quality pieces, and a second one once he dies and the technical office is dissolved in the late 60s when the city administration replaces the original furniture for lesser quality pseudo copies with no unified vision. The original furniture is designed for a specific place and that was not followed in this phase, in addition to the carpenters are not faithful to the original designs wood is of lesser quality and the models begin to degenerate. It's the years during which the city falls into oblivion and the administration does not take care of its heritage, leaving the furniture to deteriorate due to the lack of maintenance. The original deteriorated and damaged furniture will be left in storage with no care or simply abandoned in the open. Thousands of original pieces slowly disappear; some are sold by local vintage dealers at absurdly low prices, and others just simply end up broken or even burnt in stoves.

In the late 90s some European and American architects, dealers and gallery owners interested in the Modern Movement period visit Chandigarh to track the furniture and, alarmed by its neglected situation, they begin a recovery operation together with a register.<sup>12</sup> They begin to buy (the Indian administration will host legal sales like the massive one in Punjab University in 1999 or the 2002 sale at the High Court)<sup>13</sup>, furniture to local second hand vendors and the furniture is sent out of the country, where, after it is restored, they will be offered for sale and are currently scattered around the world.<sup>14</sup> Looting also happened with the still in use existing furniture of the Capitol building sold by public officials. These original handmade Jeanneret designs of high quality (mostly made of wood) were very appreciated by Western collectors who paid high prices at auction houses in Europe and the U.S. something that set the alarm among local authorities. Although local architects had insisted for a long time in the safeguard of the heritage of the city, local authorities were not aware of its importance until recently and although belatedly, they have begun to act. From 2011 work began to make an inventory of existing furniture in public buildings, creating the Chandigarh Heritage Furniture Committee (among its members the Dean of the School of Architecture and the College of Arts ), and it is not permitted to remove any element from the city except with a permit from the government. We will have to wait a while to see the effects of these measures

Cultural abandonment has been discussed by those who promoted it and should take care of their heritage, the government of Chandigarh. Unfortunately this is a

utopia in India. If the local administration has not been up to scratch, architects and cultural activists in the city have participated for years in forums and public spaces and have published articles and books on the city which not only is a cultural and architectural heritage but also an active city growing daily. These architects have made this possible but outside India's borders they have not been sufficiently recognized and those who are not with us any longer have been forgotten. Neither Pierre Jeanneret's figure, always an architect in the shade of Le Corbusier has been sufficiently recognized although he was the soul that made Chandigarh possible. After living there fourteen years, his will was that his ashes were fused with the waters of Lake Shukna. This happened three years after his death, a sunny morning in 1970.

#### Notes

1. There is an extensive bibliography on this subject. Some of the more recent titles are *Chandigarh's Le Corbusier: The Struggle for Modernity in Postcolonial India* by A. Prakash, and *Chandigarh 1956* with the re-edition of the wonderful photos of the construction of the city by E. Scheidegg.
2. He was prime minister until his death in 1964, with the Congress (Indian National Congress) party which has ruled India for decades and is now governing. Reunited by Gandhi, it also symbolizes the Nerhu-Gandhi saga.
3. Expression with which Hindus refer to the creation of Pakistan in 1947.
4. The city is divided into sectors, each a super-block of 800x1,200m. Each sector has the same mixed typology program of public and private housing with a central area of facilities (shops, schools, community centers, buildings for worship) and green areas. Currently there are 56 sectors, and in the initial phase there were 30.
5. In 1955 Pierre Jeanneret designed a simple building that served as an office for the technical team which had more than fifty people at some moments. It was a provisional building that had to be built up quickly. Fortunately, the building was not demolished (among other factors due to pressure from local and foreign architects) and it is now the headquarters of the *Fondation Le Corbusier*. It is popularly known as the 'Old Architect's Center. It has a small furniture museum with original documents such as sketches, photographs, letters, drawings and models.
6. Women have also played a role in the design and construction of the city. Together with Urmila Eulie Chowdhury and Jane Drew—the only architects who have been recognized in Chandigarh—there was also Minnete De Silva and Gira Sarabhai—although there is not much documentation on this female presence. We do not know the identity of the anonymous women who were part of the labor work and which Le Corbusier himself immortalized in the photos of his *Complete Works* (an image that still remains in India where construction workers do not wear proper work clothes or use safety measures). The name of the city also refers to a woman as Chandi is the name of the Hindu goddess who symbolizes power and garh in Hindu means power.
7. India is a country with a tropical climate, with 80 varieties of wood which are ideal for furniture.
8. The house, also designed by him, was one of the serialized built typologies for senior government officials (specifically the 4-J in sector 5). It was also where Le Corbusier lived during his two visits per year.
9. From the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the colonization of the country by England, India produced a wide range of furniture made by local craftsmen, but the designs were imported rather than their own. Different styles will develop of which the best known is the colonial one.
10. The Scissors 92 chair was designed in 1947 during his American stage, it was manufactured by Knoll, similar to the 40s designs with Perriand. It is a low seat for the living room, spacious dimensions, with a structure of birch wood and foam cushions upholstered with fabric resting on a cotton seat. [http://www.knoll.com/museum/prod\\_museum.jsp?prod\\_id=398](http://www.knoll.com/museum/prod_museum.jsp?prod_id=398)
11. In order to respect Indian culture, all the skin that was used was from cows which were dead; they were not killed.
12. Some of these gallery owners were the French Eric Touchaleaume and Gérald Moreau who acquired elements during seven years and then restored them. They recently published an interesting book with many photographs and reproductions of furniture from Chandigarh and it has been one of the references for this article: *Le Corbusier & Pierre Jeanneret. L'aventure Indienne/The Indian Adventure*, Montreuil, Gourcuff-Gradenigo and Éditions Erich Touchaleaume, 2010.
13. According to Moreau and Touchaleaume in *L'aventure Indienne*, the original furniture of Le Corbusier and Jeanneret was also sold in France at the *Cité Universitaire de Paris* and at the *Maison de Brésil* by Le Corbusier and Lúcio Costa, in order to replace the furniture with other designs instead of restoring it.
14. This furniture can be found in various international galleries and photographs are easily accessible via the Internet, for example on the website of the Parisian gallery of P. Serguin: [www.patrickseguin.com](http://www.patrickseguin.com).



Figure 7. Cast iron manhole cover by **Le Corbusier**.  
Photo by Ariadna Alvarez, 2012.

#### Ariadna Alvarez Garreta

Architect and writer, she graduated in 1988 at the ETSAB in Barcelona. She obtained her Diploma in Advanced Studies in Architectonic Composition in the doctoral program "Theory and History of Architecture" (UPC). Master of City Management at the Polytechnic University of Catalonia Foundation and guest lecturer at the ESARQ School of Architecture and the Institute for Advanced Architecture of Catalonia (IAAC). Some of her books include *Rascacielos* and *Arquitectos de Rascacielos* (Atrium); *Once miradas a L35 Arquitectos and Living in High Density*, architecture for the future (Linksbooks); and she is currently working on the monograph *45 anys d'arquitectura*, Miquel Alvarez Trincado.

# Nadir Afonso: the Painter (who graduated) Architect From his Collaboration with Le Corbusier and Oscar Niemeyer, to his Works in Chaves and the Abandonment of Architecture

By João Cepeda<sup>1</sup>

**N**adir Afonso, one of the most well known (and recognized) Portuguese painters, has dedicated a great deal of his life to practicing the profession from which he graduated as an architect a facet that is still commonly unknown by the great public, as it was just slightly studied by the history of contemporary Portuguese Architecture.

Regarding his career, it is to particularly note the periods he spent abroad, working with Le Corbusier and Niemeyer. These influential authors of the Modern Movement gave him the opportunity to participate in various projects that marked the history of architecture. This singular international phase manifestly resulted in Modern influences that are visible in the work he later built in Chaves.

Nadir Afonso ended up abandoning the profession, since when he has dedicated himself to Painting on a full-time basis.

## 1938–1946

The Formation Period

### The “choice” of Architecture—Porto

**D**espite having always revealed a natural predisposition to embrace painting, Nadir Afonso ended up enrolling on a course of Architecture at the old School of Fine Arts in Porto (1938), advised by a member of the school staff. At the School of Fine Arts, Nadir Afonso found a quite open climate which, under the influence of Professor Carlos Ramos, marked a decisive moment in the reformulation of teaching Architecture in Portugal. Even so, his dilemma between being a painter or an architect never diminished. Throughout the whole of his graduation course, Nadir Afonso always persisted in designing Architecture to be seen and appreciated as if it were Painting, i.e., practicing architecture through the eyes and the soul of a painter.

## 1946–1960

The International Phase

### In the studios of Le Corbusier and Oscar Niemeyer—Paris, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo

**T**hen, upon conclusion of his studies, what becomes outstanding is his rich and fascinating career abroad, mainly in collaboration with two of the most influent masters of the Modern Movement: first with Le Corbusier in Paris (“*Atelier des Bâtitseurs*—ATBAT”, 1946–48 and 1950–51), of who he became a great friend, and then with Oscar Niemeyer in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo (1951–54). Thus, he had the unique opportunity to participate with

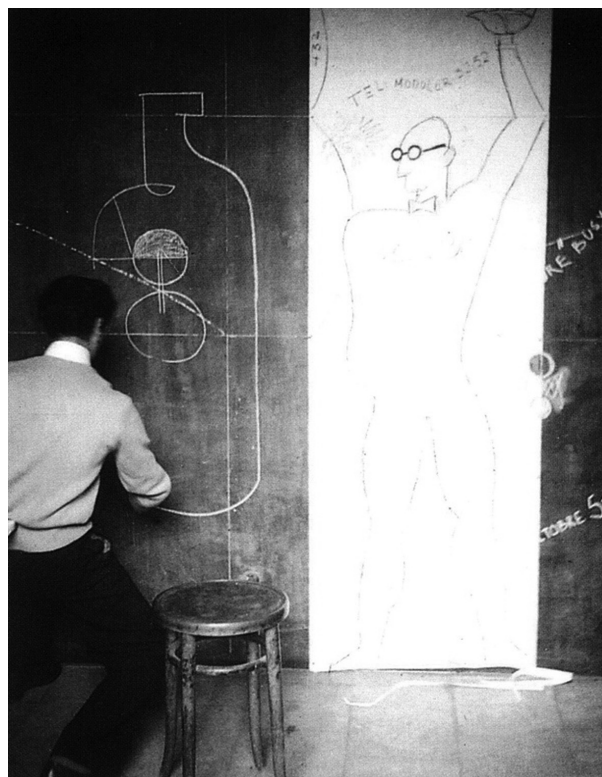


Figure 1. Nadir Afonso in the ATBAT in Paris, drawing Le Corbusier at the Modulor's scale, on the birthday of the Swiss architect. Photographer unknown.<sup>8</sup>

Figure 2. Nadir Afonso (on the right) working with Teodoro Ponce de León in the ATBAT of Le Corbusier, in Paris. Photographer unknown.<sup>8</sup>

Figure 3. From left to right: Olek Kujawsky, Iánnis Xenákis and Nadir Afonso (with their wives), at the time they worked on the construction site of the *Unité d'Habitation de Marseille*, 1950. Photographer unknown.<sup>8</sup>

Figure 4. Certificate of Le Corbusier to Nadir Afonso, 1948. Photographer unknown.<sup>5</sup>

Figure 5. Nadir Afonso in Rio de Janeiro, 1952. Photographer unknown.<sup>8</sup>

Figure 6. Nadir Afonso's house in the Outeiro Seco Road, nowadays (2010). Photo by João Cepeda.



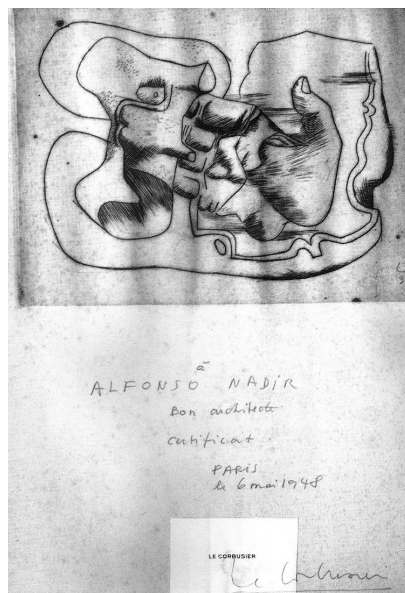


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these two renowned architects in some remarkable projects of the history of 20<sup>th</sup> century Modern architecture, like the *Unité d'Habitation* in Marseilles (1945-52), the *Claude et Duval* Factory in Saint-Dié (1946-51) and the project for the Exhibition commemorating the 4<sup>th</sup> centenary of the city of São Paulo in the Ibirapuera Park (1951-54), among others. It is also worth emphasizing his participation in the final investigation team of Le Corbusier's famous Modulor—a system designed to find harmony in architectural compositions. This opportunity gave him the advantage of getting a great proximity to one of his great passions—Geometry. This proximity decisively contributed to the development of his remarkable expertise in manipulating the proportions and relations among geometric shapes and figures.



