



Giuseppe Penone, Uga de Plaisant and Raynaldo Perugini, *Casa Albero*, Fregene, Italy, 1968, the "Palla" after restoration, 2020. © Photograph of Silvia Segarra Lagunes.

The Home at the core of Modernity, an optimistic architecture

The architecture of the Modern Movement encompasses a century of fast-paced innovation accompanying the creation of our modern lifestyle. Architects have always been at the forefront of this innovative conception of daily living space, which changed radically during the last century. From *Art Nouveau* to the *Arts and Crafts* movement or the work of the *Deutscher Werkbund*, the spatial and material experimentation from Victor Horta to Adolf Loos, the research into the idea of comfort from Frank Lloyd Wright to Alvar Aalto, and the innovative spatial proposals from Le Corbusier to Mies van der Rohe, just to mention a few, the design of the House and Home became a progressive tool reflecting on society. Experiments on transparency and the inside-outside relationship, along with key books at the end of the 1920s, led to a shift in the architectural approach to living space. 1929 was an especially fertile year on these topics: Sigfried Giedion published *Befreites Wohnen*, stressing the importance of *licht, luft, oeffnung* [light, air, opening]; on the scope of the 2nd CIAM (*Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne*) that took place in Frankfurt, the book *Die Wohnung für das Existenzminimum* was published, focused on Frankfurt's ambitious housing program directed by Ernst May, known as *Das Neues Frankfurt*, and including a collection of international attempts to define the minimum habitable dwelling. The book cover and poster advertised an exhibition of plans that addressed the conference theme, submitted by modernist delegates from different countries, all drawn to the same scale. Ernst May's minimalist floor plan for houses on *Frankfurt's Praunheim* estate, which included the standardized kitchen designed by Grete Schütte-Lihotzky, was selected as an outstanding example. The same year Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich designed the Tugendhat House in Brno, and Le Corbusier, in his celebrated Villa Savoye in Poissy, was about to perfectly apply *les cinq points pour une nouvelle architecture*, defined while designing a house for the Weissenhoff Estate in Stuttgart, as part of the *Deutsche Werkbund-Ausstellung* of 1927.

Entitled "Modern Houses" this issue of the **docomomo Journal** is devoted to the theme of single-family houses, given the key role they played in the ideal definition of the Modern Movement architecture, as a symbolic and functional affirmation of the utopian turning of dreams into reality. The aim of this issue is to consider the transformation of daily life, and to address the architectural

challenges that arose from the joy contained in what we might call the "architecture of happiness." As we continue to endure a pandemic that has now lasted for more than a year, **docomomo** wishes to declare that "till the moment, the best vaccine to prevent contagion was invented by architects: the house".

Thus, in response to the question "How should we live?", the goal of this **docomomo Journal** 64 is to debate the house and the home agenda as an important topic at the core of Modern Movement architecture. Nowadays, the growing emphasis on wellbeing goes beyond the seminal ideas that modern houses were "*machines à habiter*" and is closer to an idealistic vision of a stimulating shell for humans, which is shaped by imagination, experimentation, efficiency, and knowledge.

Presenting thought-provoking essays, this journal makes a link between the ideas of the Modern Movement and the current use of these precious houses, taking into account the passing of time and its effects, and combining questions of design, maintenance or even rehabilitation. A variety of reflections from professionals and scholars is presented: from essays dedicated to the avant-garde experiments of the 1920s in Japan, under restoration to reassert their original innovative and sustainable construction systems, to the most innovative modern achievements in São Paulo, Brazil, going through the optimistic atmosphere after WWII echoed in mid-century design and architecture, and imbued in everyday living with softer and organic forms. From Mexico to Puerto Rico and Argentina, from Australia to Kenya, from Portugal to Italy and France the future was envisaged as something better than the present, with the home being the architectural canvas through which comfort, domesticity, and beauty were expressed. If the 1950s can be said to embody optimism, the 1960s represented a maturity of design that should represent the best in us, and most of all inspire us!

docomomo is deeply grateful to Louise Noelle and Horacio Torrent for accepting the challenge to act as guest editors of this **docomomo Journal**, and for proposing this challenging topic for discussion. Thanks to their commitment, underpinned by the meticulous and rigorous work and skill of the wide range of professionals, scholars, and researchers who have contributed with their knowledge and research, it is with great pleasure that we are able to present this journal.

Searching Paradise

BY LOUISE NOELLE AND HORACIO TORRENT

Alvar Aalto (1898-1976) stated:

Architecture has an ulterior motive... the thought of creating a paradise. It is the only purpose of our houses. If we did not always carry this thought around with us, all our houses would become simpler and more trivial and life would become – would it be at all worth living? Each house, each product of architecture that is worthwhile as a symbol is an endeavour to show that we want to build an earthly paradise for people.¹

Presented in a lecture in Malmö, in 1957, where, facing the predominance of the technical and economic dimensions of those times, he claimed for architecture the ability to create a place for human beings' happiness in all its complexity. According to Alvar Aalto, raising the quality of life did not lie in technical and economic capabilities but in the creative work of architects, whose "houses are built where people can lead happy lives," and only reachable "by concentrating on human happiness."

This search for paradise, magnificently expressed by the Finnish architect, has guided countless projects in modern architecture. The house, the place of home, the world and container of the everyday individual and family life has been the privileged set of this implicit exploration, where many paradises can be recognised. It is about achieving adequate protection and getting a space where satisfaction becomes a daily joy for those who live in it: happiness as an attainable goal.

The idea of house

From time immemorial, the house has been present as one's place; one need only recall the home dominant role in Ulysses' journey in *The Odyssey*. However, this is rather an ideal perception of domestic space since architectural creations took the form of palaces or mansions for many centuries. In the Renaissance, not only rich merchants had access to the construction of important dwellings, but also some artists had this privilege, as was the case of Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574), with two residences richly decorated with frescoes by him, in Arezzo and Florence. It was also the case of Federico Zuccari (1540-1609) and Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564), in the same Italian city, while Andrea Mantegna (1431-1506) and Giulio Romano (1499-1546) settled in Mantua, among others.

Yet it would be at the end of the 19th century that private houses would acquire greater presence and relevance, resulting from the growing well-being of the bourgeoisie, who sought not only better places to live but also publicly

demonstrate their prosperity. Besides, advances in materials and construction techniques, as well as new studies in health and hygiene and a series of theoretical writings strengthened this progress. In this sense, books such as Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc's (1814-1879) *Histoire d'une maison* encouraged the possibility of building private houses by offering a kind of manual for the domestic architecture of the 19th century French bourgeoisie. In a way, it was to be expected that a year later, in 1875, he would publish the controversial *Histoire de l'habitation humaine*² to show the various modes of inhabiting across the globe since ancient times. It was an attempt to reflect the fact that people weave affective and emotional ties with architecture, especially when, with its structure, bricks or mortar, it makes up what we call "home".

Attractive residences from just over a century ago by renowned architects, such as Charles Garnier (1825-1898) in Bordighera (1884-1886); Victor Horta (1861-1947) in Brussels (1898-1901); Antoni Gaudí (1852-1926) in Barcelona (1883-1906); Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959) in the Chicago area (1893-1914); and many others come to mind. It is therefore not surprising that the presence of private houses with a particular stamp multiplied exponentially at the end of WWI. At the beginning of the Modern Movement, pioneers built for themselves a series of paradigmatic dwellings which they set out in the form of manifestos. It is proper to recall Rudolf M. Schindler's (1857-1953) manifesto (1921-1922) and Richard Neutra's (1892-1970) manifesto (1932-1963), both in Los Angeles; Konstantin Melnikov's (1890-1974) in Moscow (1927-1929); Alvar Aalto's in Muuratsalo (1952-1953); or Jean Prouvé's (1901-1984) prefabricated house in Nancy (1954). Without forgetting a good number of Le Corbusier's (1887-1965) precursor examples in France, the houses that Walter Gropius (1883-1969) made for the director and teachers of the Bauhaus in Dessau (1925), as well as the early models of Latin American masters, such as Gregori Warchavchik (1896-1972) in 1927, Lucio Costa (1902-1998) in 1928-1930 and Juan O'Gorman (1905-1982) in 1931.

Likewise, the house is an architectural genre that in the first half of the twentieth century could integrate *avant-garde* concepts and disseminate novel ideas with creative cases. By studying the domestic spaces of the Modern Movement, it is possible to trace its growth and its undoubted contributions. Habitability was a central theme in the development of the modern house promoted by some of the pioneers, most notably Le Corbusier and his approach – "the house is a machine for inhabiting" – in the search for a house for the common man. But also, the need to think of it as a whole, as Bruno Taut (1880-1939) did, as a single body, with its internal

functions and its radiation towards the exterior, including its context, garden and landscape.³

In addition to the fact that the house has always been considered as a shelter, the concepts of comfort and well-being were added, sometimes based on technological advances and mechanical processes. Furthermore, the careful study of dimensions, spaces and furnishings that were not only pleasant but also suitable for the inhabitant and his or her household goods, became a priority in the design process. Not only is it an intimate and personal space, but it becomes an individualized environment. The examination of basic design principles thus led architects to incorporate new ways of thinking and acting, which had a positive response from users.

The fundamental architectural typology of a dwelling and climate and economic factors were central to many of the avant-garde projects. The immediate surroundings became an intrinsic part of them, because of the clear relationship between interior and exterior that modernity proposed through the transparency and openness of the architectural box. In fact, this integration can be seen as a distinctive feature from the houses of the past. In some privileged cases, the architect appreciated the environment and the landscape, taking advantage of the existing nature and the views generated towards the distance. We have often considered paradise to be nothing more than a garden.

House's footprints

The idea of creating a paradise has had multiple manifestations in modern architecture, both the notion of an earthly Eden and its repercussions in the forms that buildings have taken.

This issue of **docomomo Journal** offers a series of monographs and an extensive bibliography. The examples presented have been little referenced in reflections on the modern house, despite having been recognized as part of the work of their creators. The selection was made up of a casuistry which allowed to show different configurations of modernity in different times and latitudes, seeking to broaden the perspective on diverse lifestyles and habits, as well as the dissimilar conceptions in the opening up to its surroundings.

Considering architecture as a geographically and temporally localized discipline, the guiding idea was to include projects from different territories to avoid generalizations in the interests of a review of the facts themselves. There are several ways – both theoretical and practical – through which architects confronted their repeated aspiration to build paradise or at least an adequate approximation to this ideal. To this end, it was necessary to place the works on a plan of common recognition, which would supply greater clarity in the correlations and affinities.

In 1953, when he was teaching at Tulane University, the Argentine architect Eduardo Sacriste (1905-1999) began a recognized work of what he called the footprints of the buildings. This consisted of a drawing on the same scale of many paradigmatic buildings from different periods. The first version of this collection was published in 1959, by students at North Carolina University, and a more definitive

one in 1962 in Buenos Aires.⁴ His intention was pedagogical and should be seen as part of the formation of experience, visual education, and the training of students' powers of deduction. He considered the floor plan as the image of the footprint of a building, the impact it leaves on the ground, close to the idea of the ruin that proposes the hypotheses for the recognition of the building that has disappeared. He said: "The comparative method is the only one capable of giving us a grasp of reality and of bringing before our eyes the volume and dimensions of a building, this knowledge being fundamental for any subsequent intellectual speculation about the space or the plastic values of an edifice."⁵

Ludwig Hilberseimer (1885-1967) had the opportunity to see these drawings when they were shown at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago. He recognized how irritating and misleading maps drawn at different scales could be, as well as the usual representations in the history of architecture, where small buildings were often shown on a larger scale and large buildings on a smaller scale. He therefore considered a good move to have found a representation method, a system "in which all floor plans are drawn to the same scale so that the relative size of buildings are immediately apparent to the eye." He pointed out how some works propose systems of absolute proportions and others are based on systems of relative proportions, while noting that Eduardo Sacriste "has hereby introduced a superior method of studying buildings comparatively, a vital new aid to the appreciation of their relative size, and thus he enables us to acquire a fuller understanding of architecture."⁶

In a similar exercise, drawings of the plans of the houses in this publication, were organized in chronological order, from 1928 to 1968. What is striking about these plans, put in relation to each other, is the simplicity with which they show different project strategies for a common theme, that of the abode for family life, as well as the variety and richness of the architectural principles applied in each work. They show the search for a relationship between a universal subject such as the house and its contexts, which are so different from one another. It is thereby possible to see the choices made regarding different geographical positions and latitudes: while some show the clear distinction between winter and summer in temperate climates, others, located in tropical zones, demonstrate how the undeniable force of nature was present in the design.

Simply putting the floor plans of these works together confirms that the richness and variety of the house, as a work of architecture, is not only given by the conditions of its materialization. The comparative appreciation of the plans shows the diversity of solutions and the traces of the spatial strategies that proposed the shaping of the intimate world in a distinctive link with the exterior, in a dialectic that is reaffirmed as typical of the Modern Movement.

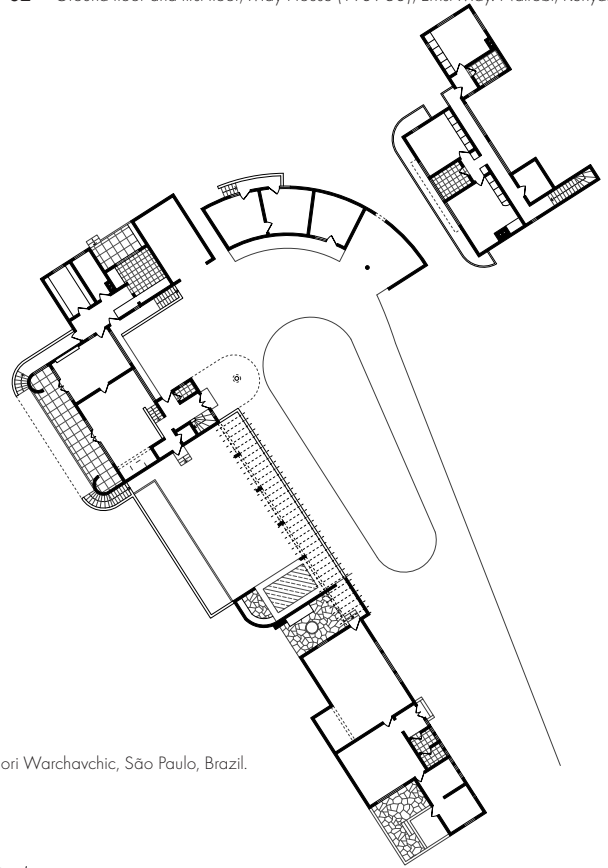
Modern design, modern living

We usually recognize the transformation of formal paradigms that modern architecture carried out. Ideas about the relationship between space-time and the circulation spaces articulation; the design operation based on a pure form;

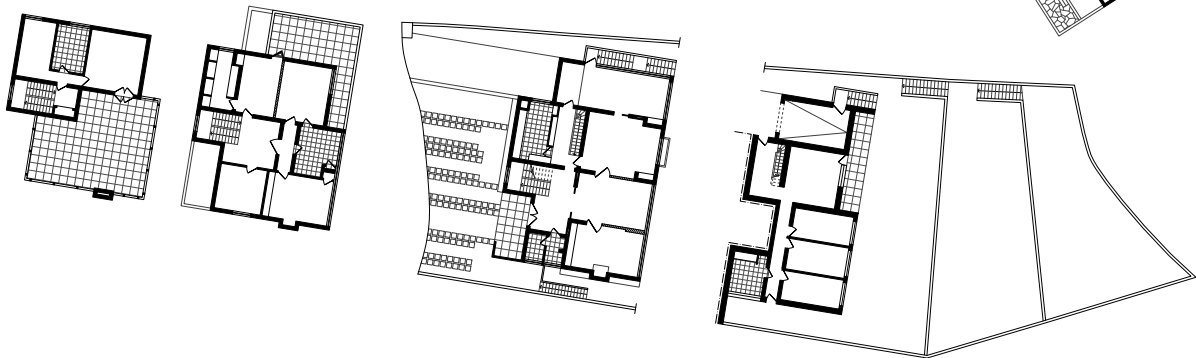
01 Ground floor plan, Chochikukyo House (1928), Koji Fujii. Kyoto, Japan.



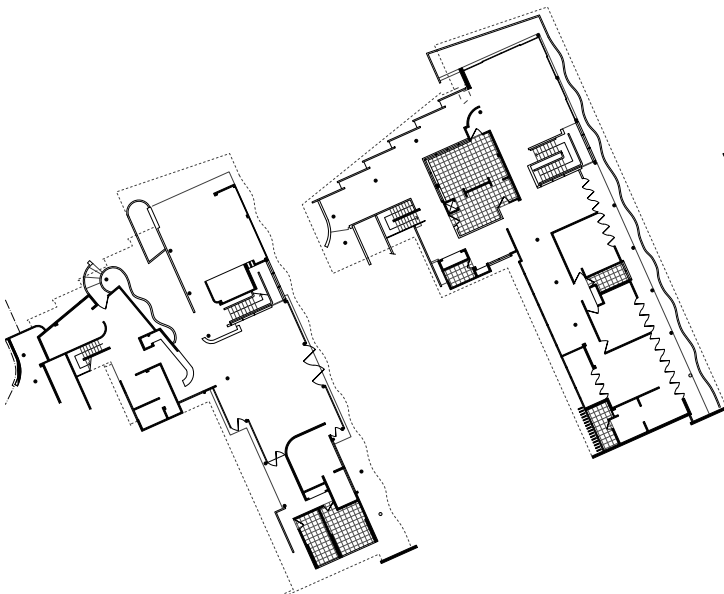
02 Ground floor and first floor, May House (1939-53), Ernst May. Nairobi, Kenya.



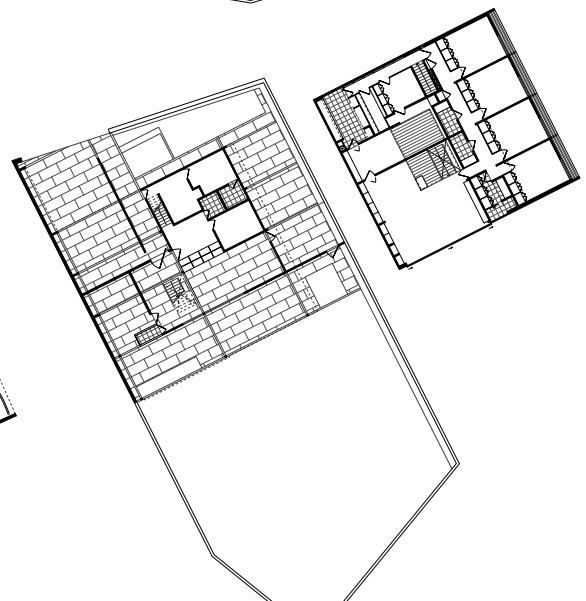
03 Basement, ground floor, first and second floor plans, da Silva Prado House (1930). Gregori Warchavchic, São Paulo, Brazil.



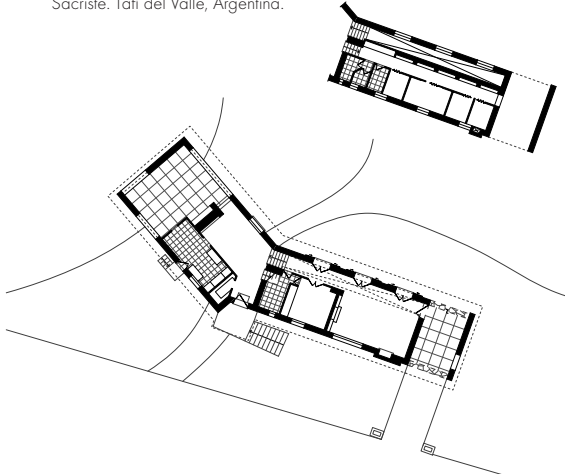
04 Ground floor and first floor plans, Fullana House (1946), Henry Klumb. San Juan, Puerto Rico.



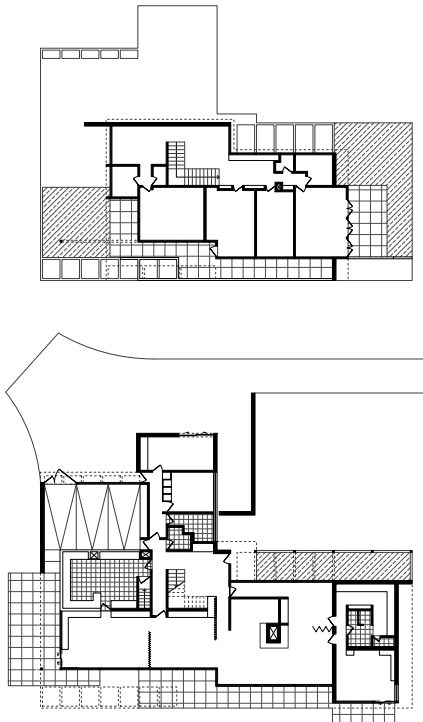
05 Ground and first floor plans, Álvarez House (1949), Augusto H. Álvarez. Mexico City, México.



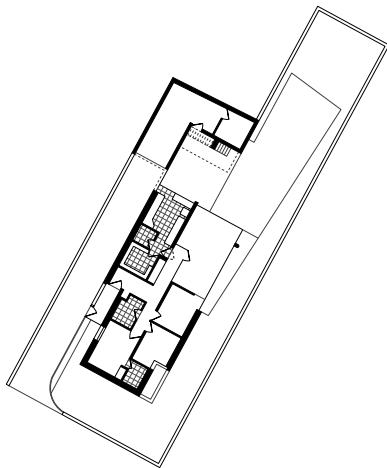
06 Ground floor and first floor plans, Torres Posse House (1957-58), Eduardo Sacriste. Tafi del Valle, Argentina.



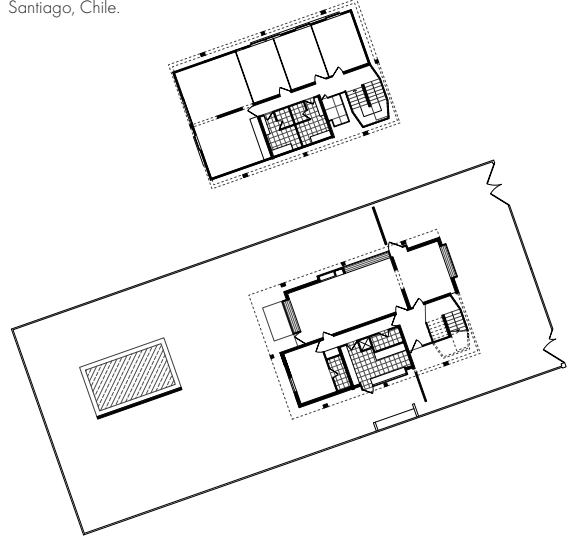
08 Ground floor and first floor plans, Delcourt House (1968), Richard Neutra. Croix, France.



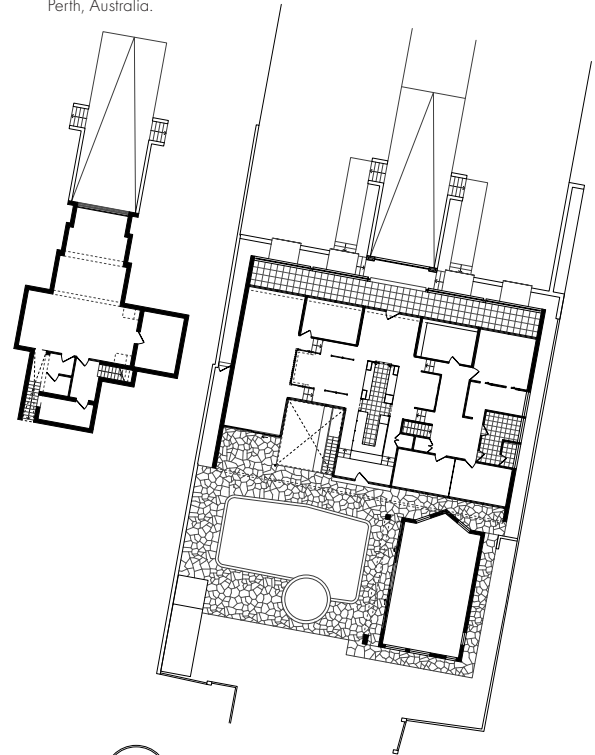
10 Ground floor plan, Magalhães House (1967-70), Alvaro Siza. Porto, Portugal.



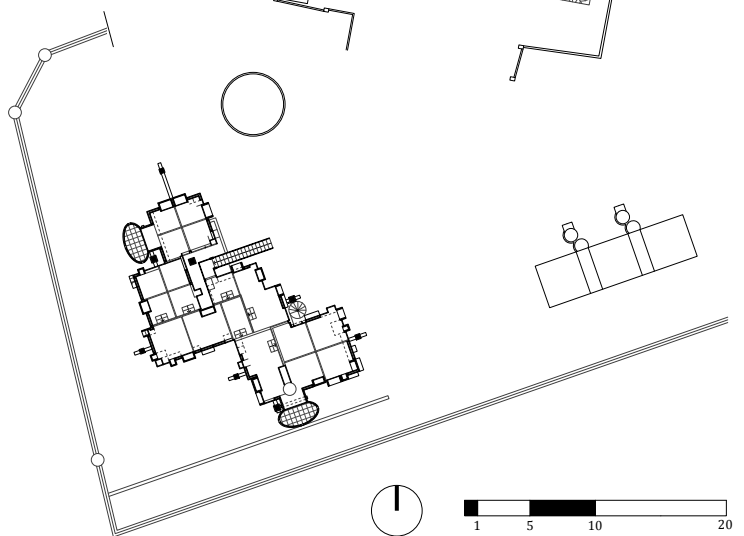
07 Ground floor and first floor plans, Herman House (1963-65), Emilio Duhart. Santiago, Chile.



09 Basement and ground floor plans, Paganin House (1966), Iwan Iwanoff. Perth, Australia.



11 Ground floor plan, Albergo House (1968), Giuseppe Perugini. Rome, Italy.



the opening of the architectural box in a full connection between interior and exterior; transparency in all its forms; and the climate and nature enjoyment were key to transforming the house, as space or container, and the life in it. But behind the spatial and formal conceptions was also the intellectual effort of modern architects to modify at least two fundamental aspects: on the one hand, that of the practice and direct experience of domestic life; and on the other, that of *habitus*, as “lasting dispositions” that functioned as generating and organizing principles of these practices and their representations.⁷

The house was the privileged laboratory for this change, which would include both the architecture’s thought structures and the design strategies for the dwelling, as well as ways of life and social and cultural pretensions of those who would inhabit it. Modern architecture overturned, through the project of the house, many of the social conditioning factors that already had a consolidated history in the bourgeois family modes of inhabiting, and in those of the popular sectors big families. It incorporated the idea of efficiency in organization, comfort, and the enjoyment of space as the keys to a good life.

The modern house was then thought of not only in itself, as a problem of fine-tuning the discipline and domestic space, but also as a fine-tuning of the instruments of architecture itself, to carry out space’s transformations in all its registers and scales. This desire to adapt domestic life linked spatial and material ideas with cultural, social, and even political meanings that were present in the aims for change of society. To achieve this, it generated new strategies and techniques for the architectural project, which made it possible to set up ties with transcendent meanings, such as the aspiration for paradise on earth. That ulterior motive always latent – as Alvar Aalto said – suggested the search for new ideas and instruments to design the house, and they become clearer from the joint reading of the plans, in which the conditions assumed by the modern project in architecture, in different times and places, can also be read.

If the traditional house had been conceived fundamentally as a shelter, the modern house also had to ensure a series of minimum conditions to allow maximum use and enjoyment in circumstances dominated by the economy and new technological possibilities. But it was a question of transforming the living experience, according to the conditions that modern architecture proposed – both in design and materiality – in its commitment to a new culture of inhabiting. Hence, a new link between the interior and the exterior went beyond the idea of mere shelter and made it possible to establish a new relationship with nature.

It is also interesting to note the vocation of these dwellings, which varies from urban houses to suburban residences; this can be understood from the land size and condition on which they are placed. They combine the ideas of rational organization found in the conception of the floor plan’s typological configuration, but they set up a particular connection with the site, its width or narrowness, its orientation in search for the sun and how courtyards and gardens expand the interior experience. On the one hand,

there are houses with the pursuit for a greater relationship between the program components and their articulation in a concentrated floor plan which combines the different areas in a configuration dominated by the geometry of the volume or the massiveness of the walls. On the other hand, there is the idea of an expansive or centrifugal floor plan which seeks a greater continuity relationship with the exterior. In these cases, there is a greater articulation between the different spaces, especially the semi-covered or open ones, when the climate permits.

These are dialectical positions, concomitant with the Modern Movement in its various stages. The concentrated floor plan appears in the earliest houses, which do not yet assume the full potential of steel and reinforced concrete technologies. Meanwhile, the expansive floor plan frees itself from the constrained spaces, seeking full continuity made possible by better use of the notion of the free floor plan, which also allows greater continuity with the exterior, where courtyards and gardens become an extension of the interior. In both cases, to a greater or lesser extent, the open floor plan allows the public and private spheres to be combined, and transparency makes possible various degrees of integration with the exterior, whether towards small plots of land or attractive distant views.

The modern house favored diverse formal and material conceptions, based both on new social ideas and family organization and on the use of novel technical solutions, some of which compromised their durability over time. It also promoted the incursion into mechanisms for achieving interior comfort, which were not always fortunate. These enquiries and trials looked to configure the architecture of well-being and bring an optimistic future. But primarily, they highlighted a new culture of inhabiting which, based on a new spatial experience, that would bring the home closer to the idea of paradise.

Preserving architecture: preserving the search for paradise

There are many interventions that modern houses have been suffered of in recent times, when only a few of them can be recognized as paradigms of modern architecture and preserved in their integrity. They have become museums of themselves or exhibition centers for the work of their architects; some have been declared National Heritage or, in the best of cases, UNESCO World Heritage Sites, although unfortunately they are in the minority.

It is possible to point out that the most common transformations come from the demands proposed by the change of their inhabitants, rarely those who requested the original project. On other occasions, they are linked to their surroundings modifications. However, most of them have been and still are homes, places that adapt to new family organizations, changes in social conditioning and adjustments that their inhabitants consider necessary. But also, some coercions weigh on residents or owners, many of them based on the need for updating, enhanced by new patterns of consumption or new pretensions to social representation.

Transformations related to changes in their geographical

context are increasingly common. They correspond to the excessive increase in land prices, in places that at the time of their design and construction assumed quite different urban characteristics. Houses that were conceived in suburban environments thus now coexist with other city scales, or have definitively disappeared, in many cases due to the profitable expectation that is imposed on a small property as opposed to the chance of greater use of the land.

The works included in this publication show the wide range of possibilities for intervention that the houses of the Modern Movement have undergone. Some of them have kept their presence and have only needed simple maintenance or small modifications of installations and infrastructures, due to their materiality – the Torres Posse House and the Fullana House – or the careful first configuration, such as the Manuel Magalhães House. Others demand advanced operations to adjust the first technical improvements to current requirements, such as the Delcourt House; or even to assume a reconstruction – by decision of the owners after a disaster – such as the Paganin House, a dilemma that also arises for the Klumb House, which recently burnt down. The unacceptable modifications to the May House in Kenya, which was completely disfigured when it was turned into a suburban club, make it necessary to reflect on the possibility of rebuilding it. In some cases, the renovations are carried out to adapt the spaces to new use, as in the house in Sao Paulo; in others, substantial changes are made, such as the interior liberation and recomposition of the Herman House, as well as the extreme case of the Augusto H. Alvarez House, which was divided into two dwellings. Finally, the Albergo House, near Rome, proposes the challenge of a recovery that assumes the powerful experimental dimension of its origin.

The Eindhoven-Seoul Statement establishes that one of the aims of **docomomo** International and the National Working Parties is to “promote the conservation and re(ue) of buildings and sites of the Modern Movement”, as well as to “foster and disseminate the development of appropriate techniques and methods of conservation and adaptive (re)use.” For this reason, the diverse actions undertaken in most of the works presented below can be said to follow these precepts.

Modern houses stood for the breaking down of ways of life’s conditioning and the incorporation of freedom modes

in the evolution of architecture in the last century. These conditions are embodied in the spatial continuity, the integration of uses, circulations, the opening of the architectural box, and the relationship between interior and exterior, giving rise to countless new social and spatial experiences and practices. They make up today a particular dimension of the modern architecture heritage; a series of intangibles that go unnoticed by force of habit and about which it is necessary to warn that they can disappear when the material conditions are altered. These intangibles form the immaterial dimension which, through the modern house, has transformed life forever.

Today it is necessary to preserve these intangibles that architecture carries with it, those that formed the central *corpus* of that ulterior motive of modern architecture: the search for paradise.

Notes

- 1 Alvar Aalto, “The Architects Conception for Paradise”, in *Villa Mairea*, Helsinki, Alvar Aalto Foundation, 1998, 2.
- 2 Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le Duc, *Histoire d’une maison*, Paris, 1874; *Histoire de l’habitation humaine*, Paris, 1875.
- 3 Bruno Taut, *Ein Wohnhaus*. Reihe der Kosmos-Baubücher, Stuttgart, Verlag Franckh’sche Buchhandlung, 1927.
- 4 Eduardo Sacriste, *Building Footprints*, Raleigh, NC: A Student Publication of the School of Design, North Carolina State College, 1959.
- 5 Eduardo Sacriste, *Huellas de edificios - building footprints*. Buenos Aires, EUDEBA, 1962, 9.
- 6 Ludwig Hilberseimer, “Introduction”, in Eduardo Sacriste, *Huellas de edificios - building footprints*, Buenos Aires, EUDEBA, 1962, 3.
- 7 Pierre Bourdieu, *El sentido práctico*, Siglo XXI Editores Argentina, 2007, 93.

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Koji Fujii, "Chochikukyo", Oyamazaki-cho, Kyoto, Japan, completed in 1928, view from the Living-room to the Dining-room. The Living-room and the Dining-room are gently separated by a screen with a gentle arc. © Photo by Taizo Furukawa.

Chochikukyo: cultural property representing “Japanese Timber Country Modernism”

BY AKIRA MATSUKUMA

“Chochikukyo” (1928) is the fifth residence designed by and for the architect Koji Fujii (1888-1938). As a result of his research on environmental engineering at Kyoto University, “Chochikukyo” presents the ideal form of a universal “Japanese house” that suits the climate of Japan as well as the sensitivity and lifestyle of the Japanese people. In 1999, “Chochikukyo” was selected as one of the twenty best **docomomo** buildings to represent Japanese modernist architecture, and in 2017, it was designated as a National Important Cultural Property which was the first time for an architect’s own house built in the Showa period (1926-1989).

“Chochikukyo” 1928, a masterpiece of timber modernism

The fifth architect’s residence “Chochikukyo,” located in the town of Oyamazaki-cho, Kyoto Prefecture is the only existing building of his in the residential area of the Tanida district, where the architect Fujii purchased approximately 40,000 square meters (m²) of forest, developed the infrastructure such as roads, water supply, sewage systems, electricity, and built his third, fourth and fifth residences, and various other facilities. “Chochikukyo” consists of three buildings: the Main Building where he lived with his family, the Pavilion (Room of Quiet) which is a private space where Fujii enjoyed peace, reverence and tranquility, and the Teahouse where he welcomed guests.

Japan has a long history of timber buildings built from natural materials in response to the seasonal climate. Unlike styles with strong expressions and decorations in Western countries, those styles came from repeated works of study, and teahouse architecture, represented by Sukiya style buildings which can be said to be a typical example. However, when modernization started in Japan, which opened up to the world from around 1868, it was promoted at the same time as Westernization, and until the early Showa period, Western-style houses and semi-Western-style houses, which were directly imported into Japan, were built one after another regardless of the climate of Japan or sensitivity and lifestyle of the Japanese people.

At that time Fujii, coming from a scientific point-of-view, reviewed the architectural methods that had traditionally been adopted in Japanese homes to suit the climate of Japan. He pursued a “Japanese House” that matched the Japanese climate and Japanese sensibilities. He equipped it with Western chair-style lifestyles and home appliances that reduced household chores and, with “Chochikukyo”, realized a cutting-edge model dwelling called the “Origin of the Environmentally Friendly Dwelling.”

“Chochikukyo” Innovations and Realization by Fujii: Passive (making use of natural energy) innovations using a scientific approach.

Especially in Japan, the following were implemented as important summer measures:

- To provide air flow, one can open all the doors & shoji screens allowing the building to be one large room.
- In order to avoid the summer sunlight and to take in the winter sunlight, the eaves lengths were scientifically determined.
- Avoiding summer heat by inducing ventilation in the roof space.
- Outside air coming into the room was chilled by the use of the underground temperature (use of cool tube).
- A vent pipe connecting the underfloor and the ceiling space is provided, so air cooled under the floor passed through into the roof to lower the temperature and increase ventilation.

Integrating Western, Japanese, and Modern Design – Modernization of the “Japanese house” that the Japanese have built for a long time:

- The tatami mat floor is set 30 centimeters (cm) higher than the wooden floor to match the eye level of the person sitting on the chair with the person sitting directly on the tatami.
- Natural materials such as wood, Japanese paper, bamboo and clay walls traditionally used in Sukiya style architecture are used.
- The fusion of Art Deco and Modernism in Europe and the United States of America (USA) in its early days with the design of the Sukiya style in Japan.

Living room-centered, family-centered planning as the “prototype” of the House:



01 Koji Fujii, "Chochikukyo", Oyamazaki-cho, Kyoto, Japan, completed in 1928, whole view. The "Chochikukyo" Main building wrapped in fresh green, a panoramic view from the south front yard. © Photo by Taizo Furukawa.



02 Koji Fujii, "Chochikukyo", Oyamazaki-cho, Kyoto, Japan, completed in 1928, exterior view. Appearance of the southern side of the "Chochikukyo" Main building. There is no pillar in the corner. © Photo by Taizo Furukawa.

Based on the idea of placing family life as the center of gravity in the house, the space for greeting and serving guests is compactly arranged around the entrance, leaving a large living room for the family behind it. The living room has been created as a place where people gather, with the penetration of the continuous veranda, reading room, and dining room areas creating one rich family space that still has differentiated areas within it for each family-member.

Designing an entirely new lifestyle for the "Japanese House":

On the large site, in addition to using the abundant underground water as a source of drinking water, there is also a 25 meters (m) long and 6 m wide reinforced concrete pool, full-size tennis courts, and Fujii's kiln (where he made pottery named "Fujiyaki"). There is also a landscape around the house that makes use of the slope with streams, ponds and waterfalls. He also practiced the tea ceremony and flower arrangement, and designed everything from architecture to furniture, lighting, carpets, everyday utensils, and the binding of his books.

Architect Fujii sought an ideal model for the "Japanese House"

Fujii, an architect who was active from the Taisho period (1912-1926) to the early Showa period (1927-1989), has attracted attention in recent years as a researcher and architect who pursued "The Ideal Dwelling for the Japanese" that truly suited the climate of Japan and the sensitivity of the Japanese.

He was born in 1888 as the second son of a wealthy family in present-day, Fukuyama City, Hiroshima, a year later than the world-renowned architect Le Corbusier (1887-1965). In 1913, he graduated from the Department of Engineering, Department of Architecture, Tokyo University, and joined the Design/Build construction company Takenaka Corporation in Kobe. Takenaka Corporation was founded in 1899 and was on the verge of making a leap into the modern construction industry. Fujii laid the foundation of a design organization that mainly dealt with the design of office buildings, including the Asahi Newspaper Building in

Osaka. He resigned after being employed for less than six years. After that, from 1919 to 1920, for about nine months, he visited the USA, the United Kingdom (UK), France, Belgium, Italy, Switzerland at his own expense, to inspect their dwellings and manufacturing and engineering facilities which were in the process of modernizing compared to office buildings in Japan at that time.

After returning to Japan, he was invited to teach at the Department of Architecture of Kyoto University, which was established in 1920, and he was one of the first to tackle current environmental engineering. He inspected the devastation caused by the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, and became more conscious of the climate and natural features of Japan. He published his representative book, *Japanese House*, in 1928. The book is famous as the first theoretical book on environmental engineering and it consisted of five chapters: "Japanese style housing," "Western style housing," "Climate," "Facilities," "Summer facilities and Hobbies." As a result of promoting the imitation of Europe and America blindly by the policy of Europeanization and modernization after the Meiji Restoration, the period was a time in which a mixture of Japanese and Western styles and Japanese traditions were mixed up, and furthermore, people faithfully imitated westernized houses, believing them to be culturally superior homes. Fujii, had doubts, "If you compare the history, the human nature, the customs, the local lifestyle and the climate of our country, it is known that they are all very different." He blamed architects and wrote in the introduction that "We must create a genuine Japanese cultural dwelling that is in harmony with our country's unique environment and that is suitable for living here."

"Chochikukyo" was the realization and completion of his housing research and practice through environmental engineering. In 1929 he documented this in *Chochikukyo Documentation* consisting of drawings, photographs, and explanations based on the research results. In 1930, he wrote the English version, *The Japanese Dwelling House*, which was a combination of his two previous books in Japanese. This spread the wonder of the "Japanese House" to the world. He continued to design approximately fifty residences, but the Nakata Residence in Kyoto named



03 Koji Fujii, "Chochikukyo", Oyamazaki-cho, Kyoto, Japan, completed in 1928, living room and dining room. The living room is loosely connected to the Tatami floor called Kogari and the Dining-room. The tatami mat space in the living room is about 30 cm higher than the boards, so that the person sitting on the chair and the person sitting on the tatami can see each other. The clock built into the wall imitates the design of Scottish architect Macintosh. © Photo by Taizo Furukawa.



04 Koji Fujii, "Chochikukyo", Oyamazaki-cho, Kyoto, Japan, completed in 1928, drawing-room. The Drawing-room with floors is not a tatami mat but a board between chairs. The furniture was designed and made by Fujii. The vase displayed between the floors is Fujiyaki designed and made by Fujii. © Photo by Taizo Furukawa.



05 Koji Fujii, "Chochikukyo", Oyamazaki-cho, Kyoto, Japan, completed in 1928, view from the living room to the veranda. View from the room inside the main room. The edge has a glass window that is continuous in three directions. The upper and lower parts are frosted glass and the center is transparent glass, cutting out the landscape like a frame. © Photo by Taizo Furukawa.

“Senyou-so” completed in 1937 was his last work. He died in 1938 at the age of 49. He lies in the graveyard of Nison-in Temple in Kyoto and he designed his own tombstone from his sickbed. He lived in “Chochikukyo” for a short span of only ten years.

