The term Brutalism should not be narrowly defined as having had a single national origin—except, perhaps, in the postwar works of Le Corbusier. And since most Brutalist buildings, regardless if they were also part of local or national trends, were designed and constructed during the same twenty-plus-year period, the term by no means belongs to any one of its most familiar manifestations—for example, the so-called British New Brutalism, for which historians often inaccurately claim precedence. Brutalism had no central geographic focus. Perhaps it is best conceived of as a generational achievement, helped by that period’s easy exchange of images through widely circulated professional magazines and journals, which published works from different countries that looked similar. Editors and critics used the term Brutalism in an effort to characterize an international phenomenon, perhaps with no clear understanding of its precise limits and significance.

About the label: Brutalism in its many guises

Though the term Brutalism was coined relatively recently, it is not easy to analyze, given its inconsistent use and varied definitions. Such a task would not be complete, or even possible, without revisiting Reyner Banham’s *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?*, among other sources. Above all others, this was the publication responsible for the origin and crystallization of the myth that Brutalism (or, in Banham’s terms, New Brutalism) was a movement created and nourished by British architects. A book is more-often mentioned and quoted than critically read or studied. An attentive analysis reveals just how vigorously Banham endeavored to promote a myth that establishes the predominance and precedence of British architects in the constitution of Brutalism. He accomplishes this through a precise but abbreviated and partial historical account, cleverly seasoned with some interesting anecdotes whose aim is not to arrive at a general definition of Brutalism but to promote British architecture from 1944–1964, with the main focus on the creative contribution of the architects Alison and Peter Smithson.

Banham was extremely successful in his mythmaking, and it is not uncommon, even today, to find Brutalism portrayed as purely British in origin. Moreover, there remains the pervasive belief that the term can be correctly applied only in Banham’s circumscribed sense (more precisely, as he uses it in the first half of his book), and that its use would be unjustified in other circumstances—even though Banham himself did not hold this position. Let us, instead, more precisely apply the term ‘New Brutalism’ to identify a young generation of British architects from the postwar period who were dissatisfied with the state of affairs in the ongoing tension between continuity and transformation of the modernist tradition. This is the sense in which the Smithsons used the term in their texts published from 1953 onward, which was first picked by Banham in a 1955 article and then in his later book. And let us use the term ‘Brutalism’ as it was consecrated by common use: it begins to be used to indicate Le Corbusier’s béton brut, as a constructive material, a building technique, and an artistic attitude; and its use is extended after the end of the 1950’s to define other more ordinary works, designed by countless architects all over the world with or without the same high quality of Le Corbusier’s examples.

From about 1960 onward, Brutalism emerged as a more or less recognizable style supported and validated by its initial exemplary works of the 1950’s. In 1959, the first explicit statements of a Brutalist affiliation appear in connection with certain works, though these rarely originate with the architects themselves. More frequently they come from commentators and critics, who always base this assessment on a detailed description of the works, not on an *a priori* body of doctrine, although in some cases one can detect a few timid attempts in that vein.
When commenting on these works in his 1965 book, Banham suggests the existence of a "Brutalist connection." The phrase attempts to account for the simultaneous flourishing in several countries and regions of the world of works in tune with the Brutalism canon though not necessarily affiliated to one another, or sharing a central focus (except perhaps the original connection with Le Corbusier’s contributions). To illustrate the “Brutalist connections” Banham includes works in Italy, Switzerland, and Japan and gives only one example Latin America, from Chile. Although he does not mention Brazil or more precisely, São Paulo Brutalist works, there would not be any logical impediment to his including them, since the results, circumstances, and dates are compatible with his other examples.

A more-careful analysis of the broad panorama of the period’s architecture reveals that Brutalism, as an architectural trend, appears internationally in works designed or constructed from 1953-55 onward. Facts – meaning, the works, and their correct dates of design – clearly show that the Brutalist aesthetic did not emerge in Britain first and foremost, as an isolated phenomenon, instead, that Brutalist works for more precisely, works that can be connected with that architectural trend) appeared around the same time in several different parts of the world – and also in São Paulo, Brazil.

Half a century after its initial works, the nature of Brutalism trend continues to be ill-defined, impeding its recognition as an important phenomenon in the architectural history of the mid-twentieth century. This movement, like others that succeeded it, flamed like a Roman candle: by the end of the 1970s, it began to be ridiculed and reviled, both by the laypeople and in critical surveys of modern architecture. Because it was largely employed for the design of public and official buildings, Brutalism was labeled—first by influential writers advocating stylistic and historic eclecticism, and later by neoliberal critics—as a mistaken and miscarried movement, aesthetically and politically. For these and many other reasons, Brutalist architecture has never received the attention it deserves, let alone a systematic assessment of its contributions.