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In Paris, he also collaborated with some of his former friends and colleagues of the ATBAT, the architects Georges Candilis, Alexis Josic and Shadrach Woods (1954-60), mainly in various urban projects, namely the urban plans of Bagnols-sur-Cèze (1956-61), Balata (1959) and Agadir (1963). Thus, his unique international career ended up being decisive in his learning process as an architect.

During this period, it is also worth emphasizing Nadir Afonso's contact with a wide variety of international personalities. Many of these were from the Architecture sphere, like Roberto Burle Marx, Hélio Uchoa and Lúcio Costa, but others were mainly from the Arts area, like Victor Vasarely, Richard Mortensen, Auguste Herbin, André Bloc, Cândido Portinari, Di Cavalcanti, Dewasne, Edgard Pillet and Fernand Léger. He worked together with some of these people, and the work experience he gained



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surely contributed to also enrich his future artistic evolution.

Although Nadir Afonso has invoked Painting as the main motivation for his world-wide career, the truth is that it was not certainly by chance that he chose to collaborate first with Le Corbusier and later with Oscar Niemeyer. As a matter of fact, Le Corbusier was the most important architect of the Modern Movement, which exercised a great influence in Portugal and especially in Porto. Niemeyer and the Modern Brazilian expressionist architecture were already widely appreciated in Portugal as well. Thus, no wonder that, having experienced what others would have ambited, Nadir Afonso has worked with the architects who were culturally closer to the formation of a Modern consciousness in Portugal. Therefore, this period abroad should be regarded to some extent as an intentional and deliberate path by Nadir Afonso as an architect.<sup>2</sup>

So, although he has always lived a dual vocational and professional life translated into a simultaneous production of architectural and painting works, all this long international cycle was crucial to his architectural career, due to his direct contact with major players of the Modern Movement, and the knowledge and influences he gained, as well as the projection that he could, thus, achieve as an architect.

## 1960—1970

The Autonomous Practice of Architecture

### In his own studio—Chaves and Coimbra

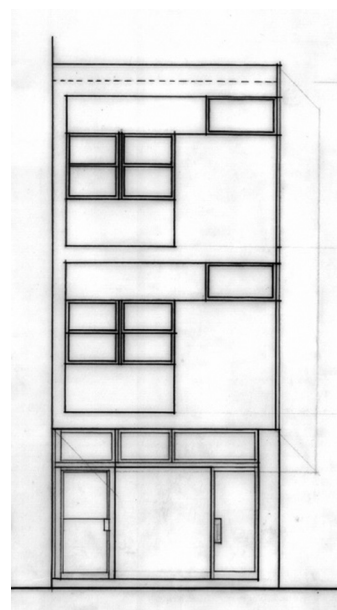
In Portugal, he worked in architecture for short periods. In Lisbon (1945, with Fernando Silva), in Porto (1950, with Fernando Távora, Fernando Lanhas and Fernando Moura), in Coimbra (1960–62, with

Carlos de Almeida) and finally ended up establishing his office in Chaves, his homeland. Here, in 1960, he began his career on his own as an architect, in a small environment that could only grant him humble clients and modest sales, certainly different from those affordable in the big cities and in some of the offices he had worked before and where, should he have stayed, he could have followed a more promising career and taken more advantage of the experience he had gained previously. Yet, Trás-os-Montes—and Chaves in particular—was marked by the presence of this painter-architect who concentrated there a great deal of his achievements, especially in the first half of the 60's.

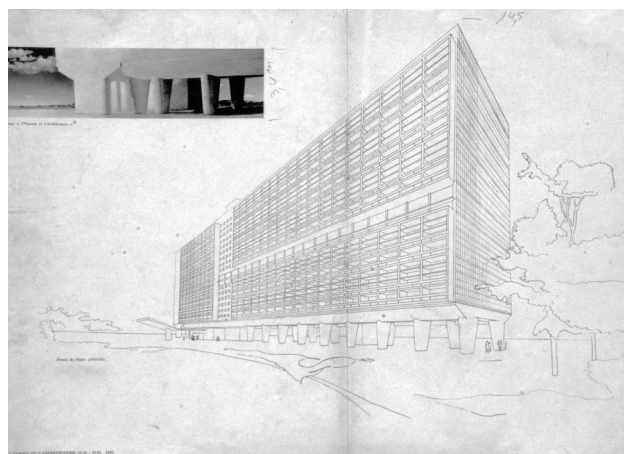
Regardless of the contexts, the performance of architecture emerged in Nadir Afonso's life only as an indispensable resource to his economical subsistence and never as a true passion like Painting, activity which he never left out of mind.



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Figure 7. **Le Corbusier's** factory "Claude et Duval" of Saint-Dié. Photographer unknown.<sup>5</sup>

Figure 8. **Nadir Afonso's** project for the residential and commercial building in Madalena-Chaves (elevation), 1960. Source: Personal archive of João Cepeda.

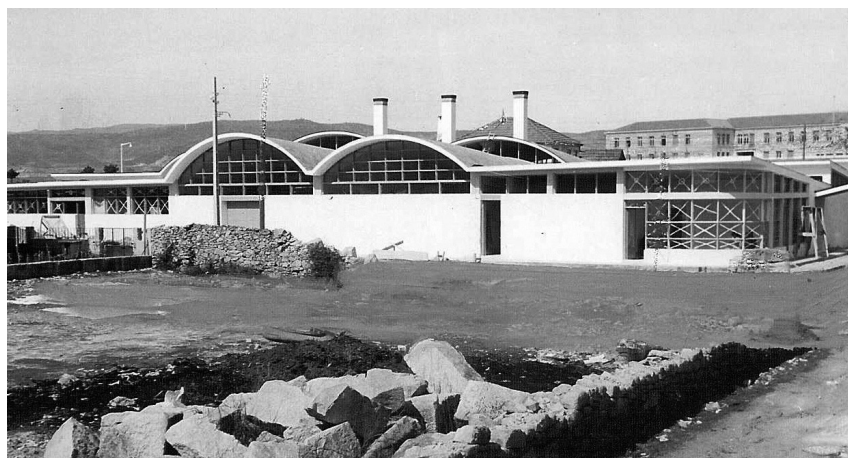
Figure 9. Perspective of the *Unité d'Habitation de Marseille* designed by **Nadir Afonso**, published in the magazine "*L'Homme et l'Architecture*", 1947. Photographer unknown.<sup>8</sup>

Figure 10. **Nadir Afonso's** residential and commercial building in Madalena-Chaves, 1960s. Photographer unknown.<sup>5</sup>

Figure 11. **Nadir Afonso's** Chaves bakery, nowadays (2010). Photo by João Cepeda.

Figure 12. **Nadir Afonso's** Chaves bakery under construction, 1962-64. Source: Personal archive of Nadir Afonso.

Figure 13. **Nadir Afonso's** Vila Real bakery (abandoned), nowadays (2010). Photo by João Cepeda.



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Therefore, his architectural work emerged gradually in a non-continuous way, at times showing little confidence or not even dictated by passion. Thus, the Modernity that characterizes his architectural work reveals some hesitation in certain pieces, whereas it is fully explicit in others, clearly emphasizing the Modern influences present in a well determined cycle of his life.

### The Challenge of a Personal Work: The Indelible Presence of Modern Influences

In general terms, Nadir Afonso intuitively expressed in those projects a language remarkably influenced by Le Corbusier. The mark of Modern Brazilian architecture with which he got acquainted during the period when he worked with Oscar Niemeyer in Brazil is sometimes also worth of notice. The Chaves (1962) and Vila Real (1965) bakeries—unique masterpieces of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Portuguese architecture, well-illustrative of the pure and abstract language of the Modern Movement—exhibit a delicate merge of those two Modern references. If on the one hand they exhibit a more rigorous and

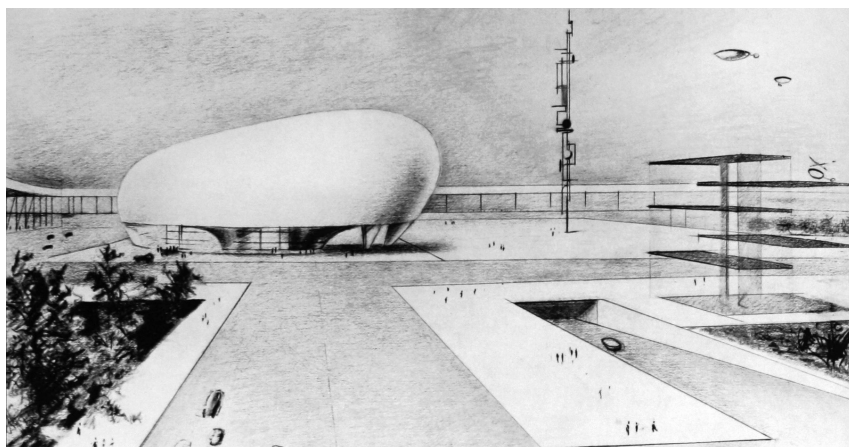
orthogonal design, on the other hand, they display a freer, more spontaneous and gestural design in their dome coverings. This curve/straight dialectic results in a harmonious combination which, due to its originality, substantiates a unique spatial and volumetric Modernity in Portugal.

Simplicity is, in general, transversal to all of his Modern projects, in an attempt to compose simpler and purer volumes, together with a clear search for harmony and purity in proportions, thus giving the architectural solutions a clear desire of Modernity.

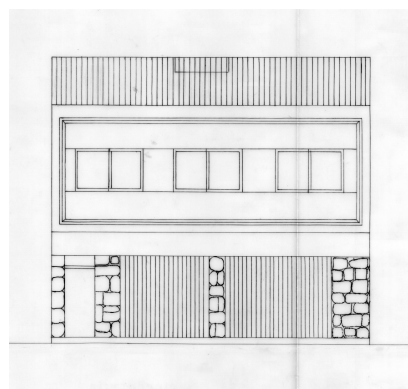
The house in the Outeiro Seco Road (1961) constitutes one of the most significant cases of this attention to the aesthetic care in the volume modeling. It reflects a Modern and pure geometric depuration which, in Nadir Afonso's architectural works as a whole, is perhaps the most illustrative example of the "Corbusian" vocabulary.

The project (never built) of a "rotary" theatre (1957) emerges from his set of works with an absolutely exceptional identity, due to its singular and utopian nature, "futurist" and original, associated with the transposition of the dynamics of kinetic art into architecture.

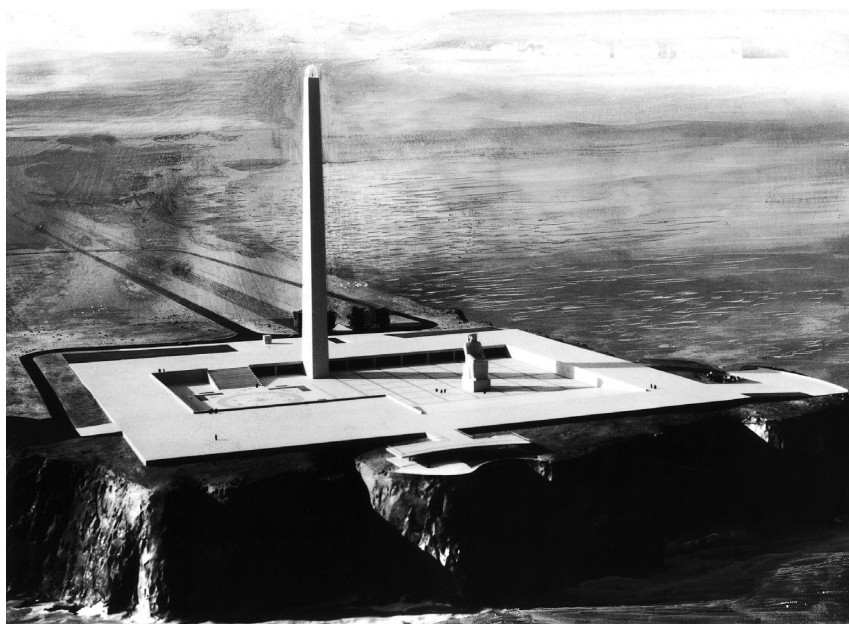




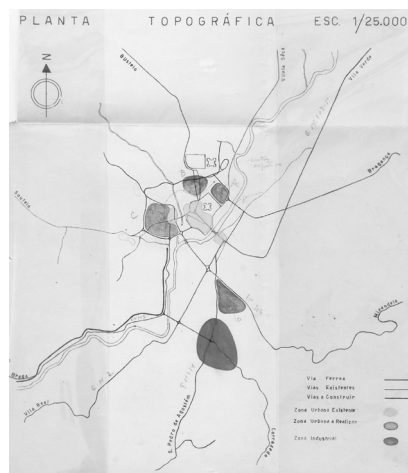
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Among all of his projects (and in particular among the most Modern ones), it is also inevitable to highlight one of his most distinguishable works which consisted of a sober and rational design for the Infante Dom Henrique monument (not built, 1954–55), face to face with the abyss and exceptionally integrated into the scenery of the Sagres cliff. The flat nature and subtle lines of this light and elegant project denotes a Modernity with which we identify ourselves, even nowadays, constituting, maybe, the most “current” project among all of his architectural works.