**It was the first to be designated as a
National Important Cultural Property (2017)
as a “Showa era dwelling”
built by an architect**

“Chochikukyo”, both the landscape and the three buildings, was designated in July 2017 by the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology as a “National Important Cultural Property.” It should be noted that it was awarded for a dwelling representing the Showa era house, built by an architect for his own residence, that had been completed in pursuit of an ideal house suitable for the climate and natural features of Japan and the way people lived. The idea of functionalism is fused with the Sukiya style technique and the ingenuity of improved facilities for the indoor environment is practiced. It is important in the history of housing and architecture as a pioneer of modern housing based on engineering principles.

The late Hiroyuki Suzuki (1945-2014), a leading researcher of Modern architectural history in Japan and the first representative of **docomomo** Japan, wrote in a magazine featuring “Chochikukyo” in 2000 that it was “an extremely important work as an example of Japan’s approach to global architectural modernization.”

Placing “Chochikukyo” (1928), in the genealogy of independent residential homes built in the suburbs, with the “Red House” (1859) in England, “Behrens Residence” (1901) in Germany, the “Prairie house” group in America, “Villa Savoye” (1931) in France, may be favoritism. To do justice to the world’s architectural history, “Chochikukyo” is unknown. However, in the history of each modernization in each country, continuing to search for its own modern residence, Fujii’s attempt in Japan was an original attempt sufficiently focused on the life of his own country. Fujii looked at the “Modern age” and “Japan” in an equal way, and it should not be considered as a small fiction like a private novel which crystallized his personal world. This is where the bold spirit of the modern quest for housing is overflowing. His aim was not to import or introduce Western residential architecture, but to explore modern life as seen. If Sukiya-like expressions were to appear, it was only because he set up a model of an independent house before modern times as the basis of Japanese houses. Rather than looking at Western architecture as a model of style or technique, there are not many architects who have looked at the movement of Western architecture in the way of model exploration. Fujii’s position should be judged from this.¹

The significance of the designation of “Chochikukyo” as a National Important Cultural Property lies in the fact that it provided an opportunity to review the prototype of “dwelling” for the Japanese people’s living style

at that moment, in that period of modernization and Westernization of Japan after the Meiji period (1868-1912). Many Japanese architects searched for an ideal form of housing for the new Japanese people in the 1920s, and as one of the masterpieces, this house, this “real-thing” was passed on to the next generation.

**Disaster restoration
and maintenance work (2018 to 2022)**

The Main Building and the Pavilion (Room of Quiet) were severely damaged by two natural disasters in 2018.

Since its completion in 1928, the “Chochikukyo” had been standing quietly without suffering any major damage from natural disasters. But in 2018, major natural disasters struck the building twice. The Northern Osaka Earthquake in June and Typhoon 21 in September.

At 7:58 AM on 18 June 2018, an earthquake measuring 6.1 on the Richter scale shook the area. In 1923 Fujii had gone to Tokyo from Kyoto to inspect, for three weeks, the devastation of the Great Kanto Earthquake and five years later he built the “Chochikukyo” from the lessons learned. In 2018 the house was hit by an earthquake for the first time. The glass of the corner sash of the veranda, which had never been broken before, was broken and the exterior earth-plaster wall was partially destroyed. However, the damage was minimized as Fujii had selected land with solid ground for earthquake resistance, lightened the roof making it a one-story building, and reinforced it with built-in furniture at the corners of the building. Fortunately, there was no major damage to the structure of the building, and the general public’s building tour, which had been suspended for two weeks, was resumed on 1 July 2018.

On the other hand, Typhoon 21, which hit the region on 4 September 2018, was the strongest typhoon in 25 years and caused strong winds of more over 158 km/hr and heavy rain in various parts of western Japan including Kyoto and Osaka. Many shrines and temples in Kyoto were damaged by fallen trees. The building itself was not damaged much, but many branches of large Maple trees were broken and the greenery surrounding the dwelling, which is also part of “Chochikukyo”, was severely damaged.

Fortunately, following these two natural disasters, many local staff members (after they had finished confirming the safety of their own homes immediately after the disaster) arrived at “Chochikukyo” on foot the same day, recording and communicating the damage through photographs, and cleaning up the broken glass. It is often said that efforts in times of peace are important for the success or failure of emergency responses, but unexpectedly, “Chochikukyo” utilized the daily efforts of local staff.

Because it had been designated as a national important cultural property the previous year (2017) three days after the earthquake in the area, officials in charge of cultural properties rushed to the site to investigate the damage. After being urgently budgeted by the government, in the spring of 2018, it became possible to repair the earth-plaster of the collapsed external wall and restore the damaged



06 Koji Fujii, "Chochikukyo", Oyamazaki-cho, Kyoto, Japan, completed in 1928, roof tiles displaced by the northern Osaka earthquake 18 June 2018. Roof tiles displaced due to large shaking of the earthquake. Currently repaired after disaster recovery work.

roof tiles as disaster recovery work in 2019. The exterior walls and roof of the "Chochikukyo," which had been worn out for a long time, were beautifully restored to their original appearance.

Teahouse, Main Building, Pavilion
(Room of Quiet) - Preservation repair work
and disaster prevention facility improvement

The devastating fires at Paris' Nôtre Dame Cathedral, and Shuri Castle on Okinawa in 2019, both important cultural assets that symbolized their particular regions, shocked the world. Due to this a project to install large-scale fire extinguishing equipment, including water cannon-guns, was launched in the summer of 2020 to protect the "Chochikukyo" timber modernist buildings from fire.

On the other hand, the Teahouse which had fallen into disuse soon after the war and had suffered considerable damage to its internal structure due to leaks and other reasons, was completely dismantled for preservation and repair. In 2019 the Main Building and Pavilion, which had been damaged by the earthquake and typhoon and whose external appearance had been repaired, had preservation work begun on their interiors. The preservation and repair work, with new disaster prevention facilities, is scheduled to be completed in the Spring of 2022, at which time the original 1928 appearance will have been restored.

Rediscovery, preservation, public activities, owner conversion and cultural property designation (1996 onwards)

Rediscovering the forgotten attraction
and value of "Chochikukyo":

In 1996, at the 20th Century Japanese Art Review II 1920's exhibition held at the Mie Prefectural Museum of Art, I personally cooperated in the exhibition of "Chochikukyo" which was the main exhibition item in the building section, and this was the beginning of my relationship with "Chochikukyo" and the Fujii family. Taking advantage of the fact that

"Chochikukyo" was vacant for a while in 1999, a voluntary survey was conducted in 2000 by the Architects of Takenaka Corporation, who had been established by Fujii. The survey result was published in 2001 *Chochikukyo Jissokuzu* (Survey of Chochikukyo). In 1999, "Chochikukyo" was selected as one of the first twenty of **docomomo** Japan's representative modernist architecture, and in 2000, this exhibition was held all over Japan to raise its social recognition. Thereafter, it was often covered in newspapers, magazines and TV programs. A special TV broadcast on New Year's Day in 2013, which the Emperor and Empress (at that time) viewed, led to the Imperial visit on 24 June of the same year.

Working Together with Local Communities:

The "Chochikukyo", even after the death of Fujii in 1938 continued to be owned by the family until the end of 2016, when Takenaka Corporation became the owner. After the family moved out in the 1950s, it was rented out for a long time, but it was not remodeled into a larger house, nor modification made to the bathroom or kitchen. In the spring of 2008, the tenant moved out and the house became vacant. I formed the "Chochikukyo Club" with the volunteers in



07 Koji Fujii, "Chochikukyo", Oyamazaki-cho, Kyoto, Japan, completed in 1928, outer wall collapsed by the northern Osaka earthquake, 18 June 2018. A clay wall that cracked and collapsed due to a large shaking of the earthquake. Currently, it has been restored after the disaster recovery work.

the neighborhood, and personally leased “Chochikukyo” from the owner and opened it to the public. Back then, its existence and importance were not well known even in the architectural community. To cope with this situation, we created a website, and opened the building to the public through reserved visits. Since then, the number of visitors from all over Japan has gradually increased, and the number of visitors from Japan and overseas has now reached approximately 10,000 per year (in 2018).

In addition to the reserved tour, an event called “Mederu-kai (fan club)” has been firmly established as an annual event in Spring and Autumn to allow many to visit the site to experience being surrounded by fresh green leaves and Autumn leaves. Furthermore, exhibitions have been held, such as in the Spring of 2009 by the modern lacquer artist Natsuki Kurimoto, and in the spring of 2013 by the modern artist Tatsuo Kawaguchi. The site has been used as a place where you can enjoy the conversation between the space of “Chochikukyo” and the Modern Art. All members of the “Chochikukyo Club” except myself, live around Oyamazaki-cho, a town within walking distance. As a matter of fact, this is the most important thing, and no matter how famous intellectuals value it, it is difficult to leave a building that is rooted in the community to the next generation unless the local people continue to be attached to it from the bottom of their hearts.

Shift from individual to corporate
ownership and designation as a national
important cultural property:

It was difficult to keep paying maintenance and management costs, as well as inheritance and property taxes. Therefore, it was decided to shift the ownership of the land and buildings from an individual to the Takenaka Corporation, and to build a sustainable conservation and utilization system in which daily maintenance and public activities are conducted by a non-profit organization, the “Chochikukyo Club,” which is mainly composed of nearby residents. It is significant that the Takenaka Corporation, which has “Dreams into Reality for a Sustainable Future” as its group message, acquired “Chochikukyo” at the end of 2016. By connecting with the people of the town of Oyamazaki-cho through “Chochikukyo”, as a corporate owner rather than an individual, it has become possible to create an intergenerational future for “Chochikukyo” together with the community.

Soon after obtaining the property, Takenaka Corporation applied to designate it as a National Important Cultural Property, and in July 2017, with the advice and assistance of the government, it was decided that “Chochikukyo” would remain as a national property forever. In 2019, Takenaka Corporation, a 120-year old planning, architectural, engineering and construction company, that has Fujii’s DNA at its core, owns an important cultural property, “Chochikukyo”, and is going to work with the local town of Oyamazaki to preserve and open it to the public. Through these activities, we will accumulate the know-how, knowledge, and

technology necessary to preserve and continue to use historic buildings, return them to society, and promote the transmission of architectural culture.

From “20 Century Heritage Sites of Japan” to “World Cultural Heritage”

“Chochikukyo” is in the town of Oyamazaki-cho which
has a rich history, culture and natural environment.

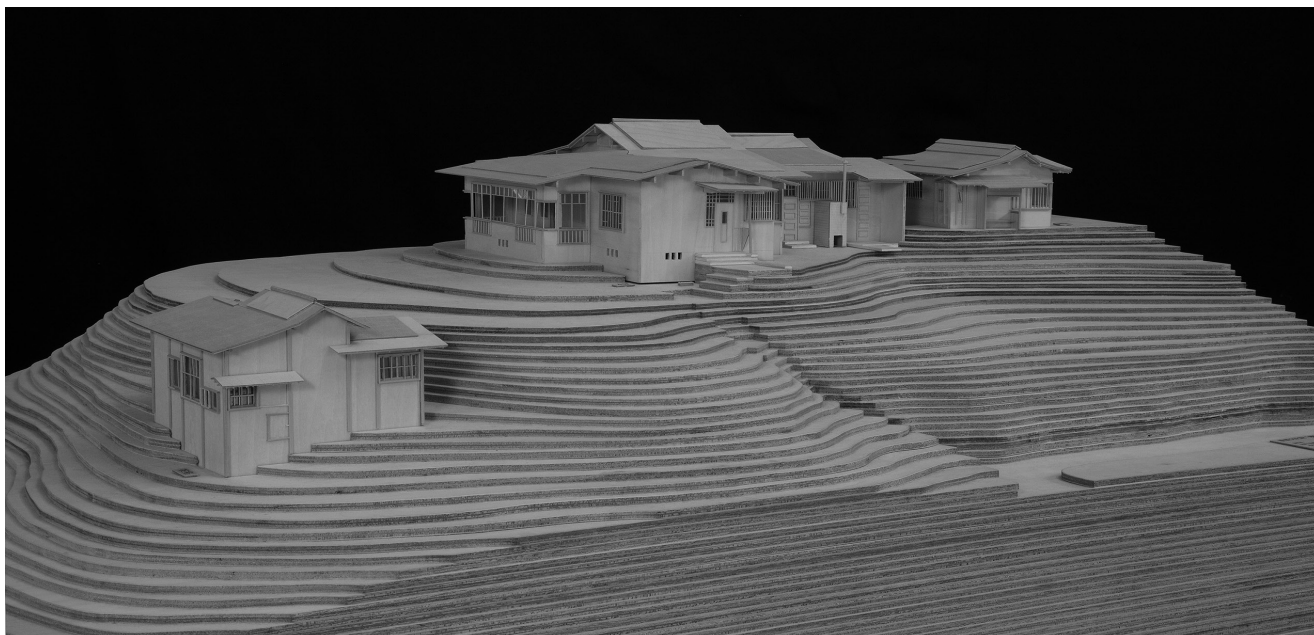
Oyamazaki-cho, a town of about 15,000 residents in the Kyoto Prefecture, has on its north side, the site of the famous Battle of Yamazaki in which Mitsuhide Akechi, who killed his lord Nobunaga, fought with Hideyoshi Toyotomi to take over the country in the Sengoku period (1467-1590). On its south side is the prefectural border with Osaka Prefecture, characterized by a magnificent view of the Yodo-gawa River where the three rivers of Katsura, Uji and Kizu, that flow from Kyoto, join to form the Yodo-gawa River. This small town, with mountains and rivers close by, has long been a key transportation point connecting Osaka, the commercial capital, and Kyoto (the former Imperial capital). In addition, Oyamazaki-cho contains many historical and architectural treasures, such as Myokian “Taian” which is the only existing teahouse of Sen-No-Rikyu who started the tea ceremony, and is a national treasure, Hoshaku-ji Temple (Three-storied pagoda) which is an important cultural property said to have been built by Toyotomi, and “Oyamazaki Villa” which was built as his own house by Shotaro Kaga, an entrepreneur in Osaka, and “Asahi Beer Oyamazaki Villa Museum of Art” which was renovated and extended by architect Tadao Ando (1941-).

“Chochikukyo” selected as
“Twenty 20 Century Heritage Sites of Japan”:

Most of Japan’s World Cultural Heritage Sites (Buildings) are old buildings such as temples and shrines, such as “Kinkaku-ji Temple” in Kyoto and “Horyu-ji Temple” in Nara, castles such as “Himeji Castle,” old private houses such as “Hida Takayama Gassho-zukuri” and traditional townscapes, but there are only two modern constructions, the “Atomic Bomb Dome” in Hiroshima and the “National Museum of Western Art” in Tokyo (the only work of architecture left in Japan by Le Corbusier). Furthermore, both were designed by foreign architects. On the other hand, in recent years, foreign buildings built in the 1920s, the 1930s, and even newer ones built in the 1970s have been selected for World Heritage registration.

Fujii published a book in English, *The Japanese Dwelling-house* in 1930. Ninety years later, “Chochikukyo” is again on the verge of spreading its message to the world as Japan’s representative of 20th century world heritage. As one of the great gestures to show this, in December 2017, the Japanese International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) National Committee announced “Twenty 20 Century Heritage Sites of Japan” including “Chochikukyo.”

“Chochikukyo” was selected since it meet two of the six evaluation criteria (Outstanding and universal value) for



World Cultural Heritage. (i) It is a masterpiece representing the creative talent of mankind, and (ii) It is related to the development of architecture, technology, monumental art, city planning, and landscape design, and shows the important exchange of human values over a period of time or in a cultural region of the world. It is a masterpiece that utilizes tradition and incorporates the idea of modern environmental engineering and is one of the "Twenty 20 Century Heritage Sites of Japan." It is the only private single family house among the list of twenty items. ICOMOS Japan showed how important "Chochikukyo" is in the "Japanese House."

Saying left by Fujii "a country's representative architecture is the residential architecture":

The trend of Modernism that began around 1920 in various parts of the world can be said to be the root of modern architecture that we see today. Considering the future of architecture that continues to be created every day, "Chochikukyo" is extremely important as evidence of the existence of modern and contemporary architecture that has been built over the past one hundred years. I think it is significant to open "Chochikukyo" as a museum and utilize it as a memory of a particular period in time on the topic of the "dwelling," since a house is the most familiar architecture for the general public in many parts of the world.

The concept of "Chochikukyo", which Fujii tried to convey through the "Japanese House", can be said to be an original attempt to modernize dwellings adapted to the climate of Japan and to the sensitivity of the Japanese, unlike the direct imports from Western countries, the blending of Japanese and Western styles, and the International Style advocated by Le Corbusier who lived in the same period. Fujii's idea of the "Japanese House" also reminds us of the importance of the

traditional Japanese way of life, including the tea ceremony and flower arrangement created by Japan's four rich seasons. Based on his wish, "Chochikukyo" will continue to convey to the world the appeal of the "Japanese House" as a world-class residential heritage representing Japan in the 20th century together with the town Oyamazaki-cho, where history and culture have accumulated.

Notes

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Akira Matsukuma

Takenaka Corporation, Design Department. Representative director of General Incorporated Association Chochikukyo Club. Councilor of Takenaka Carpentry Tools Museum.

Born in 1957. After graduating from Hokkaido University in 1980, joined Takenaka Corporation. In addition to design work, he is engaged in preservation and utilization of modern architecture and numerous architectural exhibitions. His main publications are *Chochikukyo*, *The ideal home for the Japanese*, *22 Years of Audience Chochikukyo*, *Chyochikukyo actual measurement collection*. Received the 2018 Architectural Institute of Japan Award achievement award and the Japan ICOMOS Award for a series of activities about Chochikukyo.



Gregori Ilitch Warchavchik/Mina Klabin,
1126 Bahia Street (Luiz da Silva Prado) House, São Paulo, Brazil, 1930-1931. © Source: Acervo da Biblioteca da FAUUSP.

Houses beyond manifestos

BY RUTH VERDE ZEIN

Brazilian historiography on modern architecture, replicated by international authors, confirms the importance and the pioneer stance of Gregori Ilitch Warchavchik (1896-1972)/Mina Klabin's (1896-1969) 1927-1932 architecture in São Paulo, and the 1126 Bahia Street (Luiz da Silva Prado) house, 1930-1931, São Paulo, Brazil, is a remarkable example of their initial set of houses. Its design dialogues with other houses simultaneously designed by Adolf Loos (1870-1933), Le Corbusier (1887-1965), Juan O'Gorman (1905-1982), and the connections among all these modernist pieces and their authors suggest the informal existence of an interconnected network of creators, spread across continents. Likewise, they all put forward proselytizing strategies to amplify the repercussion of their works through exhibitions, publications, and debates. The generous internal spaces of this house on Bahia Street, the steady play of its geometrical composition, and its wise topographical and innovative landscape arrangements are well balanced, providing the authors' aim of both making a manifesto and providing the site and the client's necessities with an appropriate individual solution. The house has been used as a commercial space in recent decades, but it has been properly maintained and it is still in good shape.

Thirty-three hatted men stand on the street, in front of the house, one of them slightly detached to the right; two others stay inside the garden, one with no hat on his head, as is the 36th man waiting at the open door to welcome the group. It is cloudy, probably winter, which back then could be quite a harsh, windy and humid season, despite the city of São Paulo, Brazil, being located exactly on the Tropic of Capricorn, not far from the coast – 60 kilometers (km) – but with a milder climate due to the altitude [approximately 800 meters (m) above sea level]. The photograph was probably taken to be presented in the *Salão de 31*,¹ inaugurated on 1st September 1931. It was perhaps taken in the previous July or August, when the construction of the house was finished, and still displayed a sign with the name of the architect/constructor – who is perhaps one of the men in the photo, or maybe, the photographer himself.

This house was one of the first to be built in the new “garden city” neighborhood of Pacaembú, set on a hill slope looking northwest, with a small creek of the same name down in the narrow valley, soon to be completely transformed by the placement of the city's first municipal soccer stadium. Another house may be seen faraway in the misty background: it is actually above the opposite slope. The house of the photo stands on an irregular parcel of land, its curved front and back lines measure approximately 20 m each, it is 50 m long and from the main street to the back street it falls approximately 11 m: a portion of its slope may be seen in the lateral wall on the right side of the image. Despite the still almost bare surroundings, the house's quite luxurious and diversified vegetation and its terraced placement are remarkable, as well as an inseparable feature of its architectural design and detailing.

The image invites us to enter, so let's tour the house.

But before visiting it, let's stay a little longer in the parlor, have a welcoming cup of coffee – harvested by some local producer – and have a conversation, to reminisce on the circumstances of the authors' life, deeds and dreams, up to the moment this house was designed and built. For, although the international financial crisis of 1929 was hitting hard both the local and the global economy, a young generation of artists was still trying to make a difference and change the world. And make a living at the same time: the coexistence of both aims is not necessarily contradictory.

Warchavchik (Odessa, Ukraine, 1896 – São Paulo, Brazil, 1972) was born into a modest Jewish family. He studied architecture first at the Odessa Art School, then at the *Istituto Superiore di Belle Arti* in Rome, where he received a diploma as *professore di disegno architettonico* [professor of architectural drawing] for the *Corso Speciali di Architettura* [Special Architecture Course], in 1920. He worked for a couple of years at Marcelo Piacentini's (1881-1960) office, mostly on the final works to the *Cine Teatro Savoia*, in Florence. He came to Brazil in 1923, commissioned by the *Companhia Construtora de Santos* [Santos Construction Company], having worked there quite anonymously on several projects for its São Paulo office, until 1926. In 1925 he published a pioneering article on the subject of modern architecture in a local newspaper, after “the bustling local cultural atmosphere animated him into deepen his knowledge on the recent events of modern European architecture.”² In the same year he married Klabin (São Paulo, Brazil, 1896-1969). Born into a prosperous immigrant Lithuanian Jewish family, well-educated and traveled, she was a key influence on upgrading her husband's social and cultural life. She was probably instrumental in introducing him to the local artistic circles and in promoting his shifting

professional attitude towards a more enlightened clientele of a learned elite, able to accept the new architectural ideas. She helped him establish his own office in 1926, where she also acted as landscape and interior designer.

Warchavchik's formal experiences as a young architect in Italy may be read as showing

the author's efforts to steer away both from the eclectic anxiety around originality and from the Heimat [home/homeland] nostalgia which were then in vogue (...) and a predisposition for a more sober style.³

A sobriety that is possibly rooted in

the discovery and appropriation of ordinary things – often anonymous, preindustrial, vernacular buildings and objects – (which) informed and transformed the practice and discourse of architecture and urbanism.⁴

The frank adoption of a striking modern vocabulary and discourse in his works actually happened sometime after he was already living in Brazil. It was certainly stimulated by the flow of international publications, avant-garde artists' debates and the exchange of ideas among peers, either the locals or visitors passing through the city (such as Blaise Cendrars, among others). Back then, São Paulo was undergoing a huge demographic and geographic expansion, thanks to the increasing waves of migration and the pouring of rural capital into city industrialization.

Inside the house, we have to use our imagination, helped by contemporary images, to see how it was when just completed, since almost nothing of the original furniture has remained in the house. The few existing drawings and black and white images mostly show the public areas – and we never know whether the furniture was staged for the exhibitions and publications or was an actual representation of the family's daily life. One of the photos was taken from the northwest corner of the dining area looking diagonally to the parlor and the entrance area beyond. A curtain separates the two main rooms: its railing survived the passage of time, even after the house was rented for non-residential uses; not so much the lower translucent ceiling, in a sort of Mondrian-like color composition, hanging over the dining area. The photo's angle stresses the quite remarkable succession of planes and generous integrated spaces of the entrance level, suggesting a more somber, intimate atmosphere in the dining area, and a more open and day-light flooded ambiance in the living area. Although there were some light metal armchairs in a corner, most of the furniture seems to be of quite heavy ebonized and/or lacquered wood, and the contrast between lightness and heaviness, and between the straight lines of the spaces and some curved details of the furniture helps us date the image and confirm, again in this case, the somewhat paradoxical coexistence between modern spaces and eclectic interiors, as pointed out by some scholars.⁵

Warchavchik/Klabin's first "modernist" houses from 1927-1930 are in dialogue with those simultaneously being

designed by Adolf Loos (Müller House, 1928-1930) and Le Corbusier (Planeix House, 1925-1928); many other learned connections can be made among all the "modernist" pieces of architecture⁶ within that moment, a feature that suggests the informal existence of an interconnected network of creators, spread across continents. He and Mina also keenly embraced the modernists' proselytizing strategies, amplifying the repercussion of each new house designed and constructed through exhibitions, publications and debates. In addition to providing social connections, she probably also revised his texts in Portuguese and participated in the houses' design with her progressive landscape and gardening ideas and skills.⁷

Warchavchik is not quite an unknown author: Brazilian historiography on modern architecture, often replicated as found by international authors, is threaded with debates on the importance of the pioneering stance of his 1927-1932 studio architecture. At that moment, and in the following decades, several instigating debates referred to his contribution, mostly to defend, sometimes very heatedly, the primacy of São Paulo's over Rio de Janeiro's Brazilian modernist initiatives. All these debates seem quite dated today, from a contemporary point of view. Today, instead of putting too much importance on mythical beginnings, as the fulcrum to reconsider the past, a more consistent approach would be to try to understand, even if partially, the complex and synergic real panorama of intricately woven and (un)connected facts, debates, ideas and works of that moment. As stated by historian Paul Veyne, "origins are rarely beautiful (...) the sub-lunar world has no depths, it is only very complicated (...and although) we can reach many truths, they will be partial."⁸

However, in architectural history we have the possibility of considering events that are not only in the past, having to be indirectly known by the disembodied memories of external situations. Historical architecture – or its manifestations, the buildings – keeps on existing, hopefully, in the present. So, although it is very important to learn as much as possible from the contextual situation presiding during the creation of a piece of architecture, it is also relevant to consider it in itself, via its material presence. Buildings are our main documents. They kindly allow us to re-approach them, now and again, to try and (re)construe their lessons, each time through different angles – literally and figuratively speaking – since their characteristics are not always immediately evident, or explicitly manifested.⁹ These works may be (re)considered from different positions, sometimes even in partial or total contradiction with some of the previous established narratives accumulated over them, in the course of time, like crystalized crusts of layers.

As for example. The argument that these late 1920s/early 1930s houses by Warchavchik/Klabin are not quite "modern", since they were constructed using a mixture of traditional and new construction techniques, is completely flawed. Or better: if it is to be taken seriously and extrapolated, almost none of the listed examples in the canonical architecture histories would survive a thorough scrutiny. Recent studies on the renovation and conservation of these

01 Gregori Ilitch Warchavchik/Mina Klabin, 1126 Bahia Street (Luiz da Silva Prado) House, São Paulo, Brazil, 1930-1931, lateral view immediately after construction. © Source: Acervo da Biblioteca da FAUUSP.



02 Gregori Ilitch Warchavchik/Mina Klabin, 1126 Bahia Street (Luiz da Silva Prado) House, São Paulo, Brazil, 1930-1931, dining and living room. © Source: Acervo da Biblioteca da FAUUSP.

early examples are showing us how they had been mostly constructed using a hybrid of traditional/innovative ways; as so, debunking several pseudo truths on the supposed common knowledge about them – and even, putting *sub judice* their authors' statements in memorials and texts.¹⁰ Perhaps the boastful idea that the architects who designed those early "modernist" examples were "ahead of their time" may now be accepted, albeit from a twisted (but more precise) standpoint. It seems that those authors wanted their houses to appear to be more technologically advanced than it was feasible at that moment – and we should accept that this was a strategic move, not an error. They perfectly understood the actual conditions they had to cope with, and quite creatively, made the best of those limitations. This conundrum was even more frequent when it came to houses: although commissioned by wealthy people, there seldom was enough funding to allow the builders to go much further than the basic current ways of erecting small buildings. A similar situation happened to Warchavchik: lots of ink has been spent to discredit the Santa Cruz house (1927) for its hipped roof disguised behind a parapet – as if it were an unsurmountable taint to its status as "modernist." It is not – either by comparison, considering the factual construction situation of most of the so-called "modernist" houses of that period, in any and every other continent; or by the understanding that traditional materials are not an impeditive feature for granting a building a status of "modernity." A lesson that was, in fact, effectively learned in the 1930s, but was already there even before.

While this particular aspect does not seem relevant to me at all, the reason I have not chosen the Warchavchik/Klabin more famous "first" house for this case study, but instead another example among their initial set of houses, has other motivations. One is purely subjective: it is simply the one I like the most. For sure, my subjectivity has probably been fed by the sum of many other considerations. First, it is not placed onto an "ideal" parcel of land, flat and non-specific, able to accept some sort of prototypical solution. Instead, although its downward sloping site is a common characteristic of São Paulo's hilly topography, its unique situation asked for, and was fulfilled by, a careful and particular design solution. As such, the authors were struggling between two poles: the making of a bold generic statement, to befit Warchavchik's rising fame as an avant-garde modern architect, and the creation of a particular individual solution, to better attend the site and the client's needs. The house did achieve both goals: it became a piece of propaganda, but it was also a very accomplished building in which to live – initially as a house, and afterwards, in a second life, as an office. Secondly, its volumetric solution is both simple and complex, depending on how you look at it, or from where; and that is not just the result of a complicated aleatoric compositional game. It fully attends to the necessities of the first owner's family, while considering the decorum of its public facade on the somber south side and allowing the house to have open views to the rear north and west horizons, while still being partially protected from the sunset tropical glare through the clever placement of

verandas. It looks like a regular two to three story building when seen from the street, but when seen from the back, its four to seven story/terraced arrangement suggests the possibility of an experimentation with the idea of a high-rise volume. In brief, I like it because it is an accomplished and complex piece of design which cannot be fully understood without properly promenading it, in a real or a virtual way. And because its qualities as an avant-garde piece did not weaken it: its sturdiness assured it a sort of ageless quality that has helped it survive the decades quite well. And still, it looks so freshly new it makes you forget you are looking at an almost century-old house.

One can establish several connections between the architecture of this house and that of other better-known ones, designed at almost the same time by several other architects: in fact, a very erudite and thorough approach on that line has already been made.¹¹ Anyway, that is also a very tricky proposition: the current crystalized historiographic crusts tend to make us believe that the things that were earlier published worldwide are more relevant than other objects that were, until now, only known locally. A good cure for that bias is a triple sided remedy: the comparison of dates; the understanding that the word "influence" may not be the best qualifying term when things are happening simultaneously; and the consideration of the differences, which are of as much importance as the similarities.

For example. Although it is a legitimate approximation to compare the back facade of the Bahia Street house with Walter Gropius' (1883-1969) Zuckerkandl House in Jena (1927-1929), due to the evident similarities at first sight of their volumetric aspects, when you look a bit further, the differences between them are also quite striking and mostly relevant. The basement of the later is coated in dark colors. This and the slightly prominent slab above it suggest that although Walter Gropius' house occupied a sloped terrain, the designer wanted to create a sort of "platform," a horizontal podium, over which the house was meant to stand, debasing the lower level into a less important space. In comparison, and on the contrary, the Bahia Street house *parti* does not try to elude the declivity but, rather, makes the most of it. Although the lower level is also employed to placing support activities – laundry, storage, etc. – it has the same visual status of the other levels; there is no discontinuity from top to bottom, the verticality is explicitly stressed, and the rear gardens, arranged in three different levels to take advantage of the slope, are treated as a most important part of the dwellers' daily life. Or, as said above, the authors did not let the desire to make a generic manifesto interfere with the design ideas. But in the end, they put forward a much more powerful statement, able to disprove the idea that modern architecture did not consider the place. Good modern architecture, actually, does. The same kind of considerations may be done when observing the garden design, which may be read as a sort of French-cubist quote. On the other hand, the *damero* [grid street plan] arrangement is a common and traditional solution to plazas and parks in all Latin America, most specially in Mexico, where it was frequently re-appropriated by



03 Gregori Ilitch Warchavchik/Mina Klabin, 1126 Bahia Street (Luiz da Silva Prado) House, São Paulo, Brazil, 1930-1931, terraced arrangement of the site. © Source: Acervo da Biblioteca da FAUUSP.



04 Gregori Ilitch Warchavchik/Mina Klabin, 1126 Bahia Street (Luiz da Silva Prado) House, São Paulo, Brazil, 1930-1931. © Mme. Stein São Paulo. Source: Acervo da Biblioteca da FAUUSP.



05 Gregori Ilitch Warchavchik/Mina Klabin, 1126 Bahia Street (Luiz da Silva Prado) House, São Paulo, Brazil, 1930-1931.
© Source: Acervo da Biblioteca da FAUUSP.

its modern architecture, as for example, in the houses designed by Juan O’Gorman. That is perhaps a much more probable source of inspiration to Klabin’s gardens than the alleged European connection. And of course, the conspicuous use of succulents and cactuses (in this case a Brazilian variety, mandacaru, *Cereus jamacaru*) endorses the likelihood of this hypothesis.

In the early 1990s the house was rented to an architecture and graphic design firm. An “as built” drawing was prepared, and the house was adapted to a commercial use,¹² with very few, but reversible, changes. The electrical wiring and the hydraulic piping were updated to conform to contemporary regulations, some dry walls were added to organize the internal spaces in the basement floor, a few partition walls were removed (and their original positions were marked by strips of special flooring), all the windows were cleaned and renovated, with no major changes, and an important work of fumigation of the rear gardens was put forward, to prevent as much as possible the possibility of the house being invaded by termites. The closing wall to the lower back street had to be properly sustained because it was about to collapse due to the growth of the roots of a huge Brazilian tropical tree (*Pau-ferro*, *Caesalpinia ferrea*). The renovation of the wiring was much facilitated by the fact that there was no concrete slab between the main and the first floor, which was originally built using a timber structure, protected by a stucco lining with crown moldings on the underside. That allowed the substitution of the wiring conduits via the removal of pieces of the upper timber floor, which were afterwards carefully repositioned in their original locations, maintaining the original ceiling untouched. It is interesting to note that such structural solutions between these floors (with a timber structure instead of a concrete slab) helps alleviate the weight over the two back 7 m horizontal windows which are evidently the most daring construction aspects of this house.

Some discreet changes were made, with the agreement of specialists from the federal and the state heritage agencies. The low height wall of the front garden was removed, maintaining the still existing vegetation to the left – at

that moment, the original group of plants to the right side was no longer there. The resulting open space was used to attend the municipal regulations concerning the number of parking spaces, necessary for its commercial use. The front door was quite small, even for a residential use. It was replaced with a bigger metal door that maintained as much as possible the original door appearance. Investigation uncovered the original color of the house – a sort of very light green and all the window frames were originally painted in a light beige color. Nevertheless, they agreed to maintain the more recent overall white color, since the works done were not considered a full restoration, but as a minimum interference renovation. A situation that was feasible because, despite the age and the continuous use of the house, in was still in quite a good structural condition.

One of the more interesting features of the house – its triple level metallic structure front staircase, with thick translucent glass steps – was actually not a characteristic of the original 1930 design, but had been added by Warchavchik himself in a later intervention. The renovation carried out in the 1990s maintained and fully restored this stair. Because the glass steps were very damaged by scratches, they were carefully removed, polished and sandblasted, and then repositioned in their places – upside down, to show a new smooth face.

The architecture/design firm used the space for around 25 years, eventually allowing random and scheduled visitors to enter and visit it. Nowadays the house is vacant, for rent and waiting for its next user. When it was designed in the 1930s, it was a relatively compact house for a large wealthy extended family with a large staff. Today, its over 500 square meters (m²) area is quite excessive for the use of any contemporary compact family. The surroundings have also changed, and now the zoning law accepts some types of quiet and discreet commercial uses. Many other very interesting modern houses in São Paulo are at risk of being demolished, not just because they have aged, but due to the changes in the life styles of potential families interested in living in the residential quarters in which they stand. This house is not quite at risk of being destroyed as the owners are quite conscious of its importance and also of its protected heritage status.¹³ But as we know, when a building has no use its decay rate tends to accelerate. Let’s hope it is not the case here, despite the economic shortages and recessions that are troubling the world at the beginning of the second decade of this century.

Notes

- 1 More Information on the *Salão de 31*, organized by Lucia Meira de Lima, Carlos Zilio and other members of the “Observatório do Modernismo Brasileiro”, is available at <https://www.salao31.com/o-salao-de-31> (accessed on 29 August 2020).
- 2 Jose Lira, Warchavchik. *Fraturas da Vanguarda*, São Paulo, Cosac Naify, 2011, 126.
- 3 Idem, 84.
- 4 Michelangelo Sabatino, *Pride in Modesty. Modernist Architecture and the Vernacular Tradition in Italy*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2010, 3.
- 5 Cf. Marta Peixoto, *A Sala bem temperada – interior moderno e sensibilidade eclética*, Porto Alegre, PROPAP-UFRGS (PhD Thesis), 2006.

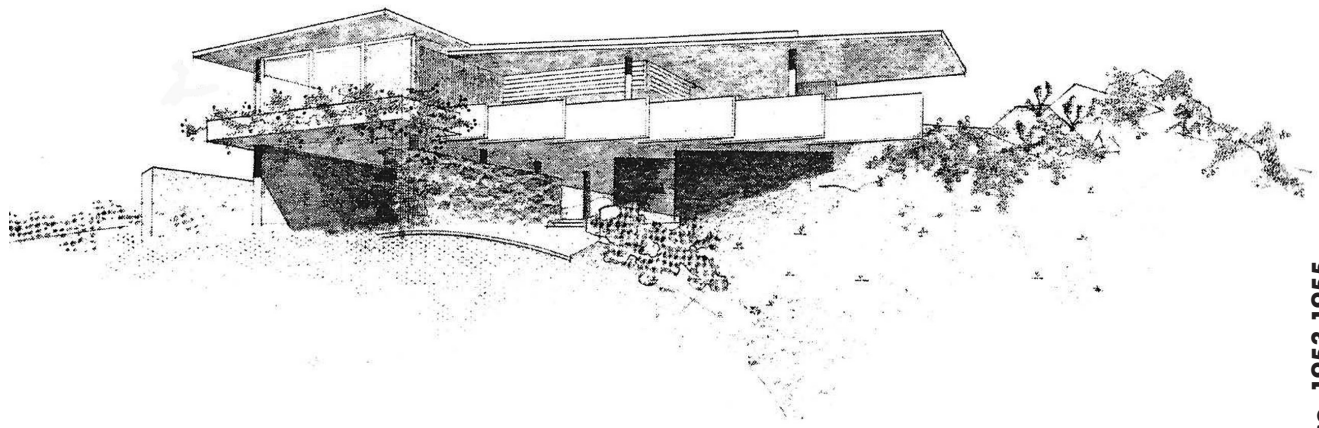
- 6 On the subject of the mechanisms and modalities of influences in architecture cf. Silvia Arango-Cardinal, “Las influencias en arquitectura. Tres premisas y una conclusión”, in Alexandra Kennedy-Troya (Org.), *Modernidad y vanguardia en América Latina 1930-1970*, Cuenca, Universidad de Cuenca, 2019, 81-94.
- 7 The biographical information about Klabin is quite scarce and the sparse sources for the most part repeat the same phrases, stressing her role as landscape architect, subliminally suggesting that her contribution to these early modernist houses was a sort of “posterior” addition, “surrounding” their architectural design, just adding “character and excitement to the modernist buildings designed by her husband” (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mina_Klabin_Warchavchik, accessed on 29 August 2020). As I propose in this essay, a deeper examination of these houses – and most specially, in the case of the Bahia Street house – confirms that the landscape architecture conception is inseparable from these houses’ conceptual ideas and design, and critical to their architectural definition. On the silencing and invisibilization of women architects cf. Ines Moisset, “Poetisas y arquitectas. Historias silenciadas”, in CrucesArquitectura Blog, 17 June 2017, available at: <https://crucesarquitecturayciudad.wordpress.com/2017/06/17/poetisas-y-arquitectas-historias-silenciadas/>, accessed on 29 August 2020; and Eva Álvarez, Carlos Gomez, *The Invisible women: How female architects were erased from history*, Architectural Review (online), 8 March 2017, available at: <https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/the-invisible-women-how-female-architects-were-erased-from-history>, accessed on 29 August 2020.
- 8 Paul Veyne, *Como se escreve a história e Foucault revolucionou a história*, Brasília, UnB, 2014, 48.
- 9 Cf. Marina Waisman, *O Interior da História. Historiografia para uso de latino-americanos*, translation: Anita Di Marco, São Paulo, Perspectiva, 2013.
- 10 As for example: Ivo Hammer; Robert Linke, “White, everything White? Josef Frank’s Vila Beer (1930) in Vienna and its materiality”, in Ana Tostões, Natasa Koselj (Org.), *Metamorphosis. The Continuity of Change*. 15th International **docomomo** Conference Proceedings, Ljubljana, **docomomo** International/**docomomo** Slovenia, 2018, 410-416.
- 11 Jose Lira, op. cit., 232-240.
- 12 It was already being used as a commercial show room of a lighting fixtures firm before the house was renovated as an architecture/design firm headquarters. Architect Rogerio Batagliesi gave me information on the details of the renovation in the 1990s, in a personal interview. Rogerio Batagliesi was responsible for the project and management of those works. Due to the pandemic situation (July-August 2020, São Paulo, Brazil), it was not possible to revisit the house during the writing of this essay. I had to make the most of my memories when I (thoroughly) visited it in the early 1990s, with Rogerio Batagliesi himself explaining to me all the aspects, of which he reminded me again, in this recent conversation; and my memories from other visits there, while touring the city with foreign friends. I apologize if some specific information is not quite correct, despite our best efforts to be precise.
- 13 The Bahia Street house, along with Santa Cruz Street house (1927) and the Itápolis Street house (1929), by Warchavchik/Klabin, is part of a set of three buildings considered to be the first in modern architecture in Brazil. It has a full preservation status at three governmental levels: municipal (COMPRES/Resolução de tombamento 05/91), State (CONDEPHAAT, Resolução de Tombamento Ex-Officio 31/01/1994, Livro do Tombo Histórico No. 272, 70, 25/3/1987), and Federal (IPHAN, Número do Processo: 1153-T-85. Livro Belas Artes: No. inscr. 580, Vol. 2, f. 011, 14/08/1986). More information available at <http://www.ipatrimonio.org/Sao-Paulo-Casa-de-Warchavchik-R-Bahia/#/map=38329&loc=-23.55051990000001,-46.63330939999999,17>, accessed on 31 August 2020.