The non-essential character of Brutalism

The absence of more systematic definitions of the term Brutalism, despite its frequent if imprecise application to certain modern architectural expressions of the mid-twentieth century, is paradoxical. Is this term so vague that, in the end, it is not even worth an attempt to employ it in a coherent and consistent manner?

According to William Curtis, neither professionalism is easily characterized by a style, although each term is capable of designating a group of aspirations and reactions, however vague they may be. Yet in fact it is not difficult to adduce the formal, constructive, and symbolic characteristics of Brutalism, which easily can be extracted from the ample range of works to which the term has been applied. What seems to slip through one’s fingers is a way to grasp, among so many and such diverse productions, something more than their likeness, more than a certain tactile sensibility. As Curtis states, the only thing which really links Brutalist architectures is captured in a “cliché,” namely that “this architecture was the exposed concrete surface, obtained with the help of rough timber formwork.” Yet, this too is insufficient to grasp Brutalism as a tendency, let alone a style. In any case, the term Brutalist seems inappropriate because it lacks any essential quality or substance capable of linking beyond any doubt the majority of its manifestations. Such an essential quality might perhaps be ethics, or at least a moral standard applied to architectural design. However, this would not be a definition, but a subterfuge, escaping from the vacuity of one domain—architecture—to the even greater vacuity of another—the ethical-moral dominion—leaving architecture to ally itself with philosophy, without solving our problem of definition.

Instead of discarding Brutalism as an inappropriate, conceptually vague term, we might find, paradoxically, that it is suitable, once we adopt a pragmatic or phenomenological approach. All one has to do is to disperse the search for an internal, essential harmony between Brutalist works and accept, instead, that what really unites them is their appearance. If we accept this putatively superficial definition and cease to look for an essential one, then we can, without logical inconsisteny, bestow the title Brutalist on a group of correctly dated works sharing similar formal and surface characteristics, even though each one of them and/or their creators might hold different conceptual, ethical, and moral attitudes. In other words, some buildings can be called Brutalist simply because they appear to be so, since what determines their inclusion in the group is not their inner essence but their surface—not their intrinsic characteristics but their extrinsic manifestations. With this understanding of Brutalism, it is possible to label the Brazilian Paulista architecture of the 1950s and 1960s as Brutalist, and to introduce it as a contribution among other, also forgotten Brutalist manifestations around the world.

Figure 1. Affonso Eduardo Reidy, Museum of Modern Art, Rio de Janeiro, 1953

In Brazil, Brutalism’s earliest manifestations appeared in the early 1950s in Rio de Janeiro, when modernist Affonso Eduardo Reidy shifted from his lighter Carioca-Corbusian style to the strong exposed-concrete porticoes of the Museum of Modern Art.

Figure 2. Helio Duarte and Ernst Mange, Engineering School, São Carlos, São Paulo, 1953

Also in 1953, architects and engineers Helio Duarte and Ernst Mange proposed a three-story linear block over pilots for the Engineering School of the University of São Paulo, a reworking of Le Corbusier’s Swiss Pavilion in an all-concrete construction. The central double column was continued through all levels, supporting a cantilevered slab and defining built-in structural ducts. All details, including the free facades, were designed on a modular grid; the beauty of the composition emerges from its discipline, which, owing to its regularity, is suitable for prefabrication.

Figure 3. Roberto Tibau, Astrophysics Municipal School, São Paulo, 1956

The Astrophysics Municipal School sits amid greenery of the Ibirapuera Park. An elongated rectangle, it is composed of huge extended beams with enclosing walls. Many internal and external voids define terraces, verandas, and habitable spaces in a marked horizontal solution. The building was recently restored and painted white.

Figure 4. Vlanova Artigas and Carlos Cascaldi, Elementary School, Itanhaém, 1959

In the 1950s, many other significant São Paulo Brutalist buildings explored daring new ideas in prestressed concrete. These were designed either by architects with engineering expertise, as in the case of Duarte and Mange, Tibau, and Vlanova Artigas, or by a new generation of gifted young architects who had been trained in architecture programs only recently separated from the polytechnic schools, but still under their pragmatic, structural, and Constructivist-oriented influence. By contrast, architectural programs in Rio de Janeiro remained under the influence of the Beaux-Arts tradition.

Figure 5a. Paulo Mendes da Rocha and João de Gennaro, Paulistano Club Gymnasmum, São Paulo, 1958

Figure 5b. Joaquim Guedes, Cunha Lima House, São Paulo, 1958

Most notable among the younger Paulista architects of the 1950s generation was Paulo Mendes da Rocha (winner of the 2008 Pritzker Prize) and João de Gennaro’s winning entry for the Paulistano Gymnasium competition (1958). Mendes da Rocha and de Gennaro proposed huge structural concrete columns supporting a concrete donut slab and rising up to anchor the cables supporting a metallic scrim that covered the sunken sports arena. This remarkable spanning solution emerged from a habitable concrete structure, which defined a plaza just above street level. Another example of remarkable designs from this generation was the Cunha Lima House, designed by Joaquim Guedes, where a light tree-like structure emerged from four columns anchoring the house to the steep site.