In these designs, besides the already mentioned attention to proportions and the formal rigor of the relations as a whole, Nadir Afonso often stresses the rhythm of his constructions through the use of chromatic contrasts, normally in a synthesis of two or three primary colors (in addition to white), with a special predominance of the blue and the red.

This aspect is well captured in the two bakeries, in the Outeiro Seco House and in the small residential and commercial building in Madalena (1960), and draws our attention to the Modern “Corbusian” palette of colors so widely used in many of the architect’s masterpieces. Yet, in this particular aspect, the influence intrinsic to Nadir Afonso’s mentality as a painter should not be overlooked, as it might probably have moved him to an instinctive addition of these streaks of colour.

This free chromatic treatment of shapes, aimed at completing and emphasizing a search for volumetrically harmonized and mutually “melodious” architectural compositions, was never supported by the use of the measures suggested by Le Corbusier’s Modulor, which Nadir Afonso could follow closely either as a member of the ATBAT final investigations team or in its subsequent application to various projects of the Swiss architect.

Figure 14. **Nadir Afonso’s** “futurist” project (never built) of a “rotary” theatre (perspective), made in Paris at the request of the Hungarian sculptor Nicolas Schöffer, 1957. Photographer unknown.<sup>8</sup>

Figure 15. **Nadir Afonso’s** (not built) project for the competition of the Infante Dom Henrique monument in Sagres (model), 1954–55. Photographer unknown.<sup>8</sup>

Figure 16. **Nadir Afonso’s** (not built) project for a small residential building in São Roque-Chaves (elevation), 1964. Photo by João Cepeda.

Figure 17. **Nadir Afonso’s** Chaves urban pre-planning (topographic plan), 1964. Photo by João Cepeda. Source: Personal archive of Nadir Afonso.

Figure 18. **Nadir Afonso’s** (not built) project of the movie theatre in Chaves (elevation), 1961. Photo by João Cepeda.

Figure 19. One of the **Nadir Afonso’s** proposals of the urban plan for the Dr. António José de Almeida Street in Coimbra (perspective), 1961. Photo by Eduardo Mascarenhas de Lemos.

However, if in this former group the wish of a Modern expression is obvious, in other situations we are confronted with drawings in which that expression is not so clear, and it seems there have been some concessions to rather more traditional answers. As a matter of fact, in other Nadir Afonso's architectural projects, a mixture of tradition and Modernity predominates, yet, they never assume a dominant style, at least integrally. Even so, they seem to wish to be singled out from a purely traditional Architecture.

In volumetric terms, all these other examples reveal a degree of depuration and simplicity remarkably lower than that of the first set of projects. By analyzing its architectural plans we realize, in addition, that they all possess less fluid spatial solutions, based on a remarkably traditional design. Yet, in this second set, Nadir Afonso invariably rehearses a complementary Modernization of the architectural object at the outside level, through various

design strategies that he applied with more or less intensity in each case. They served the purpose of suggesting simpler, purer and lighter volumes, the transmission of a stronger sensation of horizontality and orthogonality, the search for more abstract façades, and a current attempt at transmitting an illusion of a flat upper finishing, by disguising the coverings in traditional roofs which systematically configure the top of these buildings.

This remarkable difference comparing to his more Modern works is mainly explained by a gradual and increasing separation from his profession, motivated by an enormous creative dissatisfaction that his profession could never fulfill.

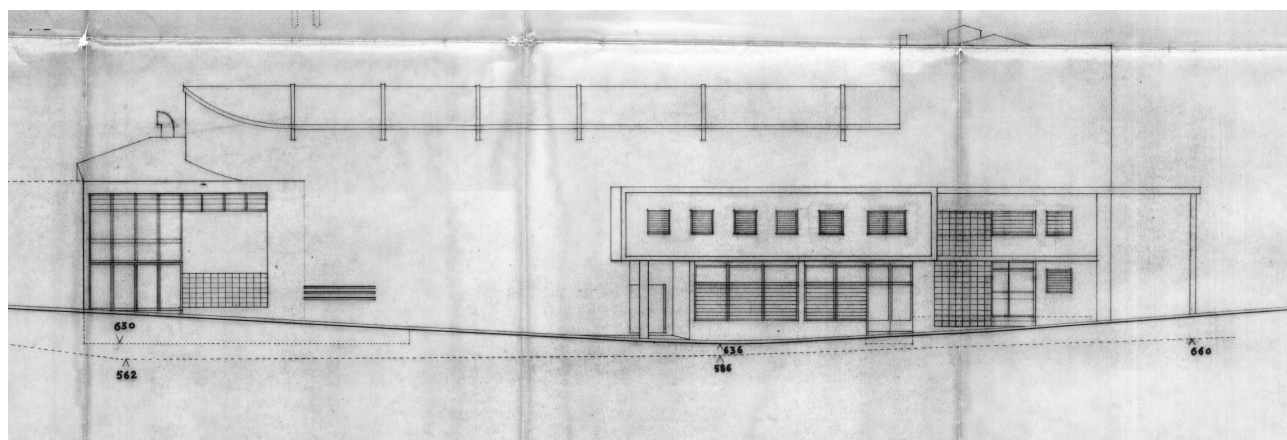
Actually, this interpretation seems to be confirmed by a chronological analysis of all of his selected works and projects. The most Modern ones were designed at an initial stage in his career as an architect (until 1962), whereas the most "compromised" ones correspond to a later period (until 1964), closer

to the time when he abandoned architecture, and so at a time of Nadir Afonso's particular disenchantment towards the practice of his profession.

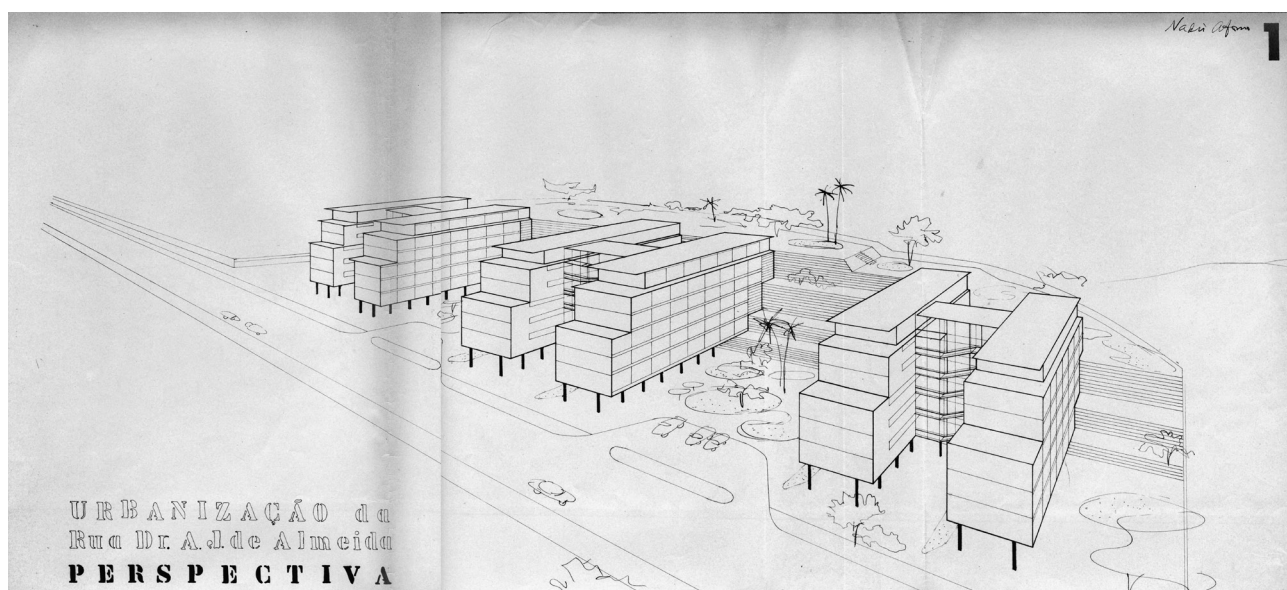
Only the bakery in Vila Real, a building with Modern lines, designed in 1965, emerges as an exception to this tendency. Yet, his choice in this project for a kind of "mimic" answer replicating, in general, his homonymous work in Chaves, seems to bring to light once more the "saturation point" that Nadir Afonso would already have reached towards designing new architectural projects, confirming to some extent the above mentioned interpretation.

Curiously enough, it is still worth mentioning that—apart from the Chaves urban pre-planning (1964)—it is also in his first works (the most Modern ones) that we can find the most complex programs he had to answer to.

His indifference to architecture, even though exponential at the end of his career, is also visible—throughout his whole work—in his great difficulty to



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deal with the clients, which would lead him sometimes to radical decisions, such as abandoning projects already concluded. These were the cases of the project of the movie theatre in the town of Chaves (1961) and its urban pre-planning (1964).

### "Architecture is not an Art"

From his path as an architect (and artist) it is worth highlighting the importance of the strong theoretical reflection that always accompanied him, translated into a number of conceptual studies on Architecture. He had already defended these concepts in his thesis "*Architecture is not an Art*" (1948). The name of this thesis is very meaningful and almost seems to legitimate his difficult relationship with architecture. To him, the fact that architecture cannot be dissociated from its inevitable nature as a utility—to satisfy mandatorily a practical function—constituted the main source of all restrictions to his creativity, thus, in his view, placed out of the artistic scope.<sup>3</sup>

Curiously, Nadir Afonso's theory of opposing art to utility is very similar to that of the famous architect Adolf Loos, who also influenced Le Corbusier during his graduation and in the beginning of his career: "[...] the house has to please everyone, contrary to the work of art which does not. The work is a private matter for the artist. The house is not. The work of art is brought into the world without there being a need for it. The house satisfies a requirement. The work of art is responsible to none; the house is responsible to everyone. [...] Does it follow that the house has nothing in common with art and is architecture not to be included in the Arts? That is so".<sup>4</sup>

Nadir Afonso's strong assumption that Architecture is not an Art, together with the complex interdisciplinarity of the first activity which implies a collaborative work and has no intimate, lonesome or individual artistic genesis, constitutes the core of his great creative dissatisfaction towards architecture. It is, therefore, usual to hear him say that he never liked architecture and never felt like a true architect.<sup>5</sup> As a matter of fact, his devotion to painting was always so intense that not even the privileged path among his peers—contacting with two of the greatest architects of the 20<sup>th</sup> century—was strong enough to deviate him from it.

### The Abandonment of Architecture

Based on these assumptions, somewhere between 1965 and 1970, Nadir Afonso made up his mind to leave architecture for good, thus releasing himself from the "[...] martyrdom"<sup>6</sup> that he had chosen about 30 years before in Porto, and then starting a full-time commitment to painting and to the cre-

ation of numerous plastic and theoretical works.

In reality, his vigorous theoretical position, which he still defends nowadays, can be found reflected in some of the works he made—namely in the later ones—thus helping to explain the appearance of "passionless" and less interesting architectural solutions.

However, some of Nadir Afonso's initial works, especially the Infante Dom Henrique monument (1954–55) and the Chaves bakery (1962) projects seem to reflect a certain degree of artistic involvement. From his drawings, the search for a strong tension and accuracy, purer volumetric modeling and more harmonious proportions stands out.

Having never expressed a wish to evolve artistically in Architecture, in these cases Nadir Afonso may have exceptionally moved away from this position and faced all the "impositions" not as restrictions, but rather as the basic references that would make it possible for him to go further and find an artistic character in his proposals. "[...] I don't mean there are no architects—and maybe I have been one of them—who have also tried to find a balance within the laws [...] [that rule the work of art]. But it doesn't look like the normal way."<sup>7</sup>

As it has been illustrated throughout his entire professional career, Nadir Afonso was at all times a painter-architect, but always a painter in the first place and only afterwards an architect, a painter through his soul and architect only through education, having his life and works constantly marked by this dichotomy of activities.

However, the huge weight that his ability as a painter always had in his life does not seem to show with an identical density in his architectural work in a way that one could consider it as the "architecture of a painter". The current use of colors (primary colors usually) in his buildings, searching for aesthetic and balanced compositions, and the concept of freedom present in the drawing of the dome coverings of the bakeries—aspects that can also be seen as some of the Modern influences that he received—are in fact the only situations that seem to point towards an intervention of his painting character in Architecture, but not significant to the extent of making it possible to identify a painter's hand in the architectural work.

Concluding, upon the analysis of all of Nadir Afonso's architectural inventory—which proves to be far bigger than it is commonly thought by the great public—it is worth emphasizing his set of initial projects, among which his adherence to a lexicon of great Modernity deserves a particular attention, even though without the radicalism and intransigence of the architects he worked with in France and Brazil.