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Henry Klumb, Casa Fullana, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1953-1955,
perspective drawing, 1953. © Henry Klumb Collection, Archivo de Arquitectura y Construcción Universidad de Puerto Rico (AACUPR).

Casa Fullana: a model for modern living in the tropics

BY ANDRÉS MIGNUCCI

Casa Fullana [Fullana House], built in 1955 in San Juan, Puerto Rico, is an exemplary model of Henry Klumb's (1905-1984) design principles for modern living in the tropics. German architect Henry Klumb conducted a prolific architectural practice in Puerto Rico, producing some of the most iconic examples of tropical modernism in the Caribbean. His work, most notably at the University of Puerto Rico (1946-1966) (UPR) and in landmark projects like the San Martín de Porres Church (1948) in Cataño, constituted a breakthrough in Puerto Rican, Caribbean and Latin American architecture. Anchored in the principles of modern architecture, specifically of an organic architecture put forward by his mentor Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959), Klumb's work is deeply rooted in the specificities of the landscape, topography, and climate of Puerto Rico as a tropical island.

Casa Fullana, holds a particular place in Klumb's residential *oeuvre*. Of all his urban, suburban and rural houses, Casa Fullana, in the view of this author, best exemplifies Klumb's design philosophy, architectural language, and mastery of form. As a design strategy, Klumb juxtaposes complex stereotomic forms on the ground floor with a disciplined tectonic structure on the main floor above. On the ground level, Klumb tames the complex geometries so they do not seem forced and arbitrary, reading instead as an evident architectural response to site, topography, and climate. In the upper main floor, he infuses the simple straightforward layout in plan with a sense of habitability and comfort. For the owners, who have now lived in the house for two generations, Casa Fullana embodies the ideal of modern living in the tropics. Central to this notion, lies Klumb's design strategy of the "living spaces turned inside out." Like in his own house, the sheltered covered terrace becomes the major open space in the house and the center for day-to-day activities. The Modern Movement's precept of inside-outside continuity becomes not only visual but also real, in the form of habitable spaces for daily living connected to nature and the landscape.

Introduction

Casa Fullana was designed in 1953 for engineer and contractor Pedro Fullana and his family in the Extensión San Agustín neighborhood in Río Piedras. The house is located on a large suburban lot of 5,894 square meters (m²) atop a hill with expansive views of San Juan's northern coast.

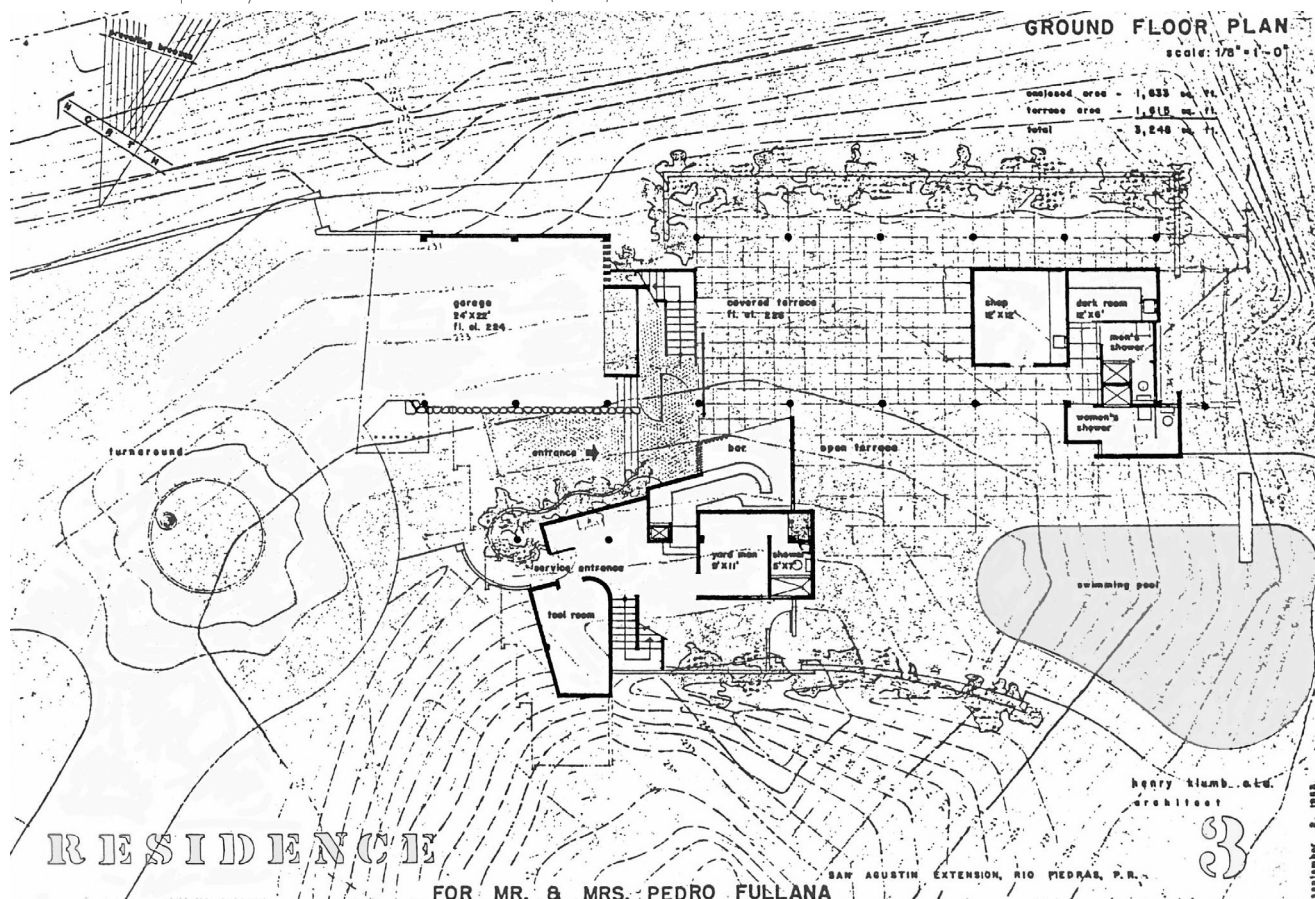
The design process began in May 1953.¹ The fundamentals of Klumb's design strategy for the house seem to have been arrived at an early stage in the process. A conceptual floor plan dating from 25 June 1953, already has all the elements and programmatic components of the "L" shape design in place. By the time of issue of the Preliminary Design Plans in 2 September 1953, the design for the house was all but complete. Minor revisions to the preliminary plans

included an additional structural bay to accommodate a third bedroom, changes to the configuration of the kitchen layout incorporating a sewing room, and the addition of a terrace in the bedroom wing. These revisions were petitioned by Mrs. Fullana, who played a major role in the revision of the drawings and the design.² Construction drawings were finalized in 1954 and construction completed the following year.³

Archival photos taken just after construction was completed reveal a contradiction of sorts regarding Klumb's habitual deference to the existing landscape and vegetation. Either through Klumb's direct instructions or perhaps upon request of his engineer-contractor client, all existing vegetation on site was surprisingly cleared. This, however, allowed Klumb to reshape the contours of the topography to settle the house in place, opening at the same time the possibility of planning the garden and the site's surroundings as part of a new narrative between building and landscape.

An architectural grammar

In 1953, when the house was commissioned, Klumb was at work on the design of the master plan and buildings for UPR campus in Río Piedras. The amount of work was surely overwhelming. As a strategy to cope with the extraordinary work volume of projects and design commissions, Klumb developed an architectural grammar of forms elements, material use, and detailing, which allowed him to manage complex programmatic requirements while achieving an identifiable coherent architectural image. Plans would be accompanied with booklet-like sets of standard details organized by building component. This work strategy, intended to systematize production, defined the forms language that would distinguish and, to a great extent, brand his architecture. Round columns, pivoting doors, deep overhanging eaves, wood and metal screens, *brise-soleils*, jalousie windows, and concrete tile flooring, would form a distinctive palette for his buildings. These would be accompanied



with sets of design principles that would privilege cross ventilation, natural daylight, attention to the site's topography, the incorporation of natural vegetation, and the dissolution of boundaries between inside and outside.

This strategy of developing an architectural grammar is, of course, not unique to Klumb. His mentor, Frank Lloyd Wright used a similar strategy in the development of his Usonian houses. Le Corbusier (1887-1965) developed a kit of forms for his white houses in Paris during the 1920s. And closer to home in Venezuela, Carlos Raul Villanueva (1900-1975) established a form language for his buildings at the Universidad Central de Venezuela in Caracas. What is particular to Klumb, is that his architectural grammar transcends differences in building and use types. The Casa Fullana undoubtedly shares its architectural DNA, its form language and syntax, with some of Klumb's educational masterpieces at the UPR, namely the UPR Student Center. We can only speculate on the intersections and crossings between the educational buildings at the UPR and residential projects like Casa Fullana. What seems evident is that Casa Fullana and the emblematic Student Center share, alongside the common architectural grammar, two of Klumb's principal design strategies – the fluid space and the sheltered exterior.

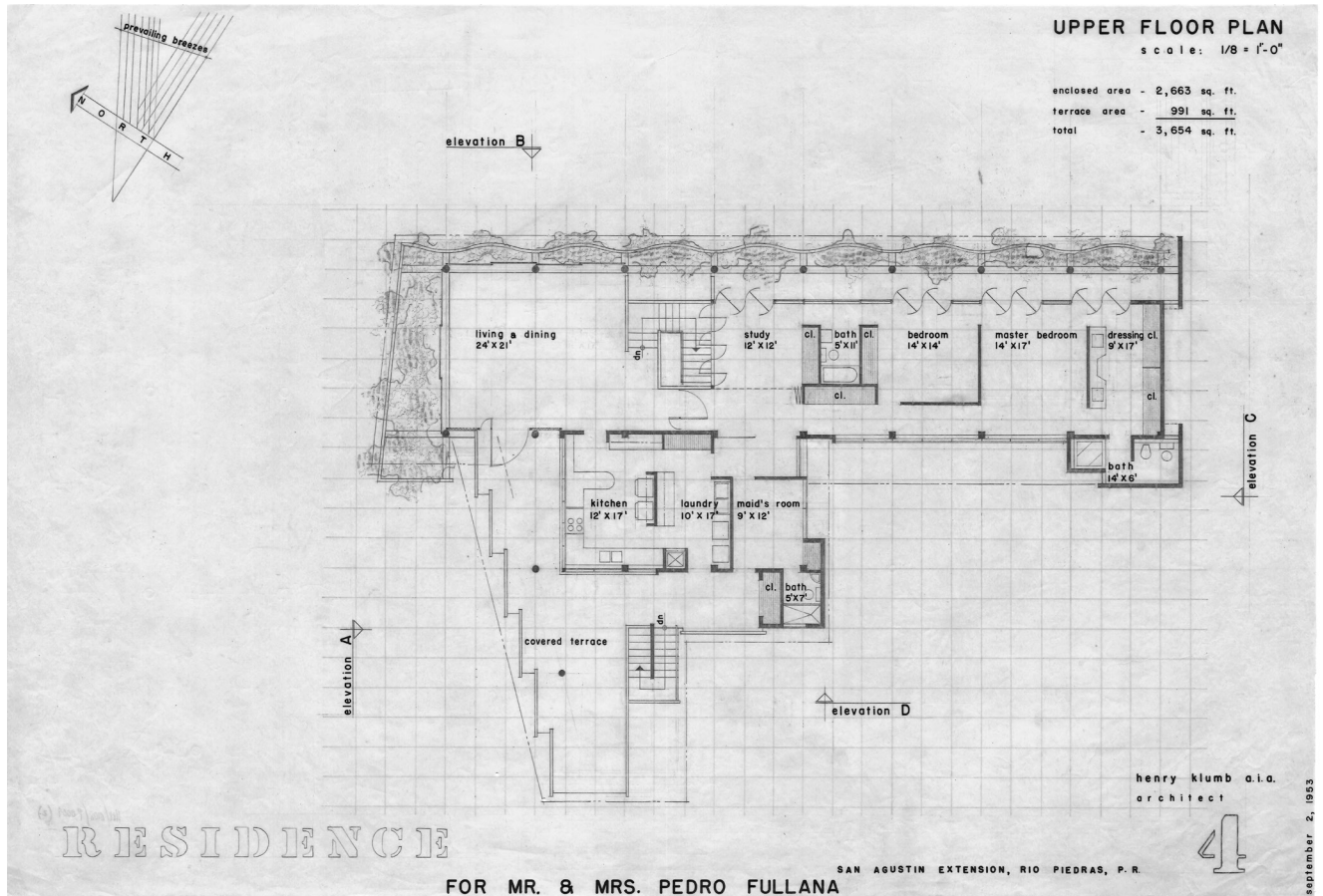
While the construction drawings for the Student Center date from 1957, its design process was developed concurrent with Casa Fullana. Like in the Student Center,

Klumb conceives the Casa Fullana as a composition of two different types of entities: the fluid space that shapes the movement through its public open space, and the enclosed programmatic “rocks” conceived as compartmentalized pods, containers that contain structured functions, uses, services and support areas. The fluid space defined by the pods, is layered with filters of light, ventilation and access/privacy controls in the form of pivoting wooden doors and screens, emphasizing the use of natural cross ventilation typical of Klumb's work.⁴ While in a large-scale building like the Student Center, the fluid space takes the form of a covered plaza, in the smaller and more intimate residential context of the Casa Fullana, the fluid space manifests itself as covered terraces, the sheltered exterior, on both the ground and main floor. An exploration of the house's *promenade architecturale*, will help clarify these observations.

An Architectural Promenade

The house is accessed through a cul-de-sac that organizes a cluster of four houses that form a green oasis within the smaller suburban fabric of the surrounding neighborhood. Past the entrance gate, the access road to the house climbs uphill forty feet [12.19 meters (m)] from the site boundary. Upon arrival at a circular turnaround, the house is viewed in an upward *scorzo*, closely following the perspective prepared by the architect for his clients.

- 02 Henry Klumb, Casa Fullana, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1953-1955, floor plan, 1953. © Henry Klumb Collection, Archivo de Arquitectura y Construcción Universidad de Puerto Rico (AACUPR).



- 03 Henry Klumb, Casa Fullana, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1953-1955, stair, entry sequence, and ground floor exterior terrace, 1955.
© Photograph: Alexandre Georges, Henry Klumb Collection, Archivo de Arquitectura y Construcción Universidad de Puerto Rico (AACUPR).

04 Henry Klumb, Casa Fullana, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1953-1955, exterior. © Photograph: Ivonne María Marcial Vega, courtesy of **docomomo** Puerto Rico.



05 Henry Klumb, Casa Fullana, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1953-1955, covered terrace. © Photograph: Ivonne María Marcial Vega, courtesy of **docomomo** Puerto Rico.

The main level of the house is raised from the ground plane as a *piano nobile*. At first glance, Klumb's habitual connection with the site is traded for a perched floor plane levitating above the ground to privilege the distant views of the Atlantic to the north. In reality, the seemingly straightforward design and rather simple plan of the main floor, hides a much richer, complex, relation with the site and its surrounding landscape.

The ground floor, cave-like and stereotomic, is organized using three programmatic pods – the garage, the gardener's quarters, and the pool service area. Between these three "rocks," Klumb's fluid space, flows through structuring the spectator's experience and movement through the house.

The Japanese *rocks in the sand* design ideogram, helps us understand and describe Klumb's design strategy. This fluid space establishes the main entry sequence. The main entrance is nestled between the first two "rocks" in the form of the garage and the gardener's quarters. Klumb brings in landscape elements – a stone wall and a planting area – to reinforce the connection with the exterior landscape. Past the entrance, the vestibule with the main stair sets up the progression toward the main level above. Between the three "rocks" the fluid space opens toward the ground floor's covered terrace. In the preliminary design plans, this covered terrace connected with an open exterior terrace and pool area to the southwest and a landscaped patio to the northeast. As a diagram, this design *parti* finds echo in the covered plaza at the UPR's Student Center. The ground floor's spatial axis of the house is closely aligned with the orientation of the prevailing breezes from the northeast opening to the exterior gardens to the northeast and the southwest. As center and focal point of the ground floor, the covered terrace serves to stabilize the design's composition in plan.

Let's return to the main entrance to describe the movement from the ground floor to the main floor above. Utilizing a lowered ceiling height, the tighter width of the entrance between the stone wall and the planter, and the natural decrease in light levels when progressing from outside to inside, Klumb creates the effect of a spatial compression as the traveler moves through the entrance. As he moves up the floating stairs, there is a sharp switchblade turn at the stair landing before arriving at the main floor's living and dining area. In this first space of the main floor, with clear fenestration of glass jalousie, the traveler receives the surprise of a vast panoramic view of the city. During the day one sees the ocean and the horizon at the distance. At night, the view is pixilated into a thousand city lights with an infinite number of stars above. With a single, simple design move, Klumb connects Casa Fullana with a broad larger landscape, a long vista that anchors the house with the geography of the city.

Having raised the building as a *piano nobile*, framing the long vista toward the north is an expected reward. However, Klumb still has another twist in his constructed narrative with Casa Fullana's landscape. In the main floor, Klumb creates an "L" shaped planted area composed of a cantilevered planter fronting the living room toward the north and a continuous undulating planter that extends the whole

length of the wing. This planter places lush vegetation close to the plane of the fenestration. The result is an interior engulfed by greenery. These two tactics together – the long vista and the foreshortened landscape – create an environment with a markedly different relation to the landscape.

The main floor plan and the faceted facade

The main floor, the *piano nobile*, is decidedly more tectonic in nature. The structure follows an L-shaped plan divided in a rectangular wing organized on a 4-foot (1.2 m) grid with round columns spaced at 12-foot (3.6 m) intervals. The longer wing made of nine modules, contains the living-dining room, the stairs, a study, and the private quarters of the house – three bedrooms and two bathrooms. A gallery on its eastern side and a terraced porch on the west flank this rectangular body of programmed space. Pivoting sets of doors open each room to the gallery – yet another move to reinforce the continuity between inside and outside and to facilitate the flow of cross ventilation and natural daylight.

Contrasting with the straightforward, almost institutional, design of the main wing, the house's front facade toward the north breaks the grid with subtle geometric inflections. The large cantilevered planter fronting the living and dining area, splays outward initiating a sequence of slight but effective counterpoints to the geometry of the grid. A second, more pronounced angle defines the geometry of the long eave that shelters the covered terrace. Supported only by two round columns and the central wall of the service stair, the roof above the terrace seems to float, hovering over the exterior living space below.

The kitchen is centrally placed, serving as a pivoting kernel between the two wings of the "L" plan. Its placement is inherited from Frank Lloyd Wright's design tactics for residential design. Wright referred to the kitchen as the house's "laboratory," pointedly charged with scientific-educational allusion. In Klumb's variation, he distinguished the kitchen as part of what he called the house's "life core." The kitchen/life core serves the dining room in the main wing, but spatially and functionally responds to the activity that takes place in the exterior terrace. The kitchen may be Klumb's life core, but the open terrace is the *raison d'être*, the fundamental territorial space of Klumb's plan. It is in this sheltered open space, in this exterior terrace where most of the family's day-to-day life takes place.

Living outside: the sheltered exterior

This space, the end of our architectural promenade, holds the secret of Klumb's manifesto of modern life in the tropics. In his view of the tropical world, daily life does not happen inside, it takes place in a sheltered exterior. Remembering Aldo Van Eyck's (1918-1999) poetical term, it is in this *twin phenomena*, this place that is neither inside nor outside, that we inhabit in the tropics. In the Casa Fullana, this sheltered exterior is open to the breezes and the vistas, it welcomes natural daylight while offering shelter from sun and rain, and is perched above the ground so the family can feel secure without grills and metal bars. This space is connected with the immediate lush vegetation close to the

06 Henry Klumb, Casa Fullana, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1953-1955, exterior view, 1955. © Photograph: Alexandre Georges, Henry Klumb Collection, Archivo de Arquitectura y Construcción Universidad de Puerto Rico (AACUPR).



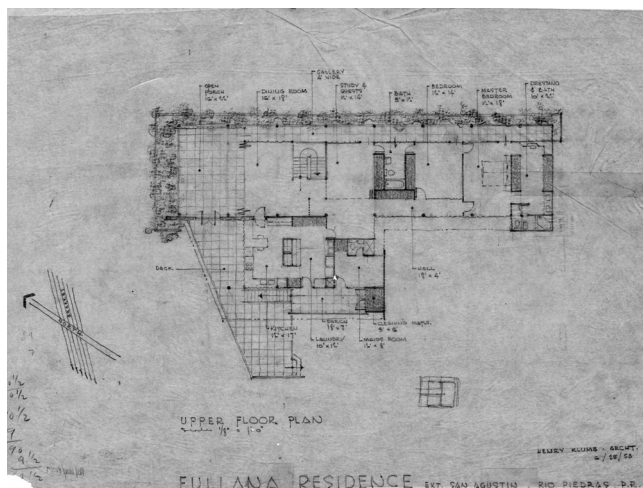
07 Henry Klumb, Casa Fullana, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1953-1955, exterior terrace, 1955. © Photograph: Alexandre Georges, Henry Klumb Collection, Archivo de Arquitectura y Construcción Universidad de Puerto Rico (AACUPR).



08 Henry Klumb, Casa Fullana, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1953-1955, interior view, 1955. © Photograph: Alexandre Georges, Henry Klumb Collection, Archivo de Arquitectura y Construcción Universidad de Puerto Rico (AACUPR).



09 Henry Klumb, Casa Fullana, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1953-1955, aerial photograph. © Google Earth.



10 Henry Klumb, Casa Fullana, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1953-1955, site plan sketch, 25 June 1953. © Archivo de Arquitectura y Construcción Universidad de Puerto Rico (AACUPR).

building's skin, as well as with the vistas of the larger landscape beyond.

He developed these ideas in the conversion of his 19th century plantation home, stripping it of most of its walls to privilege the verandah as the main living space. After Casa Fullana, he amplified and polished them in his design for the UPR's Student Center, where the fluid space takes the form of a covered plaza. His explorations suggest that the fundamental element of an architecture for the tropics is not the wall, but the roof. The basic strategy for making habitable territories is not about the disposition of walls and fenestrations – the building skin – like in northern temperate climates, but about treating the roof as the primal shelter that protects from sun and rain. Like the canopy shade of a tree, the roof of the house sets up territories for living.

This, for Klumb, is the essence of the tropics.

Conclusion

Casa Fullana, undoubtedly represents particular sets of values of modern architecture. Some are evident – the use of reinforced concrete and its tectonics as the quintessential modern material, the continuity and transparency between interior and exterior, the mastery of form-making “in the spirit of materials.”

But Casa Fullana, this modern villa in the tropics, puts forward a broader set of lessons. Klumb certainly used modern architecture as a vehicle for his architecture with

conviction and discipline. But in his belief of the basic values of modernity, Klumb systematically explored the intimate relation between form and habitation. For him, architecture is not the finality, but a vessel to assist people in their act of inhabitation. In the Casa Fullana, Klumb put into form some of his emergent ideas on modern living in the tropics. That it centers in a space, barely without walls or fenestration, delimited fundamentally by a roof, is a testament to his masterful vision of the tropics as place.

Notes

- 1 Drawings, plans, photographs, and correspondence associated with Casa Fullana form part of the Henry Klumb Collection at the *Archivo de Arquitectura y Construcción* of the University of Puerto Rico (AACUPR). We are grateful to the archive, in particular to Elena García, for providing material for this article.
- 2 Mary Frances Gallart, “Entre lo fundamental y el detalle: El rol de las clientas en la obra de Henry Klumb”, *Informa*, No. 2, San Juan, UPR, 2006, 56-71.
- 3 In 1960-1961, Klumb's office executed some minor programmatic changes to the interior layout without affecting the initial design.
- 4 Andrés Mignucci, María Isabel Oliver, “El Centro de Estudiantes de Henry Klumb en la Universidad de Puerto Rico. El edificio moderno y la sociedad contemporánea”, in Carolina Carrasco (Ed.), *Arquitectura y Modernidad en Contextos Regionales*, Valparaíso, USM Editorial, 2017, 20-23.

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Andrés Mignucci

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Augusto H. Álvarez, house at Lazcano 20, Mexico City, Mexico, 1959-1961, view of the main staircase. © Fondo Augusto H. Álvarez, Archivo de Arquitectos Mexicanos, Facultad de Arquitectura, UNAM. Photograph of Guillermo Zamora, 1962.

The House of Augusto H. Álvarez in Mexico City: an Integral Architectural and Personal Project

BY LOURDES CRUZ

In his 56 year professional career, Augusto H. Álvarez (1914-1995) built around thirty apartment buildings and over fifty houses. This article analyzes the emblematic house he built for his family between 1959 and 1961, which has been reinvented over time. It's a work that faithfully reflects Álvarez's appropriation and interpretation of the ideas of the Modern Movement, revealing a modulated, diaphanous, ordered and flexible space enclosed by a simple volume. It was an integral project because, aside from the structure, the architect also designed its furnishings and system of natural lighting, implementing materials that were hitherto-unused in a private residence.

Augusto H. Álvarez: a Mexican architect with a universal spirit¹

The global conflict provoked by WWII stimulated the Mexican economy as products began to be manufactured domestically that had previously been imported. As Mexico's economy entered a period of accelerated industrial growth, the population began to concentrate in its major cities, considerably increasing the demand for urban infrastructure such as hospitals, schools or buildings for commercial and financial enterprises. These latter two representatives of modernity and economic growth needed a coherent image, one similar to that found in developed nations. Among the many architects that formulated a response to this problem was Augusto H. Álvarez.² His domestic and international prestige was primarily due to the over fifty banking, financial and other offices he designed.

His works express his time, one of economic boom and technological progress. Ever since his student days, he revealed his modernism. His restless spirit drove him to constantly explore all that which left the past behind, not just in architecture, but in all aspects of everyday life. He was passionate about products that represented progress and innovation because he loved design, technology and new materials. This lifestyle and way of thinking was reflected in the four houses he built for himself,³ especially the one located at Calle Lazcano 20, San Ángel Inn, Mexico City. Built between 1959 and 1961, in collaboration with his colleague Luis Guerrero López (1936-2019), this house is the subject of this article.⁴

He was a man of his time and knew that technological progress and communication breakthroughs would make us global citizens, rather than of just one country. This helps explain his approach to architecture and his conviction as to how people should live and work, appropriating universal materials and technological systems. His affinity with the Modern Movement therefore did not come about by chance – it was natural for someone who, ever since he was young, firmly believed in a universal world, as he expressed below:

We live in a world in which distances are ever shorter, in which communicating is ever easier, leading peoples and cultures to influence each other and mix together. This allows the achievements of science, technology and industry to no longer be the patrimony of one nation, but a good held in common. I don't believe I have the right to renounce my participation in the genesis or gestation of a new culture and a new form of universal life in which the characteristics of nations will become increasingly diluted.⁵

He understood modernity as an ideological attitude rather than a passing trend, as a constant exploration that did not admit tradition except to be reinterpreted. He was never satisfied with applying the same techniques over and over and, when tackling a new project, he always did something different, arguing that he had the obligation to provide new responses to old problems through innovative solutions and formal expressions.⁶ By the beginning of the 1950s, Álvarez had defined the characteristics of his architecture and was convinced of the universal language of the Modern Movement, with which he fully identified. Ever since the beginning of his career, he had a preference for European architectural publications over those from the United States of America (USA) and acknowledged the deep influence of Le Corbusier (1887-1965) on his work. He also identified with Dutch and German architects: "I feel that these influences are, above all, those that one absorbs thanks to an affinity of temperament."⁷ Later on, the work of Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969) played a determining role in his career, assimilating its structural sincerity and painstaking attention to detail.

A strict rationalism was expressed in his volumetric purity, stripping architecture of any ornamentation and thus achieving a total simplicity. This became almost a slogan for him, as he often repeated: "I want to build calm works, ones that don't provoke unease, that simply feel natural and normal."⁸ Another of his trademarks was



01 Augusto H. Álvarez, house at Lazcano 20, Mexico City, Mexico, 1959-1961, view of the south facade overlooking the garden. © Fondo Augusto H. Álvarez, Archivo de Arquitectos Mexicanos, Facultad de Arquitectura, UNAM. Photograph of Guillermo Zamora, 1962.



02 Augusto H. Álvarez, house at Lazcano 20, Mexico City, Mexico, 1959-1961, view of the family room. © Fondo Augusto H. Álvarez, Archivo de Arquitectos Mexicanos, Facultad de Arquitectura, UNAM. Photograph of Guillermo Zamora, 1962.

transparency, especially in the use of glass. He deeply loved natural light, taking maximum advantage of the sun as a natural resource; the use of glass surfaces was something that he occasionally took to an extreme. As he once so clearly expressed, “for me, a window is not just a form of illuminating or ventilating a space. For me, a window is a transparent wall.”⁹ He designed ingenious systems of screens, implemented with refined technique.

The House at Lazcano 20:

its location on the lot and the volumetric solution

Augusto H. Álvarez was 45 years old when he decided to build a house for himself in southern Mexico City. He had reached professional maturity at this time, having built emblematic buildings across the capital, which positioned him as one of the most important Mexican architects of the 20th century and gave him a solid economic position.¹⁰ He had a very clear idea of what he wanted when he began this project as the concept had existed in his head for some time, without reference to where it would be built. He wanted a simple, austere space, without complications, one that would fit his lifestyle and his architectonic ideas. For this new residence, he utilized innovative concepts and solutions that he would later apply in other buildings. As he said,

I have one great concern: the process of building unsettles me. I “love” the challenge, that of having to do something new and different, something that’s worth it. Even if it’s small, it still represents a step forward for me – one thing leads to another, you become inventive, you transform things, you extract qualities from the raw materials. It’s a game, I feel like I’m a child again.”

Álvarez bought two contiguous lots – very close to his house on Calle Yarto¹² – that together had an area of 830 square meters (m²). The land was flat, free of topographic anomalies and mostly rectangular, with the back of the

lot forming a trapezoid. The side facing the street was 20 meters (m) wide and it was oriented in a north-south direction. He located the house at the front of the lot, so as to have a large backyard and to give easier access to service personnel. He placed the structure against the lot’s western boundary in order to have a shady side patio to the east that would lead to the backyard. He designed the house in a square shape with two floors, with a total area of 460 m². It was an open plan house and, in the style of Le Corbusier, he decided to put all the services on the ground level floor, with living areas on the floor above. On the ground level floor, he placed a four-car garage and service areas towards the north, with a model train room, a study and a covered terrace overlooking the garden (irrigated with a spray system) to the south. On the upper floor, the kitchen and complementary services were located to the north, the bedrooms to the east and the living areas to the south. A simple layout, revolving around a central patio with a skylight illuminating the main staircase. The facade was closed off to the street, turning the house inwards to create a more private, intimate world.

The result was a simple cuboid, without formal pretensions, with a nearly blank wall facing north on the upper floor and a marked *chiaroscuro* on the lower floor. The eastern exterior wall exposed the bedrooms and service rooms. Here it’s worth mentioning the wooden beams that formed an integral part of the walls, supporting the guillotine windows. To the south, the white walls and the enormous pane of glass contrasted with the shade of the covered terrace and the colorful hydrangeas.

Modular discipline and structure

To understand why this house had an integral design – as will be explained below – it should be mentioned that, ever since he was little, Álvarez had two complementary abilities: he was a careful observer and he was skilled with his hands, and he would remain that way throughout his

life. He learned to draw in high school, which reinforced his manual skills despite his disability;¹³ before starting his architectural studies, he already knew how to draw plans and build models. He was convinced that, to be able to design anything, you should know how to build it; he would never abandon this professional premise.

Ever since the start of his studies, he was distinguished by the use of modulation in his designs, as it allowed him a simple, consistent method of relating the whole to its parts. Devoted to architectonic rationalism, especially in the clarity of compositional schemes (public, private and service areas), clear and coherent patterns of circulation and controlled costs, he adopted modulation and, therefore, standardization. He started using imperial units because he was convinced of their advantages in terms of building at a human scale; many industrial materials, such as steel, glass and wood, are also sold based on these measurements. The foot – that is, 30.5 centimeters (cm) – became the unit that formed the basis of his explorations in combinations such as 61 cm, 1.22 m or 2.44 m. This method allowed him to avoid wasting materials, thus saving him a great deal of money. He argued that, while it seemed to be an inflexible system to some, it was a path that allowed him to ensure rhythm and harmony in his works.¹⁴

His house in San Ángel Inn became an exemplar of this, as both its architectonic design and the design of its furniture, closets, doors, screens, ironwork, kitchenware and storage areas all followed this parameter. Modular discipline allowed him to give order to the house because everything was based on Álvarez's own designs and executed by his greatest allies, the blacksmith and the carpenter.¹⁵ As this house was a comprehensive project for family living, the architect's greatest collaborator was his wife Fina. She was the "heart" of the home, organizing, experimenting and proposing improvements. As their son Javier said,

Once a design was tested out, she was the one who said, "this doesn't work because of this and that." He then made all modifications necessary so as to meet the house's cleaning needs, which were not insignificant, and to make sure that nothing looked out of place (...) the house was an experiment, not just as an architect, but also as an inventor.¹⁶

The house was based on 90 cm x 1.2 m modules, which resulted in a 14.4 m x 14.4 m square architectonic plan with four inter-axial spaces of 3.6 m in the north-south direction and two inter-axial spaces of 7.2 m in the east-west direction.

It was a mixed structure formed by 15 columns of steel made by two angles of five degrees with I-beams and reinforced concrete slabs. The walls were made of pressed bricks painted white with asbestos cement panels with metallic profiles in specific locations. He experimented here for the first time with this material that, he confessed, had captured his attention. This meticulous modulation allowed the house to undergo many transformations over the years without losing the essence of the precepts of modernity.

Social and private space: a masterful relationship

After going through the front gate, there was a wall to the right that separated the garage from the pedestrian access. To the left, there was a reflecting pool along the path to the front doors. The first was the service entrance, immediately followed by a more impressive door whose look befitted the house of an architect: a glass pivot door, with the tension bars in the inner side. After going through this door, one could make out the garden on the other side of the metal-and-wood main staircase, arranged in a single flight, were illuminated from above by the skylight. Here a small potted tree grew, which could be appreciated from the living room above. Passing the staircase on the right, one could find the model train room, an astonishing space devoted to one of Álvarez's favorite hobbies: his HO-scale electric trains, to which he added miniature houses, hotels, stations, bridges and even a church. This was an endless project, full of imagination and skill, that he was constantly reinventing and rebuilding and which only came to a stop a few months before his death.

On the other side, with a view of the garden, was a study for his sons. As Manuel recalls, "initially, it was a room with four desks. We each had a key and you could go in and do your homework, supposedly without distracting your brother." These modularly-designed desks were later complemented with a Knoll armchair, "as it should be," and a record player, constituting a multipurpose area that evolved as his sons grew up.¹⁷ This room, along with the covered terrace and the backyard, hosted countless family gatherings and parties, as Álvarez and Fina were excellent hosts. The backyard was also where his children played soccer, so Álvarez purposely planted two trees to serve as the goalposts and installed a small metal rhomboid mesh fence to protect the hydrangeas, as can be seen in the photograph. His children remember the house as a place of play, despite the strict established order.¹⁸

Upon ascending the staircase, one reached the living room. Immediately to the left was a door that led to the bedrooms, marking the border between public and private life. The stairs were covered by a dome letting in natural light, filtered by blinds, creating an ideal environment for a series of planters placed on a metal grate that allowed for water to drain. To the left, there was a modular wooden bookshelf with a metallic structure, which could also be used as a bar, next to a work table. The living room had Knoll armchairs and tables, with a blue Florence chair facing the chimney, which was integrated with the closet or storage space with a Formica walnut laminate finish. The dining room, featuring a round table of the same brand, also had a modular piece of furniture designed by the architect himself that served to delimit this space from the planters. All this contrasted with the parquet on the ceiling, which often astonished visitors. The dining room was actually rarely used, as the family preferred the dinette, even when working, thanks to the unique environment provided by its planters and the light filtering through a translucent window, yet avoiding a view of the service areas.

The south-facing “wall” was a major innovation and the focus of the architectonic design. It consisted of a large, 2.4 m x 7.2 m sliding glass window, the largest in Mexico at the time. It had to be shipped from England and then moved by train, raised into position with a crane and installed with a specially-built scaffold. The automated system for opening and closing the window was the most sophisticated part of the house, as the glass moved on the outside of the exterior wall.¹⁹ It opened in its entirety – even though this was risky, given its great height – because the view of the garden was what the architect most enjoyed about the house.

Once the door had been crossed into the private area, the environment was different. The generous space of the common areas was reduced, both in the bedrooms and in the bathrooms. Álvarez had a very specific, rational conception of these areas – surely inherited from the customs of his hometown – because the bedrooms were practically only for sleeping, with austere furnishings consisting of modular beds, nightstands and dressers with fine finishes: “they were based on the idea that a bedroom was not a luxury, but a cell in which one should save space so that more could be devoted to socialization.”²⁰ The living room was primarily for the parents, although the arrival of television meant that its uses had to be shared and expanded. Only the master bedroom had a walk-in closet and a private bathroom; the other bedrooms had to share bathrooms. All these spaces were illuminated by skylights and ventilated from outside. The relationship between the social and the private was thus masterfully resolved, as the architect created an internal circuit that connected the bedrooms with the service areas without passing through the living room. The house’s residents could then go down the service staircase to the ground floor, passing through the kitchen and the laundry room. This internal mobility is one of the most widely appreciated aspects of this house.

Nothing was purchased for the kitchen – except for the stove, the refrigerator and the freezer – as everything was meticulously designed especially for this house. This was also true of the wine cellar against the north wall, which was protected with a metallic screen, and the garbage chute. Going down the service staircase, one came to the laundry room and the other services areas, including the servant’s room, which had access to the side patio. In the machine room, there was a heating system for wintertime and here it should be mentioned that Álvarez hated low temperatures because Mérida, where he spent his childhood, is very hot. One technical innovation that was implemented in a house for the first time was the hydropneumatic system with a boiler and two alternating pumps. He also experimented with asbestos flooring, which had to be covered with linoleum (inside) and washed gravel concrete (outside) when it was later learned to be a carcinogen.

In terms of color, he identified fully with those pioneers of the Modern Movement that used white as a synonym for modernity, purity and hygiene: all of the house’s interior and exterior surfaces were this color aside from the upper panels of the eastern wall, which were painted blue

(like the plumbago flower), one of his favorite colors. Most spaces were illuminated through indirect light, using tubes, recessed light fixtures and double walls with strategic designs that allowed for easy maintenance.

In sum, this house’s value lies in it being an integral project, the result of a rigorous analysis of the architectonic program, of a deep, innovative study of hitherto-unused materials and techniques and a very simple formal intention, thus fulfilling the personal project of the architect Augusto H. Álvarez.

The house: its transformation and conservation

The house’s rigorous modulation has shown its advantages over time. When Álvarez died in 1995, the house intermittently accommodated two of his sons and their families until it was finally sold to two buyers in 2002. As the house was built on two lots, it allowed each buyer to buy one part and the land was thus divided. It is important to note that the interventions performed are reversible, as they were carried out by two excellent architects who understood the value of the house: the intervention on the western side was done by Pola Zaga and the one on the eastern side by Javier Sánchez. Dividing the house prevented its destruction, but no matter how well the interventions were done, it still lost the value of its internally fluid space. The new owners preserved part of the integral furniture designs due to their efficiency and this versatile structure, with its singular staircase and breath-taking transparency, still preserves a spirit of modernity.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

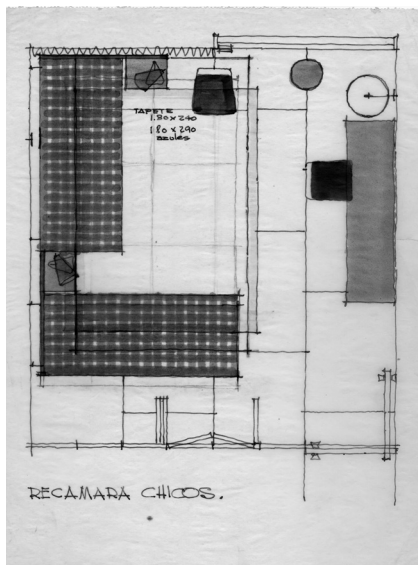
- 1 In 2002, the archive of Augusto H. Álvarez was donated to the Archive of Mexican Architects at the Faculty of Architecture, National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM).
- 2 He was born on 24 December 1914 in the city of Mérida, Yucatán, Mexico. In 1933, he enrolled in the National School of Architecture, graduating on 18 August 1939 with the dissertation “Project for a Maternity Hospital in Mexico City.” He married Fina Fuentes Ogarrio and together they had four sons – Augusto, Manuel, Jorge and Javier – which is relevant information here. He received the National Architecture Prize in 1983 and died on 29 November 1995. To learn more about his life and works, see Lourdes Cruz González Franco, *Augusto H. Álvarez. Arquitecto de la Modernidad*, Mexico City, Facultad de Arquitectura, UNAM, 2008.
- 3 The three others are the house at Simón Yarto 39, San Ángel Inn, Mexico City, 1949; the house in the La Peña subdivision, lot 1, Valle de Bravo, Mexico State, 1969-1970; and the house at Calle 17 109, Itzimná, Mérida, Yucatán, Mexico, 1992-1994.
- 4 San Ángel Inn is a residential neighborhood in southern Mexico City that, since the early 20th century, has been known for its shady cobblestone streets. According to Virginia Armella de Aspe, it was promoted from the 1940s on as being “a bucolic place with fresh air, soft sunlight and the ever-present smell of pine,” in “Historia de San Ángel,” *Artes de México*, Mexico City, Vol. 17, No. 117, 1969, 14-15. Just a few blocks away from the house at Lazcano 20, one can find the first modernist houses in Mexico, built between 1929 and 1931 by the functionalist architect Juan O’Gorman for the painters Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo.
- 5 Augusto H. Álvarez, “Una obra, una postura,” *Calli*, No. 29, Mexico City, September-October 1967, 40.



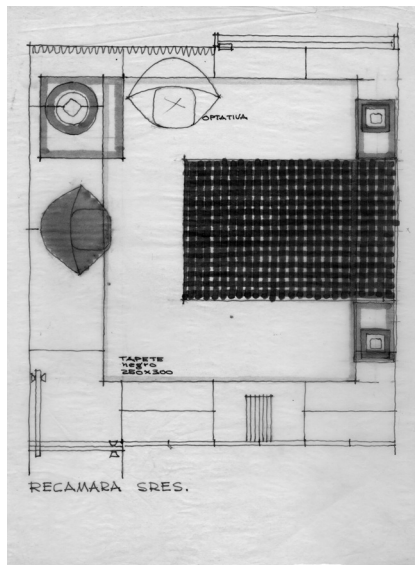
03 Augusto H. Álvarez. © Fondo Augusto H. Álvarez, Archivo de Arquitectos Mexicanos, Facultad de Arquitectura, UNAM.