In fact, even in the drawings in which Nadir Afonso seems to propose a more Modern language, adhering to some of "*Les cinq points d'une nouvelle architecture*" and to certain rational principles of the Athens Charter, that language is not fully developed. Nevertheless, his preferences for urban and architectural concepts of the Modern Movement are clear, applying them, even though, at a late stage of its diffusion in Portugal. These concepts are well illustrated in the house of Outeiro Seco (1961) and in his two first proposals of the urban plan for the Dr. António José de Almeida Street in Coimbra (1961), and still, with a more discrete presence, in his Chaves urban pre-planning (1964).

Actually, the fact that the author did not devote himself completely to architecture may have led to a non-exploitation of an absolute Modernism, to its limit. Nadir Afonso's interest as a painter, always relatively alienated from architecture, may have inhibited the complete development of this aspect. Nevertheless, his first projects reveal a quality that seems to suggest an initial significant commitment of Nadir Afonso to Architecture, depicting his maturity as an architect, enabling him to leave his imprint in Chaves and reflecting his most representative architectural feature.

In fact, his most Modern projects clearly suggest a dimension of an architect that Nadir Afonso could have accomplished, if he had developed an interest and a deep engagement towards Architecture which could have led him to a full in-depth development of the Modernity displayed in his first drawings and, perhaps, precluded his sudden and premature abandonment of the profession.

### Notes

João Cepeda was born in Lisbon in 1983, he attended the *Instituto Superior Técnico* of the Technical University of Lisbon and, having been granted a scholarship from the Helvetic Confederation, the *École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne* in Switzerland, completing his Masters in Architecture with the thesis "*Nadir Afonso, the Architect*". He is currently starting as a professional architect.

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Afonso, Laura, *Nadir Afonso, Da Vida à Obra de Nadir Afonso*, Venda Nova, Bertrand, 1990. News and Information. Tostões, Ana (ed.), *Arquitectura Moderna Portuguesa*, Lisboa, IPPAR, 2004.



# Heritage in Danger

By Ivan Blasi

## The Ofir House – Casa Dr. Fernando Ribeiro da Silva Ofir, Esposende 1956–1958 by Fernando Távora



Photos by Ana Tostões

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The Ofir holiday house was the first work by Fernando Távora (1923–2005) published in the *Arquitectura* magazine (nº 59, July 1957). It was presented as a work that searched a personal language which reconciled the values of traditional Portuguese architecture and new technologic and material achievements.

The house was built during the period of transition between the 50s and the 60s, standing out in its historical context, opening up the path for a renewed Modern architecture and for contemporary Portuguese architecture; between an architecture referred to regionalism and nationalism imposed by Salazar's regime, and rationalist international Modern architecture that sought a different methodology, based on the integration of distinct cultural values, on place contextualization, centered in man and his cultural, social and psychological specificity.

The house was presented by Távora with a well-known text in which he exposed the clarification of the differences between "composite" and "mixture", asserting that the Ofir house was a result of a com-

posite and not a mixture. With these parameters, the architect acknowledged the existence of factors which determine the conception of architecture, those which are alien to the architect and those which are part of his education or personality.

55 years after its construction, the house's state of degradation as a result of a fire, is very high. In 2011 it drew the attention of the *Ordem dos Arquitectos* (Architects' Association of Portugal) which, in January 2011, made contacts with organizations involved in safeguarding and dissemination of architectural heritage in order to create a working group that strived for urgent intervention in the building, reversing the degradation process and searching possibilities for a comprehensive rehabilitation, respecting the original design, in conjunction with either the Municipality of Esposende or with the owners of the property.

The *Ordem* has also been defending the necessary and urgent assignment status as Monument of Public Interest, a process that has still not culminated.

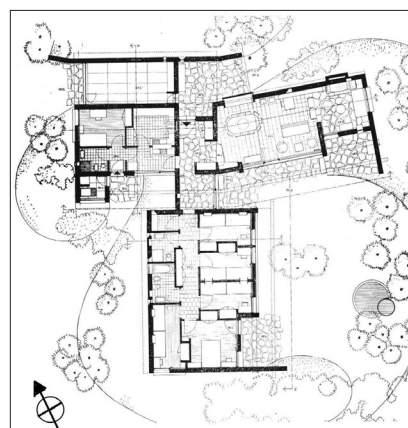


Photo by Alexandre Araújo

# Alexander von Vegesack

In July 2012, Bárbara Coutinho, Director of MUDE—Design and Fashion Museum, Francisco Cape-lo's Collection since 2006, interviewed Alexander Von Vegesack, founding Director of the Vitra Design Museum in Weil am Rhein and the person who set up Thonet Museum in Boppard am Rhein. The subject of this interview is the importance of *Collect—Curate—Exhibit—Publish* to the Preservation and Communication of Modern Architecture/Design.

Interviewed by Bárbara Coutinho

As founder and first Director of Vitra Design Museum, you were crucial in the creation of one of the world's most important collections of Modern furniture. They began as two collections, one compiled by Rolf Fehlbaum since the early 80s and the other one was begun by you in the late 60s. At the same time, you have your own industrial furniture design collection. Why and how did you start to collect? What's your understanding of *collecting*? Your goals and purpose?

I started collecting more than 45 years ago. Exhibitions had been most of the time the purpose for me to collect as I wanted to present stories about the history of the industrial evolution. Objects are used to illustrate these ideas. I was (and I still am) looking at objects from this point of view quite frequently. I was never interested to assemble all the different variations of one product, like many collectors do. I had been looking for key pieces as the best documentation of my stories. The criteria for the selection had been always: pieces that express new ideas, functions or aesthetics, material innovation or new technology. During my life, however I also collected a huge variety of completely different objects. Sometimes, for example, I became curious of an object on the flea market or fall in love with one and when the price doesn't prevent me from buying it ends up either in my storage or quite often being integrated into my every day's environment.

From the very first moment on, the goal to do exhibitions encouraged me also to buy books, catalogues and photos about design-related subjects. I found most of them in Europe, in the libraries of retired curators from the 60s and 70s—when design just started to become an issue—and later on in America from former Bauhaus students or teachers, who had immigrated. Their children, who often had no interest in the publications, started selling them.

For me an exhibition needs to convey the entire picture of a subject. That's why I collected books and photographs from all the different disciplines in craft, industry and architecture as well as from the major style periods in order to show how pieces were defined originally and in which circumstances and ambience they were used and to give an overall understanding of each individual designer, his concept and the way he was perceived. Without photography and literature it would be impossible to know how an object was supposed to look. Very often I bought two or more copies of the same book because I just wanted to show different plates of the content.

With the Vitra Design Museum I did not intend to create a museum that cares about the company's history—nobody would visit such a museum more than once, because its content always remains the same. When I started with the Vitra Design Museum I made it clear that we would not show Vitra products from the last 25 years; we would collect the important results of the design process but they wouldn't be the subjects of our exhibitions. Putting objects in the context of their time and technology was much more important. Young designers need good examples of case studies in order to develop and improve their ideas.

When the Vitra Design Museum turned out to be a success, I was contacted by various companies asking for my point of view how to conceive an attractive museum of their own activities. If a company provides an important contribution to history, their documents and products should be conserved and made available for public access. But a museum being limited only in the documentation of its own history is like a car being driven only in first gear. Only when you forget about the direct product promotion and instead care about the overall theme of your

occupation you can really master your discipline, serves the public interest and—ultimately—also grant a long term promotion for the company.

**I**n your collection, you mixed industrial furniture (mass-produced pieces, single pieces, prototypes) with objects people use in everyday life in different cultures of the world, anonymous ones... Saddles, for instance. I read the common issue was the innovation and modernity they can express. Regarding all that you've done until now, why can you define Modern [how would you define Modernity]? I know you are still collecting. Do you recognize a modern perspective in our time?

**J**oris Laarman, for example, showed us in 2006 with his Bone chair how new technology helps us develop optimized structures in a beautiful example of what Gaudí always wanted to achieve. Gaudí started to do research on how we can learn from nature to build delicate but solid structures. He examined plants and their way to build resistant structures with a perfect course of forces. But at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it wasn't as easy as it is today. He surely would have adored operating with computers to finalize such a clear demonstration like the Bone chair, a good example to document that conceptually nothing starts from zero. We are always using certain experiences of the past in order to improve our ideas, to apply them in a new field and to enlarge their potential.

You had a main role in the Thonet Museum and you conceived the first major exhibition on the history of bentwood furniture that has crossed the United States museums. You also started your collection with the Thonet chair. Why this specific interest in Thonet and bentwood furniture?

I was fascinated with Michael Thonet who started off as a simple cabinet-maker in Germany. From his early works on he planned to produce chairs in the most economical way and for a large public use. He was not looking for individual clients, but for restaurants, hotels and other large spaces that needed a huge amount of chairs. He was very consequent in all aspects of what we would call today a Modern production and marketing. His factories used the assembly line some decades before Henry Ford; his furniture was only assembled at the selling point and not at his factories in order to reduce shipment volume. The parts for 36 chairs found space in a crate of one cubic meter, being sent overseas and sold there for a much lower price than the local chair production. All this happened already between 1870 and 1890. Michael Thonet became a symbol of the industrialization in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Many followers had used his ideas and inventions and today IKEA is probably the most successful one.

**D**o you think this mentality and "framework" is missing nowadays?

**N**o, you still find people with such a capacity of global thinking. Just look at the large field of computer technology and telecommunication, where young entrepreneurs carry out extremely influential projects and have a huge international success. The traditional western industry may not be able to react as rigorously as Thonet did 150 years ago, because more and more legal restrictions are formalizing the procedures. But crisis like today's economic one may provoke new approaches from industry and administration—let's hope and fight for it. History gives a good example: in 1851 with the First World Fair, the world opened up and everyone believed engineers were capable of solving all problems. There was a big sensation of trust in the capability of human beings to find new solutions.

**H**ow do you conceive the conservation of Modern design objects?

**A**rt and applied art have been collected for a long time. There is a lot of experience and knowledge about its conservation. We can learn from it for most of the Modern design classics. But the moment we start to look at pieces made out of plastics we are facing problems that are extremely difficult to solve because often they quickly deteriorate, we don't know their exact 'ingredients' any longer and we are lacking experience and knowledge about their aging. In some cases we can only preserve the outer appearance of such objects but must accept that they can no longer be used—which for a design object, an object of applied art, is of course problematic.

**S**o, for you, the most important value to preserve is the authenticity in terms of concept and ideology and not so much in the materiality?

**I**would not generalize this, but if you can reproduce the deteriorated parts of an industrially mass-produced object with today's materials and you don't change the volume, the look and the function, I would accept this procedure in order to provide the documentation of the designer's original concept for future generations. Most museums are scared to death when taking out the upholstery foam. If you have a chair with upholstery that was made of foam in the beginning of the 60s, today you only might have a handful of grains left. Of course this piece of furniture should be restored and shown. We need to replace it with today's materials (similar or better ones), keeping the original volume, proportions and forms. I



want to show the idea of the design, which includes the foam, the function and the capability of the material.

**M**ost museums don't have the point of view you've just explained. Why?

**T**oday's attitude in the museum's world is to keep as much as possible the original state of the object. But you are indeed caught between two different points of views. The moment you replace the original but deteriorated parts of an object its market value could easily lose 20 to 60 percent. No employee of a museum wants to take such a risk. Otherwise if you ask the designer of a piece about his intention he or she generally would ask you to restore it: "I wanted my design to look perfect". When Christopher Wilk, today the keeper of furniture, textiles and fashion at the Victoria & Albert Museum, prepared his Marcel Breuer show for MoMA in 1980, he asked Breuer, who was still alive at that time, how to present his early works such as the Wassily chair. The object Christopher wanted to use in his exhibition was a little bit worn out and missed a lot of coating showing rusty parts. Breuer answered immediately "clean the structure and renew the coating. I intended a light and transparent piece of furniture in the space". I guess Breuer would have even preferred to show a new and precise reproduction of his chair rather than the antiquity!

For an exhibition it might be the best to show the old original version with patina and worn-out fabrics as well as a completely renewed or even reproduced example that corresponds to the original. We must respect and communicate the original intention—maybe also with original photos from the period when and how the designer exposed his object first. Regarding products from the 50s, 60s and 70s, I would not hesitate a moment to replace the upholstery if the foam inside of the fabric cover is gone, but trying to preserve the original fabric.

**S**o you consider that museums could have a key contribution in the understanding and safeguarding of Modern heritage if they were able to search new ways to present the original idea of an object and so, underline the formal, structural, technological and functional contribution for the development of design.

**Y**<sup>es.</sup>

**A**nd the conservation of architecture?

**I** am not so much an expert in this field, but in order to preserve architecture you probably have to accept much more compromises as these objects are exposed to so much more stress. Furthermore, the initial investment as well as the costs for preservation are so much higher and the needs to change a building's purpose or to replace it with another one are much more relevant than in the case of a sofa or a lamp. But in principle I would deal with these objects as parts of a cultural heritage in the same way and try to keep the look and functionality as much as possible. In most cases you will nevertheless be forced to change and moderate its parts and there I always prefer to clearly show what has been renewed or added and what has been conserved.

**T**he oldest museums dedicated to collecting decorative arts and design in the 19<sup>th</sup> century—such as the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Metropolitan Museum or the Museum for Applied Arts in Vienna—try to educate both public and manufacturers, helping them to use and produce better products. Then, after the MoMA, design enters art galleries because of its aesthetic relevance in Modern art. Nowadays which should be the focus of design museums?

**A** design museum should still be a witness of the design evolution and serve the public with its design collection, interpreting exhibitions, publications and educational projects. It should still serve for research, to inspire new ideas and entertain the public as well as organize expert discussions about its themes. Today, design's connection with other arts, with technology and with social issues are complemented with its relation to almost any natural science as well as humanities—as a matter of fact, design is standing in the focus of all these disciplines. A contemporary design museum should reflect this.

**Y**ou have a strong knowledge and experience as a freelance curator and a collector adviser for several museums. In your opinion, can curating be an effective way to preserve Modern design? How come? Regarding the times we are living in, with new maintenance technologies, which are the most important goals you tried to achieve with each exhibition? Specially architecture exhibitions?

**T**o curate an exhibition means to interpret the subject and this interpretation takes part in the general discourse of the matter. It therefore always also affects the importance which people attribute to certain objects, documents and ideas, and that goes for ancient as well as Modern ones. However, to connect Modern and often ephemeral things with long historical evolutions may

cause a larger awareness of the relevance of today's phenomena. Design is a marvellous subject, ideal to highlight the manifold network in which our society, especially today's consumer society, lives. In the past years architecture has become more and more a subject that interests a larger audience. And last but not least, because we recognize more the importance of the ecological and social environment for our product-oriented culture. To illustrate the connections between the object on the one side, the human body and spirit on the other, the environment on a third side, the historic background and future expectations on further sides, all these aspects fascinate me and in our exhibitions we try to convey their complexity in the most fascinating and educating possible way.

In Vitra you created a program of traveling exhibitions on design and architecture. Most of them touched Modernity and the Modern Movement, but in a very open way. I remember the retrospectives on Jean Prouvé, Charles and Ray Eames, Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier and Luis Barragán or thematic exhibitions on Czech Cubism and Learning from Vernacular. They represented a very important push forward on the debate on Modern architecture and design. How did you choose the different themes and names? What's the importance of traveling exhibitions?

First and foremost I did not accept any thematic borders. I find my themes in the fascination for phenomena of all kinds that come across discussions with colleagues as well as my daily, probably quite unusual life. I never tried to copy anyone else but followed my own scent of curiosity. My travels, encounters with people, a strong respect for history, a willingness to engage in our present time (especially through education)—all these components make up my way of choosing the subjects of my work.

Travelling exhibitions are a way to multiply the results of our work and to offer them to a larger audience. But they also force us to think twice about the relevance and the comprehensibility of our subjects. Furthermore they can improve the economic feasibility of a project and serve as a promoter for its originating institution.

How do you see the exhibition catalogue and what should be the relation with the exhibition context?

The catalogue should document with images and texts the exhibition's content as comprehensively as possible. But a book lasts longer than any exhibition and not only serves as a mere reference. It preserves research, presents an intellectually filtered essence of the exhibition's content and adds to it with further back-

ground material. It thus is a valuable source for any further research in the respective field. I think in the future, with the help of computers, we should find out how to make research more easily accessible for other museums and experts. We should think more about its proper use in exhibitions, reaching and engaging the public without distracting it from the original artefact.

How do you think an exhibition can achieve that kind of emotional engagement?

The visitor must experience the visit as a unique adventure. Original material, holistic images, a variety of media and environments, which enclose exhibits and visitors alike are the one aspect of this adventure. Profound and yet comprehensible information which visitors can access in a suitable time is another aspect. A third important aspect is the choreography of an exhibition: a proper beginning, a fascinating story with altering highlights and a strong ending. Ultimately you are dealing with images, and these must be stronger than TV or Internet, otherwise people just stay at home.

#### Alexander Von Vegesack

Founding Director of the Vitra Design Museum from 1988 to 2011 in Weil am Rhein (Germany). As a freelance curator and collector of industrial furniture design, Alexander von Vegesack set up the Thonet Museum in Boppard am Rhein, and advised international museums in shaping and adding to their design collections. He organized exhibitions in Paris for the Centre Georges Pompidou as well as the Musée d'Orsay, and was commissioned by the American Federation of Arts to conceive the first major exhibition on the history of bentwood and metal furniture, which was shown at ten leading US museums. He realized similar projects in Eastern Europe for the German Foreign Ministry, and in 1989 he established the Vitra Design Museum in cooperation with the furniture manufacturer Vitra. As the Museum's founder and director, he created a continually changing program of internationally touring exhibitions on design and architecture, including the publication of numerous associated catalogues and other materials. In addition, he initiated an annual European museum conference to provide the most important museums in these fields with a forum for the exchange of ideas and programs.

Twenty five years ago, Alexander sold a part of his bentwood collection to the Austrian Government and bought the *Domaine de Boisbuchet* in the Poitou-Charente region of France. He established an internationally recognized seminar program in France for designers, architects, as well as artists, craftsmen and artisans from various disciplines. In 1997 the Centre Georges Pompidou and the Vitra Design Museum started to support the program of Boisbuchet. In 2011 this educational centre was recognized by the French Government as a national *Pôle d'excellence rurale*.

In 1993 the Centre Georges Pompidou presented an exhibition and catalogue of his collection under the title "Miroir d'une collection" and in March 2008 the *Pinacoteca Giovanni e Marella Agnelli* in Torino, Italy organized the exhibition "Scoprire il Design—La Collezione von Vegesack".

Alexander von Vegesack served as a member of the *Fonds National d'Art Contemporain*, he is *Officier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* and holds the German Order of Merit.

# Learning to Love Brutalism

The following keynote lecture was presented at the 12<sup>th</sup> International **docomomo** Conference that took place in Espoo, Finland, this past August 2012. The author began his lecture thanking the Chair of **docomomo** International, Ana Tostões, and all **docomomo** members and friends who have done so much to ensure that the now historical heritage of Modernism might be saved for the future. Following the stimulating talks of John Allan and Mark Pasnik, he entered what for many in this field was a territory that was at least ambiguous if not impossible to accept: that the so-called Brutalist buildings of the period 1960 to the late 70s would one day be the urgent object of attention for those interested in preservation and conservation.

By Anthony Vidler

Even today, while a portion of the architectural community might be supportive, the general public remains convinced that these, often mega-structural and urban planning related structures, are both unredeemably ugly (to use one of John Allan's terms) and worthy only of being torn down. John Allan made the point that we cannot any more use our own aesthetic and professional criteria to argue for their preservation—energy, economic, and political considerations demand to be fore-fronted—and Mark Pasnik's coalition in Boston has tried to re-frame the debate by re-naming the style—not "Brutalism" but "Heroic Modernism". I don't want to rehearse these arguments again, but rather to speak about this undeniably unfortunate word "Brutalism". John Allan, in his response to the session on the Tugendhat restoration, made the point that Modernism for many was received in photographs and that it was essential to unravel the "mythic" status of photographic Modernism. I will briefly try to unravel the equally mythic status of a word—"Brutalism". I turn first to the dictionary definitions as quoted in that repository of the common wisdom Wikipedia: "Brutalism" is, according to the dictionary, a commonly accepted term for a particular style of architecture dominant in the 60s: "a style of Modern architecture, primarily in the 60s, emphasizing heavy, monumental, stark concrete forms and raw surfaces" (*McGraw-Hill Dictionary of Architecture and Construction*, 2003, McGraw-Hill); "term applied to the architectural style of exposed rough concrete and large Modernist block forms, which flourished in the 60s and 70s and which derived from the architecture of Le Corbusier". (*The Concise Grove Dictionary of Art*, 2002, Oxford University Press); "term coined (1953) to describe Le Corbusier's use of monumental, sculptural shapes and raw, unfinished molded concrete, an approach that represented a departure from International Style" (*Britannica Concise Encyclopedia*, 1994–2010, Encyclopædia Britannica). Readers are referred to Louis Kahn, Denys Lasdun, and James Stirling. In these senses the term is generally applied to a wide range of buildings, and not necessarily just to British buildings, that include to give just a few examples which without expanding upon this evening I would just note have all been the object of public dislike if not animosity more or less from the outset, and that all are nearing, according to their owners, public or private, the end of their useful life.

## Boston City Hall [figure 1]

Vilified on completion as "a giant concrete harmonica" a "pigeon cage" or better, an "Aztec gas station". At the very least it was, and still is, with most so-called Brutalist buildings characterized as unwelcoming, cold, ugly, with poor lighting, ineffective heating, and having a labyrinthine layout.

By contrast, the architectural community was more or less ecstatic, at least for a few years: Ada Louise Huxtable, wrote, "what has been gained is a notable achievement in the creation and control of urban space, and in the uses of monumentality and humanity in the best pattern of great city building. Old and New Boston are joined through an act of urban design that relates directly to the quality of the city and its life". Donlyn Lyndon wrote in the *Boston Globe* that "Boston City Hall carries an authority that results from the clarity, articulation, and intensity of imagination with which it has been formed". Architectural historian Douglass Shand-Tucci, author of *Built in Boston: City and Suburb, 1800–2000*, called City Hall "one of America's foremost landmarks" and "arguably the great building of twentieth century Boston". Ada Louise Huxtable noted "the architectural gap, or abyss, as it exists between those who design and those who use the 20<sup>th</sup> century's buildings".

## Birmingham Central Library [figure 2]

This building was built by John Madin (1924–2012), one of Birmingham's often unappreciated master architects of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, between the mid-60s and 1974, as part of a large civic centre scheme on the newly created Paradise Circus site. Originally planned to be built alongside the library was a School of Music, Drama Centre, Athletic Institute, Offices, Shops, Public House, a Car Park with 500 spaces and a bus interchange. The collection of civic buildings was all to be connected by high level walkways and the network of galleries which bridge the roads. According to Madin, it was designed with the inspiration of Leslie Martin's Law Library at Oxford, and of course, Boston City Hall. Prince Charles famously described the library as "looking more like a place for burning books, than keeping them". It will, as you know, soon be torn down in favor of a new library building by Mecanoo architects—an undeniably good contemporary structure, that in the place of its "austere" forebear





Figure 1. Boston City Hall, vilified on completion as “a giant concrete harmonica” a “pigeon cage,” or an “Aztec gas station.”



Figure 2. Birmingham Central Library, which has been torn down in favor of a new library building by Mecanoo architects.

will provide a “world-class new Library [...] a ‘people’s palace’ for people of all ages, offering the diverse communities across the city and beyond a library to truly be proud of”.

### London South Bank Arts Centre [figure 3]

Even Charles Jencks tried to defend this structure in his review for *Architectural Review* in 1978, against the charge leveled by nearly half of 550 engineers surveyed as ‘Britain’s Ugliest Building’ (*Daily Mail*, October 1967); qualified by the press variously as ‘quasi-fortified’, ‘neo-Antheap’, ‘mini-Ziggats’, bunker’, or what I think of as the very best that British journalism can have ever come up with ‘an army of centipedes carrying off the dried carcass of a broken turtle.’ The fate of the South Bank is yet undecided—perhaps, like that of Boston City Hall only in limbo by reason of the recession.

Charles Jencks in his argument for the South Bank development, admitted that to the eyes of a rationalist these attacks were partially justified: no apparent structural logic, no underlying coherence, no visual logic to explain the functional logic, a “confusion of shapes and ambiguity of forms—all in exposed concrete—with dark apparently useless space beneath circulation deck; changes of level stairs turn inward; no provision for daytime activity—in short as far as the always anti-elitist public is concerned, just one more post-war cultural ghetto”. Yet there was, he insisted, a sensible answer to each of these objections: “the architects were not trying to create a building in any conventional sense but rather a sequence of extended places and events along a route. And where they were trying for a building, it was probably *intended* to be conventionally ugly”.

In other words, the architects of the South Bank were deliberately trying for something other than either the traditional classical monument or the already traditional anonymous International Style Modernism of corporate usage. The true ancestor of the South Bank, Jencks argued, is the Brutalist work of the Smithsons. Sheffield University scheme of 1953 was “the first really blunt expression of a non-building, organized around non-formal principles by means of a circulation deck”. The Berlin Hauptstadt competition scheme was “open aesthetic for the open society”, “a loose, polycentered arrangement which is

organized as a series of fixed places on a route for movement, as well as an ad hoc arrangement of elements.”

How did this movement come into being? (I will call it a movement for the moment, although as we shall see, as a movement with an ethic rather than an aesthetic sense since it was severely restricted in its adherents).