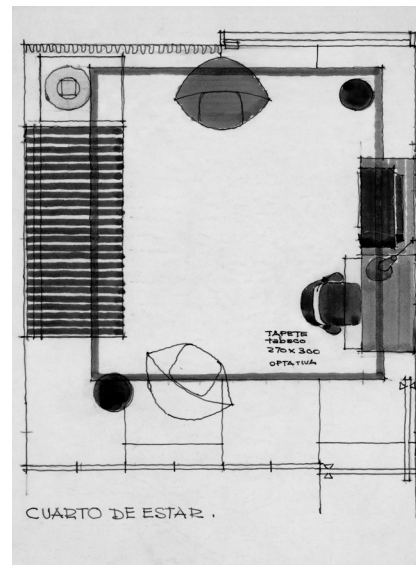
04 Augusto H. Álvarez, house at Lazcano 20, Mexico City, Mexico, 1959-1961, view of the east facade, remodeling in 2002 by the architect Javier Sánchez. © Photograph of Luis Gordoa, 2002.



05 Augusto H. Álvarez, house at Lazcano 20, Mexico City, Mexico, 1959-1961, sketch of the children's bedroom, a drawing of Augusto H. Álvarez, 1961. © Fondo Augusto H. Álvarez, Archivo de Arquitectos Mexicanos, Facultad de Arquitectura, UNAM.



06 Augusto H. Álvarez, house at Lazcano 20, Mexico City, Mexico, 1959-1961, sketch of the parents' bedroom, a drawing of Augusto H. Álvarez, 1961. © Fondo Augusto H. Álvarez, Archivo de Arquitectos Mexicanos, Facultad de Arquitectura, UNAM.



07 Augusto H. Álvarez, house at Lazcano 20, Mexico City, Mexico, 1959-1961, sketch of the living room, a drawing of Augusto H. Álvarez, 1961. © Fondo Augusto H. Álvarez, Archivo de Arquitectos Mexicanos, Facultad de Arquitectura, UNAM.



08 Augusto H. Álvarez, house at Lazcano 20, Mexico City, Mexico, 1959-1961, View of the family room. © Fondo Augusto H. Álvarez, Archivo de Arquitectos Mexicanos, Facultad de Arquitectura, UNAM. Photograph of Guillermo Zamora, 1962.

- 6 "Arquitectura es vivencia," in *Obras*, Year XII, Vol. XII, No. 142, October 1984, 55.
- 7 Graciela de Garay, *Historia Oral de la ciudad de México: testimonios vivos de sus arquitectos (1940-1990)*. Augusto H. Álvarez, Mexico City, Instituto José María Luis Mora, 1994, 15.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 73.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 1.
- 10 Some important buildings constructed through 1961 were the building for the National School of Business and Administration in Ciudad Universitaria, Pedregal de San Ángel, 1950-1952, designed with Ramón Marcos Noriega; the Mexico City International Airport, 1950-1952, with Enrique Carral Icaza, Manuel Martínez Páez, Guillermo Pérez Olagaray and Ricardo Flores; and the Torre Latinoamericana, 1950-1956, with Adolfo and Leonardo Zeevaert.
- 11 María Teresa Gómez Mont, "Galardonará el presidente Miguel de la Madrid con el Premio Nacional de Arquitectura a Augusto Álvarez," *Novedades*, 15 June 1984.
- 12 The quality of the house at Calle Yarto 39 led it to be included in the book *18 Residencias de arquitectos mexicanos*, Mexico City, Ediciones Mexicanas, 1951.
- 13 At the age of fifteen, he lost sight in his left eye due to an accident.
- 14 See "La enseñanza del diseño: Mesa redonda," *Cuadernos de arquitectura y docencia*, No. 2, Mexico City, Facultad de Arquitectura, UNAM, October 1986.
- 15 The author would like to thank the sons of Augusto H. Álvarez for their ideas, memories and suggestions, which enriched this text on the house in San Ángel Inn. These interviews were conducted in July and August 2020.
- 16 Interview with Javier Álvarez Fuentes, 13 August 2020.
- 17 Years later, this space, together with the covered terrace, housed Augusto H. Álvarez's offices, while a two-story workshop was built at the back of the garden, taking advantage of the excavation of a swimming pool that was never completed.
- 18 Interview with Javier Álvarez Fuentes, 13 August 2020.
- 19 The photograph of the exterior wall facing the garden shows this window partially open. Unfortunately, due to the effects of an earthquake years later, this mechanism stopped working and some openings were made to allow for the room to be ventilated.
- 20 Interview with Javier Álvarez Fuentes, 13 August 2020.

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Eduardo Sacriste, Torres Posse House, Tati del Valle, Argentina, 1957-1958. © Photo Carolina Ramos, 2014.

Modern Heritage, organic space, material permanence: Torres Posse House in Tafí del Valle

BY HORACIO TORRENT, OLGA PATERLINI,
ANNA BRAGHINI AND LAURA CUEZZO

The Torres Posse House (1957-1958) is a testimony to the particular forms that the modern house took in the context of northern Argentina, and at the same time shows how the conservation and sustainability of modern heritage come in large part from the quality of its original project. Built to enjoy the holidays, it was rationally organized, according to the demands of economy, topography of the site, climate, and orientation. The gallery, the most memorable space, is a typological approach that remains in good condition. The project established a stone box within which to arrange a demanding interior program with total freedom. The durability of the material proposed it as a modern architecture, capable of transcending the obsolescence of the modern image to resist the passage of time and aging without conflict.

A house, a place, an opportunity

A beautiful photograph shows a particular space. A boy dressed in the local style, with a country hat, appears leaning on a side wall. The setting is not casual. The center of the shot is occupied by a space partially enclosed on three of its sides and open to the front. The stone walls and the cement tile floor contrast with a white lateral wall and the ceiling. Two big openings propose a particular relationship with the exterior. On the side one, a large opening generates the relationship with the land; in the background, a large window with glass frames the view to the Tucuman mountains. The deckchairs and furniture – more typical of a garden – seem to indicate a place for relaxed and festive use, a place for family and friends to meet, a room to be in the shade protected from the wind during the long days of the summer vacation.

Like a covered patio or an open living room, it is an intermediate space between inside and outside, positioned on the highest part of the site; from there it is possible to dominate the immediate environment and contemplate the distant one. It is a reinterpretation of the traditional gallery, based on the consideration of the climate.

The picture was taken in the early 1960s, in the house designed in late 1957 by Eduardo Sacriste (1905-1999) for the Torres Posse family in Tafí del Valle, Tucuman, and built during 1958. From that great gallery, the outdoor life enjoyed by the children was organized. It was the place to receive friends, contemplate the landscape, and, definitely, the condenser of the family life during vacation.

Sacriste graduated as an architect in Buenos Aires in 1932.¹ From the beginning of his professional work, he assumed “the spirit of what we called modern architecture at that time,”² developing some works in the keys of early rationalism.³

At the end of the 1930s, the debate in Argentina proposed

broad paths to overcome functionalism and the search for more culturally rooted approaches. The debate initiated by the Austral Group⁴ recognized the critical moment of the modern architecture and the distance from its initial spirit.⁵ In the early 1940s, Sacriste traveled to the United States of America (USA) to study prefabrication;⁶ he came to know Frank Lloyd Wright's (1867-1959) work which was recorded in his book *Usonia*.⁷

He arrived in Tucuman in 1944 to teach at the School of Architecture and two years later, he was one of the protagonists of the creation of the mythical and renowned Institute of Architecture and Urbanism of Tucuman, together with Horacio Caminos (1914-1990) and Jorge Vivanco (1912-1987).⁸ As it is known, Jorge Vivanco contacted some architects at the *International Congresses of Modern Architecture* (CIAM) in Bridgewater in 1947, so that they could be integrated into the new pedagogical experience. Between 1948 and 1949 Enrico Tedeschi (1910-1978), Cino Calcaprina (1919-1977), Guido Oberti (1907-2003), Ernesto Nathan Rogers (1909-1969), and Luigi Piccinato (1899-1983) arrived. The participation of some of the Italians in 1945 in the *Associazione per l'Architettura Organica* (AAO) [Association for Organic Architecture] nourished the spirit of renewal that had taken root in the Institute.⁹

Around 1951, political issues affected the functioning of the Institute, which was suspended and its teachers were displaced. This took him away from Tucuman, and he dedicated himself to teaching abroad.¹⁰ During that time, he drew and made an analysis of works that would become part of *Building footprints*.¹¹ Upon his return in 1957, he was appointed Dean of the Faculty; it was then that Guillermo Torres Posse, who lived with Josefina Leal Lobo and their large family in an urban house designed by Jorge Vivanco, commissioned him to design the summer house in Tafí.



01 Eduardo Sacriste, Torres Posse House, Tafi del Valle, Argentina, 1957-1958, photo c. 1960, view of the gallery, the living space of the house. © Julio Middagh Archive.

Sacriste was direct in characterizing the commission: “The program of this house asked for economy and 12 beds.”¹² The Torres Posse had eight children and many relatives and friends. They used the property as a second home to enjoy during vacation.

The dwelling was located in that wide valley, between two mountain ranges, at an altitude of about 2,000 meters (m), with a temperate and humid climate in the summer, but dry, cold, and with some snow in the winter. The opening of the road in 1943 meant the greatest interest was to enjoy the valley during the summers. It was one of the favorite places for University professors.¹³

The architect wrote:

Tafi del Valle is a magnificent site. It is a sheltered valley, which descends steeply from north to south, where you can reach it from Tucuman. In summer it rains and turns all green. In winter it dries up, it is cold, but with a radiant sun. It is full of stones (granite). Fruit trees are given generously. It is covered by the remains of pre-Columbian indigenous populations that form circular platforms of 12 m in diameter, surrounded by large stones.¹⁴

From the stone box to the living space

The house was located on a large and generous piece of land. The topography marked a wavy slope. It was located in between the lowest and the highest part, where there was also an accentuated unevenness. Sacriste

always said that the house should be part of the environment rather than something superimposed with the purpose of modifying it; on the contrary, it was necessary to understand its qualities when designing the project.¹⁵

He expressed this clearly when he defined it as the link with the place, since in it “fundamental aspects of the link between man and environment are reflected: landscape, customs, building techniques.”¹⁶

Showing the volumetric hierarchy of its conception, the house breaks up at an angle, accompanying the unevenness of the terrain.¹⁷ Facing the street, the continuity of the stone wall presents it in an imposing way; from the other side, the break of the volume is more clearly perceived. The

facade integrates the different levels, while the roof slab strengthens the horizontal line.

The entrance to the property is at the lowest level, which facilitates access; the covered space for the car, which acts as a portico, was arranged accordingly, allowing entry to the living room of the house. The facade to the street presents what was thought to be the main entrance; a staircase resolves the difference in level as a light folded slab.

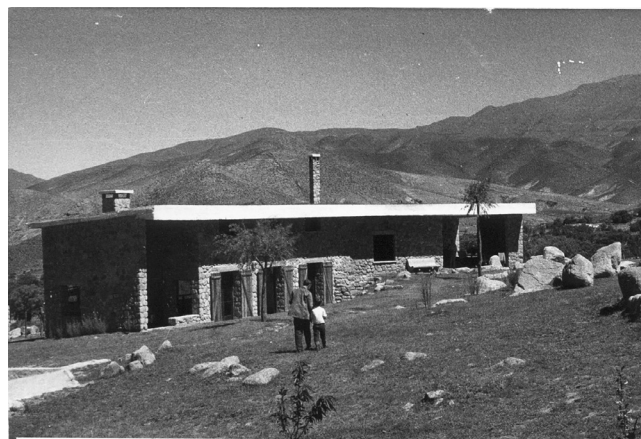
The break in the volume clearly marks the layout of the program. In the longer, two-story sector, the minimum children's bedrooms are located on the upper floor, and the living room and parents' bedroom on the lower floor. The change of direction of the volume coincides with the change of level, and the dining room, kitchen, and gallery are organized here.

The house puts into action a very particular idea. Sacriste emphasized the lesson received from an Italian worker who had taught him:

What you have to do to design is to build a very precise perimeter wall, with its doors and windows, and then inside of it, do the ant thing: you move with total freedom, according to your needs.¹⁸

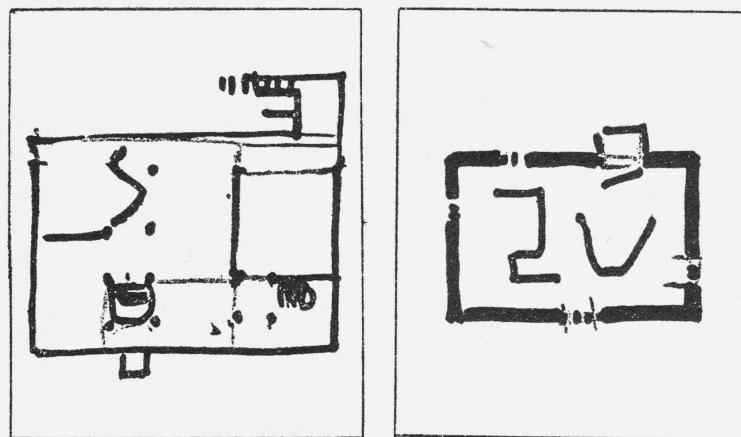
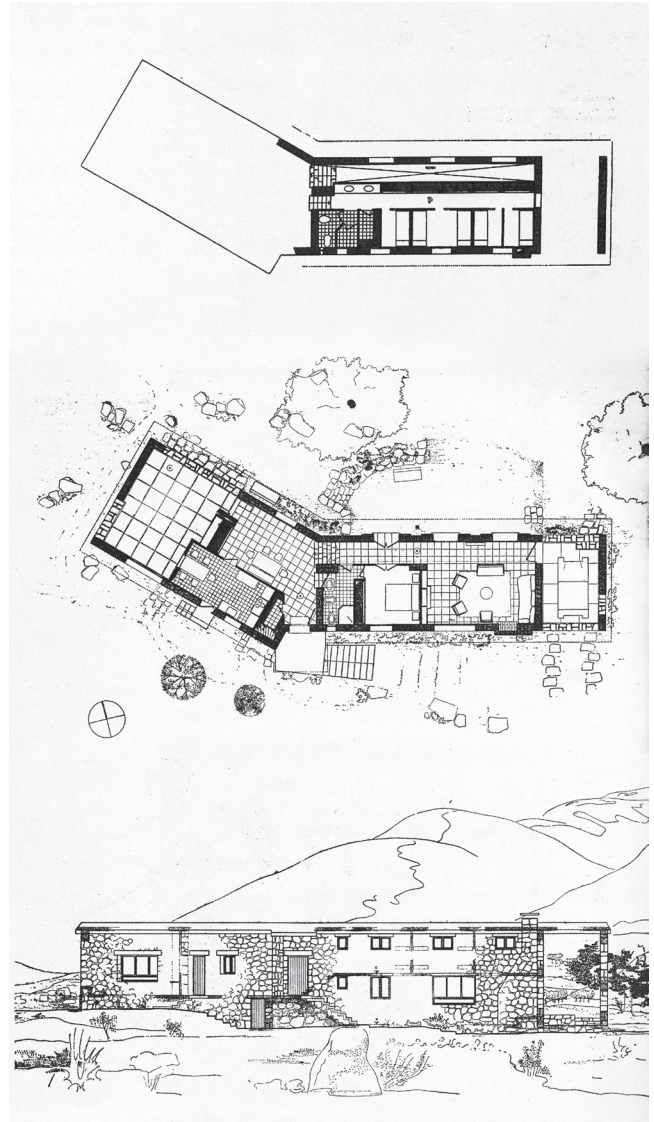
He highlighted the coincidence of this idea with the scheme of the Torres Posse House and the plan of the Villa Stein-de-Monzie (1926-1927), Garches, by Le Corbusier (1887-1965).¹⁹ It was a particular interpretation of the concept of the free plan. In the Corbusian idea, the pilotis ensured the independence of the programmatic distribution and configuration of the envelope regarding the supporting structure and permitted the use of the horizontal window. In the Torres Posse House, the stone box establishes a perimeter that is away from the notion of a free facade and the size of the openings is related to the support of the loads. The idea of the free plan is therefore housed inside the stone perimeter, allowing it to be autonomous in the layout of a relatively demanding program.

Inside, the level of the land is used to define three planes half a level apart, which, while resolving the functional organization, the three levels propose a spatial configuration



02 Eduardo Sacriste, Torres Posse House, Tafi del Valle, Argentina, 1957-1958, photo c. 1963. © Julio Middagh Archive.

- 03 Eduardo Sacriste, Torres Posse House, Taft del Valle, Argentina, 1957-1958, plans from *Summa*, No. 1, Buenos Aires, Ediciones Summa sa, 1963.



- 04 Comparison between Villa Stein-de-Monzie, Garches, (Le Corbusier, 1926-1927) and Torres Posse House (Eduardo Sacriste, 1957-1958), the architectural idea, a box closed to the outside with freedom of movement inside, from *Summa*, No. 1, Buenos Aires, Ediciones Summa sa, 1963.

marked by the meeting point of the entrance, the stairs, and the circulation. This configures a spatial system that grants the total height to be recognized and strengthens the horizontal dimension of the house. Concerning the small rooms, “in the shape of a train carriage,”²⁰ a line of low cupboards was arranged in the corridor which, in correspondence with the double-height space, left the roof slab visible.

Thus, the vision of such a limited space is charged with spaciousness, a perception that is reinforced by the change in direction of the volume, which in the horizontal movement announces the continuity of the rooms. The spatial system is regulated by a clear and effective recognition of the human scale.

Although the assignment was to build a simple house for the summer, the time it would be used would be long and therefore it had to accommodate the requirements of family life for almost a quarter of the year. The memories of the protagonists speak of a house designed only for minimum needs, as well as of a space lived to the full: “We were outside all the time, in full sunshine. The bedrooms were only used for sleeping.” The experience of life in the house verifies the success of the typological conformation: “Our favorite place was the gallery; a little further away were the horses...”²¹

Sacriste had argued that “the house has to be designed with the exclusive purpose of achieving a product suitable to the way of life and the economic conditions of its future occupants,”²² giving a fundamental role to the lived space in the design. Attention to the way of life allowed overcoming mechanistic rationalism in favor of human ideals of an organic architecture. As Bruno Zevi (1918–2000)²³ had proposed, with the organic movement the fundamental attention was shifted towards the spatial conception, in which space was not only a figurative category, but the place of individual and collective social life.

Architectural idea, materiality, durability

“It is not about looking for an original idea but finding the architectural idea that will solve the problem posed,” Sacriste said.²⁴ This one was not supposed to be arbitrary or unjustified, but reached through effort, intuition or experience, and was closely linked to the creative capacity.

Beyond the intelligent solution of the program and the adaptation of the stone box to the topography, the architectural idea integrally assumed in this house an organic approach based both on spatiality and orientation, materiality, and durability, as if it were a conceptual advance of the notion of sustainability.

The house proposes an impression of unity, establishing harmony between the parts and the whole. Sacriste recognized that this house owed a debt to Wright’s Jacobs II House (1946–1948),²⁵ emphasizing the sense of a unique space.²⁶ The debt is registered in the cut, in the double-height, in the elimination of the limits between the lower and upper spaces, and in the vision of the continuity of the roof.

The climate was fundamental in the conception of the dwelling. In his texts, the architect highlighted: “The climate is par excellence the determining factor of architecture:

similar climates, similar architectures,”²⁷ he argued, stating that the project should solve the problems caused by the environmental conditions to achieve interior comfort.

The break in the volume at an angle of 135° (degrees) allowed the orientation to be optimized; both sectors benefit from good sunlight entering from the north; the gallery opens completely in that direction and the living area is resolved with generous double doors for the same purpose. On the contrary, as the dominant wind is from the south, the openings on this facade are more controlled. “The openings must hardly be opened to ventilate the rooms. The north is warm and cheerful.”²⁸ In the gallery both decisions are synthesized: the north side has no limit and the south side incorporates a glazed opening that ensures views and wind control.

Materiality supports the organic conviction of the house. The owner chose the stone because it was more advantageous than the adobe wall: it did not have to be plastered or painted and was much more durable.²⁹ The architect likely shared the decision, as he incorporated new features in the use of this ancestral material: the 30 centimeters (cm) wide walls that make up the box were worked flush in the interior, using a wooden formwork and a binder mixture. The visual result is more pleasing than that of the exterior, where the split ball stone with taken raked joints generates an effect of greater solidity and strength.

Reinforced concrete is present in the roof slab, a low-cost solution for that time. The drawing of the wooden formworks transmits expressive force inside, indicating the two main directions. In the context of the massiveness of the stone, the slab of the roof appears as a contrast in its lightness.

The roof was of particular concern; covered with earth and grass, it aimed to conserve interior heat during the winter and reduce exposure during the summer.³⁰ But, besides, the green roof was proposed as a fifth facade: “Seen from the top of the valley, the roof blends in with the land.”³¹

The presence of the stone also took on other meanings. A huge rock found on the site was brought in at the beginning of the construction and cut for use. A portion of it was arranged as the upper frame of the fireplace and the most important portion was installed – prior to the construction – in the living room as a big sofa, in a corner next to the fireplace. It is clearly an *objet trouvé*, a playful gesture, a different note. It echoes a surrealist attitude that had been felt in some areas of the local *avant-garde*.³²

Sixty years after its construction, the durability of the materials has allowed this house to be in a good state of conservation. With minimum maintenance, it has remained without substantial modifications. The gallery, the most memorable space for the family, continues to be suitable for the multiplicity of social practices. A clear observation of the habits and customs give it a place of hierarchy in the spatial organization.

The organic notion that initially emerged from the conception of the house as a “tailor-made suit” has transcended as a value. While the definition of the original program may seem a major limitation, the rigidity of the box, as well as the rich internal spatial dynamics, represent possible starting points for adaptive re-use.



05 Eduardo Sacriste, Torres Posse House, Tafí del Valle, Argentina, 1957-1958, Sacriste and the owners in the living room; Josefina sitting on the "found" stone. © Julio Middagh Archive.

06 Eduardo Sacriste, Torres Posse House, Tafí del Valle, Argentina, 1957-1958, interior view, the organic spatial conception, articulation of the different planes and levels. © Carolina Ramos, 2014.



07 Eduardo Sacriste, Torres Posse House, Tafí del Valle, Argentina, 1957-1958. © Photo Carolina Ramos, 2014.



08 Eduardo Sacriste, Torres Posse House, Tafí del Valle, Argentina, 1957-1958, view from the site, the horizontal line of the slab appears clearly in the landscape. © Photo Carolina Ramos, 2014.



09 Eduardo Sacriste, Torres Posse House, Tafí del Valle, Argentina, 1957-1958, south facade, view from the road. © Photo Carolina Ramos, 2014.

Only the green roof has presented repeated problems since construction, associated with the effects of the thermal amplitude of the site. The house has been preserved as it was; it is the integrity of its conception that makes it heritage.

Its material definition implied durability. Stone had been used by Le Corbusier in the Errazuriz House (1929–1930) as an approximation to the vernacular vocabulary; Wright associated it with the locality, but the way it was worked referred to his own search; Henry-Russell Hitchcock (1903–1987) and Philip Johnson (1906–2005) had accepted it only as a surface material for modern architecture, rejecting any suggestion of mass and weight.³³

In the Torres Posse House, the stone indicates weight and permanence. Its material resolution confirms the relationship with the landscape, rejects the obsolescence of modern construction methods, but also the one of the modern image. The selection of the stone by the owner came from a practical idea – which dismissed the need for maintaining facades and interiors – that opposed to the impact of weathering: for the architect, this overcame the rationalist image and modern architecture's idea of remaining pristine. At the same time, the material choice recognized – in accordance with the integral design – that the house was not an aesthetic object that should remain untouched, but fundamentally a place for life. The house eloquently reveals itself as an architecture capable of planting itself firmly in the virtue of the material to resist the passage of time and, paradoxically, to age without conflict.

Modern house, design and place

The house represented for the architect a field of experimentation to define a type that he continued to deepen in the following years in his summer houses. It synthesizes the modernity projected and conceived from the location; this has transcended the pragmatic and incorporates the natural and human dimension in the design conception, where the experience of the domestic space becomes a central argument.

The gallery distinguishes the type: it comes from the local tradition, but it is reinterpreted and clearly integrated, not as an extension of another room, but with its own dimensions and characteristics of use. It is a living space in which the experience of rest, leisure, and contemplation of the landscape is synthesized.

It is a modern house because the requirements are resolved in rational terms, organizing a plan consistent with the demand for economy and the conditions proposed by the place, climate and orientation. The commitment to the topography of the site was key, as was the integration of materials – the stone walls and the reinforced concrete slab – which enabled the abstract form to be overcome. On the inside, the light gives life to a material as hard as stone, and on the outside, the shadows of the roof mark the surface of the walls, while the presence of the slab and eaves give it “unity of form.” The material option for the stone does not refer to a problem of language, but to weathering resistance and as the prolongation of its life, in synthesis, to the overcoming of time.

The house transcends because it was made to fit the family, shaping the living space of the time of rest, thus embodying the sphere of essential joys and contributing to the formation of a new type. It transcends because the design strategy valued the definite configuration of the box in relation to the freedom of the floor plan. It transcends because of the durability of its material choices, and because fundamentally, even in its modern conception, it appeals to stone as an eternal material that places it outside of time.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

- 1 Sacriste was a very well-known architect and professor who is widely recognized in the historiography of Argentine architecture: Olga Paterlini, *Eduardo Sacriste*, Buenos Aires, Clarín, 2014.
- 2 Eduardo Sacriste, “Acerca de mis primeras obras modernas”, *Summa*, No. 220, Buenos Aires, Ediciones Summa SA, 1985, 31.
- 3 The Ferro House, in Mar del Plata (c.1936), and the rental building in Callao Avenue and Quintana, in Buenos Aires (with D. Duggan, 1938) are two of the best examples he designed at that time.
- 4 The Austral Group was initially formed by Jorge Ferrari Hardoy (1914–1977), Juan Kurchan (1913–1972), and exiled Spanish Antonio Bonet (1913–1989). All of them had worked for the Buenos Aires plan with Le Corbusier. They were joined by Jorge Vivanco, Horacio Caminos, Hilario Zalba (1912–1995), Simón Ungar (1912–1971), Alberto Le Pera (1913–1990) among others. See Jorge Liernur, Pablo Pschepiurca, *La red austral*, Bernal, Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, Prometeo Libros, 2008.
- 5 Antonio Bonet, Jorge Ferrari Hardoy, Juan Kurchan, “Voluntad y acción”, *Austral*, No. 1, sp., from: *Nuestra Arquitectura*, No. 119, Buenos Aires, 1939.
- 6 Carlos Coire, *Eduardo Sacriste: El hombre y su obra*, Buenos Aires, Universidad de Morón, 2005.
- 7 Eduardo Sacriste, *Usonia. Aspectos de la obra de Wright*, Buenos Aires, Ediciones Infinito, 1960.
- 8 They would be joined later by: Hilario Zalba, Alberto Le Pera, Rafael Onetto (1915–1967), Eduardo Catalano (1917–2010), and Jorge Bruno Borgato (1918–1985). See: Horacio Torrent, “Radical Pedagogies: Instituto de Arquitectura y Urbanismo, Tucumán, Argentina”, in <http://radical-pedagogies.com/search-cases/an-instituto-arquitectura-urbanismo-tucuman-argentina/>.
- 9 Sacriste took part both in teaching and in the memorable design of the university city that Banham considered as the first megastructure of modern architecture. See: Reyner Banham, *Megastructure: Urban Futures of the Recent Past*, London, New York, Harper & Row, 1976.
- 10 Between 1952 and 1957, he taught at the London Polytechnic, Tulane University in the USA, and the Bengali Engineering College in Calcutta.
- 11 Eduardo Sacriste, *Buildings footprints*, The Student Publication of the School of Design, Raleigh, North Carolina, 1959.
- 12 Eduardo Sacriste, “Obras en Tucumán”, *Summa*, No. 1, Buenos Aires, Ediciones Summa SA, 1963, 37.
- 13 In 1950, Enrico Tedeschi made a minimal stone cabin for himself; Margarita Roesler Franz (1915–1974) had designed the wooden house she shared with Cino Calcaprina, always remembered as a very cold place; Hilario Zalba did the same somewhat later, using adobe. In the same place, Sacriste had projected in 1947 a sanitary station, and later he built two other houses. See: Ricardo Viola, *Plano de Tafi del Valle*, Municipalidad de Tafi del Valle, 1999; Enrico Tedeschi, “Casa en

- Tafi del Valle”, *Nuestra Arquitectura*, No. 381, Buenos Aires, 1961, 21-23; Camilo Galetti, “Recuerdos de mi abuelo Hilario Zalba”, *47 al fondo*, Year 6, No. 7, La Plata, 2000, 3-5.
- 14 Eduardo Sacriste, op. cit., 37.
 - 15 Olga Paterlini, interview with Felipe Torres Posse, Luisa María Torres Posse and Fernando García Hamilton, Tucumán, 11 August 2020.
 - 16 Eduardo Sacriste, *Qué es la casa*, Buenos Aires, Editorial Columba, 1968, 33.
 - 17 The house has been highlighted only in the history of modern architecture in Argentina. See: “Eduardo Sacriste: la obra de un maestro”, *Summa*, No. 220, Buenos Aires, Ediciones Summa SA, 1985, 24-78; César Pelli, Julio Middagh, et al. “Eduardo Sacriste Casa Torres – Posse”, *Revista 1:100*, Buenos Aires, 2016; Alberto Petrini, *El arquitecto Eduardo Sacriste. Un maestro de la modernidad criolla*, Museo de Arte Hispanoamericano “Isaac Fernández Blanco”, Buenos Aires, 1995.
 - 18 Eduardo Sacriste, *Charlas a Principiantes*, Tucumán, Facultad de Arquitectura y Urbanismo, Universidad Nacional de Tucumán, 1961. In 3rd edition Buenos Aires, EUDEBA, 1976, 18.
 - 19 Eduardo Sacriste, “Idea Arquitectónica”, *Summa*, No. 1, Buenos Aires, Ediciones Summa SA, 1963, 53-54.
 - 20 Eduardo Sacriste, “Obras en Tucumán”, *Summa*, No. 1, Buenos Aires, Ediciones Summa SA, 1963, 38.
 - 21 Olga Paterlini, Interview with Felipe Torres Posse, Luisa María Torres Posse y Fernando García Hamilton, Tucumán, 11 August 2020.
 - 22 Eduardo Sacriste, *Qué es la casa*, Buenos Aires, Editorial Columba, 1968, 28.
 - 23 Bruno Zevi, “Della cultura architettonica”, *Metron*, No. 31-32, Roma, Sandron Editore, 1949, 18-26.
 - 24 Eduardo Sacriste, “Idea Arquitectónica”, *Summa*, No. 1, Buenos Aires, Ediciones Summa SA, 1963, 53.
 - 25 Eduardo Sacriste, “Obras en Tucumán”, *Summa*, No. 1, Buenos Aires, Ediciones Summa SA, 1963, 38.
 - 26 The Jacob II House had been recognized and analyzed by Sacriste as a clear example of Wright’s Usonian house strategy. From: Eduardo Sacriste, *Usonia. Aspectos de la obra de Wright*, Buenos Aires, Ediciones Infinito, 1960. Recent edition: Eduardo Sacriste, *Frank Lloyd Wright, Usonia*, Editorial Librería Técnica CP67, 105.
 - 27 Eduardo Sacriste, *Charlas a Principiantes*, Tucumán, Facultad de Arquitectura y Urbanismo, Universidad Nacional de Tucumán, 1961. In 3rd edition Buenos Aires, EUDEBA, 1976, 104.
 - 28 Eduardo Sacriste, “Obras en Tucumán”, *Summa*, No. 1, Buenos Aires, Ediciones Summa SA, 1963, 38.
 - 29 Idem.
 - 30 It assumed a solution concerning some pre-existing building traditions and which the architect applied in other works, as in the case of the García House, in San Javier. See Ferré, María Ana. “Três casas de pedra por Eduardo Sacriste”. From: *IV Seminario docomomo Sul*, Porto Alegre, Faculdade de Arquitetura da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, 2013; Villavicencio, Susana, *Casa García Bernasconi (1966)*. From: Paterlini, Olga, *Eduardo Sacriste*, Buenos Aires, Clarín, 2014, 96-101.
 - 31 Sacriste, Eduardo, “Obras en Tucumán”, *Summa*, No. 1, Buenos Aires, Ediciones Summa SA, 1963, 38.
 - 32 It was clearly proposed in the manifesto of the Austral Group as liberation from established truths, and as a lesson to appreciate the men and women protagonists of architecture in its most complex dimension. Was also referred to by Gómez de la Serna in 1944, in the pages of *Tecné*, the magazine in which Sacriste had collaborated. Bonet Antonio, Ferrari Hardoy, Jorge, Kuchan, Juan, “Voluntad y acción”, *Austral*, No. 1. From: *Nuestra Arquitectura*, No. 119, Buenos Aires, 1939, sp. Gómez de la Serna, Ramón, “Surrealismo arquitectural”, *Tecné*, No. 3, Buenos Aires, 1944, 149. Sonderegger, Pedro, “Proyecto moderno y circunstancias nacionales en la Argentina de 1940. El grupo ‘Austral’ y la revista *Tecné*”, *América: Cahiers du CRICCAL*, No. 4-5, 1990, 431-438.
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Richard Neutra, Delcourt House, Croix, France, 1967-1970, lateral view of the hall. © Richard Klein, 2018.

The Delcourt House: the last house by Richard Neutra

BY RICHARD KLEIN

The only French building by the architect Richard Neutra (1892-1970), Delcourt house, built in Croix near Roubaix, France, is frequently forgotten in publications on his work, and is generally considered to be of little significance in the largely American career of its designer. At the end of the 1960s, Marcel Delcourt (1923-2016), a young Chief Executive Officer at the head of the mail order company *Les Trois Suisses*, was attracted to the American way of life. As the final work of Richard Neutra, the Delcourt residence is a fragile heritage, the result of complex and fruitful exchanges between Europe and the United States of America (USA), between architects and the client, but also between the customized design of most of the features and the use of sophisticated techniques, products that the interior finish industry was able to supply at the end of the 1960s. The edifice now stands as a repository of domestic architecture techniques.

The only French building by the architect Richard Neutra, the Delcourt house, located in Croix near Roubaix, is frequently forgotten or relegated in the publications devoted to the work of Richard Neutra. Neutra designed several villas in Switzerland and Germany and his only French house is also his last achievement.

The itinerary of the Austrian-born American architect goes through the agency of Adolf Loos (1870-1933), emigration to the USA in 1923, meeting with Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959) and Rudolf Schindler (1887-1953), and the elaboration, at the end of 1920s, of his architectural language applied mainly in Southern California. The first achievements of Neutra are then considered as European demonstrations on American soil whereas the development of American architectural activity after WWII presents towards Europe the image of an American architecture open to modernity and wide open spaces.

Architecture of houses in the usa

Marcel Delcourt ran the *Les Trois Suisses* mail order business from 1957. As a member of the CIL Roubaix-Tourcoing,¹ the young CEO went to Berlin in 1965 to visit the *International Architecture Exhibition of Berlin* (IBA 1957), the Hansaviertel district and the collective housing projects designed by Walter Gropius (1883-1969), Oscar Niemeyer (1907-2012) and Alvar Aalto (1898-1976). It was during this trip that Marcel Delcourt discovered the publication of Helmut Borchardt and Volker Traub: *Maisons individuelles aux USA*.²

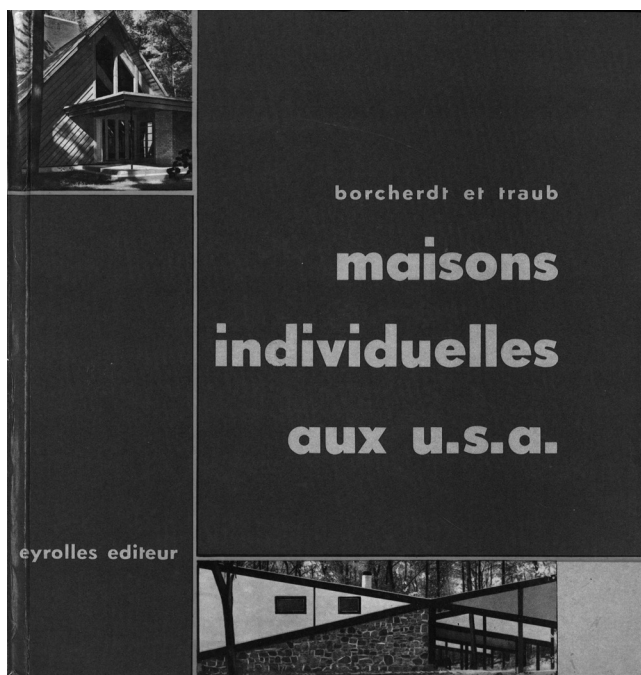
The introductory text emphasized the specificities of American architecture and, more generally, the qualities of a modern architecture that had become the new style of an era. The authors pointed out the USA's advance in terms of individual housing while recalling the fundamental contribution of the emigration of European architects such as Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969), Richard

Neutra and Eero Saarinen (1910-1961). In the register of singularities, Helmut Borchardt and Volker Traub mentioned a relationship to landscape shared between integration or detachment and the influence of lifestyles on architectural forms, the expression of a kind of life and an individual way to live in the USA. A generation of clients less attached to appearances, living in a new, unconventional family structure that was concerned with education attentive to child psychology, and a less formal way of life were presented as the foundations of a home atmosphere that was very different from that of European dwellings. The program that the authors deduced from it was obviously the one that Marcel Delcourt would adopt.

Tempted by the American way of life, as a part of the milieu of the late 1960s Europe, Marcel Delcourt finds in the book a vast panorama of the architecture of individual houses built between 1951 and 1961 in the USA. Among the achievements of Marcel Breuer (1902-1981), Craig Ellwood (1922-1992), Philip Johnson (1906-2005), John Lautner (1911-1994) and George Nelson (1908-1986), the Singleton House (1959-1960) designed by Richard Neutra in Los Angeles caught his attention. He appreciated, thanks to the four photographs by Julius Shulman (1910-2009),³

*the interpenetration of the interior and exterior spaces. The portico coming out of the room to span the pond. The glass windows join at a sharp angle and the mirror of water with its reflections gives an impression of depth which favors the irruption of the landscape in the room. The volumes remain very open between the vertical and horizontal walls.*⁴

The north-south elongated and swaying plan, typical of Richard Neutra's series of American houses, shows how the topography, the view to the west and the landscape in the distance of a Californian valley conditioned the provisions of the villa.



01 Cover of *Maisons individuelles aux USA*, Helmut Borchardt and Volker Traub, Paris, Eyrolles 1965.

Marcel Delcourt and his wife confirmed their interest after visiting several of Richard Neutra's works in Germany, Switzerland and Los Angeles. The site plan and the planned program⁵ were sent to Richard Neutra in May 1966 and Neutra visited the site during the same year, taking advantage of his visit to one of his projects in Germany. The site upon which Marcel Delcourt plans to live is in an environment completely different from the vast expanses of America. The site is located in town, in the heart of a block occupied by an old house to be demolished. The land is, however, large enough and wooded⁶ to accommodate an architecture that is intended, according to its designer, to be the synthesis of the observation of life, geometry and technology. Starting from the program that Marcel Delcourt specified, the architect took special care of the layout of the house according to the orientation and inclination of the sun. The plans were co-signed by Dion Neutra (1926-2019), associated with his father Richard Neutra for several years. The execution part was entrusted to Bruno Honegger (1935-2007),⁷ architect in Zurich and collaborator of Richard Neutra.⁸

The Delcourt house includes all the ingredients that have made Richard Neutra's formula in the USA a success: an abstract and open plan that seems boundless, crossings and overhangs, the pursuit of floors and ceilings beyond the largely glazed walls, the emphasized horizontality, the "spider's leg" consisting of the extension of a beam held by a metal end post located outside the envelope, temporary partitions, curtains and movable partitions, sophisticated illusionist devices such as outdoor water ponds, interior mirrors or the polychrome of the first floor partitioning.