‘The New Brutalism’ was a term invented by Reyner Banham in concert with Alison and Peter Smithson in 1953–55. Later, following irate letters from Hans Asplund, Banham admitted that ‘Brutalism’ as a term had originated in Sweden in the form ‘Neo-Brutalism’ but defended ‘New Brutalism’ as entirely different, as composed of a mash-up of two Gallicisms: *Art Brut* and *Béton Brut*. The first one referred to Jean Dubuffet and later Edoardo Paolozzi, and the second one to the concrete work of Le Corbusier’s *Unité d’Habitation* in Marseilles. There were, inevitably, other memories of this semantic history. Peter Smithson thought the term came from his colleague and friend Edoardo Paolozzi, who had taken it from Dubuffet’s *Art brut*. Georges Candilis, probably paraphrasing Sigfried Giedion, thought it came from the conjunction of Peter Smithson’s nickname, “Brutus” and Alison’s own name: “Brutalism, yes of course. It was our slogan. The term has to be taken in the sense of directness, truthfulness, no concessions. I remember writing: ‘You have to be direct and brute’ [...] We used to say: Smithson=Brutus (Peter’s nickname) plus Alison”. Banham, not to be outdone, added another twist, noting in his entry on “Brutalism” for the *Encyclopedia of Modern Architecture* that it was a friend of the Smithsons, Guy Oddie, who was “the first person to utter the phrase in the early summer of 1954”—despite the fact that this directly contradicted Peter Smithson’s own use of the term in print the year before.

As late as 1956, the origins of the term were still giving rise to what the photographer of the vernacular tradition, Eric de Maré, called “a subject for academic research”. In 1950 the Swedish journal *Bygg-Mästaren* (Build the next few years) had published a special issue on the work of the architect Gunnar Asplund, with an English summary that used the term “Neo-Brutalist”.<sup>1</sup> De Maré wrote to *The Architectural Review* summarizing a letter he had received from Gunnar Asplund’s son Hans, explaining how the term had arisen in Sweden. Hans, it seems, had coined the term in jest to characterize a house design by Ed-



Figure 3. London South Bank Arts Centre, qualified by the press as 'quasi-fortified', 'neo-Antheap', 'mini-Ziggats', 'bunker', or 'an army of centipedes carrying off the dried carcass of a broken turtle.'

man and Holm, and had shared his comment with two English architects, Shankland and Cox, who brought the words back to England where "it had spread like wildfire" and had "somewhat surprisingly" been adopted by "a certain faction of young English architects". Hans Asplund took "no pride" in this invention as a self-described "paleo-sentimentalist". Thus, a term that was apparently invented to repudiate Swedish Modern, and its importation to Britain, has in fact been invented by the Swedes.

Banham's riposte to this idea was belated and followed the orthodoxy of art-historical terminology. "Neo-Brutalist" he stated in his summing up of the movement, "is not the same as 'The New Brutalism' [...] 'Neo-Brutalist' is a stylistic label, like Neo-Classical or Neo-Gothic, whereas 'The New Brutalism', the privileged users of which were, he concluded predictably, Alison and Peter Smithson, was "an ethic not an aesthetic". In this context it is worth remarking that the word 'brutalist' as used by the friends of Hans Asplund was from the start "negative" while for Banham and the Smithsons, with their attempt to translate a "New" brutalism into an "ethic", it was positive.

But as a British movement, the *New Brutalism* was born out of a particular context—that of postwar "austerity Britain"—it was a society of scarcity, subjected to what historian Tony Judt describes as the "unprecedented conditions of restraint and voluntary penury", with "almost everything either rationed or simply unavailable". But as far as building was concerned, and despite fuel shortages, bricks were in plentiful supply. Brick production reached prewar levels by 1954 and continued to grow until the early 70s.

Of course, the British, from Georgian times, were very proud of their bricks. In a 1940 advertisement for the most popular of bricks, the Accrington Brick and Tile Company showed a bomb landing harmlessly on their 'Nori' (Iron) brick that resisted with a crushing load of 1028.8 tons per square foot (*AR* vol. LXXX-VII, n° 518, January 1940). Part of Churchill's charisma as a wartime leader, and afterwards his folksy image in retirement, was his passion for bricklaying: "each afternoon, we'd spend a couple of hours together, laying bricks. If anyone had asked me what my grandfather did, I'd have said: 'he's a bricklayer'".

But the British were also slightly embarrassed by their bricks; they were a little too much of a reminder of the working-class streets of Midland industrial towns, not part of the establishment—as in the sobriquet "Red-brick Universities" to distinguish local and regional foundations from Oxbridge and London.

As Jim Stirling was to note regarding his and James Gowan's re-housing at Preston "I suppose some would think them too Victorian". But it was this very ambiguity that allowed for the fighting words of the "Angry Young Men", their novels, films, and plays celebrating the resilience, comradeship, and sometime upward mobility of working-class culture. It was in some sympathy with this sentiment, though not as politically charged, that New Brutalism was able to adopt its rough materialism and attitude toward brick-and-steel culture. It was not accidental either, as Banham reminded his readers much later, that the rubric 'New Brutalism' was "claimed particularly by an English team of Redbrick extraction".

The Brutalism word itself first appeared in print in a short text by Peter Smithson for *Architectural Design* in 1953, introducing the drawings for a house in "Soho" (which was not for Soho at all but a project for their own house in Colville Place) and claiming that, if it had been built, it would have been "the first exponent of the 'new brutalism' in England". Modest in the extreme, with its load-bearing brick party walls and exposed concrete floor beams on front and rear façades, the project inherited the already five-year preoccupation with neo-Palladian geometry: the façades were controlled by regulating lines, the plan was nearly square, and the internal divisions were equally geometricized. But the interest of the design did not lie in this survival (Peter Smithson was later to declare the Palladian movement over by 1948) but rather in the use of materials specified for the builder:

*Bare concrete, brickwork and wood...Brickwork may suggest a blue or double burnt or colored pointing; but the arbitrary use of color and texture was not conformed with, and common bricks with struck joints were intended. The bars and color variation have some sort of natural tension when laid by a good bricklayer.*

Alison and Peter Smithson, "House in Soho, London"  
*Architectural Design*, December 1953, 342.

In their preamble to the builder's specification, the Smithsons exhorted the "Constructor" to "refrain from any internal finishes wherever practicable". The conclusion was that he should "aim at a high standard of basic construction as in a small warehouse".

A house like a small warehouse: this suggests the stringent conditions of material supply and construction at the time, but also an emerging sense that

the formulas of the Modern Movement were outworn and unsuitable for the postwar British condition. This was a sense shared by many, and not only Le Corbusier himself whose wartime designs for emergency housing, the *béton brut* of the Unité, and the soon-to-be-completed Jaoul Houses, had demonstrated a turn towards the expression of materials. Indeed, while it might seem that the Soho house had been drawn up without knowledge of the Jaoul Houses (as published in the 1953 edition of Le Corbusier's *Oeuvre Complète 1938–1946*), there is every reason to believe, given the strong similarity of the Smithsons' elevations to those of the first Jaoul project, that Peter Smithson had either seen them in a presentation at a CIAM meeting or, more likely, at Le Corbusier's talk at the Independent Group in 1951 or in his subsequent visits to the RIBA and AA in May 1953.

Theo Crosby elaborated on the term Brutalism a year later, as an "attitude taken by certain younger English architects and artists, and known, half satirically, as the New Brutalism", as a reaction against the tendency to over-refinement and dry academic-abstract geometries which lurk in the International Style".

With this new traction, 'New Brutalism' was now retroactively associated with a built example—the Smithsons' Hunstanton Secondary School, designed in 1949 and completed in 1954, and reviewed favorably by Philip Johnson, presumably as the reigning Miesian. Johnson was less favorable towards the general turn represented by the Smithsons, calling it "an Adolf Loos type of Anti-Design which they call the 'New Brutalism' (a phrase which is already being picked up by the Smithsons' contemporaries to defend atrocities)". In their explanatory article, the Smithsons took issue with this American diatribe against the new British architecture, affirming that "the architects themselves would certainly disagree with Mr. Johnson's separation of Hunstanton from the New Brutalist canon, even though the term had not been coined when the school was designed", and stirringly claiming that the whole issue devolved around the truthful display of materials: "It is this valuation of materials which has led to the appellation 'New Brutalist', but it should now be clear that this is not merely a surface aesthetic of untrimmed edges and exposed services, but a radical philosophy reaching back to the first conception of the building". The Smithsons traced its philosophy back to English precedents—Hardwick Hall (by another Smithson in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century for its long gallery heating system) and Butterfield's All Saints Margaret Street, a building already praised by Ruskin and John Betjeman as "fearless" in pushing the gothic language to an extreme. Standing on these safe shoulders Hunstanton could claim further radicalism. It was, the Smithsons claimed, "ruthless" in its avoidance of the "gentlemanly" Modernism that characterized what they saw as the English version of Scandinavian Modern, and was "free from the sentimentalism of Frank Lloyd Wright or the formalism of Mies van der Rohe". It was also designed according to new structural principles—the calculation of the steel structure by means of the Plastic theory developed by Baker and Heyman during the war, and the insertion of brick panels that "were conceived from the very first [...] as performing structurally, functionally and decoratively as parts of an integrated structure". Banham wrote:

*It is this valuation of materials which has led to the appellation 'New Brutalist', but it should now be clear that this is not merely a surface aesthetic of untrimmed edges and exposed services, but a radical philosophy reaching back to the first conception of the building. In this sense this is probably the most truly Modern building in England, fully accepting the moral load which the Modern Movement lays upon the architect's shoulders. It does not ingratiate itself with cosmetic detailing, but, like it or dislike it, demands that we should make up our minds about it, and examine our consciences in the light of that decision.*

This school, proclaimed Banham a year later in his seminal article "The New Brutalism" of 1955, was the real originator of the New Brutalist manner, despite its pre-dating the term. Thus Banham, having referred to what he called "the New Brutalist canon" as if one already existed, opened his review and description of Hunstanton polemically enough, with a section entitled "Design principles..

Confusingly then, New Brutalism originated in a work that, for all intents and purposes, was inspired by Le Corbusier's Jaoul Houses, yet its most significant exemplar was a building designed three years before that, and four years before the term itself was adopted, a building that was inspired in turn by the IIT Campus buildings of Mies.

With the fervor of an art historian who had discovered a new movement that matched his favorite Modern one—Futurism—Banham now took up the cudgels for the term: "as Britain's first native art movement since the systematic study of art history reached these islands, the New Brutalism needs to be seen in a double historical context—that of post-war architectural thought, and that of post-war historical writings on architecture". It is a mark of the historicization of architectural styles that New Brutalism was introduced as an effect of art-historical writing, and as an art historian in-training Banham did not disappoint, taking care to define the origins of the term before characterizing its reach.

For Banham the term 'New Brutalism' was a natural response [natural?] to "New Empiricism" if not "New Humanism" and was a direct attack on what he called the Marxist/Communist cell in the LCC. Against the "soft" Modernism of this cell, something—a "New X-ism"—was bound to emerge. And with the help of a few continental words—Le Corbusier's *béton brut*, Dubuffet's *art brut*—the Smithsons managed to capture the term "as their own, by their own desire and public consent".

It was indeed literally and figuratively a "brick-bat thrown in the public's face", a program, a banner". But this banner was on closer inspection decidedly vague. For in the end Banham is reduced to defining New Brutalism in extremely general terms as "1, Formal legibility of plan; 2, clear exhibition of structure; and 3, valuation of materials for their inherent qualities 'as found'". Indeed, these are general enough that they "can be used to answer the question: Are there other New Brutalist buildings besides Hunstanton?" in the affirmative. Banham lists Le Corbusier's Marseilles block, Mies' Promontory and Lakeshore apartments, Eero Saarinen's General Motors Technical Center, the Dutch work of Aldo van Eyck and the architects associated with Team X, only to admit immediately that New Brutalists (i.e. the Smithsons) would reject most of these from the canon. Only Louis Kahn's Yale Art Gallery of 1951–53 might survive the test, but even this not quite, since with its inconsistent detailing it could be construed as too "arty". This leaves us alone once more with Hunstanton.

But the application of the idea to architecture, and to Hunstanton in particular, demanded more than a general sense of the word. According to Banham, it required not simply "that the building should be an immediately apprehensible entity" but that "the form grasped by the eye should be confirmed by the experience of the building in use". New Brutalism's "form" is actually "aformal", (and this despite the apparent "formality" of Hunstanton which he admitted with a certain condescension, was not the Smithsons' fault). Rather, it was the Golden Lane and Sheffield University competition entries, with their full deployment of *collage* to present a "coherent visual image" by "non-formal means" that evoked "aformalism as a positive force". Here Banham brings in a surprisingly contemporary terms to characterize his new aformalism—"topology"—that allows for a new bridging of the gap between what he called "ideal beauty" and the Brutalist "image", for in topological terms as he argued "a brick is the same 'shape' as a billiard ball". It was this term of course that allowed for the relinquishing of bricks and mortar for the smooth abstract surfaces of reinforced concrete.



Looking back on the “movement” he had theorized in 1955, in his *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?* ten years later, Banham decided not to reprint the article ‘The New Brutalism’, deeming it not “truly representative of the state of the Brutalist movement at that important time in its evolution”, revealing “only too clearly” his “attempt to father” some of his own “pet notions”. This self-critique reinforces the impression, fostered by his earlier editorial comment on Hunstanton, that if there was indeed a movement with the title ‘New Brutalism’, it was almost entirely of Banham’s own invention, supported by only one completed building. The book itself was brief enough, with no more than fifty text pages, but these were supplemented by nearly two hundred illustrations of buildings and projects that, in Banham’s eyes, demonstrated that New Brutalism, beginning in England, had by 1966 become an almost worldwide phenomenon.

One of the major problems of the book however, and that had been faced by Banham since the beginning, was that apart from the Smithsons, very few of the architects claimed as New Brutalists by Banham wanted to be called Brutalist. Among the first to react were Stirling and Gowan. When Banham had reviewed Ham Common in 1958 in an article that associated Stirling and Gowan both with the “Angry Young Men”, in his title—“Plucky Jims”—and with New Brutalism, by reference to their obvious debt to Corbusier’s Jaoul, the architects replied immediately: “we do not consider ourselves ‘new brutalist’”, stating bluntly (and with hardly concealed animosity towards Banham’s art-historical appropriation), “‘New brutalist’ is a journalistic tag applied to some designers of architectural credit, in a morale-boosting attempt to sanctify a movement as ‘Britain’s contribution’ and to cover up for the poor showing of our postwar architecture”. In a later article, Stirling and Gowan, responding to the suggestion that the flats were ‘brutalist in design’, summed up their position:

*The ‘New Brutalism’, a term which we used to regard on the one hand as a narrow interpretation of one aspect of architecture, specifically the use of materials and components ‘as found’—an already established attitude; and on the other hand, as a well-intentioned but over-patriotic attempt to elevate English architecture to an international status. But whatever the term might initially have meant it is clear from recent and repeated derisive journalistic asides, that it must now have created in the public eye an image of pretentiousness, artiness, and irresponsibility, and as such the continuation of its use can only be detrimental to Modern architecture in this country.*

As for the flats, they were, the architects stated, simply built in accordance with the client’s low-cost specifications, with “simple and everyday materials”—load-bearing brick walls “calculated structurally to get the maximum of window openings”, with recessed pointing to cast an “oblique shadow” and the concrete floor beams “patterned by the formwork”. “We do not know” they concluded ironically, “if this specification is in accord with the ‘new brutalism’”.

The lone partisan left was Coin St John Wilson, former architect at the LCC, partner of Leslie Martin, and lecturer in architectural theory at the new Cambridge School of Architecture. His extension at 1 Scroope Terrace in Cambridge, completed a year before I entered the school in 1960, was perhaps the most canonically New Brutalist of all buildings of that period. Reyner Banham opined that “into this relatively small building were poured most of the intellectual aspirations of the Wilson, Smithson generation”. A two-storey cube, with thirteen-inch thick brick walls, exposed concrete floor slabs, wood and tubular steel details, and a *béton brut* projection “pulpit” sculpted like a van Doesburg axonometric, it seemed to realize everything that the Smithsons’ unbuilt Soho house of 1952 aspired to. Carefully proportioned according to Le Corbusier’s Modulor, it was also a living memory of the neo-Palladian, pre-Brutalist moment that was influenced briefly by Rudolph Wittkower’s publication of *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* in 1949.

Wilson, the most academic of all the Independent group had in microcosm perfected a model New Brutalist exemplar—indeed realized what the Smithsons had failed to build in their little house project at Colville Road.

Even the Smithsons wanted out from under the art historical trap. The last—or penultimate to last words—were appropriately enough spoken by Peter and Alison Smithson in a conversation with E. Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew. In response to Fry’s observation that Brutalism signals “a very fierce morality which will only deal with London stock brick and bush hammered concrete”, Peter retorts: “we were stuck, and are still stuck in many ways, with the problem of the brick. I am obsessively against the brick, you know, we think brick the antithesis of machine building and yet for practical reasons we never have built in anything else. It is a tragedy. When I was 19 I said I would never design or build anything in brick in all my life, and yet one has to face in England and in this Northern climate and in the middle belt of Europe with the fact that brick does the job. You cannot argue with it, and therefore you know there is a certain sort of common sense in it. If common sense tells you that you have to make some poetic thing with brick, you make it with brick”. Alison agreed:

*But a time is coming now for a further stand against being pushed towards building in bricks, even if it means refusing a job that needs bricks. Now everything is being done in brick, rough concrete, vast sections of this and that, and varnished planks. I still cannot face brickwork. On Tyneside I was surrounded with brickwork still being dirtied by industry. Even Banham, in the conclusion to his 1966 book admitted that the movement was, to all intents and purposes, “over”.*

And yet, as we now know, the word ‘brutalism’ refused to go away.

Despite all the arguments for ‘ethics’ rather than ‘aesthetics’, by as early as the late 60s, Brutalism was to be attacked, not only by the public but also from within, by both the unrelenting supporters of a Gropius style Modernism and the initiators of what, already in 1960 was termed “post-Modernism” by none other than Nikolaus Pevsner. Pevsner indeed had always hated “Brutalism”. He didn’t mind the Smithsons’ Hunstanton (“symmetrical, clean, precise, in short Mies van der Rohe and not Le Corbusier in origin”) nor did he mind the Economist Building (“again entirely unbrutal [...] and a Townscape sensitive job”) but he hated Denys Lasdun’s Royal College of Physicians (“next to Nash’s Regent’s Park [...] with two square concrete posts in front of one bigger square concrete post to mark the entrance—take it or leave it, Mr Nash”). “Sculptural” and “personal” like Le Corbusier’s Ronchamp or Chandigarh, Brutalism represented for him “self-expression of the artist-architect”, “a fervent avoidance of lightness, of anything that could be called elegant, and also of anything that could be accounted for purely rationally” and, “forms of overpowering—what shall I say?—yes: brutality”.

Visiting Rudolph’s Yale Art and Architecture Building, he admired the spatial intricacies but thought the building failed absolutely in terms of its program. The problem there, as with any other ‘brutalist’ buildings was the return of what he called expressionism. And not of the proper line of descent from Gropius and Mies. It was not by accident that Pevsner launched this diatribe in 1966–67. This was the year in which Banham had published his summation of the Brutalist movement, *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic*, and it was Pevsner’s purpose to demonstrate that the New Brutalism was only an aesthetic, “expressionist” and narcissistic in form, that directly negated the principles of his favored “pioneers” of the Modern movement, Gropius and Mies van der Rohe, and their “ethic” of “simplicity, honesty, and service”. If in that year Banham had celebrated the movement he had started, Pevsner was determined to kill the residues of the movement that his wayward student, Banham, had started.

But Banham himself was disabused. In his conclusion to the book, Banham

closed this “period” that he had himself initiated, with the statement that, for the British contribution at least “it was all over”. “For all the brave talk of ‘an ethic not an aesthetic’, (which was, one has to say his own brave talk of an ethic as applied to a few buildings of the Smithsons) Brutalism never quite broke out of the aesthetic frame of reference”, it would never produce what he had wanted in 1955, “an other architecture” (*une autre architecture*) with an “uninhibited functionalism”, and free of a “machine aesthetic”. For Banham, the Johnsons, the Johansens, and the Rudolfs were more the followers of a Brutalist ‘style’ than of his ethical program; they were, “their allies, not mine” as he caustically remarked.

End of story—or at least for Banham, seemingly now agreeing with his teacher that an ethic had become a style at last.

It is the objects of the style that we are now obliged to contemplate as works of architecture, representative of a period of reaction to international Modernism, attempting, as Mark said this morning to supply what Sifried Giedion called a ‘new monumentality’ for a continuing Modernism, caught in a period of intense urban renewal that emphasized circulation, infrastructure and connectivity, all of which has reached an age limit of usability, if not economic renewal and investment feasibility. It is a period that **docomomo** is, I know, beginning to confront in every respect.

I conclude with an example of what may happen if **docomomo** does not become active for even the smaller iconic buildings of the period. Stirling and Gowan’s House in the Isle of White: before and after [figure 4].

#### Notes

1. In an apparently innocent footnote to his seminal article of 1955, Banham wrote: “there is a persistent belief that the word Brutalism (or something like it) had appeared in the English Summaries in an issue of Bygg-Mastaren published late in 1950. The reference cannot be traced, and the story must be relegated to that limbo of Modern Movement demonology where Swedes, Communists and the Town and Country Planning Association are bracketed together as different isotopes of the common ‘Adversary’”.

#### Anthony Vidler

Dean of The Cooper Union, Architect and Doctor in History and Theory, critic of Modern and contemporary architecture, specializing in French architecture from the Enlightenment to the present, he has consistently taught courses in design and history and theory and continues to teach a wide variety of courses at The Cooper Union.

As designer and curator he installed the permanent exhibition of the work of Claude-Nicolas Ledoux in the Royal Salt Works of Arc-et-Senans in Franche-Comté, France, as well as curating the exhibition, “Ledoux et les Lumières” at Arc-et-Senans. In 2004 he was curated the portion of the exhibition “Out of the Box” dedicated to James Stirling for the Canadian Center of Architecture and in 2010 he installed the exhibition “Notes from the Archive: James Frazer Stirling”, in the Yale Centre for British Art.

His publications include *The Writing of the Walls: Architectural Theory in the Late Enlightenment* (Princeton Architectural Press, 1987), *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux: Architecture and Social Reform at the End of the Ancien Regime* (MIT Press, 1990), *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (MIT Press, 1992), *Warped Space: Architecture and Anxiety in Modern Culture* (MIT Press, 2000), *Histories of the Immediate Present: The Invention of Architectural Modernism* (MIT Press, 2008).



Figure 4. Stirling and Gowan’s House, Isle of White: before and after. Photo © Russell Light, 2011.



# International docomomo Conference 2012

## 'From Coffee Cup to General Plan', Espoo, Finland

By Timo Tuomi



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How does good design affect our physical surroundings in all scales from coffee cup to plan? This eternal question seemed to be as topical as ever during the 12<sup>th</sup> International **docomomo** Conference in Espoo, Finland this August. This was evidenced by the amount of abstracts offered to the conference, 356 in all. The International Scientific Committee of the conference achieved a minor miracle in laboring out a selection of 78 to be presented as papers during three intensive days from August 8 to 10. A number of abstracts were also offered the chance of a poster presentation, and delightfully many grabbed the chance to be noticed in this way.

The conference was preceded by the International **docomomo** workshop held at the Department of Architecture at Aalto University's Otaniemi campus designed by Alvar Aalto. The topic of the

workshop was the campus area itself, because it is currently under enormous changes due to the merging of three universities (technical, business and design) in need for new buildings. The scale of the area will change as the results of a planning completion, still under way, will be realized.

Walks and excursions were offered before, during and after the conference, some of the most popular once being the longer ones east to Vyborg and Sunila and west to Turku all the way up to Aalto's Villa Mairea.

Tuesday the 7<sup>th</sup> was the opening day for the conference at the Espoo Cultural Centre, designed by Arto Sipinen in 1989 that completed the centre of Tapiola Carden City begun in 1952. Tapiola is an internationally known example of post-war Scandinavian town planning, and it proved to be a good choice for the conference as an excursion

destination on its own right. The opening night was highlighted by two Finnish keynote speakers, Juha Leiviskä and Juhani Pallasmaa. Leiviskä, who won the Carlsberg Architectural Prize in 1995 gave an unforgettably personal presentation on his design and underlined the use of light in many of his buildings. Juhani Pallasmaa spoke on "Newness, Tradition and Identity", convincing that newness in tradition means that each generation has to find their own way to connect with tradition in order to achieve timeless works of art.

Apart from interesting papers presented at three simultaneous sessions, an unforeseen success was a round table event on the Tugendthaus and its restoration on Wednesday. The space reserved for it filled over capacity but good humor prevailed. Wednesday's keynote was John Allan speaking about the evolution of **docomomo** and what might be the future for an organization that has achieved international credibility over the years.

Thursday was a traditional day for the International Council meeting where several new chapters were accepted and welcomed to the **docomomo** family. The Secretariat in Barcelona was approved to continue their good work with great applause and thanks for previous years. Thursday's keynote speaker was Mikko Heikkinen from the firm Heikkinen-Komonen, internationally known for example for their Finnish Embassy building in Washington D.C. Heikkinen gave examples of how many of their competition entries, both successful and not, were developed. Friday was the last day of

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Figure 1. Ana Tostões, Chair of **docomomo** International, at the 12<sup>th</sup> International **docomomo** Conference.

Figure 2. Hubert-Jan Henket, first Chair of **docomomo** International and Honorary President.