In 1996, the house was sold by Marcel Delcourt and then escaped a proposed indelicate and out-of-scale neighboring

building only thanks to the inscription of the Delcourt House on the list of Historical Monuments. The inscription proceeded despite the unfavorable opinion of the house's new owner who intended to subdivide the land.⁹ The inscription's description, arguments and the debates aimed at protecting the building underlined the originality of the construction, the typical American character of Richard Neutra's unique achievement in France and the illustration of the theories of biorealism that he defended in the work published in 1954, *Survival through design*.¹⁰

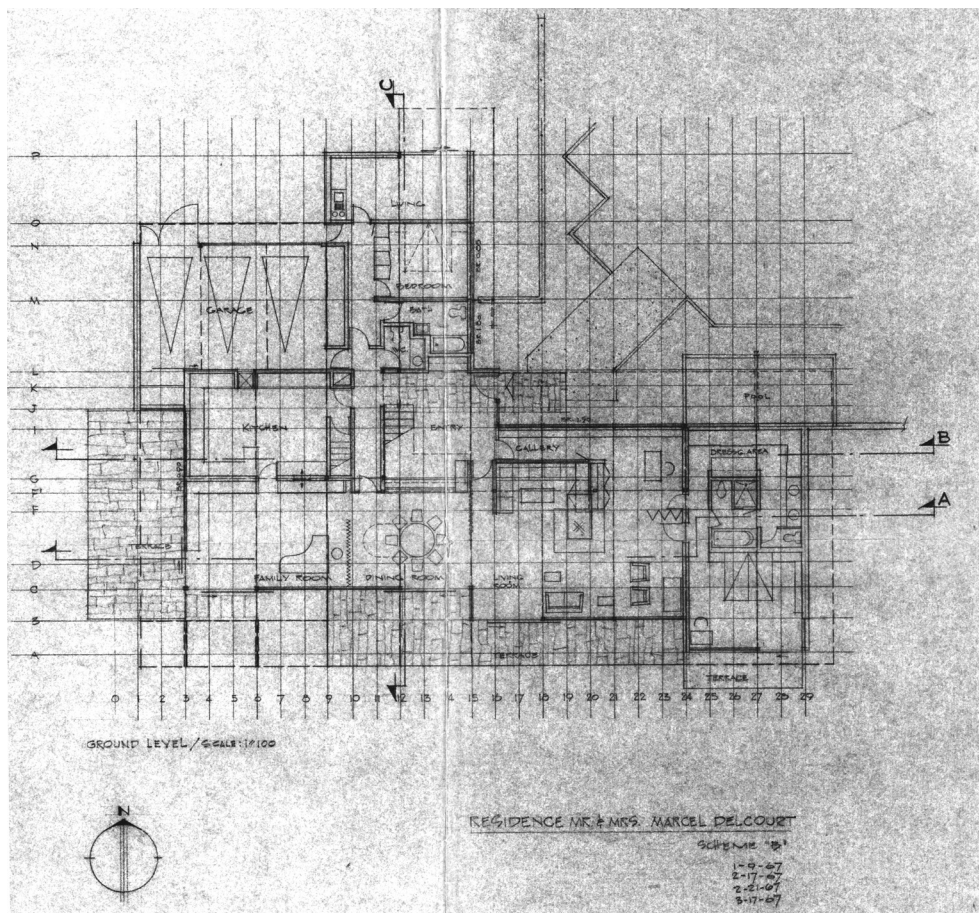
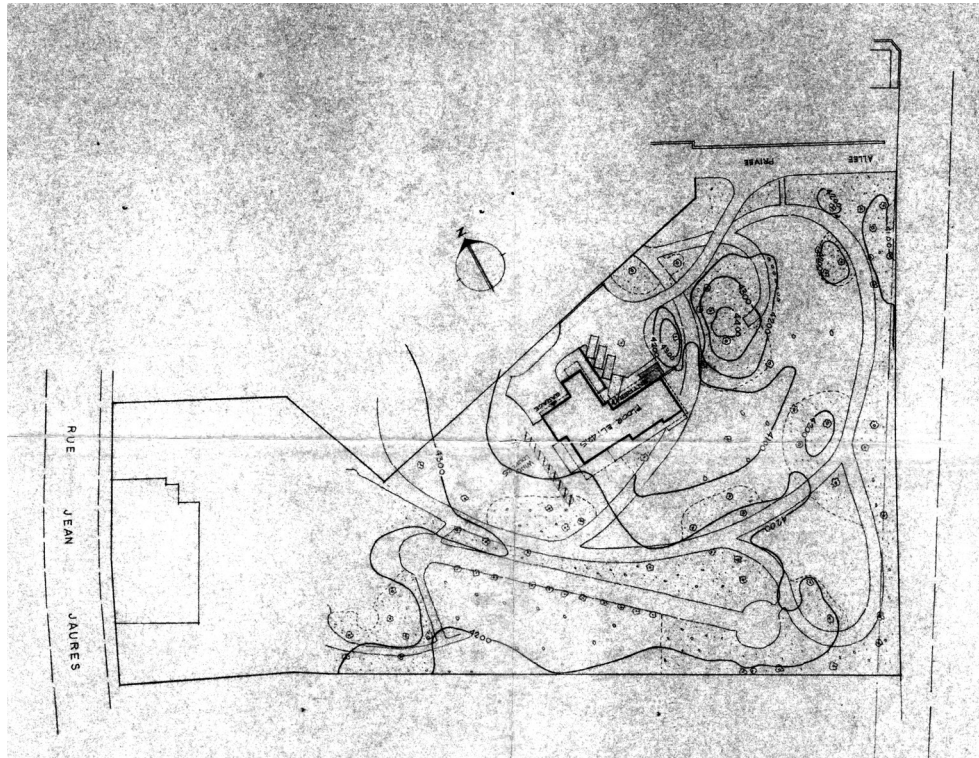
But, does the legacy of the Delcourt House rest solely on this transplantation on the lands of the North of France from a model designed for the USA? Commentators, when they do not simply forget the realization,¹¹ underestimate the real implication of Richard Neutra and the adaptations of his architecture to this singular context and its execution.

Europe – USA and back

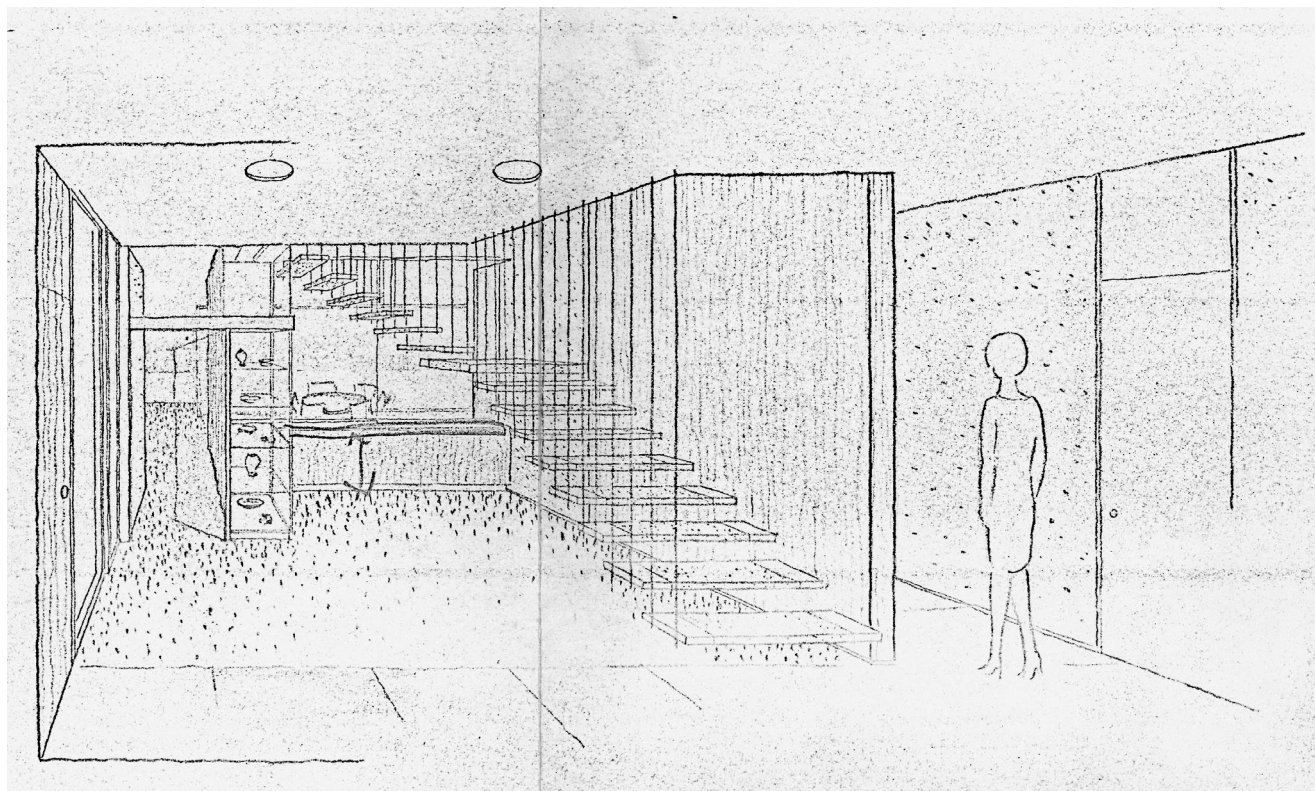
Since the 1930s, mirrors and their reflections have been systematically used by Richard Neutra to create illusions of grandeur, to multiply views, to create false perspectives and to make vertical structures disappear. The use of mirrors is a constant in the work of Richard Neutra, which represents a tangible trace of his affiliation with the practices of Adolf Loos that he exported and adapted to the USA. The Water Mirrors that Richard Neutra has been using since 1937, such as at the Miller House at Palm Springs, are one of the developments that generate a reflection and, in some cases, act as a horizontal guard rail to ensure a safe distance from the edge of accessible roof terraces. Because of the urban situation and a much more constrained visual relationship with the landscape than in his Californian houses, Richard Neutra multiplied the recourse to the mirrors in the Delcourt House: in the interior, perpendicular to the windows, above a piece of furniture of storage as in the dining room, at the junction of a wall with the ceiling to remove the partitioning; outside, perpendicular to the bay windows of the south facade by replacing the presence of a masonry wall by the reflection of joinery and their transparent windows and thus masking a border between the living room and the private spaces located to the east. The different pools, east of the entrance or terraces on the upper floor complete these illusions of their horizontal reflections.

Several specific requests from Marcel Delcourt modify the original plan and have resulted in substantial differences between the initial draft and the final design. At the level of the entrance and the north facade, Richard Neutra initially envisaged a transparency which left the view towards the south from the entrance of the house. Marcel Delcourt asked him to overcome this too ostentatious perception. The library is finally placed against the closed north wall. Thus, the initial transparency of the entrance was abandoned during the sketches in favor a solid wall, with library inside, and an entrance wall which masks the direct sight of the neighborhood. One of the most fascinating details resulting from this compromise between closing and opening the entrance is the mechanism of the glass shelf located on the side of the door to the living room from the

02 Richard & Dion Neutra architects, Delcourt House, Croix, France, 1967, situation. © Private archives.



03 Richard & Dion Neutra architects, Delcourt House, Croix, France, 17 March 1967, plan of the Ground Floor level. © Private archives.



hall. Depending on the case, a rotating mirror reflects the contents of the window or lets the garden appear from the hall. Marcel Delcourt was also involved with the choice of the tiling of the floor and with the choice of a local brick for the masonry of the fire place. Thus, Artois sandstone, with staggered joints, which seems anachronistic to some visitors, was chosen with the architect's consent instead of the architect's white marble.¹² Many other traces of adaptations to the wishes of Marcel Delcourt exist such as the Japanese steps in the garden made from slabs recovered in old spinning mills through to the enlargement of a room which disturbs the initial composition of the sections of glazing. Marcel Delcourt was also the source of a slight reduction in the size of metal frames that allowed him savings on the supply of joinery.¹³

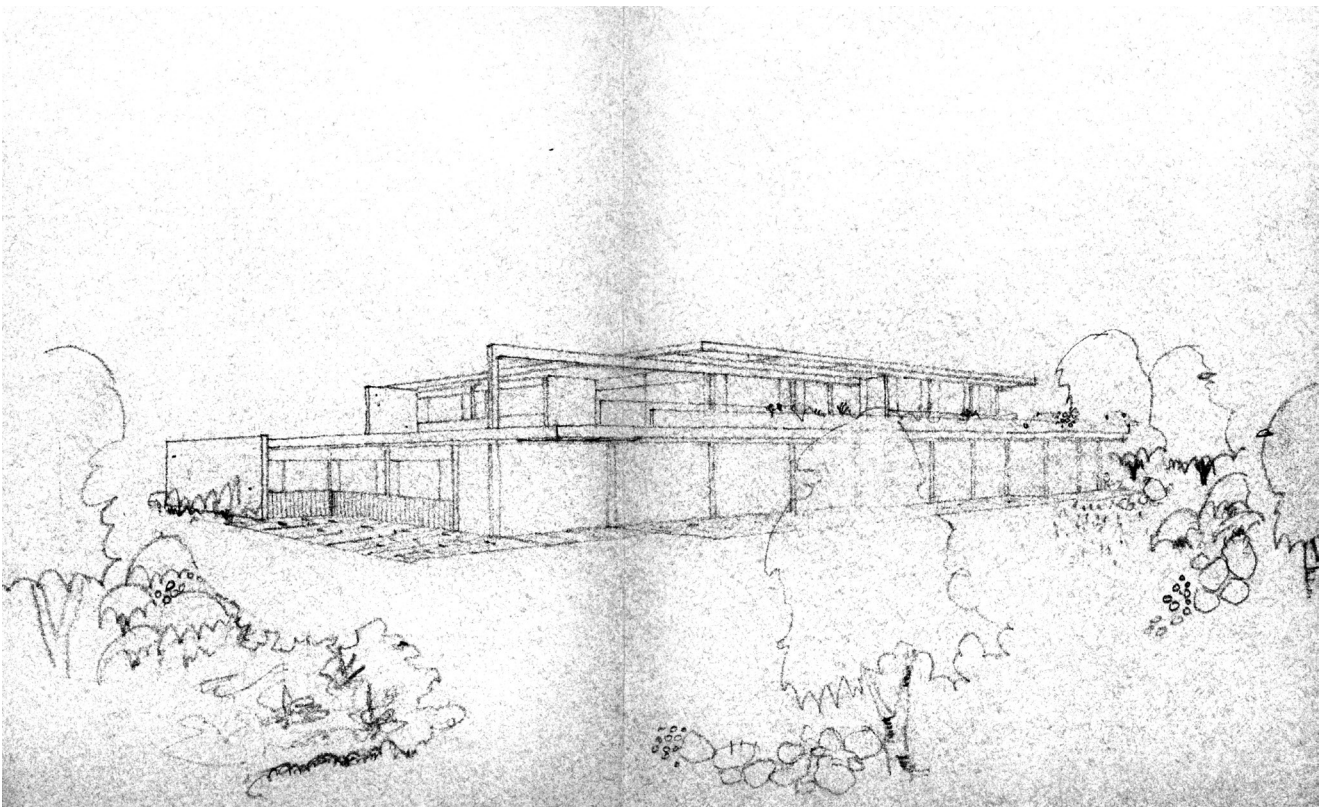
Swiss quality, American envelope

The reputation of Richard Neutra rests not only on the plastic qualities of the houses he designed but also on many inventions. The technical improvements he developed and the patents he took out cover topics ranging from metal frames and sliding glass doors to the use of plywood in construction. But the supplies of equipment and materials for the Delcourt House can reveal an unsuspected depth, that of a true conservatory of the techniques of the domestic architecture. The structural work company adapted to a mixed construction to which it was not accustomed. The masonry components of the structure, the walls and the floors, are therefore associated with the metal frame parts which include a 230 mm primary beam structure and

a secondary vertical structure consisting of square columns of 100 mm side. The documentation and inspections by Bruno Honegger introduced an uncommon finishing level to the execution and the supply of the components. The heating, developed by Alberto Marki, a Swiss engineer based in Locarno,¹⁴ combines several differently regulated systems. The first network that provides low-temperature heating in the floor, is completed by a forced-air system that blows warm air along the bays of the south facade from fine metal floor grilles, thus avoiding condensation on the windows. Radiators and hot water convectors are distributed in the other rooms. In the main bathroom, the side of the bathtub is actually a radiator that ensures the thermal comfort of the room. Finally, the awning of the south facade incorporates a series of electric radiant heaters that allow the use of the terrace in cool weather.¹⁵

Lighting devices complement spatial arrangements throughout the dwelling. For example, recesses in the interior ceilings and undersides of awnings systematically extend point or linear lighting systems by providing visual continuity between the interior and the exterior. The linear illumination of the ceiling of the entrance is extended under an outer beam in a perfect continuity that can make the visitor hesitate between the view from a side window and the reflection of a mirror. The lighting of the covered terrace extends that of the living room thus ensuring another visual continuity. More generally, the electrical plan includes, in terms of power supply network or lighting, all the requirements for use and comfort. The design of installations and their extreme precision are supplemented by the

05 Richard Neutra, Delcourt House, Croix, France, 1967-1970, view of the south facade. © Richard Klein, 2018.



06 Richard & Dion Neutra architects, Delcourt House, Croix, France, 5 May 1967, view south west. © Private archives.

GRIESSER

le dernier mot du confort-lumière

ELECTROMATIC





08 Advertising for the Maxmatic food waste disposer. © Private archives.

specification and the supply of the most efficient products and components of that period.

As the ultimate work of Richard Neutra, who died in Wuppertal on 16 April 1970, this fragile swan song is the fruit of complex and fruitful exchange between Europe and the USA, between the architects and Marcel Delcourt but also between the custom-design of most of the facilities and the use of sophisticated off-the-shelf technical solutions that the building industry was able to supply in the late 1960s. The *Trash* soap holder and the Swiss KWC faucet, the Italian toilet paper holder *Indo*, the *Arnould* switches of the *Europa* series, the *Ericsson* telephony, the *Griesser* Swiss venetian blinds of the *electromatic* model, the *Maxmatic* food waste disposer¹⁶ integrated into the kitchen sink are still visible traces that reveal how much the inheritance from Richard Neutra's last house of would be incomplete without these components. The historian and the restorer, if they wish to relate accurately or preserve the integrity and substance of the architecture of the 20th century, will have to pay more and more attention to *just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing?*¹⁷

Notes

- 1 CIL Roubaix-Tourcoing (the Roubaix-Tourcoing Housing Interprofessional Committee) administered the 1% housing parity system that was created in 1943 by the unions and the employers of the North of France on the initiative of Albert Prouvost, boss of the *Lainière de Roubaix*. The contributions to the various Interprofessional Housing Committees were intended for the financing of social housing.

- 2 Helmut Borchardt and Volker Traub, *Maisons individuelles aux USA*, Paris, Eyrolles, 1965. The book was also published in Italian, Spanish and German editions.
- 3 Ibid, 55-57.
- 4 Ibid, 57.
- 5 Marcel Delcourt was then 44, like his wife. The couple had seven children aged 3 months to 19 years. The program was precise, it included the area of the rooms that the couple intended to dedicate to the various functions as well as the list of some old furniture to be integrated into the future house.
- 6 The Belgian landscaper Guy Capart (1906-1991) was consulted by Marcel Delcourt about the existing afforestation, the future garden and its vegetation.
- 7 Marcel Delcourt remained in professional relations with Bruno Honegger for several years. The architect designed a house in Brittany for Marcel Delcourt as well as premises for his company, *Les Trois Suisses*. A lot of information about the house came from interviews conducted by Rodolphe Gissinger and Carlos Torres with Marcel Delcourt on 14th February and 23th May 2001 in Marcq-en-Barœul. These interviews were held in the framework of the research seminar led by Richard Klein and Marie-Céline Masson during the 2000-2001 academic year, ENSAP of Lille.
- 8 The plans of the house were developed during the year 1967, the work began at the beginning of the year 1968, and the Delcourt family settled into the house in the month of February 1969.
- 9 The Delcourt House was listed in the inventory of Historic Monuments on 28 July 2000.
- 10 Richard Neutra, *Survival through Design*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1954. The French edition was published in 1971 by Casterman (Tournai, Belgium).
- 11 Many publications devoted to the work of Richard Neutra do not mention the Delcourt house.
- 12 The very precise layout of the tiles was developed by Bruno Honegger (plans of February 1968).
- 13 The metal frames of the Delcourt House were supplied by Chamebel in Vilvoorde (Belgium). Window joinery on the south facade was fitted with Thermopane insulating glass.
- 14 Alberto Marki was a member of the Swiss Society of Heating and Air Conditioning Engineers but also of the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning Engineers.
- 15 The production of heat from the cellar boiler required the installation of a refrigeration system in the nearby wine cellar.
- 16 The installation of the food waste disposal unit required a request for exemption from the Departmental Directorate of Sanitary and Social Action.
- 17 *Just what is it that makes today's homes so different, so appealing?* is the title of a collage by Richard Hamilton presented in 1956 at the London exhibition *This is tomorrow*.

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Iwan Iwanoff, Paganin House, Perth, Australia, 1965, close-up of the original front facade, illustrating the white marble verandah fascia and balustrade and the Western Australian Jarrah hardwood timber on the verandah soffit and the front (North-facing) facade window wall, 2005.
© Photo Robert Frith/Acorn Photo.

Paganin House: a risen phoenix

BY SCOTT ROBERTSON AND NONI BOYD

A risen phoenix examines the issues surrounding the reinstatement of an important post-war house in suburban Perth, Western Australia that was destroyed by fire and examines the preservation of the original architect's design intent through use and interpretation of the documentary evidence, the physical evidence and an understanding of the personality and design ethos of the original architect by the architect for the reinstatement work.

When faced with the partial or total destruction of important works of architecture there is almost universal approval for a faithful recreation of the lost elements of important or well-known works of architecture. No-one questioned the wisdom of replicating the section of Windsor Castle destroyed by fire in 1992 or the interior of Mackintosh's Glasgow School of Art destroyed by fire in 2018. When the roof of Paris's Nôtre Dame Cathedral was destroyed by fire in 2019 speculative modern interventions were touted soon after, however, it was resolved to rebuild the roof according to the original design [as reworked by Viollet-Le-Duc (1814-1879) in the 19th century] and it now appears that Viollet-Le-Duc's 1859 pinnacle will be replicated to match his design. These buildings are national icons but the Paganin House (1965), in the Floreat suburb of Perth, Western Australia (WA), is a well-known, but not heritage-listed, private home which was largely destroyed by fire in 2015.

Background

The Paganin House was an important Modernist single-family house designed by émigré architect Iwan Iwanoff (1919-1986) in 1965. Iwanoff was born in Bulgaria and educated in architecture at what is now the Technical University of Munich, completing the course in 1946. From 1950 he was based in Perth, WA, but moved to Melbourne in order to obtain his architectural registration, and then returned briefly to work in West Germany. In 1961 he returned to Perth and established his architectural practice.

The house was designed for timber and marble merchant, Arthur Paganin and his family. The house's second owners restored the house and sold it in 2013. Under the ownership of the house's third owners, in December 2015 whilst the owners were away, the house was destroyed by fire to such an extent that the end brick walls and the concrete floor slabs, plus some salvaged timber joinery, were all that remained. The 1979 pool pavilion by Iwanoff, however, remained intact and contained some similar details to the original house. The loss of the house was keenly felt by architects and the general public in Perth. The WA State Architect described Iwanoff as being "like our local Gaudi" and that the "loss of the house is the loss of a local treasure."

The owners of the house determined to meticulously rebuild the house according to Iwanoff's original design and engaged Perth architect, Tim Wright, to oversee the rebuilding of the house.

The house

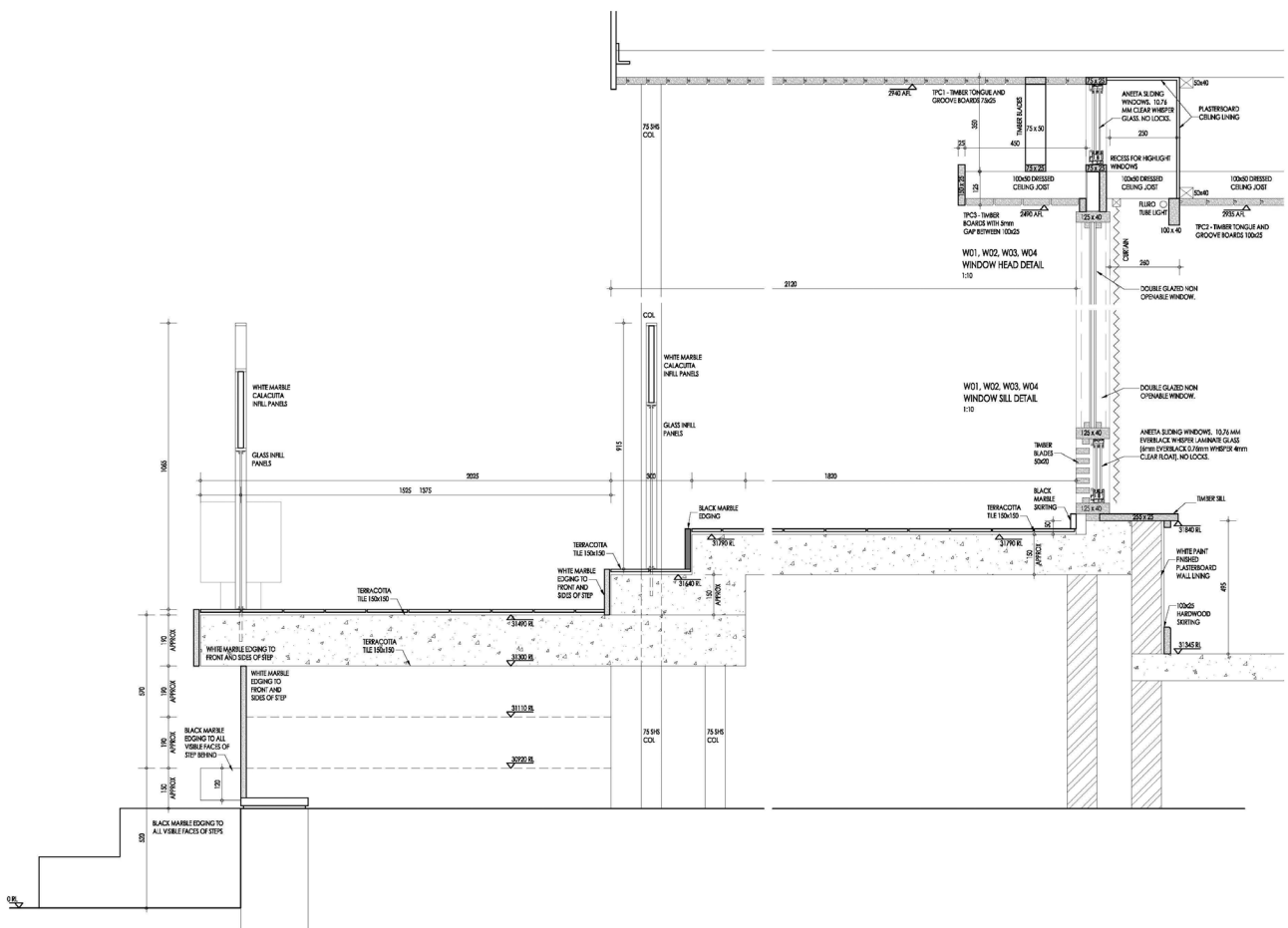
The house presented to the street as a floating rectangular prism above its garage-containing basement, with the shadow of the front verandah contrasting with the scalloped pattern of the steel and marble balustrades. The end blank walls of the front verandah featured book-matched slabs of gold-veined black Italian Nero Potoro marble. The window walls of the house were constructed from Jarrah timber, a dark red hardwood native to WA, and featured fixed louver ventilation strips at the base and top of each window panel.

The plan of the house is a rectangle with brick end walls and long window walls on the long sides. The bedrooms and other private rooms had brick walls but the remainder of the house was open plan with the prominent timber-boarded ceiling defining a solid plane above. The functional spaces under this sweeping ceiling were defined by a combination of varied floor levels and the use of semi-open timber screens that allowed vision and ventilation but created a sense of intimate enclosure. The predominant finishing materials comprised terra cotta tiles on stairs and the front verandah and in some internal spaces with edging of black marble, timber wall paneling, timber semi-open screens, marble panels, gold wallpaper, carpet, translucent white and turquoise Perspex for lighting, and plastic laminate paneling; a sophisticated mélange of luxurious and new materials specifically sourced for the project. The extensive use of marble in a private home was rare in WA at the time of construction and reflects the business of the original owner.

The process

The current owners were determined to retain as much of the scant surviving materials from the house and to replicate the missing material and elements in accordance with the original design. Iwanoff's architectural drawings are housed in the State Library of WA and the comprehensive

- 01 Iwan Iwanoff, Paganin House, Perth, Australia, 1965, section through the rebuilt front timber window wall as documented by Tim Wright, Architect showing the ventilation louvers at the base and top of the wall, backed up by sliding glass panels. © Extracted from Wright Feldhusen drawing A.08 C, dated 11 October 2016, courtesy Tim Wright Architect Pty Ltd.



set of drawings for the Paganin House was made available for use by the Iwanoff family to assist in the rebuilding so that it could be based on the architect's original details. Like all construction projects, the Paganin House had not been constructed totally in conformity with the drawings and so the remnants of the house were measured and a set of measured drawings prepared to show the Paganin House in its "as-built (1965)" configuration. This process was also necessary as the original drawings were in imperial measurements and Australia has used metric measures since 1972, so the drawings for approval from the local government authority and for construction had to be metric.

In addition to the original architectural drawings, the architect had access to a comprehensive collection of photographs. Over the years, the house had been professionally photographed, had appeared in TV commercials and TV programs and the owner possessed a collection of their and previous owner's family photographs that featured the house. A set of photographs taken by a child playing with a camera revealed details such as the skirting profiles; details not normally appearing as the subject of family photographs. In addition, the owner had clear memories of many of the features of the house (a form of oral history) that supplemented the other documentary evidence.

The physical evidence consisted of the intact basement of the house, incorporating garage, storerooms and cellar, the floor slab and the still-standing end brick walls of the main level, bedroom brick walls, sections of the steel and marble front balustrade, the steel brackets for the Dining Room timber screen, some intact window wall sections in the rear elevation, some internal floor finishes, and some internal joinery from the enclosed children's bedrooms. Marble around the pool was recovered and reused and marble paving to the rear verandah and terrace was restorable. Many of the Turner Industries "boomerang" cabinet handles used in the kitchen and wardrobes were also recovered from amongst the ashes with the balance sourced from extensive online searches and a gift of some

spare handles from another Iwanoff home owner. Markings on the concrete floor slab indicated the wall lines of the rooms and, in some instances these deviated from the position of those walls on Iwanoff's drawings. The pool pavilion provided additional "as-built" details.

The insurance company required that competitive quotations be sought for the rebuilding of the house which required full documentation but when the insurance company's builders withdrew from the tender process the architect was able to negotiate a price from his preferred builder.

Issues

The issue of recreating an architectural work without the original architect/artist was an interesting philosophical conundrum but one which had to be solved by relying on the surviving physical and documentary evidence as well as on an understanding of Iwanoff's design approach by considering the other extant works by the architect that were contemporary to the Paganin House.

In a similar manner to the 19th century use of an iron structure in the new roof of Chartres Cathedral, it was decided that the new roof structure at the Paganin House would be steel to create a straighter, lighter structure over the large open spans of the house which would be fixed to the new steel columns replicating the original steel posts. The steel structure is not visible and so there is no detrimental aesthetic impact. The speedy erection of the steel and the installation of the long-length steel roofing sheets enabled the house to be covered in at an early stage of the project, allowing work to continue during inclement weather.

One of the most important aspects of the house is the widespread use of different types of marble. Some of the replacement marble could be sourced from marble importers but the black marble end panels to the front verandah proved difficult to source and the decision was made to inspect the marble quarries of Northern Italy and personally select the slabs of marble for the house. The cost of the marble used in the house eventually comprised



02 Iwan Iwanoff, Paganin House, Perth, Australia, 1965, Paganin House front facade photographed in 2005 prior to the fire during the previous ownership of the house, illustrating the use of white marble on the verandah fascia and balustrade and the extensive use of Western Australian Jarrah hardwood timber on the verandah soffit and the front (North-facing) facade window wall. © Photo Robert Frith/Acorn Photo.



03 Iwan Iwanoff, Paganin House, Perth, Australia, 1965, Paganin House after the 2015 fire. The remaining west side brick wall is on the left and the later Pool House by Iwanoff is on the right. © Photo Tim Wright, courtesy Tim Wright Architect Pty Ltd.

one-third of the total reconstruction budget. Other details such as glass door handles were also Italian-made and examples of these could still be seen in other Perth buildings.

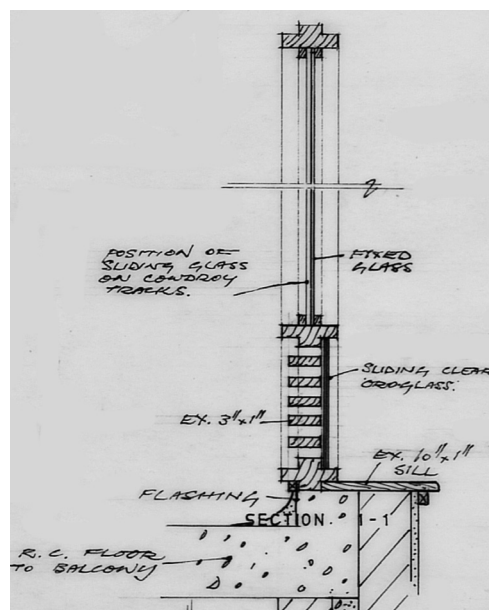
In addition to marble, the other major element of the house is the extensive amount of Jarrah timber used for windows, doors and interior finishes. Two months were required to install the 5 kilometers (km) of secret-nailed Jarrah ship-lap boards on the ceiling. Five tonnes of Jarrah were used for the windows and doors which were milled by the joinery shop to match the original Iwanoff profiles and sizes. Some of the original Jarrah joinery was salvaged from the built-in desks and bedroom wardrobes, refinished and then re-used in the new built-in furniture.

At a more prosaic level the issues of compliance with current building codes necessitated the modification of some of the original specifications. Greater thermal insulation was required in the roof but this could be incorporated in the ceiling without altering the original dimensions or esthetic of the house.

The large timber window walls of windows and integrated doors were more problematic because of the increased requirements for safety against human impact. The original timber sections were robust enough to comply but the glazing had to be safety glass in lieu of the original float glass and the decision was made to introduce double glazing for enhanced insulation in addition to its safety features.

The second owner of the house had installed a rudimentary air conditioning system and the current owner wanted to install an up-to-date system in the house. The original house was unairconditioned and relied on the fixed Jarrah timber louvers at the base and top of the window walls, so one of the new interventions was to design supply and return air grilles in the Jarrah ceiling that would not interrupt the visual flow of the ceiling.

In addition to the replication of the house structure and finishes all the furniture and light fittings had to be sourced. One of the interior features was a button-padded and Laminex' drinks bar in the shape of a futuristic boomerang. Above the bar hung four cylindrical glass pendant light fittings. The bar was reproduced from the original drawings (and the outline of the original remaining on the concrete slab). The lights were eventually identified as British "Chelsea" pendant lights by Peter Rodd and Richard Stevens for Atlas Lighting. The glass shades were manufactured by James Powell & Sons (Whitefriars) Ltd. and the design won a Council of Industrial Design Prize in 1960. Original "vintage" fittings were uncovered in Britain and were installed in the house as contemporary original fittings. When the owners purchased the house the original loose furniture was limited to beds for the master bedroom and two minor bedrooms, each designed by Iwanoff. However, by chance, these were offsite being stored and/or restored at the time of the fire so could be reintroduced into the house following its and their restorations. The destruction of the rest of the furniture in the fire created an opportunity to recreate the original dining table from drawings in the Iwanoff collection. The Jarrah framework of the new table



04 Iwan Iwanoff, Paganin House, Perth, Australia, 1965, the original section through part of the front timber window wall as documented by Iwanoff showing the ventilation louvers at the base of the wall, backed up by sliding glass panels. Extracted from Studio of Iwanoff drawing 129/1, dated 4 February 1965. © Reproduced with the permission of the Iwanoff Trust.



05 Iwan Iwanoff, Paganin House, Perth, Australia, 1965, Paganin House Bar in Living Room with white and green Laminex wall paneling, and laminex and padded bar that were reproduced in the rebuilt house. Originals of the glass pendant lights above the bar were sourced from Britain for the rebuilt house. © Photo Robert Frith/Acorn Photo.

- 06** Iwan Iwanoff, Paganin House, Perth, Australia, 1965, Paganin House Entry foyer looking towards the main bedroom with Jarrah timber ceiling and wall paneling, all reproduced in the rebuilt house. © Photo Robert Frith/Acorn Photo.



- 07** Iwan Iwanoff, Paganin House, Perth, Australia, 1965, Paganin House Entry foyer looking towards the kitchen with Laminex and glass sliding doors and translucent marble wall panels, all reproduced in the rebuilt house. © Photo Robert Frith/Acorn Photo.

- 08** Iwan Iwanoff, Paganin House, Perth, Australia, 1965, Paganin House Dining area with timber screen, the main Jarrah timber ceiling and wall paneling, all reproduced in the rebuilt house. The barrel-vaulted white Perspex lighting diffuser ceiling over the Dining area was also replicated in the rebuilt house. Photographed in 2005 prior to the fire during the previous ownership of the house. © Photo Robert Frith/Acorn Photo.



- 09** Iwan Iwanoff, Paganin House, Perth, Australia, 1965, Paganin House after completion of the reconstruction works, 2018. © Photo Tim Wright, courtesy Tim Wright Architect Pty Ltd.

was constructed using original salvaged Jarrah timber from the house that was not able to be reused elsewhere and the Laminex table top faithfully replicated the original material. In addition, following the restoration, the owners were able to secure Iwanoff's original desk that he designed and used when he commenced taking private commissions while working with Kranz and Sheldon in the 1950s. This desk has the same Turner Industries cabinet handles as originally used in the house and seemingly favored by Iwanoff in that era.

The reconstruction of the house was completed by December 2018, three years after the fire. The project was the subject of a national Australian TV program, *Restoration Australia*, which brought the house to national prominence.

Conclusion

The restitution of the Paganin House involved retention of as much of the original fabric that had survived the fire and could be reused, replication of the original architect's details and materials for the majority of the destroyed fabric, and development of sympathetic new details to upgrade some of the aspects of the house to current codes and requirements.

The recreation of an original work of architecture through replication is often not considered to be conservation as it contains little or no original material, but one only has to experience important 20th century works of architecture, such as Mies van der Rohe's (1886-1969) replicated German Pavilion (1929), to understand the value of recreating the original essence of the architecture, the manipulation of space and the sensory appreciation of faithfully sourced and replicated materials and finishes. However, as the Paganin House was not a museum building, its rebuilding also required creative input from the current architect in redesigning elements that had to be upgraded to current standards and to meet the requirements of the current owner, all within the framework of the original architect's design intent. Whilst such work required the sublimation of ego it did not suppress the necessary creativity of the current architect to bring the house back to life.

Where detailed documentation survives in the form of drawings and photographs (as well as fragmentary physical evidence) it is possible to recreate a building that reflects the original, authentic artistic intention. After all, architecture is an art that requires other hands to bring the drawings and ideas to physical reality and, if the original ideas remain behind (as embodied in the documents and physical evidence), then the original artistic intent can be maintained so long as there is a determination to use

materials that are as close as possible to the original, and for the participants in the process to want to allow the original architect's vision to remain throughout as the guiding principle of the work.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the architect for the reconstruction (2015-2018), Tim Wright, for supplying the drawings and information on the rebuilding process and Tim Bult, the owner, for his constructive comments and introductions to the photographers for the supply of illustrations.

Notes

- 1 "Laminex" is a high-pressure decorative laminate made from layers of paper saturated with melamine and bound together with phenolic resins that has been manufactured in Australia since 1934.

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Álvaro Siza, Manuel Magalhães House, Porto, Portugal, 1967-1970. Exterior view, ca. 1971. © Canadian Centre for Architecture, Álvaro Siza.

A hidden beauty. Siza's adequacy lesson at the secret and delicate MMH

BY ANA TOSTÕES

For the design of the Manuel Magalhães House (1967-1970), Álvaro Siza revisited the purist rationalist principles of Modern Movement architecture. This project represents a shift in his work after the first Matosinhos' houses and the Tea House of Leça da Palmeira. The appeal to the vernacular roots and a kind of telluric *topos* that characterized the works of the 1950s, in this project gave rise to an abstract and minimalist approach applied to a domestic life. Intricate and meticulous in all its details from inside to out, in this house the overall design achieves a perfect harmony, in other words, a balanced and beautiful *gesamkunstwerk*.

At the end of the 1960s, when the architectural ideals of the Modern Movement were being rejected, Álvaro Siza (1933-), in designing the Manuel Magalhães House (MMH), returned to its purist rationalist principles and applied them to a domestic brief. It was the first house that he designed to feature a roof terrace, and in it he used variations on the courtyard and garden theme to amplify the small area available on the lot. The *avant-garde* vocabulary, evident in the Brutalist appearance of the house's foursquare exterior form, when seen from the long *Avenida dos Combatentes*, contrasts with the well-tempered comfort of the interior spaces facing the garden courtyard, which functioned as both the heart of the house, and as an extension, in a literal and figurative sense, of the interior space. Intricate and meticulous in all details from inside to out, it can legitimately be argued that the overall design achieved a perfect harmony; a balanced and beautiful *gesamkunstwerk* [total work of art]. Finally, the boldly experimental nature of the house, makes it possible to identify four of Álvaro Siza's characteristic themes that, through repeated subsequent use, were perfected and expanded over the following decades: walls and definition of enclosure; introversion and explosion; a play of different levels and spatial filters; and circulation paths inspired by the Corbusian idea of the "*promenade architecturale*".

Álvaro Siza dominated the area of exploratory and *avant-garde* architecture in the 1960s,¹ with work that arose from new spatial and linguistic studies. One of the essential elements of this pursuit seems to be high and solid walls, of varying length, delineating, and protecting, private spaces, which he vests with an imposing poetic charge.

In the Manuel Magalhães House, the spatial organization based on the wall motif, takes on an unusual dimension, heightened by the diminutive scale of the work, and can be seen in the differentiation of walls through contrasting thicknesses, materials, textures, and colors. Álvaro Siza maintains density as a fundamental as he works with the walls, as elements that, simultaneously, separate and define enclosure, with the heaviness of stone, the traditional granite of Porto, but also the lightness of sheet steel. The contrast in thickness,

between the L and the XS (Large and Extra Small), is accentuated by the white of the vertical sheet steel that contrasts with both the rustic and rugged exterior granite masonry, and the concrete walls, plainly finished as the cubic volume of the house; a concrete container facing the street and the forecourt visible from the public domain.

In the special edition of *Lotus*² magazine dedicated to the work of Álvaro Siza, published 20 years after the project began, the external appearance of the house was described, highlighting its armored aspect: "from the road the house looks like a block of reinforced concrete devoid of windows behind an enclosure wall with steel gates. Nothing from the interior is visible from outside". Defined by its introversion and closure to the road, this concealment was interpreted as a result of the constraints of its surroundings: "The building follows the shape of the deep and narrow plot of land on which it stands, occupying it with the volume of the residence and with that of the garage at the rear". And finally, it considered how this combination of factors spurred Álvaro Siza to revisit the rationalism of *avant-garde* Modern Movement architecture ["The work marks a return to the vocabulary of rationalist architecture"] without forgetting the organic character brought to it by Alvar Aalto (1898-1976) and the humanization that this path represented as a space of poetic freedom for Modern Movement architecture.³ In this respect, in the MMH, it can be argued that: "a number of details or "excavations" of the interior hint at a sculptural vein."⁴

This sculptural vein is latent in the theme of "explosion"⁵ that Álvaro Siza developed brilliantly throughout the 1970s in the Beires House (1973-1976), also known as "Bomb House", and the Oliveira de Azeméis Bank (1971-1974). It was another underlying theme in the MMH, whose design represented a chance to experiment for the architect, who had just completed the *Piscina das Marés* [Tidal Swimming Pool] in Leça da Palmeira (1961-1966), and who now had the opportunity to work on themes that had emerged from that seminal work, and apply them on a domestic scale. The project's constraints were extremely hard to resolve.

He responded with a lesson in aptness whose form goes far beyond a useful, and rational design. Between the introversion – closing the containing volume from the public domain, and thus protecting the internal area, and creating a sense of intimacy – and the fragmentation, turning the introverted bunker-house literally inside out, when it is cut open onto the private garden courtyard, Álvaro Siza created a poetic piece that attains the transcendence of a pure creation of art.

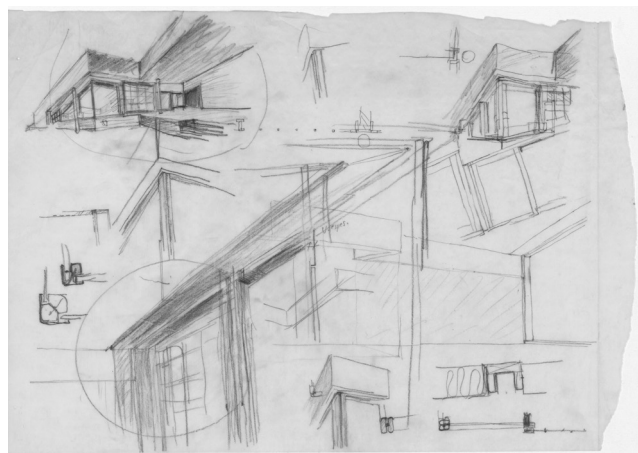
The building is made up of a series of layers that pass through filters, as if gradually unpeeling, corresponding to different degrees of psychological enclosure and domain. In the same way, the recurring play of levels is also a theme employed, despite the tightness of the site. In fact, he defines various levels, sliding horizontal planes both on the floors and on the ceilings. There are only three floor levels: the first, at street level, defines the forecourt enclosure, an area organized as an enclosed territory forming a transition space for the interior; the “in-between”, as it was coined by Aldo Van Eyck (1918-1999), which extends to the garage access, with a covered outdoor living space connected to the living room and kitchen; a second plane, the highest, which represents the level of the house’s internal space; and finally, a third plane, the lowest of all, which corresponds to the grassed courtyard garden. Surprisingly, Álvaro Siza elevates the garden at the end of the lot, creating a narrow podium, a living space redefined as a distinctive area of elevated lawn, aligned with the level of the covered courtyard and thus, resuming the initial level of the entrance plane. As William Curtis (1948-) remarks, Álvaro Siza “drew together the spatial ambiguities and tensions of Cubism with an architecture of abstract planes and contours.”⁶

The circulation path, a theme intensively explored in the Boa Nova Tea House (1958-1963), and masterfully employed in the Leça da Palmeira Tidal Swimming Pool, was transposed to this small work. The routes and inflections designed for this abstract site, with no history and devoid of any immediate landscape stimulus, were the elements that Álvaro Siza used to define the place and its magic. He wrote and recreated the history of the place using contours and connecting the horizontal planes of the exterior space with the interior domain, opening new perceptions and views. Walking through the space, one is invited to follow a path through successive filters inserted in the invented topography, which conclude by ascending to the rooftop terrace, extending the usable area its inhabitants could enjoy as domestic space.

The MMH contains the germ of many of the themes that Álvaro Siza had already retained at 35 years of age and went on to develop further. In this, he resembles Wagner, who already had within him the symphonic and operatic themes on which he would work until the end of his life, but only experimented with them in a male voice choir until he moved to Dresden at the age of 35.

Small from the outside, large within; exterior bunker, interior refinement

The MMH is located on the *Avenida dos Combatentes*, in the heart the Antas neighborhood, in the north-eastern part of the city of Porto, a modern expansion area of the city,



01 Álvaro Siza, Manuel Magalhães House, Porto, Portugal, 1967-1970. Sketches. © Canadian Centre for Architecture, Álvaro Siza.

and was a thoroughfare with a prestigious image, where, in the 1940s, the modern Antas church was built (Fernando Barbosa and Fernando Tudela, 1944), along with houses of “classic bourgeois” appearance, designed by important Porto architects such as Manuel Marques (1890-1956), Amoroso Lopes (1899-1953) and, the pair of Arménio Losa (1908-1988) and Cassiano Barbosa (1911-1998).

In contrast to the avenue’s dominant typology of single-family two-story houses with multiple tiled roofs, bay windows and a profusion of interesting volumes, expressed through bow-windows and bay-windows facing the surrounding gardens, the MMH turned inwards, towards the rear of the lot where the lawn and podium of the garden courtyard were bathed by the southern light. Álvaro Siza worked with the site’s constraints, taking advantage of the narrowness of the 14 meters (m) wide lot, from which he was obliged to subtract 3 m setbacks on either side, reducing the width of the house to just over 8.00 m. This situation led him to establish a clear dichotomy between the closure of the house to the street, and the openness of the interior space to the garden, protecting the openings from being seen from the outside and, thus, creating a welcoming and comfortable environment, of wonderful transcendence. As Rui Ramos (1961-) says, the particularly taut domestic space relaxes in the outer space of the courtyard: “here the house relaxes, acquiring a naturalness that contrasts with its interior.”⁷

The history of the house is also fascinating. Wishing to build a second house to be rented for income, on the lot it shared with the large Guimarães family house, the owner chose Álvaro Siza for the commission. In the beginning, a two-story building was considered, but the architect soon opted for a single-story solution, and it remains the only house on the avenue with this format, a singularity that was conceptually amplified.

As Álvaro Siza explained, the first proposal presented, which was licensed by the Municipality of Porto, consisted of a curved, windowless volume facing the avenue, evoking the bay window shape characteristic of most houses on the avenue, including the original family house, but turned inside out, thereby creating a semicircular volume.

However, he abandoned the curved design to work on a purely rectilinear volume. Although, in the final configuration, the memory of the curve was revived, and incorporated in the white painted steel partition that, like a second skin, detaches itself in a curve from the granite wall. After passing through all the filters, from the public domain to the most private space, a semi-circular form was also chosen to trace the symbolic step, in copper sheet, by which the elevated platform/podium built at the bottom of the garden, was entered. As if writing the story of the house's design, he combined the beautiful and the useful with a sense of the memory of things in this lesson of aptness, taking a creative plunge into domestic life, full of invention and transposed analogies.

Álvaro Siza's taste for ambiguity and his appetite for surprise, in an almost invisible *scherzo*, is displayed, as we have seen, in the animated play between the succession of walls, dividing planes and the entrance gate. As soon as we enter the entrance "forecourt" and garage access, a kind of transition space between inside and outside, the duality between the delicacy of the interior and the toughness of the bunker-volume, seen from the outside, is announced by various devices that act as system of delimitation from the street. The first demarcation is made by the low wall, expressed in both the density of its thick, rough, and dark granite, and in the smooth and glossy surface of the white sheet-metal partition, which peels off from the granite, at the entrance gate and directs the visitor to a second metal

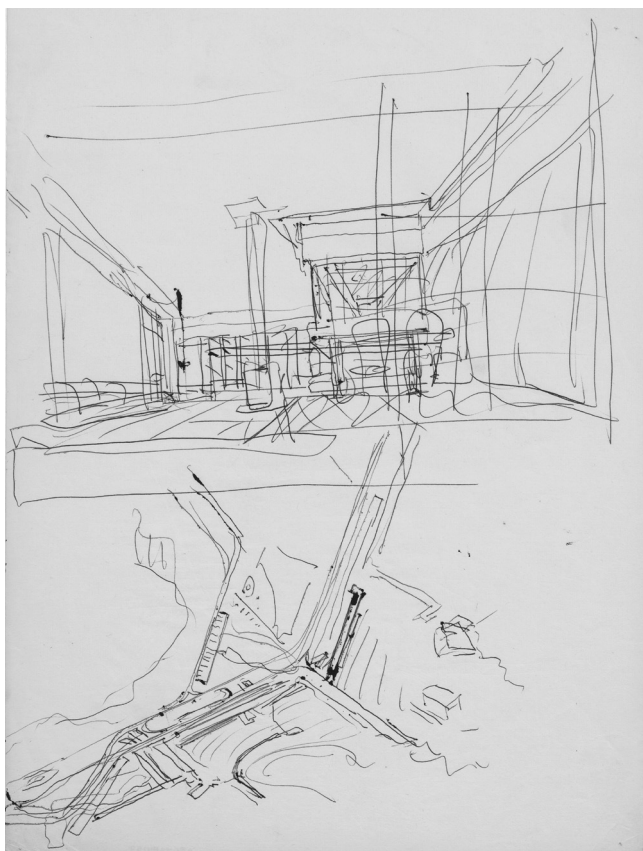
door connected to an exterior corridor leading to the house's entrance door. The route, a theme that we know is so dear to Álvaro Siza, runs from the entrance, through the forecourt, that acts as an antechamber leading, directly in front, to the garage, and laterally to a second antechamber, containing the main entrance door to the house. This second antechamber, accessed through a door in the sheet-metal, defines a kind of exterior hallway, protecting the family's privacy. From the moment that, at the end of this short hallway, we finally enter the house, a route once again emerges with successive inflections, instilling a sense of expanding spaces, like the traditional Japanese garden, in which the visitor is led to discover with surprise, what is successfully hidden, in a path that opens and closes perspectives, multiplying the sensation.

Existenzminimum mit poesis

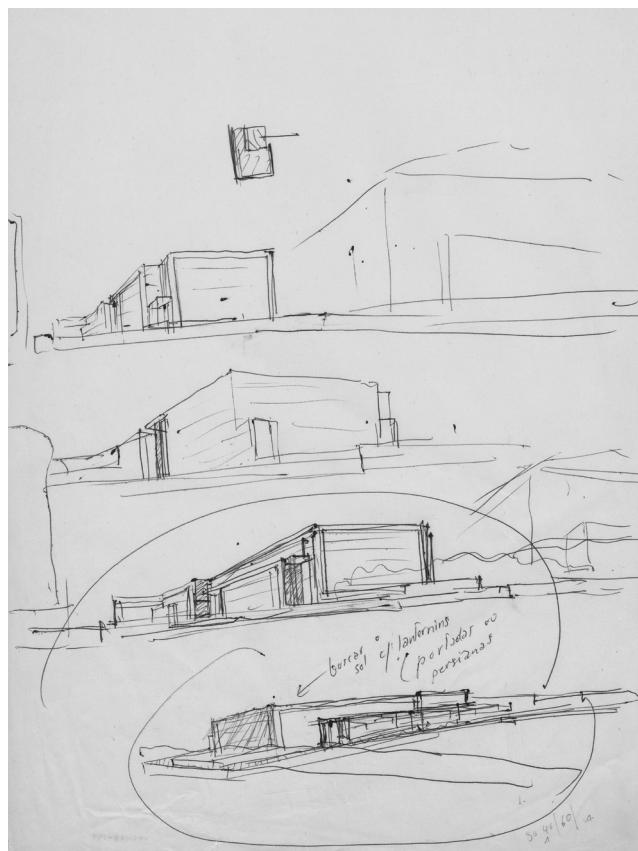
In this "hidden" and "unexplored house", Álvaro Siza, for the first time, makes use of the purist radicalism of the rooftop terrace, and creates a space to be lived in, where comfort and commodity go hand in hand with an astute exploration of *existenzminimum*, one of the most radical contributions of the *avant-garde* and the research conducted at the heart of the CIAM (Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne) and Ernst May's (1886-1970) plan for *Das Neues Frankfurt*.⁸

This minimal house was worked out in detail as a total work of art. The detail involved in the study of every aspect, including the design of the furniture and lighting

02 Álvaro Siza, Manuel Magalhães House, Porto, Portugal, 1967-1970. Sketches. © Canadian Centre for Architecture, Álvaro Siza.



03 Álvaro Siza, Manuel Magalhães House, Porto, Portugal, 1967-1970. Sketches. © Canadian Centre for Architecture, Álvaro Siza.

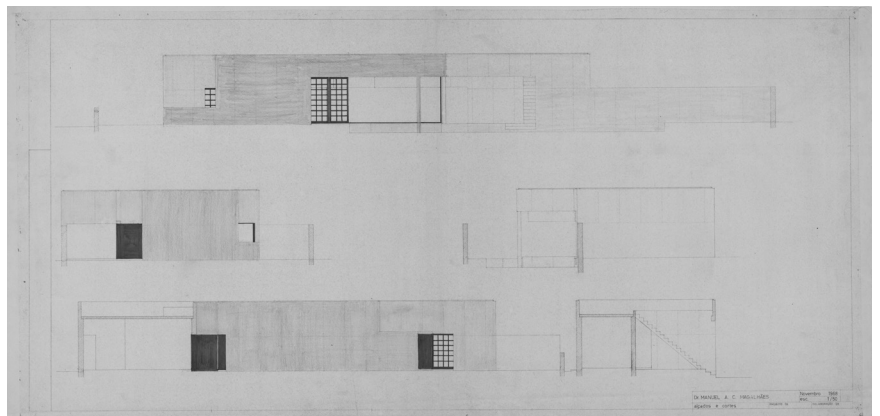




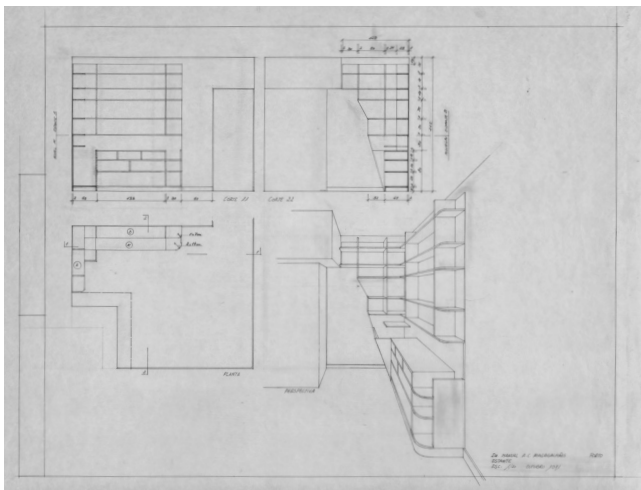
04 Álvaro Siza, Manuel Magalhães House, Porto, Portugal, 1967-1970. Detail. © Ana Tostões, 2020.



05 Álvaro Siza, Manuel Magalhães House, Porto, Portugal, 1967-1970. Window detail. © Ana Tostões, 2020.



06 Álvaro Siza, Manuel Magalhães House, Porto, Portugal, 1967-1970. Elevations and sections, November 1968. © Canadian Centre for Architecture, Álvaro Siza.



07 Álvaro Siza, Manuel Magalhães House, Porto, Portugal, 1967-1970. Sections, plan and perspective for a bookcase, October 1971. © Canadian Centre for Architecture, Álvaro Siza.



08 Álvaro Siza, Manuel Magalhães House, Porto, Portugal, 1967-1970. Detail of the lighting and ceiling design. © Carlos Castanheira, 2020.

fixtures, enhances the interconnection of the various spaces through subtle artifices. Similarly, routes composed of detours, surprises, and changes in direction, contribute to enrich the spatial experience.

The apparently minimalist dryness of the house is pervaded by a sensorial lyricism of sculptural expression whose tactile intensity is evident in the character of the materials chosen, and the importance given to the manipulation of light to shape the environment.⁹ Oriol Bohigas (1925-) refers to a work of erosion,¹⁰ used as a method to transition between different spaces, such as the opening associated with a skylight (following an Aaltian curve) cut out at a convex angle of the house's corridor to allow daylight to enter from above.

The design of skirting boards, door stops and handles, joinery (shelving units, cabinets, safes, shelves, roller blinds), and the detailing of the vertical cladding, reveal how these efforts combined to create a sense of spatial continuity. The “imaginative willingness”¹¹ revealed in anticipating the use of spaces and things by the house's inhabitants, calls to mind the exercises of Alvar Aalto, which acquired an exemplary dimension in the creation of the Paimio Sanatorium (1929-1933).

The house has two main bedrooms and a third supplementary bedroom next to the kitchen, located next to the garage, and communicating directly with the covered courtyard through which the access stairs to the rooftop terrace are reached. The living room is the largest space, and opens, in a literal and figurative sense, onto the outside through the complete opening of the corner with a sliding window, studied in detail with regard to its frame, color and hardware.

At this point, which is simultaneously a “nodal point”, an internal boundary, and the heart and center of the house, the courtyard garden with its lawn is discovered, which reflects and enhances the penetration of the southern light. This point resolves the ambiguity between indoor, outdoor, and covered-outdoor spaces. The distinct light levels direct our attention to the garden. An act of magic, a multiplication of space, as in the uncluttered house of Japanese tradition, which retains and recreates the lesson of the secret garden, which must be discovered as you walk through it. To accentuate this relationship, the modest height of the house helps to refine its perfect scale, the first prerequisite for architecture to attain transcendence. The ceiling is worked on different levels, sometimes lowered to highlight an unobtrusive space or a detail.

At a time when the conceptual richness of modern movement architecture was being contested and reduced to a caricature of an unsuccessful universal project, this work revealed the creative vitality of modern design. In an interpretation of purity, simplicity, and functionality, Álvaro Siza created a pearl of secret beauty. The house he made was so beautiful and attractive that, when it was completed, the client, Dr. Manuel Magalhães, decided to live in it instead of renting it, and thus experience life in an *existenzminimum* space, anticipating Donald Judd's (1928-1994) minimalist *avant-garde*, and reaffirming the poetic transcendence of the Corbusian maxim: “*l'architecture est le jeu savant correct et magnifique des volumes assemblés sous la lumière*” [architecture

is the clever, correct and magnificent play of volumes assembled under light].

The transformation of the “linguistic repertoire of rationalism”

The question of the continuity of modern architecture finds, in Álvaro Siza's work, an exemplary response, confirming the validity of the modern project understood as a work in progress, a *longue durée*. According to Jürgen Habermas (1929-),

Modern Architecture which has shaped even everyday life, after all, is still the first and unifying style since the days of classicism. It has developed both the organic as well the rationalistic origins of Frank Lloyd Wright and Adolf Loos and flourished in the most successful work of Gropius and Alvar Aalto. It is the only architectural movement to originate from the avant-garde spirit: it is equivalent to the avant-garde painting, music, and literature of our century. It continued along the traditional line of occidental rationalism and was powerful enough to create its own models; in other words, it became classic itself, and set the foundations of a tradition that, from the very beginning, crossed national boundaries.¹²

In “Modernity, an incomplete Project”, he argues for a self-critical continuation of the Modern Movement.

The architect revisited this modern tradition with a highly erudite eye and inaugurated a new approach within the European architectural scene that may be classified within a tendency that stresses the artistic nature of architectural sources. As Oriol Bohigas pointed out, Álvaro Siza's relative novelty lies in his recognition of the whole linguistic basis of rationalism, though emphasizing those aspects that are truly “artistic”. He emphasized the subtlest nuances, working on fluid superimpositions that were consistent with his critical approach to the rationalist vocabulary and its syntactic distortions.

In one of the first and fundamental critical texts on Álvaro Siza's architectural approach, Oriol Bohigas stresses the idea that, in the architect's transformation of the “linguistic repertoire of rationalism”, boundaries are of the utmost importance. He considers that

Siza's architecture is above all a formal program which starts by accepting the vocabulary of rationalism, organized and critically transformed through a process in some ways similar to the major change introduced by mannerism: respectful of the immediate tradition, which begins with a useful codification, but equally critical and disruptive in its new practices, which include techniques ranging from collage to surprise, and syntactic distortions which become its main features.¹³

As has been acknowledged,

the way Siza devotes close attention to the contours of topography and to the spatial transition between buildings, is nourished by a wide range of sources, including Aalto, Le Corbusier, Loos, Wright. These qualities are subject to a rigorous transformation into an indisputably modern vocabulary. For Siza, modernism provided a route away from provincialism towards a certain universality.¹⁴

Gifted with brilliant intuition, Álvaro Siza was able to elaborate a subtle link between geometry and the natural surroundings, in dialog between place and a critical exploration of the sources of modern architecture. As Bernard Huet (1932-) states, “the spirit of Wright, Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier were evoked at the Leça da Palmeira Tidal Swimming Pool and continued to visit the houses built by Siza.” In fact, the MMH is undoubtedly the crowning achievement of Álvaro Siza’s rationalist revisionist phase. The drama of the Leça da Palmeira Tidal Swimming Pool gave way, in the MMH, to a tranquility which is more apparent than real. The craftsmanship of detail, on which the expressive quality of his early projects was largely based, here changed completely. In the MMH, the detail was neither a pretext for decoration nor a technological display, but rather an issue that informed and validated the architecture itself.¹⁵

As Álvaro Siza recognizes “architectural proposals which aim to thoroughly merge with innovative existing trends, with the conflicts and the tensions which characterize reality; proposals which claim to be more than a passive materialization [...] whatever form they take, cannot be ambiguous.”¹⁶ As he argues “we have to build in the most rational and practical way possible; we have to rediscover [...] the special nature of obvious things and arrive at a feeling of the earthwork as a pre-condition for architecture.”¹⁷ In other words, there is a critical concern for place-creation in order to address his conjunctural approach which means he must “find a solution to a concrete problem which I’m involved in, but without an architectonic language being established, because I’m simply part of a movement for change which has much wider implications.”

According to Vittorio Gregotti (1927-2020), there is something peculiar and subtle in the work of Álvaro Siza related to “an independent archaeology made up of stratifications of all earlier experiments.”¹⁸

His relationship with the complexity of life, with things, with the city and the world is natural: “formal complexity arises from real complexity.” Even if Álvaro Siza is capable of playing with experimental variations on the theme of complexity, each one offering a different solution, he does not believe it is possible to invent complexity.¹⁹ In his own words: “In my early work, I began by studying the site in order to classify it... but now I take everything into consideration, since I’m interested in reality.”²⁰

According to Bernard Huet

we already find him intent on checking certain spatial hypotheses – tangential approaches and ingenious reveals, by means of screens, flexible pathways, and scales that physically include the observer’s body – which, in turn, became real constants in a particularly subtle poetics of space. Siza demonstrated that he was, like L. Barragan, one of the few modern architects capable of creating a pure “architectonic” place.²¹

The MMH emerged like a small-scale explosion in comparison to the Leça da Palmeira Tidal Swimming Pool.²² As Kenneth Frampton (1930-) recognizes, Álvaro Siza uses, in his residential work,



09 Álvaro Siza, Manuel Magalhães House, Porto, Portugal, 1967-1970. Exterior view, ca. 1971. © Canadian Centre for Architecture, Álvaro Siza.

that modern tradition of flexible, light-weight, mobile, spatial sub-division [...] However the presences are so filtered out by metaphorical layering and minimalist detailing as to be virtually imperceptible in any literal sense. The handling of the site itself, from the asymmetrical, minimalist detailing of the sliding entry gate, to the encasement of the house that unfolds in successive spaces led by the route, [cannot fail to remind us] that, at the time, Siza was working on one of his most celebrated masterpieces, the Tidal Swimming Pool.²³

Álvaro Siza recalling *La continuità* proposed by Ernest Nathan Rogers’ plea

In the context of his early experimental work, the MMH marked the discovery of the rich paths of Modern Movement architecture. Returning to the insightful synthesis that Ernesto Nathan Rogers (1909-1969) called the *crisi o continuità*,²⁴ Álvaro Siza moved in the direction of *continuità* [continuity], in this work that reaffirms the modern. After this point, when he embraced his first cubist work, featuring a rooftop terrace, he went on to elaborate a critical re-examination of the modern classics, from Le Corbusier (1887-1965) to Bruno Taut (1880-1938), and from Adolf Loos (1870-1933) to Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959).

Between *Poesis and Transformation*, something about its construction is so pure. The MMH is an affirmation of the timelessness of the modern tradition that Octávio Paz (1914-1998) describes so well.²⁵ Reflecting in “*El laberinto de la soledad*”²⁶ on the paradox between development, which he considered “a false liberation”, and what is called the “culture of poverty”, he considered that the dichotomies between poverty and wealth, and development and backwardness, were inadequate as a complex of constitutive permanencies of contemporary culture. From the deep roots of the past, Octávio Paz considered the challenges of the future, arguing that “modernity had become separated from the past, and was compelled to leap forward at a dizzying pace that prevented it from establishing roots, pushing it towards a fleeting survival from one day to the next, whereas modernity could return to its origins and its capacity for renewal”²⁷. Much like him, Álvaro Siza was also involved in “a collective movement” that aimed to “asserting

the identity” of his country.²⁸ It is important to stress that Álvaro Siza is a scholar with an extensive architectonic culture and remarkable skills of critical observation. Thus, with humility and rigor, the architect makes magnificent things adopting a small scale and expressing the peripheral circumstances of his work at the end of the 1960s. The MMH is a piece of global art, a result of architecture venturing into uncharted territory and creating a complete work of art.

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To CCA for their support with original sketches, and for offering the copyright; to the firm NFS Advogados; To the guest-editors of This **docomomo** Journal, Louise Noelle and Horacio Torrent for their challenge to write on Álvaro Siza's house; To the architects Carlos Castanheira and Clara Bastai for a memorable visit together with Álvaro Siza; and finally, to Álvaro Siza for generously sharing his memories, and for sparing the time for an interview, conversation, and drawings.

Notes

- 1 The movement that emerged from these small congresses were forums which were held on the basis of the critical discussion led by the architects' colleges of Spain, namely through the action of Carlos de Miguel (1904-1986) from Madrid and later the stimulating and decisive action of Oriol Bohigas from Barcelona. They met yearly to visit work, conduct critique sessions, and discuss topics that concerned them. Initially these meetings united architects from Barcelona and Madrid, through Oriol Bohigas and Carlos de Miguel, respectively, as, at the time, Carlos de Miguel was Director of *Arquitectura*, the journal of the Architects' College of Madrid, and was mainly responsible for the organization of the "Criticism Sessions". See Ana Tostões, "A diáspora ou a arte de ser português", *Camões, revista de letras e culturas lusófonas*, Lisboa, No. 22, 2013, 23-40; Nuno Correia, "A Crítica Arquitectónica, o Debate Social e a Participação Portuguesa nos Pequenos Congressos - 1959/1968", *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais*, Coimbra, No. 91, 2010. Álvaro Siza was "discovered" when he participated in one of these congresses in 1968, bringing his work into the spotlight and leading to the publication of Oriol Bohigas's and Vittorio Gregotti's essays in important journals. See, Nuno Portas, "Prefácio à Edição Portuguesa da História da Arquitectura Moderna" in Bruno Zevi, *História da Arquitectura Moderna*, Volume I, Lisboa, Arcadia, 1970; and "Evolução da Arquitectura Moderna em Portugal: uma Interpretação", in Bruno Zevi, *História da Arquitectura Moderna*, Volume II, Lisboa, Arcadia, 1973; Nuno Portas, "Note sul Significato dell'Architettura di Alvaro Siza nell'Ambiente Portoghese", *Controspazio*, No. 9, September 1972; Pedro Vieira de Almeida "Un Análisis de la Obra de Siza Vieira", *Hogar y Arquitectura*, No. 68, 1967, 72-76.
- 2 Titled suggestively "Poetic profession", see AA.VV., *Alvaro Siza: Profissão poetica / Alvaro Siza: Poetic profession*, Milano, Electa, 1986.
- 3 On this topic, the manifesto written by Pancho Guedes (1925-2015) should be recalled: "I claim for architects all the rights and liberties poets have had for so long!", in Amâncio d'Alpoim Guedes, *Manifestos, ensaios, falas, publicações*, Lisboa, Ordem dos Arquitectos, 2007, 13.
- 4 AA.VV., op. cit., 52.
- 5 Ana Tostões, "Le temps retrouvé. La recherche de la contemporanéité ou l'affirmation d'une architecture (1965-1975)", in Nuno Grande (ed.), *Les universalistes. 50 ans d'architecture portugaise*, Paris, Éditions Parenthèses, Cité de l'architecture & du patrimoine, 2016.
- 6 William J. R. Curtis, *Modern Architecture since 1900*, New York, Phaidon, 1996, 483.
- 7 Rui Jorge Garcia Ramos, *A Casa. Arquitectura e Projecto Doméstico na primeira metade do século XX português*, Porto, FAUP, 2010; *Modernidade Inquieta*, Porto, Afrontamento, 2015.
- 8 "Wohnung für das Existenzminimum" [Minimal existence home] was the theme of the CIAM congress of 1929, in Frankfurt, as is well illustrated in the congress poster by Hans Leistikow; This theme was also central in the

- review *Das Neues Frankfurt* edited by Ernst May between 1926 and 1931.
- 9 On this subject, see Juhani Pallasmaa, *The eyes of the skin*, Chichester, John Wiley & Sons, 2012 [1996].
- 10 Oriol Bohigas, "Alvaro Siza Vieira", *Arquitectura Bis*, No. 12 March 1976; translated to English in AA.VV., op. cit., 185.
- 11 Álvaro Siza, *Immaginare l'evidenza*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1998.
- 12 Jürgen Habermas, "Modern and Post-Modern Architecture", 9H, No. 4, 1982; republished in Neil Leach (ed.), *Rethinking Architecture: a reader in cultural theory*, London, New York, Routledge, 1997, 228.
- 13 Oriol Bohigas, op. cit.; translated to English in AA.VV., op. cit., 183.
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- 24 Ernesto Rogers, "Crise o Continuidade", *Casabella-Continuità*, Milano, No. 215, April-May, 1957.
- 25 Octávio Paz, *Los Hijos del Limo [Children of the Mire]*, Barcelona, Biblioteca de Bolsillo, 1998 [1974].
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- 27 Octávio Paz, *Los Hijos del Limo*, op. cit.
- 28 Álvaro Siza, op. cit.; AA.VV., op. cit., 177.

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Giuseppe Perugini, Uga de Plaisant and Raynaldo Perugini, *Casa Albero*, Fregene, Italy, 1968, construction process *Casa Albero*, 1968.
© Archive Raynaldo Perugini.

Casa Albero: an architecture experiment

BY SILVIA SEGARRA LAGUNES

Designed in 1968, the *Casa Albero* [Tree house], in Fregene near Rome, by Giuseppe Perugini (1914-1995), Uga de Plaisant (1917-2004) and their son Raynaldo Perugini (1950-), constitutes an exceptional case of architectural experimentation. With multiple references to the aesthetic avant-gardes of the 20th century. It is presented as an example of modular, systematic and prefabricated architecture, in which the architects are, simultaneously, authors and part of the experiment themselves. The project functions as an architectural model in 1:1 scale. The concept embodied in this work offers the possibility of studying different ways of interpreting the living space within the same architectural composition.

Casa Albero, un esperimento di architettura was the title Giuseppe Perugini¹ gave to a book he had prepared to present his experimental house, built together with Uga de Plaisant² and with the collaboration of his son Raynaldo Perugini,³ also architects, in 1968. With a broad professional career, Giuseppe Perugini stood out as an architect with the project of the *Monumenti ai Martiri delle Fosse Ardeatine* (1944-1947), which has become not only the most important symbol of the immediate postwar period in Italy, but also the starting point of a new phase of Italian architecture.

The *Casa Albero* is located on a site with an area of approximately 2,300 square meters (m²) a few blocks from the sea, in the coastal town of Fregene, 40 kilometers (km) from Rome. Surrounded by streets on three sides and adjoining low houses on one of them, the site boasts many large trees that appear as a small forest, which creates an isolated environment. The house consists of three experimental buildings that make up three “*Episodi*” [episodes] – *tre “test-oggetto”*⁴ [three test-objects] – of architecture, as their own author calls them: the *Casa Albero*, properly speaking, the most important and the main nucleus of experimentation, and two smaller buildings, one called “*Cubetti*” [little cubes] and the “*Palla*” [ball], that are scattered through this kind of domestic forest of huge pines and holm oaks, discreetly enriched with other trees.

The project was carried out as an exercise in the experimentation of architectural techniques and the study of different forms of living space, in a real 1:1 scale model, in which the architect and his family become members of their own experiment: “The experimental principle is in the analysis of the creative process, which is what seems to reveal the correctness of the criteria that concur in its final conformation.”⁵ Giuseppe Perugini himself places it as a form of didactic architecture in which teaching takes place through self-architecture.

It is an incursion into a work in permanent evolution, framed in the concept of “not finished” or “not terminable,” to which parts could be infinitely added in modules. At the same time it is an abstraction of the diaphanous space, of the “architectural void,” as described by Giuseppe Perugini, since the habitable space offers “greater freedom through an infinite

range of organizational possibilities, with optimal distribution of spaces and functions, free of predefined schemes.”⁶

The experimental program concerns five different visions.⁷ The first one deals with experimentation on the theoretical plane about the concept of “not terminable” through a series of modules that determine a structural design preserving the organic part and allowing growth in every direction; the second deals with the abstraction of the architectural void in such a way that it is never perceptually determined as volume; a third one refers to the psychological effects in which static sensations are reverted to dynamic ones, through symmetry on the horizontal plane; the fourth is oriented towards the functions/services being structured in an absolutely autonomous way, also from a formal point of view and, finally, the fifth vision explains how the confrontation between the finished-unfinished concepts is experienced by contrasting the structure of the house with the spherical volume, placed at a specific point, determined by some theoretical considerations.

The “tree” and the “ball” are two opposite paradigms for other reasons as well. The first concerns the shape and the non-predefined organic increase based on the growth of the tree. Although the forms are straight, based on polygonal volumes, the development of the house emulates the growth of the branches with their clumps of leaves, which gives the name to this first project, not completed but not unfinished either. It is also a kind of *palafito* [stilt house], since in the lower part there is a water mirror, the pool, which at the same time reinforces the horizontal symmetry, reflecting, and recreating, the sky.

In opposition, the “ball” (sphere) is the completed figure, finished, without the possibility of making subsequent changes, not moldable, not modular and, nevertheless, it is a dynamic figure that, deliberately, is shown inclined outwards thanks to the oblique axis traversing the window placed around its perimeter and results in a perfectly balanced and stable interior. The sphere is also a room unit in which materials and dimensions were studied to solve acoustic problems.⁸

The concept of the *cubetti* is the intermediary between the other two buildings. They are elements of “linear variability”

in which the principle of seriation⁹ is applied and refer to the two previous episodes: the versatility of the modules and of the polygonal prefabricated elements compared to curves: the doors and windows are pieces of circular and cylindrical shapes that break with the straight line again. The module in this case measures 3 x 3 x 3 meters (m) with semi modules functioning as intervals, hosting services with a total area of approximately 40 m². The unit hosts two bedrooms, kitchen and two bathrooms. It is a form of prefabricated housing that allows multiple varieties of uses and applications. The *cubetti* were, in this case, destined to be rooms for guests, who could thus isolate themselves in their own environment.

This configuration of separate spaces provides infinite possibilities within the same house and allows different experiences of the living space.

The other relationship of the “tree” to the “ball,” has to do with the use of convex and autonomous circular volumes, which constitute the bathrooms of the house and change the rhythm of the facades, sometimes frontally, sometimes edgewise, attached to the rooms with steel profiles as huge couplings for plumbing.

The rationality of the forms is also reflected in the materials whose variety is reduced to a minimum: concrete, carbon steel and glass. With clear neoplastic and constructivist references,¹⁰ all the constituent elements are exposed and the natural-colored cement contrasts with the red-painted metallic elements.

Project, idea and performance

The architectural project arises from experiences previously carried out by Giuseppe Perugini, such as, for example, the repetition of volumes, also used in the *Monumenti ai Martiri delle Fosse Ardeatine* project, whose final objective is not the “form,” but “the possibility of proposing an architectural solution likely to contribute to solving some construction problems posing the convergence of a series of ideas from various origins.”¹¹ Indeed, the architect continually analyzes the architectures of the past to refine his project solutions.¹²

The house is built on the basis of modular pieces, which form almost cubic polygons, designed to be superimposed in an apparently random way in the manner of the “Meccanos” and was built part by part, creating a kind of habitable sculpture. In this case the house has geometric and repeatable elements, based on previous ideas embodied in sketches and studies of the shape and dimensions of each component, the construction systems, the assembly and the installations, in addition to the characteristics that both the exterior and interior space should have with respect to its location on the ground and its relationship with the surrounding environment.

The final result was conceived by making various proposals reflected in diagrams and sketches from which was chosen the one that, as architects and as users and future inhabitants of the house, was considered the most convenient.

The house can be seen from every angle and its deliberate emphasis on volumes sets aside the hierarchy of its four facades, in order to have, in fact, a three-dimensional vision with overlapping volumes that close the entire structure.

The interior, on the contrary, is an open space, devoid of

interior divisions in which, on the other hand, the different living areas are distinguished by the different levels and by the paths that allow areas of greater intimacy, also avoiding hierarchies and the standard view given to domestic spaces such as bedrooms and living rooms.

It is not an unfinished house, the central idea is an endless house, open to enlargements or reductions according to needs and always ready for modifications through the mere fact of adding or subtracting modules, which provide compositional diversity and spaces.

The house has as its starting point the structure (trunk). Concrete pillars and beams are forming a symmetrical framed support to the horizontal section and the implemented choice consists of a set of columns connected by beams which result in an asymmetrical plant. The beams are identically reproduced in the upper part, establishing the referred symmetry.

The structure acts as a three-dimensional frame and a container, on which, supported or suspended, the prefabricated modular concrete slabs are placed, separated from each other by 6 centimeter (cm) glass joints, which, at the same time, serve to cushion the expansion of the material, allowing a transparency that permanently relates the interior to the exterior. This element is also reproduced in the bathrooms.

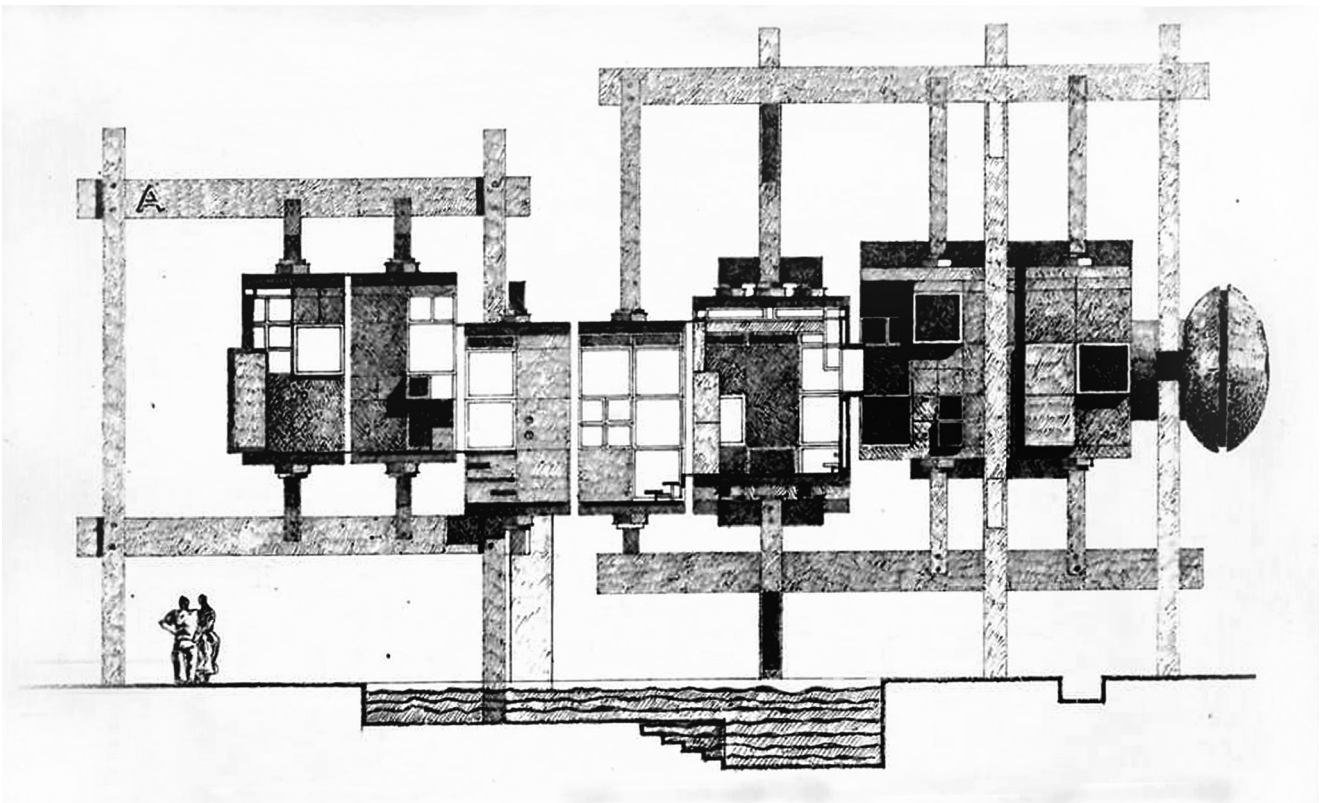
The development of the spaces begins with the placement of the plates that will serve as floors, thus defining the floor plan of the house with its different levels to give way to the construction of the exterior volumes and interior spaces, by placing the closure modules, also made of precast concrete, that form the walls. The proposed module is 0.50 x 0.50 m and pieces of different dimensions are developed from it that give rise to spaces spanning different areas from 4 m² upwards. The floor plates allow the choice of different wall materials, such as glass, brick or wallpaper.

The unevenness creates differences in floor levels of between 50 cm and 1 m and the interior stairs are independent elements from the structure, working as furniture, which are built with steel profiles according to need.



01 Giuseppe Perugini, Ugo de Plaisant and Raynaldo Perugini, *Casa Albero*, Fregene, Italy, 1968, the *Cubetti*, 2020. © Photograph of Silvia Segarra Lagunes.

02 Giuseppe Perugini, Ugo de Plaisant and Raynaldo Perugini, *Casa Albero*, Fregene, Italy, 1968, general view of the Casa Albero, 2020. © Photograph of Silvia Segarra Lagunes.



03 Giuseppe Perugini, Ugo de Plaisant and Raynaldo Perugini, *Casa Albero*, Fregene, Italy, 1968, longitudinal section, draw by Giuseppe Perugini, 1969 ca. © Archive Raynaldo Perugini.



04 Giuseppe Perugini, Uga de Plaisant and Raynaldo Perugini, *Casa Albero*, Fregene, Italy, 1968, interiors *Casa Albero*, 2020. © Photograph of Silvia Segarra Lagunes.
05 Giuseppe Perugini, Uga de Plaisant and Raynaldo Perugini, *Casa Albero*, Fregene, Italy, 1968, structure, pool and mobile draw ladder details, 2020. © Photograph of Silvia Segarra Lagunes.