Figure 3. Timo Tuomi, **docomomo** Finland, appreciates the commitment of Maija Kairamo and Ana Tostões.

Figure 4. Ivo Hammer and Ana Tostões during one of the **docotours** in Sunila.

All photos @ **docomomo** International



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the conference proper, and included a round table on the possible survival of urban design in some Northern cities. The afternoon was continued with design on an urban scale, as the workshop awards were presented on the most interesting proposals for developing the Aalto campus. The keynote was a short and dynamic paper from Anthony Vidler on "Learning to Love Brutalism". In the closing session, which was a family gathering of hundreds (around

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**comomo** Maija Kairamo for her great work right from the beginning of foundation of the organization. And then there was food and drink and dance to a band and a general feeling of exhaustion and satisfaction due to a conference witnessing the necessity and importance of **docomomo** as a dynamic organization.

## International docomomo Workshop August 2-7, 2012

Department of Architecture, Otaniemi, Espoo, Finland

Head instructors: Professors Aino Niskanen and Olli-Paavo Koponen

Observer/Reporter: Panayotis Tournikiotis

### Is Aalto just a name for a brand?

By Olli Hakanen, Sirkkaliisa Jetsonen, Tommi Lindh and Aino Niskanen



Figure 1. Panayotis Tournikiotis reporting on the workshop results at the Docomomo Conference final round table discussion August 10, 2012. Photo by Tommi Lindh.

The Helsinki University of Technology got its present placement and layout in Otaniemi with Alvar Aalto's competition winning entry from 1948. Aalto's red brick buildings freely grouped in the middle of green revolving around the focus of a Greek theatre, the main auditorium, soon became landmarks of modern architecture. The group of buildings was complete to start as a functioning campus university in the mid-1960s with student housing surrounding the educational buildings.

The area has during the decades got additions and alterations but the main features have however remained fairly intact.

Today the situation has changed. Helsinki University of Technology is annexed into a larger unit of the Aalto University having joined The University of Art and Design Helsinki and The Helsinki School of Economics since 2010. The Department of Architecture was merged together with the University of Industrial Design into a new School

of Arts, Design and Architecture in 2012.

The Aalto University is planning to move a major part of its functions from Helsinki into Otaniemi, Espoo. A two phase competition to design Aalto University's Otaniemi central campus and its main buildings facing the present. The former main building is arranged of which the first phase has just finished. The floor area of the new complex is about double compared with Alvar Aalto's building.

The future fate of Aalto's buildings is unclear: their uses will change and many of them are undergoing renovations. The buildings have no formal protection status although the area itself is included in the inventory of nationally significant cultural environments. For example the rector has moved away from the spaces which Aalto had designed as a climax of his composition—the future use of these spaces is unclear. The leaders of the university have shown no real interest in the qualities Aalto's architecture—although masses of architectural tourists visit the area.

The campus is also finally getting a subway connection to the inner city but it means at the same a pressure to condense the area with housing and commercial activities. What will happen to the character of campus architecture or the green outdoors of housing areas? The planning of the totality is a fairly invisible process. There are several projects going on—the increase of residential and commercial building is significant, more than doubling the current amount in square meters.

These topical questions were the starting point of the workshop which lasted a week was arranged as part of the Docomomo 2012 Conference. Unlike the previous Docomomo workshops the participants were not master students but young professionals instead, as the organizers had wished a relevant contribution for a situation facing real dramatic problems. They worked for a week with the aim of trying to understand the possibilities and threats of the Aalto building and their surroundings and presented their outcome at the conference. Smaller presentations were made during the workshop.

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The other group worked on understanding the on-going change of the Otaniemi campus. Some guidelines for planning and design were identified.

cial and commercial services in a way the desired world class campus becomes possible. For example recreating the mobility system of the Otaniemi peninsula has a crucial impact on the most beneficial use of land.

The group encouraged to fertilize the new architecture with the best qualities of the existing environment and architectural heritage. Human scale, sensual detailing and intimate relation with nature will always be current qualities of inspirational architecture.

A series of lectures illuminated different aspects: the history of the university area, the measures of building protection, development plans for the

whole area, the politics of a larger metropolis area, Aalto's interiors. A site visit was made to the neighboring faculty which is under renovation. The work-groups commented that lectures and visits gave good support for their work.

For the participants the current state of conservation in the Aalto Campus might have come as a surprise. A renowned area for its architectural quality together with the respect to Alvar Aalto's work may come as a shock case of cultural heritage in danger. At least the participants and some of the lecturers also, got a better overview and more knowledge of the current situation in the area today.

**Invited specialists:** Ana Tostões, Esa Laaksonen, Ivan Blasi, Maija Kairamo, Panayotis Tournikiotis, Vladimir Slapeta.

**Participants:** Jonna Taegen, Architect, PhD student (Finland); Miguel Araujo, Architect, PhD student (Portugal); Salim al Elwazani, professor (USA).

**Facilitators:** Aimo Nissi, Architect; Olli Hakanen, Architect.

**Participants:** Katariina Ockenström, Architect, PhD student (Finland); Marzio di Pace, Architect (Italy); Mihoko Ando, Architect, PhD student (Japan); Seija Linnanmäki, Architect, PhD student (Finland).

**Facilitators:** Jonas Malmberg, Architect; Alvar Aalto Foundation. Ola Wedeburn, Architect, Docent, Royal Technical University of Copenhagen.

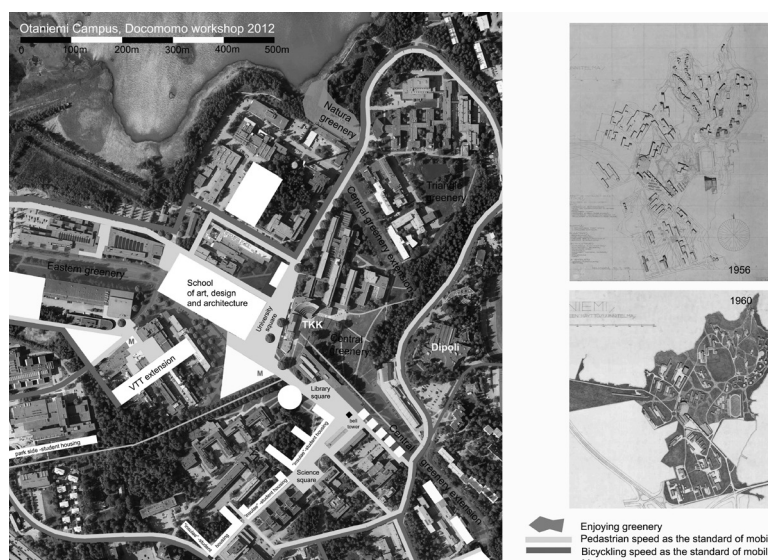
**Observers:** Han Na Song, Seung Tae Choi, Young-Cheol Kim.



Figure 3. Worksite tour in the former main building of the former University of Technology. Photo by Tommi Lindh, August 3, 2012.

Figure 4. Architect Marzio di Pace (Group 2) presenting his initial findings regarding the Department of Architecture. Photo by Tommi Lindh, August 4, 2012.

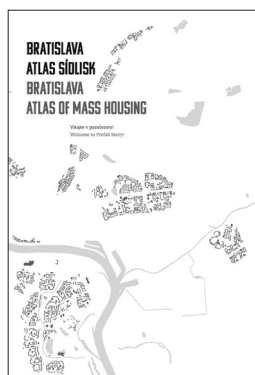
Figure 5. Otaniemi core campus. Existing main-roads and parking lots can be transformed into academic and residential building sites, urban pedestrian spaces and extensions of parks.





### Bratislava Atlas Sídlišk – Bratislava Atlas of Mass Housing, 1950–1995

By Henrieta Moravčíková, Mária Topolčanská, Peter Szalay, Matúš Dulla, Soňa Ščepánová, Slávka Toscherová, Katerína Haberlandová  
Publisher: Slovart Publications  
ISBN 978 80556 04787  
Language: Slovak and English  
Year: 2012



*Sine ira et studio*: documenting mass housing in a socialist city.

The mass housing complexes that formed so huge and, often, controversial element in the built production of the postwar Modern decades in many parts of the world have never sat easily within the mainstream trends of MoMo heritage, either at a national level (in government designation strategies) or internationally (in the proselytising and research of **docomomo**) [...]

The book is both a thematic monograph and an area-based gazetteer. Its first section contains a range of essays on the historical and cultural context of postwar housing in socialist (Czecho-) Slovakia, appropriately highlighting the special emphasis on standardisation and industrial prefabrication within Soviet-bloc housing of the post-Khrushchev era. Then follows the main 'atlas' itself, filling 206 of the book's 343 pages: a comprehensive chronologically-arranged inventory of the 21 housing schemes constructed in Bratislava over the 4 decades 1955–1995, complete with maps, statistics and historic photos and text summaries. Pride of place, of course, belongs to the vast and celebrated Petržalka, whose 50,000 flats were built in 1973–80 following a famous 1967 competition, but this is placed in its proper context of more everyday developments, up to the concluding Dlhé diely project of 1979–95, with its distinctly Postmodern detailing. The small overall number and large size of postwar developments in Bratislava—far fewer

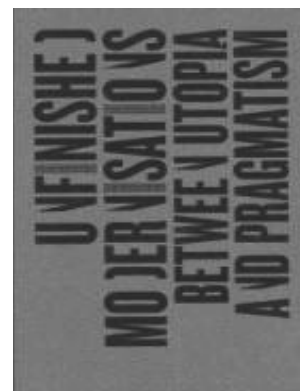
than the equivalent number in many major western cities (think of the countless small and large housing schemes and redevelopments in a city such as Copenhagen or Birmingham or!)—emphasises the highly concentrated, coordinated character of Eastern-Bloc housing production. The final section of the book, which presents type-plans of standard housing blocks and social institutions, and images of public art projects, underlines the socialist countries' characteristic combination of extreme type-plan standardisation and ambitious, usually half-realised landscaping and social provision schemes—and, more generally, the vast spaciousness and restrained height of housing slabs and towers. Considering the politically contentious status of these developments in the post-1989 years, the dispassionate character of this book, aiming (in an echo of Tacitus) 'not to romanticise... but instead to analyse truthfully and without prejudice', is a remarkable achievement. Overall, the book provides the most comprehensive coverage yet of mass housing in a single city, with very few identifiable flaws. Only the maps themselves might perhaps have been enhanced: an overall map of the city would have been helpful, as would more explicit captioning of the useful layout plans of the individual housing schemes.

Could this book serve as a fieldwork aid as well as a desk research guide? Probably, although it would certainly not fit in even a large pocket, and weighs over 1 kg! But—the electronically-minded reader might object—is not a published book, in any size or shape, an obsolete form in which to present topographical information of any sort, information that more properly belongs in GIS-type databases, accessible via internet links, 'tagging', portable devices and so forth? Maybe—but one could counter that old-style publication still offers a far more palpable, 'concrete' way of accessing a diversity of visual and textual material—as resoundingly demonstrated in the Bratislava Atlas. Perhaps the ideal formula is a combination of the two, as with the recent English Heritage/RCAHMS-backed programme to make available on-line the text of Tower Block, and convert its Gazetteer into a pilot on-line database covering several regions of England and Scotland (see [www.towerblock.org](http://www.towerblock.org)) The **docomomo**-ISC on Urbanism and Landscape (of which Henrieta Moravčíková is an active member) is currently investigating the potential of on-line databases: maybe Bratislava's achievement of the most comprehensive published inventory to date could serve as the foundation for a Slovak database initiative of equivalent international exemplar status?

Miles Glendinning  
Chair **docomomo** ISC/U+L

### Unfinished Modernisations. Between Utopia and Pragmatism

By Maroje Mrduljaš, Vladimir Kulic  
Publisher: Croatian Architect's Ass.  
ISBN 978-9-5366-4624-1  
Language: English  
Year: 2012



This brilliant research into the architecture and urban planning of socialist Yugoslavia has claimed and revealed a number of 'unfinished modernisations'. The significance of the work, then, has to be assessed at several levels: of architectural history during the Cold War, architectural history in relation to politics and society, and of the projection of a hope for new relations between architecture, urban planning, society and politics. In the history of architecture during the Cold War, the reception of Yugoslav architecture mostly associated it with the Communist Bloc. The hegemonic western definition and selection of architecture of the second half of the century was to emerge during this process. Western overviews and standard works on architecture have at least marginalized, if not entirely obliterated, the achievements of the East. Here I have to admit that at the moment I am unfamiliar with the forms and contents of the reception of Western architecture in the East, a gap that needs to be filled in further research.

A project of this kind is accordingly of immense value. It ambiguously shows that the architectural achievements of the East, until the end of the 1980s, are on an absolutely equal footing with those of the West and in some cases even more visionary. In a single sentence, the project Unfinished Modernisations is an essential contribution to the obvious demand that the architectural history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century should be written anew, as a common history of East and West, of capitalist and communist architecture.

Dietmar Steiner  
Director Architekturzentrum Wien