06 Giuseppe Perugini, Uga de Plaisant and Raynaldo Perugini, *Casa Albero*, Fregene, Italy, 1968, the "Palla" after restoration, 2020. © Photograph of Silvia Segarra Lagunes.

In contrast to traditional architecture, in which the corners are structurally the most solid and robust part, here the corners break and fragment the volumes once and again into new rectangular polygons that are introduced into the interior space or protrude from the walls of the modules, as explained by Raynaldo Perugini.¹³

From the beginning it was defined that the house would be completely closed except for some windows and that it would be accessed by means of a mobile draw ladder, the only communication with the garden level.¹⁴

One of the features that give greater interest to the volumes is the combination of blank walls with glass walls and, above all, the one obtained with volumetric glass overlays, based on cuts and plane changes, which create voids turned inward and outward. These offer surfaces and spaces that replace a large part of the furniture: surfaces for shelves, bookcases, cabinets and, the same hollow polygons, function as shelves for objects. As a result, the rest of the furniture could be of a lighter type.

Even though the form was built on the fly, the structural solutions are not improvised, each element, especially the assemblies that join the modules, sometimes concrete elements, sometimes ties, supports and other steel pieces, are carefully studied step by step with detailed schematics and sometimes with functional test models or prototypes. No component of the house is placed at random, but each one of them has a function and is essential. In the same way that it is assembled, it could eventually be disassembled.

In this way, the parts that make up the rooms are not fixed or permanent, the system is assembled based on different steel assemblies: tie rods, cross braces for support, angles and screws that allowed fixing, but at the same time were useful to stabilize the structure and allow the necessary adjustments so that the pieces are precisely assembled.

The technical structure of the architectural object seeks the greatest possible synthesis in which

a principle of mechanization and total standardization is applied, which, by its nature, allows for an almost infinite range of possibilities that not only applies to the Casa Albero but also constitutes a whole methodological process,¹⁵

explains Giuseppe Perugini in his book dedicated to the house.

Bathrooms are external to the structure, as the conceptual plan already tells us. These are spaces attached to the walls that, in this way, do not interfere with the usable space of the house. They can be adapted to any of the exterior panels.

The design of the bathrooms, with two concave walls in the longitudinal direction, places the toilet and bidet at both ends and the washbasin frontally, centered, with a huge circular door that rotates 90°. The shower is not a closed space, but rather is located at the center of this space, allowing the entire area to be used for this purpose. The proposed system consists of a perimeter pipe that occupies the entire circumference of the capsule to launch jets of water from all angles, as described in the scheme drawn by Giuseppe Perugini and which is inspired by Leonardo's Vitruvian Man. The facilities are hidden in the walls and the floor.

Curved elements required scale models and prototypes to achieve shape perfection. Both for the baths walls and for the sphere, the manufacturing process was analogous to that employed by potters, in this case taking advantage of a sand deposit in which an excavation is made by rotation that, at the same time, serves as a hemispherical mold to pour the concrete, on which the circular shape is also obtained so that the interior and exterior present a perfect surface.

An element that was not considered in the initial project but that is equally important is the perimeter fence of the house designed by Raynaldo Perugini. It is a combination of curved railings encapsulated in concrete curved sheets. The entrance doors, a continuation of the fence curve, fold inwards with a shaft system specially designed to give

stability and support the weight of the door.

Everything in this architectural work is impregnated with details that are discovered little by little. The entrance to the *cubetti* features a suspended circular platform accompanied by a canopy in contrast to the concave cylindrical door and circular convex shutters. To reach the entrance level, there are a pair of concrete steps, shaped in a mixed cylindrical and polygonal volume, separated and offset that spans the height of the entrance. Walking through the garden, there are other elements furnished with different functions such as registration boxes or tool deposits that follow the same principles as those for the buildings: the modular pieces that make them up, with the doors or metal enclosures also painted in red show that nothing in this field was the product of chance, as can also be seen in different parts of the structure, in which they appear, stamped on the concrete elements, acronyms that are numerical references to the reproducible and assembled components in different positions, and the sculpture, simultaneously a weather vane and a symbol, that tops the *Casa Albero*.

The surviving plans were drawn from the finished house to be included in the book that remained unpublished until 2018. However, they had been completely finished in preliminary form, by Giuseppe Perugini himself, many years before.

Conservation and future expectations

For various reasons, the house has been uninhabited for several years and this has caused many deterioration problems, especially due to vandalism and illegal occupation.

Among the main problems detected are graffiti, especially on exterior and interior concrete surfaces, as well as lichen stains and oxidation.

Some of the metallic elements suffer from corrosion that increases due to the proximity to the sea and some glass is broken.

Structurally, there is no significant damage except on one of the beams that shows a slight, probably original, deformation and some insignificant oxidation points in the base reinforcement.

Despite these problems, the restoration operations to be carried out would be very easy, mainly consisting in cleaning, glass replacement, repairing of metallic elements and revision of the facilities, in short, it could be said that they are maintenance operations.

The “ball” was recently restored as a starting point for a comprehensive intervention throughout the house, with the idea of turning it into a cultural center which, in addition to allocating the spaces for various activities, could serve as accommodation for study stays.¹⁶

The house represents the realization of a dream of a modular house tailored to the needs of users, with infinite shaping possibilities to suit each inhabitant and in line with the idea of modulation and serial prefabrication very present in the Modern Movement and which has been the challenge that many architects and designers have tried to respond to with the idea of solving the housing problem on a large scale.

But inevitably, beyond its rich theoretical connotations, the *Casa Albero* stands out by its immediate perception,

which reveals it as one of the most unusual and stimulating proposals of mid-20th century architecture.¹⁷

Notes

- 1 Giuseppe Perugini (Buenos Aires 1914 – Rome 1995) arrived in Rome as a teenager with the idea in mind to become a sculptor, but due to an accident, he decided to be an architect. He studied architecture at La Sapienza (University of Rome) and was a professor of architectural composition. In addition to the project for the *Monumenti ai Martiri delle Fosse Ardeatine*, his achievements include the Palace of the Tribunal in Rome and the Delta hotel a few meters away from Colosseum. His works are among the most prominent examples of contemporary architecture in the second half of the 20th century (*Novecento*) in Italy.
- 2 Uga de Plaisant (Rome 1917–2004), studied architecture at La Sapienza where she was professor of drawing. She established an innovative method in teaching and operational research that allowed her to obtain the *Inarch/Finsider* award in 1967 in partnership with Giuseppe Perugini, for his studies on steel structures and on account of the modernity of the solutions proposed, specializing above all in educational and sports facilities, and was one of the founders of the Engineering Department at the Roma 2 University of Tor Vergata. In his turn Raynaldo Perugini is an architect Professor of History of Architecture and researcher at the Department of Architecture of the Roma Tre University of which he was also a founder.
- 3 I would like to express my deep gratitude to Raynaldo Perugini for allowing us to visit, in July 2020, the *Casa Albero* and for his remarks about the story of the house.
- 4 Giuseppe Perugini, Raynaldo Perugini, *La Casa Albero, un esperimento di architettura a Fregene*, Roma, GB Editori, 2018, 23.
- 5 Ibid, 18.
- 6 Ibid, 22.
- 7 From a manuscript prepared and designed by the author, Ibid, 50.
- 8 Storpweber architects, *Casa Sperimentale – Interview with Angelo Bellotto, the builder*, 21 February 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W7FcuDjvdlI>.
- 9 Giuseppe Perugini, Op. cit., 23.
- 10 “In addition to the reference to Neoplasticism, the parallelism with radical Italian architecture (Archizoom and Superstudio), of those same years, and with the projects of the Archigram group (which experimented the open and composable structure, the ‘plug in city’”, in Maria Margarita Segarra Lagunes, “La Casa Árbol de Fregene”, *Iscarsab newsletter*, No. 6-7, 2014, 15.
- 11 Giuseppe Perugini, Op. cit., 18.
- 12 Storpweber architects, *The story of the house by Raynaldo Perugini, Architect*, 21 february 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q4qbvhedBM>.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Giuseppe Perugini, Op. cit., 20.
- 16 This operation included, temporarily, the replacement of the original door with a metal lock. Originally it was a curved glass that integrated, in this way, the complete sphericity of this element.
- 17 I would like to thank César Rodríguez Campos for his kind help with the English phrasing.

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DOCUMENTATION ISSUES

Modern Movement Houses in the Colonial Capital City of Nairobi

BY YASMIN SHARIFF

Architecturally, Nairobi was never a backwater. Modern architecture in Nairobi developed in the context of the tropical climate design vocabulary of Otto Königsberger (1908-1999), Maxwell Fry (1899-1987) and Jane Drew (1911-1996), within a racially segregated plan. Ideas and ideals of Modernism came with refugees, migrants and magazines from many cultures and places including South Africa, Europe, the Indian sub-continent and the Americas. Projects by internationally renowned architects and planners such as Herbert Baker (1862-1946), Ernst May (1886-1970) and Amyas Connell (1901-1980) set high standards of design. The Garden City Movement, International Congresses of Modern Architecture (CIAM), the Modern Architectural Research Group (MARS), and the work of many others was influential.

Imperial ambitions: the early years

Nairobi is a 20th century city with its architecture rooted in political machinations of European imperial powers, the Raj and consequences of two World Wars. Imperial ambitions fuelled the British state-owned Uganda Railway, crossing East Africa from Mombasa on the Indian Ocean to Lake Victoria.¹ 31,983 Indian artisans, clerks and labourers were recruited to build the railway and construction started in 1896.² The initial plan for Nairobi was conceived in 1898, when Arthur Church was commissioned to design a layout for the railway depot in an area the Masaai called Enkare Nairobi (cool water).³ There were no permanent buildings on this site and it was considered to be an open tabula rasa, 1,795 meters (m) above sea level. Church's plan included an Indian commercial area (the Bazaar) and there was no designated area for Africans in Nairobi until after 1919.⁴ The authorities failed to prevent outbreaks of bubonic plague in the Indian Bazaar and Professor William John Ritchie Simpson (1855-1931) was sent out from England in 1913 to advise the authorities.⁵ His report assumed Garden City principals for planning towns and recommended racially segregated zones.⁶ Thus, the die was cast and Nairobi was to be developed on Garden City principles with separated zones for European, Asians and Africans.

Opportunity and oppression: Garden City roots

In 1920, the same year that Welwyn Garden City was founded, British imperial power had

been consolidated and the Colony and Protectorate of Kenya established with Nairobi declared the Colonial Capital. The Colonial authorities commissioned South African architect and Professor of Architecture at the University of Cape Town, Thornton White (1901-1965), to design a Master Plan.⁷ Thornton White invited L. Silberman, a sociologist and lecturer at the University of Witwatersrand and P. Anderson, a town planning engineer, to join his team.⁸ These three South Africans visited Nairobi three times to draw up the plan.⁹ The Garden City vision published in Thornton White's Master Plan for Nairobi with a central Parkway and fountain are ideas virtually identical to Broadwater Park in Letchworth and Parkway in Welwyn Garden City.¹⁰ The spacing of the blocks embody the fundamental concepts of "sun, light, and air" of Modernism and green "lungs" of Garden City planning.

Modern Movement architects

Nairobi's Modernism is not a second hand copy of what was going on in other parts of the world. Two leading proponents, Ernst May and Amyas Connell, designed landmark buildings in the capital. Ernst May, vice-president of CIAM, moved to East Africa in 1937 after his socialist experiments in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) ended, and the fact that his mother was Jewish made it impossible for him to return to Nazi Germany. Connell, a member of the MARS Group, the British arm of CIAM, followed soon after the War when his practice folded.¹¹ Both architects had experience of designing in a tropical climate having worked in Tanganyika. The homes and studios

they designed for themselves in Nairobi, incorporated many of the techniques they developed to respond to the Nairobi context of dust, glare and tropical landscape.

Ernst May's Home in Kenya

Ernst May moved to Nairobi in 1937 and built himself a house and studio and set up in practice.¹² His house was built on a hilly slope surrounded by trees.¹³ The plan of the house and studio shows a grand living and dining room with dramatic views out from a west-facing terrace, well protected by a thin projecting concrete shelf, typical of Indian Modernist homes in Nairobi. The veranda is an extension of the living room with views over the valley beyond. A separated curved wing, with two bedrooms (presumably for servants) approached from the rear; a weaving studio and an open, covered workshop space, breaks away from the rectilinear block creating a turning area for vehicles.

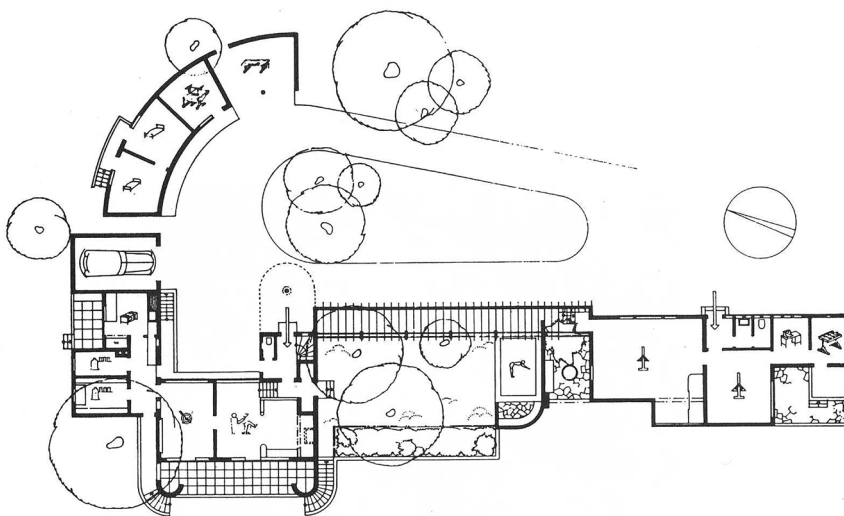
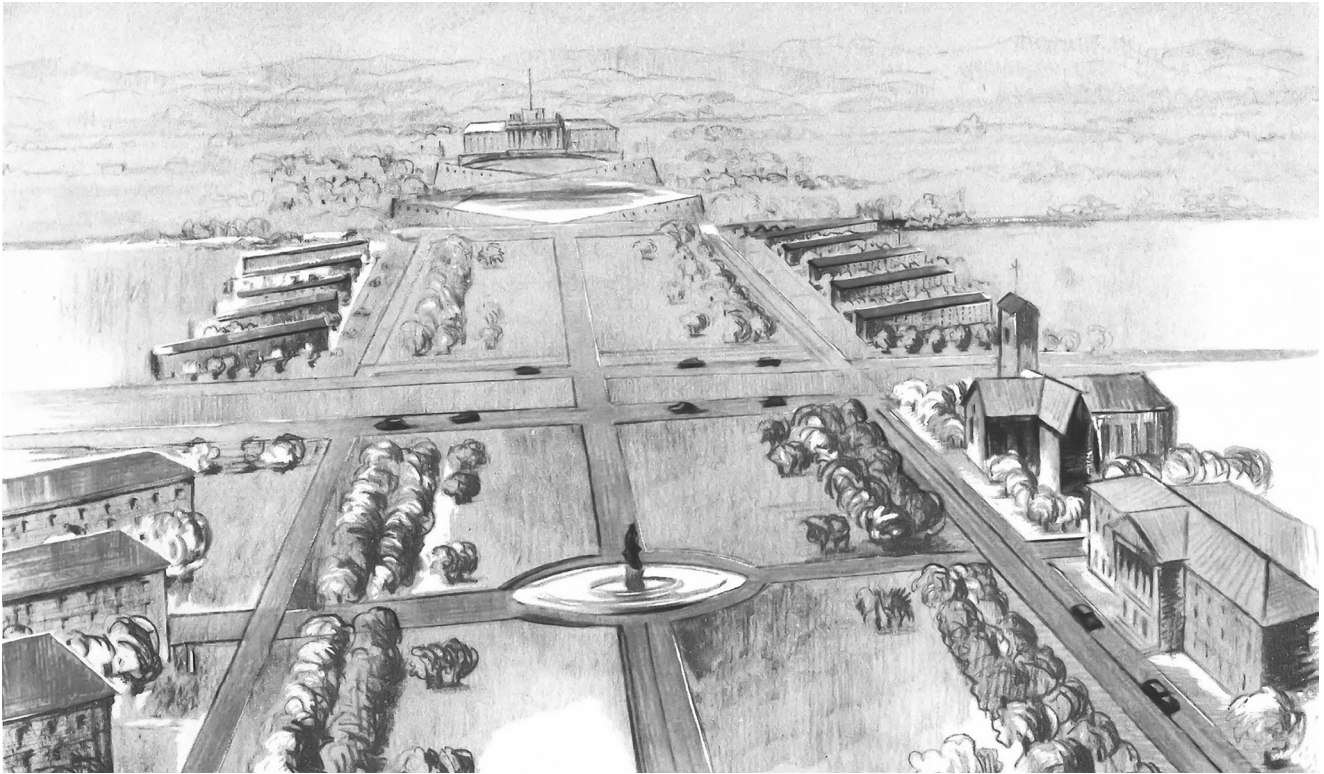
Above the living room two large bedrooms with a shared bathroom have an elevated view over the valley below. A third, north and east facing, bedroom with an ensuite, is located above the kitchen and linked by a long corridor on the east side of the house overlooking the drive.

The architecture studio on the south side of the house was erected later, in 1945. It is separated from the house by a formal garden with terraces, a plunge pool and a dramatic pergola along the entire length of the connecting east wall. The entrance to the studio is across a small courtyard garden with a circular feature. The north-south orientation of the house and studio is not ideal for the tropical sun, how-



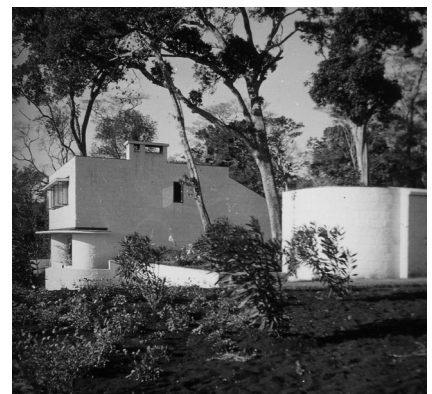
01 Front, (south) elevation, Delamare Flats.
© Dennis Sharp Archive.

- 02** I. W. Thornton White, L. Silberman and P. R. Anderson, Nairobi Master Plan for a Colonial Capital, HMSO, Kenya, 1948, a coloured rendering of the Garden City Centre vision for the colonial capital city of Nairobi published in Thornton White's 1948 masterplan.



- 03** Ernst May's house and studio, Nairobi, Kenya, 1938, ground and first floor plan.

- 04** Ernst May's own house, Nairobi, Kenya, 1938, contemporary black and white photograph of Ernst May's house built in 1938 with the studio addition. © Ernst May-Archiv, Deutsches Architekturmuseum, Frankfurt am Main; Photo: Ernst May.





05 Amyas Connell's own house, Mile Seven House, Nairobi, Kenya, 1953. © Dennis Sharp Archive.

ever the integrated outdoor garden spaces provide shade and breeze. The high altitude of Nairobi creates an ideal climate which rarely goes above 28°C in the day and solar shading and planting can easily mitigate the consequences of a compromised orientation.

Amyas Connell's Mile Seven House

Amyas Connell was finding it hard to survive as a Modernist in Britain and his practice Connell, Ward & Lucas ceased trading in 1939.¹⁴ Connell continued to practice as an independent architect and entered a competition for Auckland Cathedral with Harold Thornley Dyer (1905-1989), a fellow student at the Bartlett School of Architecture, London University College, where Connell trained.¹⁵ Both Connell and Dyer found work in East Africa after the War. Connell was commissioned to design labourers' and managers' housing on a sisal estate in the village of Kanga, Tanganyika and Dyer was appointed as a Town Planning advisor to the Kenyan Government in 1946, at the time when the South African team under Thornton White were preparing their master plan for Nairobi.¹⁶

Connell, moved to Kenya when Dyer asked him to help with the designs the new legislative building in Nairobi.¹⁷ Soon after his arrival, in 1952, Connell built a studio and house for himself at Mile Seven in Roslyn, Nairobi. Free of the bureaucratic yoke of the British planning system, Connell designed a surprisingly eclectic home with decorative screens and pointed arched doorways. In a letter he wrote to his young assistant Simon Johnson in December, 1969, he eulogised Le Corbusier (1887-1965) but went on to deplore "the new Brutalist stuff ... in which all sense of architecture has been lost," in which "the emotional content has been drained away by an eclectic intellectualism."¹⁸ According to Connell, Le Corbusier "lacked an understanding of the meaning of ornament."¹⁹

Mile Seven bears many of the hallmarks of Connell's designs for the Nairobi Law Court and Legislative building designs, particularly the use of buff geometric *brise-soleil* and dressed stone plinths. The facade of the house is orchestrated using golden mean and double square geometries to define openings and walls and there is a dynamic play of asymmetrical form with the placement of the entrance door and chimney stack. The white rendered walls provide a perfect foil for the succulents that were planted in the beds on the perimeter of the front elevation. Two raised planters mark the location of the steps that lead down to the main entrance door on a diagonal route. The pointed arch is not a reference to Islamic architecture – in my conversations with Connell he explained that the form of the pointed arch is to do with the human form.²⁰ Connell's use of random dressed stone as a plinth is a highly effective way of dealing with the mud and dust thrown up, either by torrential rain or drought conditions.

His innovatory bedroom incorporated a sliding wall which came down to separate the marital bed in two so he could read late at night! The dramatic mono-pitched living room created a large expansive space opening up sweeping views over a landscape which falls away from the living room and terrace. This latter device – probably borrowed from Marcel Breuer (1902-1981), if not directly from Le Corbusier – was used by both Connell and Ernst May.²¹

Connell, like other Modernist architects in Nairobi, embraced the essential connection between nature and architecture as seen in Le Corbusier's influential Pavilion L'Espirit Nouveau (1924-1925) and the work of Frank Lloyd

Wright (1867-1959) and Richard Neutra (1892-1970).²² Connell worked closely with Peter Greensmith (1911-1992) on several city projects including the gardens for the Legislative buildings.²³ These landscape designs were strongly influenced by the works of Roberto Burle Marx (1909-1994), with whom Greensmith had established a close friendship.²⁴

Indian Modernism

Race was a determining factor in the allocation of land and what could be built. Most of the Modernist family homes in Nairobi were built on small plots for the Indian population. Europeans were allocated larger plots of land further away from the city center. Prior to independence there were few individually commissioned family homes by native Africans.

The Indians in Parklands shunned the old corrugated iron roofed beaux arts colonial style and embraced concrete constructions with white clean lines, curved balconies and cantilevered awnings and *brise-soleil* as shading devices, similar to contemporaneous examples found in India.²⁵ Some of these Indian Modernist houses were pattern book examples and others designed by practicing architects from very different training and backgrounds including Hungarian born Jewish architect George Vamos (1910-1999), Welshman Idris Davies and Kenyan born C. S. Thakore. Many of their Modernist designs were published in the *East African Institute of Architects Yearbooks*.

Inward-looking houses focused in on a courtyard, are a characteristic feature of Indian houses in contrast with European designs as typified by Ernst May and Amyas Connell's own homes that are outward-looking into

06 House for M. P. Shah, 95 Limuru Road, Parklands. © A. Hussein and T. Hart.





07 Parkland Flats designed by C. S. Thakore for the Ismaili Community, Nairobi, Kenya. © Akbar Hussein.

the landscape. An exception to this was the Modernist terrace housing designed by C. S. Thakore for the Ismaili community in High Ridge and Parklands in 1959-1961.²⁶

The flat roofs and terraced design of the social housing for the Ismaili Community was more at home in Stuttgart or Frankfurt and completely novel to Nairobi – there were few private terraced houses like these at the time. The development is referred to as a new garden suburb in the souvenir brochure.²⁷ The terraces were of concrete construction with metal windows, terrazzo floors, fitted kitchens, formica worktops and thermo-plastic flooring. There were rear kitchen courtyards and a back “street” for services and servants.

Post-independence. Modernism legacy

Modernism in pre-independence Nairobi was a way of expressing a forward-looking vision. After independence there was a great shortage of skilled labour as many Kenyan Indians chose to migrate to Britain. For many, the Modern Movement style was considered to be too simple – not *maridadi*²⁸ enough. There was a search for a new vocabulary and architects like Karl Nostvik (1925-1992) who designed the Kenyatta Conference Centre brought a new sensitivity to the architecture of independent Kenya. The Modernist legacy is being rediscovered just as it is on the threshold of its destruction, but some European houses further out of the city stand a better chance of surviving the ravages of time and economic exploitation. Little research has been done on these Modernist homes and their secrets have yet to be revealed.

Notes

- 1 E. D. Hughes, “Prospects for British Architects in the Empire”, *Architectural Design*, November, 1948, 250.
- 2 Thornton White, L. Silberman, P. R. Anderson, *Nairobi Master Plan for a Colonial Capital*, HMSO, 1948, 12.
- 3 R. A. Deissenge, M. Njuguma (Eds.), *Conservation of Natural and Cultural Heritage in Kenya*, UCL, 2016, 163.
- 4 The Native Passes Regulations – Ordinance of 1900 and 1903 – required that Africans needed passes for leaving their towns and/or villages – R. Home, “Colonial Township Laws and Urban Governance in Kenya”, *Journal of African Law*, October, 2012, 5.
- 5 Thornton White, Op. cit., 15.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Thornton White taught at the Regent Street Polytechnic and was vice president of the Architectural Association before being appointed as the first professor at the University of Cape Town in 1937 – see G. Herbert, *Martinsen and the International Style: the modern movement in South African architecture*, AA Balkema Cape Town, 1975, 177. Thornton White, like Amyas Connell, was a Rome scholar and it is interesting to note that when at the British School in Rome, in 1930, he was criticised for his modern design for a travel agency and bank, see D. Sharp, S. Rendel, Connell, Ward & Lucas. *Modern Movement Architects in England 1929-1939*, Frances Lincoln Editions, London, 2008, 14; and RIBA Drawings Collection, ref RIBA92828. <https://www.architecture.com/image-library/ribapix/image-information/poster/design-for-a-hall-for-a-travel-agency-and-banking-company-rome-interior-elevation/posterid/RIBA92828.html>, accessed 29 August 2020.
- 8 The appointment of P. Anderson, a sociologist was novel and seen to be required “to tackle” the “sociological difficulties of a new and multi-cultural urban area” described to be the “Nairobi problem.”
- 9 Thornton White, Op. cit., 2. The visits were made in July 1945, December-January 1945-1946 and in July 1946.
- 10 Ibid. 60-61.
- 11 D. Sharp, S. Rendel, Op. Cit., 182. Ernst May and Amyas Connell both moved to Tanganyika before settling in Nairobi.
- 12 B. Tiven, “The Delight of the Yearner – Ernst May and Erica Mann in Nairobi 1933-1953”, *Journal of Contemporary African Art* – 32, NKA Publications, Spring, 2013, 82.
- 13 Photographs of the house are now in the Deutsches Architekturmuseum in Frankfurt am Main and a brief description and a model can be seen <http://archiv.dam-online.de/handle/11153/160-033-001>, accessed 17 August 2020.
- 14 Ibid., 181.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/architect_full.php?id=404640, accessed 27 August 2020.
- 17 D. Sharp, S. Rendel, Op. Cit., 182. The Legislative building became the Parliament building after independence in 1963.
- 18 D. Sharp, S. Rendel Op. Cit., private papers refer to Letter to Simon Johnson, dated 5 December 1969, also referred to in D. Sharp, “The Modern Movement in East Africa”, *Habitat International Otto Koenigsberger Festschrift*, Pergamon Press, 1983, 320. The Legislative buildings became the Parliament building after independence in 1963.

- 19 Ibid.
- 20 I worked for Amyas Connell in London as an apprentice (1979-1980) and had the opportunity of discussing his work and ethos with him.
- 21 D. Sharp, 1983, Op. cit., 311-326.
- 22 D. Sharp, S. Rendel, 2008, Op. cit., 11.
- 23 G. Irvine, et al, “Nairobi’s Gardener”, *Kenya Past and Present*, 1944, 18. A particular feature of Nairobi gardens, Modernist or otherwise are the bougainvillea which were the passion of Peter Greensmith (Henry Powell Greensmith). Peter Greensmith joined the staff of the Nairobi Town Council in 1947 as Parks Superintendent after he was demobbed from the Navy. Peter Greensmith won the highest acclaims for his work in Nairobi including the Associate of Honour of the Royal Horticultural Society.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 T. Hart, “The Nairobi that Was”, *Kenya Past and Present*, Issue No. 30, 2006, 76.
- 26 *Souvenir of a Dream*, 1961. The Parklands Flats were based on an almost identical development for the Ismaili Community for 93 Maisonettes in High Ridge completed in 1959.
- 27 Ibid., 9.
- 28 Swahili for fancy or decorative.

Note from the Editors: Ernst May’s house in Nairobi, located at 61 Marula Lane, Karen, has been transformed into The Purdy Arms, a Bed & Breakfast, Bar, Restaurant and Archery Club, with unfortunate modifications and additions.

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Yasmin Shariff

Director Dennis Sharp Architects, Yasmin Shariff is an architect whose family were some of the first settlers in Nairobi. As a young girl she grew up in Nairobi, Kampala and Emsworth. She was educated at Kenya High School before moving to London to train as an architect at the Architectural Association and the Bartlett School of Architecture. Her mother still lives in Nairobi and she visits Kenya on a regular basis.

Past Readings, Present Findings: on Intervening Emilio Duhart's PDVN House

BY ALEJANDRO BEALS AND LORETO LYON

The stamp of the definitive is avoided.

No situations appear intended forever, no figure asserts its "thus and no otherwise."

Between 1963 and 1966 Emilio Duhart (1917-2006) worked on the design of this single-family house in what used to be the outskirts of Santiago. During this period, a series of younger collaborators worked on the project, transforming it continuously. Now, confronted with the task of refurbishing the house, we trace back and try to understand the project development by researching archival material. However, it is the process of physically dismantling damaged fabric – almost everything, besides the concrete structure – that really reveals the main principles behind the whole design process. A silent dialogue with architects already gone, which provides the guidelines to write just another chapter in the life of this structure.

I

We never imagined that this house, for which we always felt a lot of curiosity, speculated and imagined stories about, would end up being our own. And probably, where we will spend the rest of our lives. For many years we walked past this enigmatic structure. An exposed concrete skeleton being consumed by a mantle of ravenous creepers, which already seemed to have devoured the softer parts. Not much else could be seen under the vegetation, but the detached volume of a triple height staircase poking out of a corner, surrounded by beams and wrapped in a thin tissue of timber and frosted glass. Through this veil, it was possible to see the blurry shadows of ivy already spreading in. An improvised greenhouse, perhaps. At dusk, a soft green light glowing from within, and just a few times, a fading human outline moving up or down the staircase. Duchamp's painting.

When we saw the house listed for sale, we arranged a visit on the same day. We shook hands with the owner just a few hours later. It was then that we discovered this house was one of the few remaining houses designed by Emilio Duhart; a house of which we were unaware.

II

Emilio Duhart, perhaps the most renowned Chilean architect of Modern Architecture, studied at the Pontifical Catholic University (PUC) of Chile and later at Harvard Graduate School of Design under the supervision of Walter Gropius (1883-1969). In 1945 he

returned to Chile, and for 12 years worked alongside his former teacher, Sergio Larraín (1905-1999), in projects of different scales and typologies, ranging from mixed use schemes, and educational complexes to residential homes. In 1952 Emilio Duhart received a scholarship to study at the Sorbonne University and during this stay in Paris, he became acquainted with Le Corbusier (1887-1965), with whom he worked at the Atelier de la Rue de Sèvres. There, he was involved in the projects of the Secretariat Building in Chandigarh and the Villa Shodhan in Ahmedabad.

III

Back in Chile, in 1958 Emilio Duhart founded his own practice in architecture and planning, and during this stage, he had his greatest professional achievements. During the 1960s he developed the most important project of his career, the United Nations Building in Chile (CEPAL), in collaboration with Roberto Goycoolea (1928-2018) and Christian de Groote (1931-2013). This building shows several of the distinctive ideas of his architecture, such as the sense of scale, the relationship to landscape and the use of exposed concrete. It is in this work where the structure also acquired a fundamental value and appears as an exo-structure which allowed for absolute freedom of the plan and facades.

IV

PDVN 0458 house, completed around 1966, is one of the few single-family houses by Emilio

Duhart which still stand. It is located in Pedro de Valdivia Norte, a neighborhood developed in the 1950s at the foothills of Cerro San Cristobal, Santiago's metropolitan park. At the time of its construction, this area was on the outskirts of the city, now absorbed by its growth and therefore much more central. Despite this change, and because of its location close to the hills, somehow the feeling of being on a fringe of Santiago remains.

At the same time Emilio Duhart designed this house, he also worked on the CEPAL project. Obviously the two buildings have a completely different scale, however, it is possible to recognize in this smaller structure several concepts present on the CEPAL building, which in turn, inherits several of Le Corbusier's *Five Points of Architecture*.

V

Once we realized the house was designed by Emilio Duhart, we started to research in order to know more about its history and define a point of departure for future transformations. Fortunately, all the drawings of the project were at PUC's archive, keeper of Emilio Duhart's archive.

The drawings cover a span of three years, from 1963 to 1966. Despite being a single-family house, and as expected in a time lapse like this, many architects and draftsmen intervened. Borja Huidobro (1936-) (Emilio Duhart's son-in-law) and Christian de Groote amongst them, two of the most prominent contemporary Chilean architects.

Even though the house underwent several changes and transformations during the whole process, what we find to be the most prominent aspects, remained: a house thought to allow for continuous change and flexibility. The project as a structure to be filled, and lived in. Change and adaptation were sought, even encouraged, avoiding the definitive and, quoting Walter Benjamin, the "thus and no other wise." Architecture as a back drop for daily life to happen. No more and no less.

VI

We identified three main moments during the design process: a conceptual stage, a documentation stage and lastly, a detailing and landscape stage.

The first plans and elevations, drawn by a young Borja Huidobro, already define the position of the house, closer to the front of the lot and leaving exactly half of the lot empty. The decision of leaving a big backyard to the west, probably linked to the views of



01 Emilio Duhart, *PDVN O458 house*, Santiago, Chile, 1963-1966.
Exterior after repair, entrance and staircase detail, 2021.

nearby San Cristobal hill and the possibility of creating a continuous and – in appearance at least – more extensive landscape.

The house itself is organized within a compact two-story high rectangular volume, surrounded by a perimeter wall that runs along the entire boundary of the plot. On top of it, a roof terrace, with some curved walls that keep the space closed towards the street and open to the main views of the nearby hill; the roof terrace of Villa Savoye, or the sail shaped wall at Casa Malaparte.

The two floors are symmetrically divided on its longer axis by a main wall, which also separates the main rooms from the service areas, with secondary load bearing walls both perpendicular to it and along the perimeter.

The facades show the house covered in a generic white material, with big openings at ground level and smaller square windows on the north elevation of the first floor, with a second layer of sliding shutters. This difference between the two floors allows, on the one hand, for a more direct connection with the garden at ground floor, whilst on the other, for privacy and protection of direct sunlight.

VII

On a second stage, by the end of 1963 and already under the supervision of Christian de Groote, the structure mutated and the materiality became more specific; all in search of an open plan that allowed for higher flexibility and future transformations.

The perimeter supporting walls disappeared, replaced by a series of concrete columns: three on each of the longer sides

and a single one coinciding with the central axis on the east and west elevations. The main wall that longitudinally divides the plan and a couple of perpendicular walls on the “service side” of the house, remained. Having earthquakes in Chile, these are needed in order to counteract horizontal movement.

The result was that now one half of the house became a free plan without any structural partition. On this side, the project specified different solutions to break down the big elongated space into smaller rooms or situations, always allowing for these partitions to be removed or transformed. At ground floor level the aim seems to obtain the longest site views as possible, connecting the front with the back garden, from wall to wall, through the interior of the house. The main space is divided into dining-room, living-room and studio using two accordion screens (*modernfold*), and therefore, without compromising the continuity of space.

On the second level the division of rooms is done by sliding doors or very thin partitions. The plan even indicates multiple possible positions for them, reinforcing the idea that these could be changed later in the history of the house and thus, adapted to the will and needs of their inhabitants. We took down these partitions when renovating the house, and found that these were made of very thin timber frames, secured just using some wedges against the slab and a continuous finished floor.

The new exo-structure sets the facades free of their structural constraints, allowing for a greater variety of openings. The difference

in size of windows between ground and first floor remained, and over consecutive drawings, they also adopt a different materiality and expression. At ground floor level, big openings are framed by thin concrete walls, creating a series of bow windows in order to be closer to the garden, or rather, *in* the garden. When there is need for an opaque wall, these frames are filled with bricks, and therefore making evident that this border, which never touches the slab, does not perform a structural function.

Differently, the outer walls on the first floor are completely made out of timber, but like the ones below, they stop before reaching the slab. Over the facade’s timber structure there is a lining of vertical tongue-and-groove boards, with smaller battens covering the joints. This textured surface runs along the four facades, recessed from the concrete structure, except on the west facade, where it is on the same plane, probably because of the main bedroom size requirements.

VIII

During the last stage of the project the biggest change occurred on the roof. At first, a low, pitched timber roof covered the higher slab, but the stairs still arrived at this now inaccessible space; evidence that this structure was expected to be removed, if needed. Lastly, there is an alternative of using the roof terrace simply as an elevated garden: a wooden deck with planters around which also, if wanted, could be transformed later into an indoor playground.

The last two drawings, dated 1966, belong to a landscaping proposal. The earlier is signed by Emilio Duhart, a conceptual general planning of the garden, and the latest, by a landscape designer, María Santa Cruz, which mostly indicated the vegetal species following Emilio Duhart’s design. The most notorious elements are a continuous shaded border, completely covering the perimeter walls, and a swimming pool, strategically placed along the same view axis of the main space at ground floor. These two elements contrast with the rest of the drawing, which is outlined using very thin lines. Additional vegetation and trees are strategically planted in front of the main windows, and nothing obscures the staircase core. The contrast between the perimeter and the rest of the drawing transforms the whole plot into a new walled room, in which the interior views extend without obstruction to reach this exterior, new green boundary.

IX

Apparently, the original owner, Mr. Herman, lived in this house for about 15 years, and then sold the house to a younger family, which lived here for almost four decades. There was no doubt about it. Door frames with children growing marks carved full height on them, red floor-wax stains climbing on the concrete walls everywhere, a derelict but reckless garden which was already devouring the house, and an old couple left alone living here, with joyful memories, but already too tired to keep going with the house. When we found the house, it was already unattended for too long.

Covered in ivy, the depth of the real damage of the concrete structure and timber elements was hidden, as was the precariousness of some construction detail solutions: every angle of the columns, beams and walls, was about to fall because of rebar corrosion; rotten timber window frames and secondary structure damaged by insects and fungi; dried out timber facades with plenty of weather grooves; broken glass; cracked waterproofing; torn vapor barriers and almost no insulation. The service installations, never updated, were useless and beyond repair. Despite all this, and having resisted several major earthquakes, there wasn't serious structural damage, but it was urgent to take care of the house to prevent further damage.

X

Confronted with this unexpected scenario, and in order to adapt the spaces to our own requirements, we progressively began dismantling all that was damaged or faulty. In the end, we had no alternative but to leave nothing but the structure.

As we progressed with this unintended

process of deconstruction, more and more pathologies or construction deficiencies were revealed. However, not everything was negative, as this turned out to be a fertile process for discovery and reflection. A creative method born out of the deconstruction itself. This way we chose not only to base our design choices on the old drawings, but mostly, we looked carefully to what the house itself suggested. To focus on the qualities and atmosphere we discovered and enjoyed.

Probably, every architect has been in the position of imagining changes or corrections when visiting a work of architecture: "That window could be a little to the left, that way you could see that hill from this chair"... "this floor could have been the same as outside"... "a pivoting door here would allow for a continuous wall between inside and outside"... and so on; small adjustments to enhance what we found had value, or to improve what we considered to be shortcomings. A process we frequently use as architects, where, whether by visiting or reflecting on work done by others, we start creating our own.

XI

The following is a list of themes and actions undergone in the renovation process, the result of the design method we used:

On Continuity

- Demolition of transverse brick partitions, to obtain longer, unobstructed views.
- New glazed doors at ground level.
- Thinner steel frames on windows.
- Pivot doors on the first floor.
- To remove all doors between dividing rooms at ground floor level.
- Lower partitions between rooms on the first

floor, separated 22 centimeters (cm) from the slab and finished with laminated glass.

On Materiality

- Paint removal over all concrete surfaces (slabs and walls).
- Replacement of gypsum board partitions and walls with tongue-and-groove timber lining.
- Change of terracotta tile floor for lighter marble stone on the ground floor and timber floor on the first floor.
- Replacement of frosted glass with wire mesh glass on the staircase. New frame and anchoring solution.

On Constructive Improvements

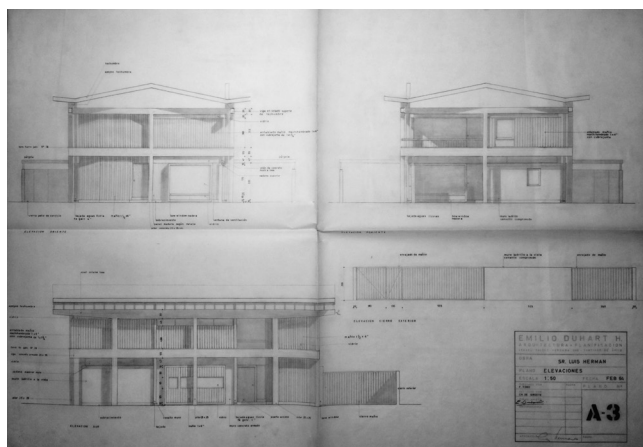
- Change of timber cladding to ventilated and horizontal thermo-treated timber.
- Full insulation and vapor barrier on walls.
- Change to lighter roof insulation and new waterproofing.
- Double glazed and laminated windows.
- Set back of first floor west facade to improve protection and to make the outer envelope completely independent from structure.
- Full replacement of service installations.

On Garden

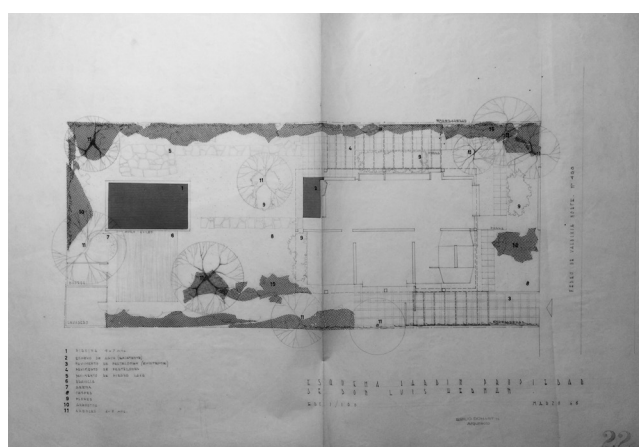
- Harmonization and rendering of perimeter walls.
- Demolition of exterior service rooms.
- Restitution of trees and plants.

On New Life

- New distribution of rooms.
- Replacement of access hall by a new concrete volume. A place to leave your coat and shoes.



02 Emilio Duhart, PDVN 0458 house, Santiago, Chile, 1963-1966, second scheme facades, 1964. © Source: Emilio Duhart Studio. Archivo de Originales. Sergio Larraín GM Library, FADEU, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile.



03 Emilio Duhart, PDVN 0458 house, Santiago, Chile, 1963-1966, landscape proposal, 1966. © Source: Emilio Duhart Studio. Archivo de Originales. Sergio Larraín GM Library, FADEU, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile.



04 Emilio Duhart, PDVN 0458 house, Santiago, Chile, 1963-1966. Main entrance covered in creepers, 2017.



05 Emilio Duhart, PDVN 0458 house, Santiago, Chile, 1963-1966. Rear garden facade, 2017.



06 Emilio Duhart, PDVN 0458 house, Santiago, Chile, 1963-1966. Open plan interior, dining and living room, 2017.



07 Emilio Duhart, PDVN 0458 house, Santiago, Chile, 1963-1966. Exterior after repair, entrance and staircase detail, 2021.



08 Emilio Duhart, PDVN 0458 house, Santiago, Chile, 1963-1966. Exterior after repair, staircase detail: wire mesh glass and ash wood studs, 2021.



09 Emilio Duhart, PDVN 0458 house, Santiago, Chile, 1963-1966. Interior under repair, dining and living room, 2019.

- Repositioning of the kitchen in what use to be a maid's room; bigger and more open to the garden. Now the kitchen is again at the heart of family life.

XII

If the survey of archival material allowed us to understand the evolution of the project and the successive contributions of Emilio Duhart's younger collaborators, it was the process of dismantling everything that was damaged or needed to be renovated, what really revealed the main spatial aims of the project. This method set the guidelines to adjust or reshape what we consider to be shortcomings. The exo-structure allowed us to rethink and renew the interiors, but most importantly, to retain and intensify the qualities that define the identity of this house. An ongoing process of observation and discovery in what will be just another chapter in the story of this house. And probably, not the last one either.

Notes

- 1 Walter Benjamin, "Naples", 1925, in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, New York, Schocken Books, 1978.

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- BENJAMIN, Walter, LACIS, Asja, "Naples", in Walter Benjamin, *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, New York, Schocken Books, 1978, 163-173.
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Alejandro Beals and Loreto Lyon

Alejandro Beals and Loreto Lyon have taught studios at Cornell University AAP, the IUAV in Venice, Scola da Cidade in Sao Paulo, and Universidad Católica de Perú. Currently they both teach at Universidad San Sebastián and PUC of Chile. They have published and exhibited extensively. In 2016 Ediciones ARQ published the monograph *Beals Lyon Arquitectos: Public Voids*, featuring a selection of works about public architecture. The practice has been recognized with various design awards, like the recent Plataforma Arquitectura's 2020 *Building of the Year Award*, for a Town Hall in central Chile.

In 2001, Alejandro Beals (Chile, 1976) received the title of architect from PUC (Chile). In 2012 he received a Master of Philosophy degree at the Royal College of Art (RCA), London, where he researched boundaries and borders in architecture, under the supervision of professor Nigel Coates.

In 2005, Loreto Lyon (Chile, 1979) received the title of architect from PUC (Chile). In 2011 she received a Master of Science degree (MSc) in "Environmental Design and Engineering" from the Bartlett, University College of London (UCL).

HERITAGE IN DANGER



01 Casa Klumb, aerial fire detail.
© Javier Olmeda, 2020..

Casa Klumb: an issue of preservation and education

Early on the morning of November 11, 2020, we woke to news of the “fire that destroyed the Klumb House.” The somber story that detailed the complete erasure of the emblematic structure, under the custody of the administration of the University of Puerto Rico, at the express wish of the architect Henry Klumb, went viral and broke the Internet. The newspaper columns proliferated with a wide range of views on the issue. Leaving the essential question: Why did this happen?

The architect Henry Klumb (1905-1984) and his wife Else Schmidt lived in the house, reconstructed to emulate the precepts of Modern architecture, until 1984, the year when both died in a car accident in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The decision to donate the house to the University of Puerto Rico, a campus that houses a great many of the architect’s best works, was natural and understandable in 1984. However, this began a story of decline lasting thirty-five years, ten months, and a few days, counting down through time and space; the “Chronicle of a Death Foretold.”¹

Casa Klumb was the former residence of architect Henry Klumb, considered as one of the masters of the Modern Movement on the Island. Located on a 2.63-hectare site, in a suburban neighborhood of San Juan. The plot was filled by an exuberant landscape, tended for years by Henry Klumb’s loyal gardener.

The importance of the structure lays in its architect’s ability to adapt a 19th century cottage into a true example of regional modernism and sustainability. In a surgical intervention, he opted to keep essential structural elements: foundations, wooden posts, beams, and rafters – but removed all existing partitions, while preserving elements like shutter doors. Although maintaining two bathrooms and the kitchen, he redesigned the whole interior in two distinct zones: a cluster of diverse interconnected spaces that included the master-, secondary- and guest-bedrooms and two studios; and an ample living space, with a living-dining room, balcony and entrance. While keeping the basics, he also added new elements, with a focus on details. The pivoting dining tables that could be adjusted to seat up to twelve guests were just one example of the way he took advantage of the space and used it as his own design laboratory. This approach extended from the interior to the exterior, such as his use of a kidney-shaped pond in front of the house, and the gravel pathways that ran throughout the abundant landscape, which merged with the house in a unique way.

This subtractive design strategy endlessly redefined the space, blending the built and natural context into one; a great example of a tropical contextualization of the modernist philosophy.

With the loss of such a masterpiece so close at hand, which generations could have learnt from, it is imperative to return to the question why? What happened to the house that led to it declining and eventually succumbing to fire? In search of an answer, **docomomo** Puerto Rico, hosted a round table, *Casa Klumb: Past or Future?*. In an open and frank debate, the guests exchanged differing views, not only on what should or should not be done with the property, but also, what should be done in the field of patrimonial preservation in Puerto Rico.

How can we justify concern for the loss of a structure when we had 13,099 days to do something about it, and let them slip away?

Now, much like with Notre Dame, promises are springing up for a reconstruction project and, above all, funding, that were never there before. But something is missing: a plan. Probably, 35 years ago, the euphoria of receiving this piece of our built history was as bubbling as the projects emerging today. This grand piece is gone, but the best tribute we can make to Henry Klumb, is to start raising awareness about built heritage, giving courses, leading tours, making alliances between all the groups concerned with preservation. If not, we can only sit and wait for the next “Death Foretold”.

Santiago Gala and Ivonne María Marcial Vega



02 Casa Klumb. © MaxToro, 2015.

Notes

- 1 Taken from the title of the book by Gabriel García Márquez: *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*, widely repeated in newspaper columns and social media at the time.

Santiago Gala Aguilera

(San Juan, Puerto Rico 1973) Bachelor in Environmental Design and Master in Architecture from the University of Puerto Rico. He has taught at the *Universidad del Turabo* and works at the Puerto Rico State Conservation Office. Vice-president of **docomomo** Puerto Rico, he is also known for his work in archeology, the discover and rescue of the hidden tiles from the El Monte Sur Building. Through educating an entire neighboring community, he undertook the task of rescuing the original completion of the entrance hall of this condominium.

Ivonne María Marcial Vega

(San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1960) Bachelor in Environmental Design and Master in Architecture from the University of Puerto Rico. She has been a professor for 26 years in *Universidad Politécnica de Puerto Rico*, *Escuelas de Artes Plásticas de Puerto Rico* and *Universidad del Turabo*. Through her experience being part of a group that worked to avoid the demolition of *El Hotel La Concha* in San Juan, she became interested in the preservation through education, therefore founded **docomomo** Puerto Rico in 2006. She is the editor of the sole architecture guide in Puerto Rico, *Acceso a lo moderno I*.



01 Leonardo Mosso raising one of his structures;
© Photos L. Mosso, T. Marzi, Archivio Istituto
Alvar Aalto-Museo dell'Architettura Arti Applicate
e Design, Pino Torinese.

Leonardo Mosso: the poetry of structure

Leonardo Mosso (1926-2020) was able to combine art and architecture. He was a collector and an interpreter of 20th century culture that he shared and passed on to succeeding generations of students and collaborators who attended the Alvar Aalto Institute. For many, he was an unsung Maestro, a generous polymath, who maintained an extraordinary curiosity and child-like enthusiasm throughout his long life.

It is not easy to define his complex identity: architect, artist, photographer, researcher, semiologist, professor (at the *Politecnico di Torino* and several European Universities, such as Berlin and Karlsruhe), a man of culture (co-founder of the National Museum of Cinema Association), an activist in the conservation of 20th century architectural heritage... and a poet of contemporary architecture.

He was born in Turin (Italy) in 1926, son of Nicola Mosso (1899-1986), a rationalist and futurist architect, and his career began in his father's studio. Together, they created one of the most evocative religious buildings of post-war Turin, the church of *Gesù Redentore* in Mirafiori (1953-1957), extraordinary for its modular geometry and complex vault structure, perforated by light.

In the early 1950s, on reading *Space, Time and Architecture*, he was struck by Sigfried Giedion's (1888-1968) description of the

Sunila paper mill designed by Alvar Aalto (1898-1976) where "no human being is misused to become an adjunct to a machine." Fascinated by this humanistic approach¹ and the generative forms of Alvar Aalto's architecture, after a train journey across a Europe still wounded by war, he arrived in Finland where he joined Alvar Aalto's studio in 1955 and remained until 1958.

Through numerous articles in architectural magazines he wrote in the 1950s, Leonardo Mosso became a key-figure in the growing interest in the Finnish architect in Italy. Some of his articles became genuine references, such as "The light in Alvar Aalto's architecture."² This renewed interest led Leonardo Mosso to become the curator of the first monographic exhibition on Alvar Aalto at the *Palazzo Strozzi* in Florence in 1965-1966.³ From 1964, he became Alvar Aalto's partner in his Italian projects that, unfortunately, were never realized, such as the Villa for Erica Olivetti in Moncalieri (1969-1972), the innovative satellite-city in Pavia (1966-1968), warehouses for the Ferrero company (1965-1970), and a congress center in Turin (1964-1965).

From the 1960s on, he devoted himself to the design of flexible, versatile structures with infinite potential for transformation. Together with his wife, Laura Castagno (1938-), a partner in his life, work, and research, he carried out some prescient and highly original studies on structuralism, on territorial planning through the relationship between man and the environment, and on the early use of computers for managing urban form. He developed a "theory of semiotic structural design" and "non-authoritarian programming," placing the concept of "structure" at the center of his research, with functional, aesthetic, and social applications.⁴ In all his architectural and artistic works, he always followed a structural logic, in the sense of "structure as a system of transformation and of possibilities" according to the definition given by Jean Piaget (1896-1980). At the same time, Leonardo Mosso undertook experimental research aimed at "understanding the potential unions and relationships that could be obtained through connections." Those steps from experimentation to theorizing led to poetic work at different scales: algorithmic combinations and astonishing inventions in rhythm and

color, such as the *Cappella della Messa dell'artista* (1962-1963) or the *Nuvola Rossa* set up in 1974 in the Museum of the Risorgimento in Turin, a large aerial structure of 400 m² consisting of red wooden elements and elastic neoprene joints, suspended from the vaults of the first Italian Chamber of Deputies.

But Leonardo Mosso was also a pioneer in the protection of 20th century Italian architecture, publicly denouncing unjustified demolitions (such as the Equestrian Club by Carlo Mollino (1905-1973), a masterpiece whose demolition, in 1960, was excoriated by Mosso in an article he illustrated with his own photographs).⁵

In 1979, with his wife Laura, he founded the *Istituto Alvar Aalto* [Alvar Aalto Institute], in the woods of the Pino Torinese hills, which also houses the headquarters of the Study Center of Programmed Architecture and Environmental Cybernetics (since 1969), and the Museum of Architecture, Applied Arts and Design (since 1984). The Institute preserves important archive materials, the result of a lifetime dedicated to the protection, conservation, study, and promotion of the architectural heritage, artworks, design, and applied arts of the 20th century.

Daniela Bosia and Tanja Marzi

Notes

- 1 On the Sunila complex Leonardo Mosso, together with Tapio Peräininen and Italo Martinero, produced the film-documentary *Sunila, la fabbrica umana di Alvar Aalto*, 1955.
- 2 Leonardo Mosso, "La luce nell'architettura di Alvar Aalto", *Zodiac*, No. 7, 1960, 66-115.
- 3 Leonardo Mosso (ed.), *L'opera di Alvar Aalto*, Milano, Edizioni di Comunità, 1965. Catalogue of the exhibition at the Palazzo Strozzi, Florence, 14th November 1965 – 9th January 1966.
- 4 Laura Baccaglioni, Egidio Del Canto (ed.), *Leonardo Mosso: architettura e pensiero logico*, Mantova, Provincia di Mantova-Casa del Mantegna, 1981; Liborio Termine, *L'invenzione della meraviglia. Ragionamenti sulla poetica di Leonardo Mosso*, Torino, Edizioni di Lettera/Istituto Alvar Aalto, 1991.
- 5 Leonardo Mosso, "Un'opera perduta: l'ippica di Mollino", *Comunità*, No. 80, 1960, 70-82.

BOOK REVIEWS



El Cerrito: La Obra Maestra de Gio Ponti en Caracas

Authors: Hannia Gómez and Giovanni Chiaramonte

Publisher: Fundación Anala y Armando Planchart/ULTREYA Milano

ISBN: 978-890-7270-00-7

Language: Spanish

Year: 2009

It was the year of 1953. A South American couple took the decision of leaving in the hands of *DOMUS* magazine's Director, Milanese architect Gio Ponti (1891-1979) (whom they did not know, except for the magazine itself), their most precious possession: the absolute finest property in the city of Caracas, placed on the valley's highest hilltop with breathtaking vistas that get lost in the landscape. Up to here everything looks already like an extraordinary story.

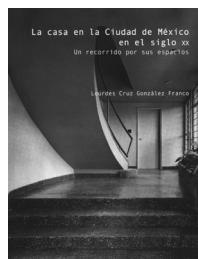
But there's still much more to tell: multitalented Ponti had never been before to Venezuela; Armando and Anala Planchart, both well-bred *Caraqueños* and art lovers, did not want to dwell anymore in a traditional house. Ponti ignored how the orchid plant looked; the Plancharts were not only orchid collectors, but wanted to exhibit their collection in their new residence; and although the architect was not familiar with distant Caracas, Mrs. Planchart demanded to be able to see El Avila mountain from every newly-conceived single space Ponti was about to design...

And there, right on the studio's drafting table in Via Dezza they met: Ponti and the Plancharts, with more than an ocean in between them; both, in front of a large sheet of drafting paper. What would later turn out to be – according to Ponti himself – his masterpiece, began to be drawn that very morning, mixed within the images of his 1940s Mediterranean white houses, plunged into the view of the sea, and the diamond-shaped forms that also became part of the magnificent Pirelli Tower. The Villa Planchart – a.k.a.

El Cerrito – and this story, multiplied in four hundred illustrated letters, a profuse project and an exquisite art, object and furniture collection, all shipped expressly from Italy.

El Cerrito: Gio Ponti's Masterpiece in Caracas, was co-edited in Caracas and Milan in 2009 by the Fundación Anala y Armando Planchart and the Milanese editorial ULTREYA Milano of architectural photographer and editor Giovanni Chiaramonte, is not a work of fiction. It is minutely based on the correspondence between Ponti and the Plancharts and the documents of the villa project conserved in the Archivo Gio Ponti Caracas and most importantly, on the personal testimony of Anala Braun de Planchart, who for five years, until her passing in 2005, with the help of one of Gio Ponti's daughters, her friend Letizia Frailich Ponti, worked directly with the author to share one of the most magnificent stories of 20th century architecture, in her will for the conservation of Villa Planchart, its collections and its garden.

Hannia Gómez



La casa en la ciudad de México en el siglo XX.

Un recorrido por sus espacios

Author: Lourdes Cruz

Publisher: UNAM

ISBN: 978-607-028766-4

Language: Spanish

Year: 2016

The house, like a luxury custom-made suit signed by an architect, is this book's only protagonist. Throughout the pages, the smart architectural critical gaze departs from conventional research that highlights the eloquent functionality of the individualism of a specific project, the heroism of the authors, aesthetics or styles. The scientific rigor with which Lourdes Cruz studies house paradigms revolves around the phenomena and consequences of society-technology-housing space. Nevertheless,

it is not an anthropological interpretation, but clearly, the research and analysis of an architectural historian and whose training was also as an architect. In the pages of the well-illustrated publication [*The house in Mexico City in the 20th century. A tour of its spaces*], the author allows the reader to understand the influences, the idea of dwelling in the 20th century and specially to understand the development of domestic architecture in Mexico City; through its almost three hundred pages, a full spectrum of houses is presented and analyzed, with well-chosen examples that follow diverse trends and aesthetic proposals. The author also includes a comprehensive bibliography, both on the habitat and on the many architects that comprise the vast range of designers showcased.

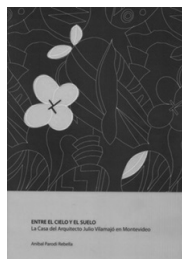
This story is about a house that is all the houses we know. Those that were transformed throughout the 20th century and, with them, the ways of inhabiting, using and showing off. The dream houses shown from advertising and publications that made them desirable fashion objects, through the impact of technology, appliances and consumerism disguised as modernity. It is the house, beautiful and vain, that locks itself up and hides its treasures, where the fear of being looked at is its own vulnerability. These many houses that are nowadays places of pilgrimage and envy, allow themselves to be looked at just a little bit from the outside. From the street you can only imagine and dream of what happens inside. Idyllic bubbles of perfect family environments, of soap opera and cinema, in the midst of lurking dangers, they are havens of peace: the middle-class and upper-class houses in Mexico City.

Design, changes, processes and transformations are the common thread of success, errors and ways of thinking about architecture in many stages of the modern movement. Born of the hand and the mind of the architect, it is presented here as the house that is compact, that opens, closes, hides, and is shown. The technological, hygienic, modern machine house, that in addition to working serves to show off. It is the admired, beautiful habitat, which is meant for the eyes of the architect, who seeks to reflect from its creativity the aspirations of those who will live in it. This personal stance, with which, as a reader, I feel identified and, as an architect, I

BOOK REVIEWS

understand and share, narrates the transformative and creative vision of the inhabitants in the object-machine-bonfire of the vanities that make up the house.

Elisa Drago Quaglia



**Entre el cielo y el suelo.
La Casa del Arquitecto Julio Vilamajó
en Montevideo**

Author: Anibal Parodi Rebella

Publisher: FADU. Udelar

ISBN: 978-9974-0-0530-3

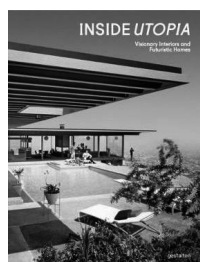
Language: Spanish

Year: 2017

Anibal Parodi's lyrical title, *Between the sky and the ground: The house of the Architect Julio Vilamajó in Montevideo*, anticipates the author's point of view on the subject of the book. First, it expresses the significance of the vertical dimension in the tower-like house built by Vilamajó (1894-1948) for himself in 1930, squeezed into a small urban corner plot, and developed over five levels, from the discreet entrance hall and garage at the basement to the miniature studio on the top. Second, it announces a description of the house that is shaped by the experience of moving inside it. The house presents itself through an ordered series of domestic sets, and this is the way in which it will be thoroughly revealed, as the author leads the reader up the stairs, stopping floor by floor, and disclosing Vilamajó's resourceful handling of space and function, light and materials, relationship to nature, and concealment of private life within the city. Such a perspective from inside out was advanced in Parodi's previous book, *Puertas adentro: Interioridad y espacio doméstico en el siglo XX*, 2005, and is crucial to unveiling the multiple layers of Vilamajó's work, from furniture to city, and his comprehensive architectural position which is able to integrate erudite historical references into a "macro-object," which is perfectly tailored for modern living.

Just as important as the text are the plates, with a full sequence of technical drawings, ranging from architectural plans, sections and facades to the detailed interior design plans and schemes of the furniture. This impressive collection of drawings, expressly prepared for the book, synthesizes the results of the author's long-term research on the house, based on direct survey, original documents and testimonies, and aimed at an integral graphical reconstruction of the house as inhabited by Vilamajó and his wife. The book also comprises a selected body of photographs, incorporating material from archival sources and pictures of the house after the restoration process, which enabled its conversion into a house museum.

Claudia Costa Cabral



**Inside Utopia – Visionary Interiors
and Futuristic Homes**

Edited: Adam Stech, Sally Fuls

and Robert Klanten

Publisher: Gestalten

ISBN: 3899556968

Language: English

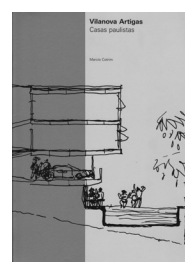
Year: 2017

In the 20th century, and especially in the inter-war and postwar periods, society experienced a tremendous and fast evolution. Each decade brought something new and a new perspective of humanity itself and the human environment.

"The future was better than the present and the home was the canvas by which to express that" was the underlying thought of that time. As cars became spaceships, houses were the place where architects could express their visionary and utopian ideas. The design of houses, and especially their interiors allowed experimentation with new techniques, materials, and ideas, becoming a total work of art. As a result, they could be traditional and eclectic yet modernist, rational and radical.

This book compiles some of the most representative houses built by Modern Movement architects all over the world. From Art Nouveau to Brutalism, it presents some emblematic projects from Walter Gropius (1883-1969), Le Corbusier (1887-1965), Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969), Eero Saarinen (1910-1961), Charles Eames (1907-1978), Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959), Gio Ponti (1891-1979), Vilanova Artigas (1915-1985), Luiz Barragan (1902-1988), among others.

Joana Coutinho



Vilanova Artigas. Casas Paulistas

Author: Marcio Cotrim

Publisher: Romano Guerra Editora

ISBN: 978-85-88585-50-8

Language: Portuguese

Year: 2017

João Batista Vilanova Artigas (1915-1985) belongs to the canon of great modern Brazilian architects, designing houses over four decades. The book [*Vilanova Artigas. Paulista houses*] is divided in two parts: houses in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s; and those designed from 1967 to 1981. Between these two worlds, two chapters of a more theoretical character: Artigas' writings in the 1950s and a discussion about the 1970s. Marcio Cotrim's approach never deviates from architectural analysis itself, based on the reliable testimony of the works and many drawings.

In the first part, houses are shown under the light of the teleology that dominated the period. The author points to three "evolutionary" paths. The usual plan of the local bourgeoisie's house is gradually changed, thought of as a reformulation of the ways of life. In addition, the creation of a steel mill in Volta Redonda made steel accessible, increasing the use of concrete in civil construction. These two courses led to the development of the architect's characteristic approach, a process inseparable from both,

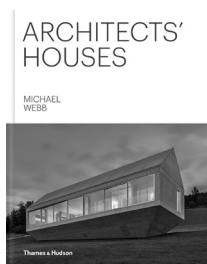
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the belief in the role of architectural project in the development of the country, and the belief in Communism itself. Spatial integration, use of intermediate levels, and various structural inventions feature in the four houses that conclude this first part, whose warm materiality is shown in Nelson Kon's photos.

The second sequence of houses begins with the Elza Berquó house, where Cotrim points out the affinities with the Tropicalist attitude, in the use of popular elements that have been ironically mixed into the erudite design. This path, however, did not have continuity. In this part, the houses are shown in circumstantial groupings based on graphical analyses that unravel structural, lot occupation or zoning issues, although diversity and experimentation remain. But is there a diffuse melancholy in the book or in my reading? Houses with very extensive programs, greater restrictions in the connection home and city.

Cotrim closes the book speculating on new lines: a new typology in the lot's integral use as a design area; the creative use of traditional techniques and materials. What emerges in this book is the curious and disarming spirit with which the author focuses on the houses of a great architect.

Maria Alice Junqueira Bastos



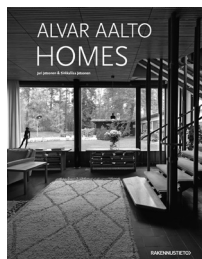
Architects' Houses

Author: Michael Webb
Publisher: Thames & Hudson
ISBN: 978-0-500-34340-1
Language: English
Year: 2018

Architects' Houses is a book about the creative process: how architects enrich lives, respond to nature, and test new ideas. It features houses that 30 of the world's most inventive practitioners have built for themselves, plus a survey of earlier models, from Thomas Jefferson's Monticello to 20th century icons. The selection

includes urban infills, rustic experiments, and fusions of new and old. They all make a statement, modest or ambitious, and each reflects the vision and needs of its creators.

From the publisher



Alvar Aalto Homes

Publisher: Rakenustieto Publishing
Authors: Jari Jetsonen and Sirkkaliisa Jetsonen
ISBN: 978-952-267-249-0
Language: English
Year: 2018

During the course of a career spanning more than fifty years, Finnish architect and designer Alvar Aalto (1898-1976) designed nearly one hundred single-family houses, several standardized houses, blocks of flats, row houses and summer homes.

Alvar Aalto Homes presents thirty of Alvar Aalto's innovative residences – from small summer homes and postwar standardized housing to large housing complexes for industrial commissions – built between the 1920s and the 1960s, and located in Finland, Estonia, Germany, France, Switzerland and the USA.

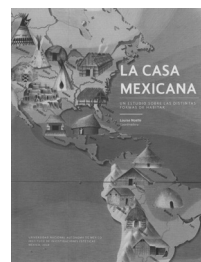
Among the presented buildings are the master pieces Villa Mairea and Maison Louis Carré, but also, a modest standard house built for ex-servicemen and compact apartment blocks and row houses such as the Standard terrace housing in Kauttua, Finland, the Typi Oy row house in Oulu, Finland and the Neue Vahr apartment building in Bremen, Germany. Alvar Aalto's own house in Munkkiniemi, Helsinki, and his summer home, the so-called Experimental House in Muuratsalo, reveal the intimate side of the Alvar Aalto family's life as well as the endless experiments with which Aalto tested his ideas.

Alvar Aalto was interested in the social aspect in all construction, but it is especially evident in his residential architecture. The

task of architecture was to create frames for a good everyday life. Even the most modest apartments have beautiful and practical solutions and most have a direct connection to nature. For Alvar Aalto, every project had to have the opportunity to experiment. Only in this way can architecture be taken forward and its quality improved for the benefit of the "little man."

Jari Jetsonen's photographs – many of them taken especially for this book – and Alvar Aalto's original drawings convey the special features of each house. Sirkkaliisa Jetsonen's descriptions of the homes are complimented by Jussi Rautsi's essay that tells the story about the wonderful Alvar Aalto partnerships: Alvar Aalto and his spouses Aino and Elissa. The foreword to the book has been written by distinguished Portuguese architect Álvaro Siza Vieira (1933-).

docomomo Finland



La casa mexicana. Un estudio sobre las distintas formas de habitar

Coordination: Louise Noelle
Publisher: UNAM
ISBN: 978607300356
Language: Spanish
Year: 2018

This book [*The Mexican house. A study on the different ways of living*] is a collective effort with 16 chapters and it was developed within the framework of the *Architecture Seminar of the Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas* [Institute of Aesthetic Research] of the UNAM, in Mexico City. The various studies approached the notion of habitability, the idea of "occupying a place" or "living in it," placing special interest in "culture as the origin of architectural space, to arrive at a built form," to then describe the house, its physical expression and its history. Organized in a chronological order, from pre-Columbian to contemporary times, it

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allows us to compare the similarities, divergences and legacies of the house in different periods. The diversity is not only temporary but also geographic and climatic, addressing different places such as Yucatan, Campeche, Cuernavaca, Acapulco, Tepic, San Luis Potosí, the State of Mexico and México City.

The first chapters can be seen as a preamble to the modernity of the last eight chapters, all written by members of **docomomo** Mexico, conveying abstract forms, novel construction systems and new ways of life. “Casa Mañana” was the name of the Tomorrow house in Cuernavaca, and presents how a foreigner interprets the Mexican building style. The article on Hannes Meyer touches upon the dwelling space in a proposed housing unit in Lomas de Berra. Meanwhile, the chapter on the Enrique del Moral house for the De Yturbe family in Acapulco, showcases an early example of tropical architecture, the one on Manuel Rosen Morrison’s (1926-2018) houses studies the local International style, whereas, the one on the fantastic house of Juan O’Gorman (1905-1982), analyses the demolished building through photography. Each chapter is enriched with photographs and, sometimes, unpublished plans, to embody a collective work that contributes to study the house, in the different ways of building and inhabiting them.

Claudia Rueda Velázquez



Carlo Scarpa. Casa Zentner a Zurigo: una villa italiana in Svizzera

Authors: Davide Fornari, Giacinta Jean
and Roberta Martinis
Publisher: Electa
ISBN: 978889182525-4
Language: Italian
Year: 2020

Between 1964 and 1967, Carlo Scarpa (1906-1978) designed and executed the project for the home of René and Savina Zentner in

Zurich. The existence of this “Italian Villa” is little known, since the Zentners always limited its photography and publication, instead preferring to maintain their privacy. Over the years, besides friends, the family admitted only a few selected and well justified visitors. Recently, Roberta Martinis, Giacinta Jean and Davide Fornari were allowed access to the spaces and the documentation on this extraordinary building, and with the support of the Swiss National Fund for Research reconstructed its history, now published in the volume *Carlo Scarpa. Casa Zentner a Zurigo: una villa italiana in Svizzera* [Carlo Scarpa. Zentner House in Zurich – an Italian Villa in Switzerland].

The story of the house goes hand-in-hand with that of the people who created it. Apart from the architect, the key protagonist was Savina, a close acquaintance of Scarpa and his client on other projects. Scarpa dedicated vast time and energy to the planning, and from time to time the Zentners would call him back, worried about the long wait. For two years, the Venetian architect spent almost a week of every month in Zurich, drafting details and drawing up construction tables.

The building stands out from the neo-Germanic *Heimatsstil* context of the surrounding residences, in terms of language, shapes and materials. For Savina, Scarpa created an album of memories, detailed by Venetian craftsmen: a private world, brought to life by the reflections of translucent stuccoes, of mosaics in glass and metal, and marked by spaces and elements designed in painstaking detail, with interweaving cross-references of architecture, design and art. The result stands, in itself, as a complete work of art.

Scarpa invested exceptional effort in Zentner House, attending constantly to the project through the entire process, as well as calling on the Swiss architect, Theo Senn, for assistance in the direction of works. Based on the many surviving drawings and correspondence, *Casa Zentner a Zurigo* reconstructs the story, from the development of the first ideas to the worksite operations. With the insertion of the personal memories of those who lived in the house and frequented Scarpa’s studio, the authors then bring the story fully to life.

Giacinta Jean



La conservación de la casa moderna como patrimonio

Author: Teresa Carrau Carbonell
Publisher: Archidocs LLC
ISBN: 78-1-64360-274-5
Language: Spanish
Year: 2020

The single-family dwelling constitutes a singular chapter in the development of Modern Architecture and has been its particular testing ground, becoming in its day a showcase of modernity. With it, architects experimented with new approaches, forms, materials and techniques with greater liberty, and expressed their wishes more freely and in a more personal way.

Tailor-made for those clients who were committed to new architecture, over the years these houses have revealed their fragility. In addition to the usual difficulties presented by aging and adaptation to successive needs, they have had to face the progressive disappearance of their original promoters and inhabitants.

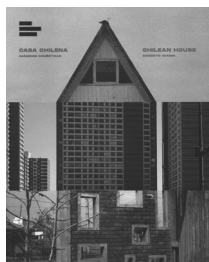
In order to deal with their possible conservation, it is, of course, necessary to know what these houses have endured through time, how they have adapted to new circumstances and demands and what is their current situation. But it is also necessary to reflect on what the conservation of this heritage means.

These are the questions addressed by the young researcher Teresa Carrau Carbonell in *La conservación de la casa moderna como patrimonio* [The Conservation of the Modern House as Heritage]. Based on the analysis of three “success stories” of the Italian Novecento, the Necchi Campiglio, Bianca and Figini villas, which have maintained their original use and characteristics up until today, she argues about what the bases of a possible “patrimonialization” of modern housing could be like. She then transfers her discourse to the production of the most international of Spanish architects, Alejandro de La Sota (1913-1996),

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focusing on the vicissitudes and the validity of four houses that he designed between 1959 and 1973: the Velázquez, Varela, Domínguez and the ill-fated Guzmán house.

Susana Landrove



Casa Chilena: Imágenes domésticas / Chilean House: Domestic Images

Curatorial team: Pablo Brugnoli, Francisco Díaz and Amari Peliowski
 Publisher: La Moneda Cultural Center
 Language: Spanish and English
 Year: 2020

The question: “How do we, Chilean citizens, live?” was the central argument of the theme: “Chilean House”. It focused on the domestic everyday dimension of the house. Therefore, the purpose of the exhibition and its catalog was to envisage the Chilean house as a cultural object, surpassing the mere architectural domain. Such a question was answered by looking into the myriad expressions that the dwelling can have, as seen from different perspectives: territorial, social, and cultural.

The catalog was divided into six themes, following the exhibition: Territories, Densities, Economies, Singularities, Disputes and Temporalities. Each of these themes, or concepts, had the underlying dimension of the house. Accordingly, each of them had been represented by graphical material, such as photographs, posters, drawings, and engravings. However, also audiovisual material was used, including documentaries and printed documents of different types, taken not only from public, but also personal archives. Within each one of these themes, three other sub-themes were suggested to define and characterize the house: Vernacular, Adapted, Shelter, Collective, Serial, Community, Commodity, Prefabricated, Almost a House, Manifesto, Experiment,

Fantasy, Taken Over, Imposed, Reclaimed, Dynamic, Recycled and Destroyed.

As Peter Burke (1937-) has said, the image, seen as a historical document, not only recounts political events, financial tendencies and social structures, also narrates the history of mentalities, of everyday life, of material life and of the history of the body. Thus, the exhibition consisted of graphical material, meaningfully portraying the multiplicity of the house.

Although the catalog and the exhibition were not chronologically organized, highly valuable historic and artistic documents were displayed, such as the reproduction of an engraving by Francesco Cavallo from 1646 that had appeared on Alonso de Ovalle’s *Histórica Relación del Reyno de Chile* and which belongs to the Chilean National Library collection. Remarkable renowned photographers were included like Rene Combeau (1921-2011), Luis Weinstein (1957-), Lola Falcón (1907-2000) and Paz Errázuriz (1944-), who portrayed poverty, but also an aspirational country, with black and white images of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. On the other hand, contemporary artists, such as Cristóbal Palma (1974-), Felipe Fontecilla, Pablo Casals, Sebastián Preece (1972-) and Bernardita Bennett, expressed Chile’s contemporary architectural reality from 2000 onwards, in a hyper-realistic, yet scenic manner. Furthermore, illustrations, sketches, paintings and posters by eminent artists and designers, such as Vicente Larrea (1942-), Antonio Larrea (1948-) and Luis Albornoz were especially relevant. Lastly, newspaper clippings, magazine covers, advertisements and periodicals, represented all forms of architectural diffusion at a general level, which enable architecture to carry out its reforming role and message. Some of these were reproduced in the catalog.

In conclusion, at the exhibition more than 300 artworks, including objects and models, contributed to Chile’s highly complex manifold history of habitations. The proposal of the catalog was to recreate this imagery and the visual discourse of the recurrent architectural images from different perspectives, alongside enlightening texts by the curators.

Macarena Cortés Darrigrande



Modern in the Middle: Chicago Houses 1929-1975

Authors: Susan S. Benjamin and Michelangelo Sabatino
 Publisher: Monacelli Press
 ISBN: 9781580935265
 Language: English
 Year: 2020

Though the houses in “Modern in the Middle” could be viewed as a tug of war between the two titans of Chicagoland Modernism, Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959) and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969), the authors’ spotlight keeps drawing the reader to a broader truth: this spectrum of architects is more complicated than that.

The examples demonstrate the fertile creativity of these heartland architects and raise many questions. Yes, Frank Lloyd Wright and Mies’ influences can be tracked, but the book also includes designers whose work is off that chart. George Fred Keck (1895-1980), for instance, early fastened on the idea of deriving form from passive solar considerations. The directions Harry Weese (1915-1998) picked up from Eliel Saarinen (1873-1950) at Cranbrook are at least as significant as those from Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) and Taliesin. Even more nuanced is the fascinating work of Paul Schweikher (1903-1997); by blending the horizontal lines and natural materials of Frank Lloyd Wright with the planar proportions of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Paul Schweikher indeed arrived at a new place – and one rich enough to inspire many other architects also.

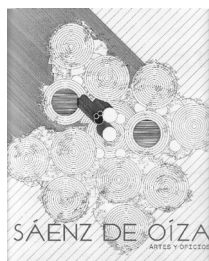
Layered into the text are details about mentors, students, employers, and clients, reminders of the realities of mid-century modern which has often escaped us in recent decades. Admirably the authors include African-American architect John Moutoussamy (1922-1995), Asian-American architect Y. C. Wong (1921-2000), and women architects like Pao-Chi Chang. Equally illuminating is their focus on the clients; as in Leonard Eaton’s Two

Chicago Architects and their Clients: Frank Lloyd Wright and Howard van Doren Shaw (1969), this information lifts modern architecture out of an aesthetic pigeonhole and situates it in larger social and economic currents. Clients include everyone from heirs to Walgreens and the African-American-owned Johnson Haircare empire, to Adlai Stevenson, to journalists, artists, and the architects themselves.

Even if we think we know everything we ought to in a well-studied region like Chicago, we don't. But what a rich trove to dip into to discover more. Author Michelangelo Sabatino reviews the contemporary literature (many of these houses appeared in MoMA exhibits, James and Katherine Morrow Ford and Thomas Creighton books, and other literature in their time), but the question necessarily arises: why did these architects and houses drop off the radar screen?

Beyond Frank Lloyd Wright and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, the authors recommend, we should tackle architects "that might require entirely new frameworks of interpretation."

Alan Hess



Sáenz de Oíza. Artes y oficios

Editor: Fundación ICO

ISBN: 978-84-948744-1-3

Language: Spanish

Year: 2020

As a catalog of the exhibition, *Sáenz de Oíza. Arts and Crafts* does not pretend to be a description of the life and work of Francisco Javier Sáenz de Oíza (1918-2000), one of the most recognized Spanish architects of the 20th century. Instead, the catalog leads to an understanding of his architecture as art by approaching the origins of Sáenz de Oíza – the countryside of Cáseda, where life affected by the Spanish Flu in 1918 was still very primitive and ruled by the beauty of Nature – his relation with the spirit of the time, the fascination

with technology – aroused by his trip to the USA in 1948 – and the Modern Movement avant-garde – specially Le Corbusier (1887-1965) – that mark his architecture.

Through a broad compilation of plans, drawings and models by Sáenz de Oíza, with introductory texts by the curators of the exhibition and children of Sáenz de Oíza, the architects Javier, Vicente and Marisa, the catalog focuses on a possible understanding of this multifaceted artist, based on his relationship with arts and different disciplinary fields, together with his personal affinities; Nature always present in his works. Therefore, as with the exhibition, the catalog is divided into five dual "spaces" identified as the "trades" of Sáenz de Oíza, where collaborations with a group of artists and craftsmen created a so called "total work of art": "El oficio de aprender / El arte de enseñar" [The craft of learning / The art of teaching], "El oficio de habitar / El arte de construir" [The craft of living / The art of building], "El oficio del alma / El arte de evocar" [The craft of soul / The art of evoking], "El oficio de creer / El arte del mecenazgo" [The craft of believing / The art of patronage] and "El oficio de competir / El arte de representar" [The craft of competing / The art of representing].

Joana Coutinho



XL: Aguinaga, Echaide, Sobrini. Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura de la Universidad de Navarra. 1978-2018

Authors: Jorge Tárrago Mingo, Antonio José Cidoncha Pérez

Publisher: EUNSA

ISBN: 978-84-313-3489-5

Language: Castellano

Year: 2020

This book is published to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the construction of the building that houses the University of Navarra's School of Architecture. It contains

a description and an annotated selection of historical material (reproductions of some of the original drawings and specifications for the detailed design) interspersed with two series of photographs of the building as it presently stands. Technical data is also included in the form of specification sheets, excluding the ones that could not be verified or that carried an earlier or later date. Its formulation was possible thanks to the published memories or conversations with some of its protagonists and witnesses, among others, Eugenio Aguinaga and Domingo Pellicer. Bountiful albeit scattered material was also obtained from three main sources: the University of Navarra's General Archive and Carlos Sobrini's personal collection of the various versions of several design documents; photos from the University of Navarra's substantial Photographic Collection, most of which had been published previously, and only three of which were included; and three numbered boxes containing documents on the work held in the archives of the builder, Construcciones San Martín. The book also features a visual dialogue between the two photographers entrusted with reproducing the historical material. These two professionals were chosen on the grounds of their reputations, but also because their contrasting ages, origins, training, careers, techniques and even the time they devoted to the assignment, were intended to stimulate a more fruitful dialogue.

The first series was taken by Montse Zamorano, a young graduate from the Technical University of Madrid, who specializes in architectural photography and digital identity. Despite her age, she has acquired international reputation and exceptional skill in the treatment of geometry and light, undoubtedly drawing on her architectural training. Her color photographs are the result of two days of intense work. The second series comprises black and white photographs by Carlos Cánovas. Although architecture has never been a pivotal theme in his long career, it appears constantly in his highly detailed surveys of spaces near his place of residence and work. Sedate and intermittent exploration during the spring of 2019 gave him a feel for the building as intimate as that evoked by his familiar landscapes.

From the publisher