Figure 6. Artigas and Cascaldi, Santapaula Club Boathouse, São Paulo, 1961

The Santapaula Boathouse was a singular work merging Brutalism and Wrightian undertones. A high degree of structural and formal experimentation characterizes this relatively small building, with a very simple program and scarce site limitations. A tripartite rectangular slab is supported by two longitudinal prestressed concrete beams with a subtle arched and slightly folded design, dispersing the weight over eight joints made by bulky steel blocks, each pair different from the other. As in other Paulista Brutalist works, architects took advantage of the plasticity of poured-in-place concrete.

Figure 7. Artigas and Cascaldi, Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of the University of São Paulo (FAU-USP), São Paulo, 1961

Artigas was always aware of the architectural developments of his time. His mature work addresses a wide range of formal, structural, and compositional paradigms, and often offers outstanding and original solutions. Although the FAU-USP building is a closed rectangular block covered with a homogeneous grid of square skylights, inside, eight half-levels are connected by ramps, defining usable spaces and voids, and all collected around a central covered courtyard. The openness of the interior is reversed on the exterior: the apparently heavy concrete facades, dark in shadow, are supported on a few widely spaced columns.

Figure 8a. Mendes da Rocha and de Gennaro, Guaimbé Residential Tower, São Paulo, 1962

Figure 8b. Telesforo Cristofani, Giselle Residential Tower, São Paulo, 1968

In the 1960s, the use of concrete in every detail and surface, combined with structural experimentation, characterized Paulista Brutalism. This architectural language first appeared in houses, schools, and clubs, and then quickly spread to other program types (even more conservative ones, such as speculative high-rise towers). Early examples of the latter are the Guaimbé Residential Tower by Mendes da Rocha and de Gennaro and the Giselle Residential Tower by Telesforo Cristofani.

Figure 9. Mange and Kato, South America Bank, São Paulo, 1966

The theme of a single central column—a kind of Brutalist trope that, with slight variations, appeared in many different countries—was explored by Mange and Kato in their South America Bank. Such central column schemes seemed to appear almost simultaneously, suggesting not some hierarchical influence but a kind of creative dialogue crisscrossing the world in Brutalist connections.
Figure 10. Lina Bo Bardi, São Paulo Art Museum (MASP), São Paulo, 1961
This is perhaps the most famous Brutalist building in São Paulo. The Italian-born Brazilian architect Bo Bardi’s contribution to local architecture was both actual and polemical in the 1960s and 1970s through her influence not only as an architect but also as a critic and cultural agent / provocateur. The MASP is indisputably a landmark, but currently suffers from several unfortunate renovations that have compromised its character.

Figure 11. Hans Broos, St. Boniface Parish Centre, São Paulo, 1965
This masterpiece of Paulista Brutalism is an enclosed concrete box elevated over four peripheral columns and crowned by a bell tower. Below the pilots is an open plaza, a few steps above street level atop the roof of the below-grade communal facilities (following the MASP example of a double building, one elevated and the other half-buried). Inside the church, the matte tones of the concrete walls creates an austere atmosphere, occasionally softened by the play of natural light and the sparkling of stainless steel details in the altarpiece and steel cables bracing the ramp. The only decoration is a concrete bas-relief of the Via Crucis.

Endnotes
2. For more visual information on São Paulo Brutalist architecture, one may refer to the author’s research website, www.arquiteturabrutalista.com.br which also provides more information about the works studied, research criteria, and its conceptual frame.
3. The appearance of brutalism trend all over the world seems to be simultaneous and deriving from the same sources, mostly, the contribution of Le Corbusier after 1945 for start and that of some other international masters like Marcel Breuer after the 1960’s. A broader research on international Brutalism is being held by the author, hundreds of examples from several countries are being studied and the results regularly published at the website www.brutalistconnections.com.
4. The author is building on her previous research on the subject in Brazil, Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay through new research on the Brutalist trends of the 1950-70s in other American countries, namely Canada, the United States, and Mexico.
5. Brutalism or New Brutalism? Even Banham is not completely consistent and clear in the use of the expressions, but alternates between both, probably to better superimpose them. New Brutalism is the term that thesmithson used in their first essays, clearly indicating their reference to Le Corbusier’s Brutalist works that they attempt to correct, not as a style but as an attitude. Instead, Banham did not want to acknowledge Le Corbusier’s precedence, and without denying it, postponed the master’s appearance in his book until chapter four, striving to distinguish the differences and to state a “discrimination between Brutalism as a creative style and the mere imitation of Le Corbusier.” See Reyner Banham, The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic? (New York: Reinhold Pub. Corp., 1966), 88. But such discrimination is also operative, not only in British Brutalism, but in any other of the knots of the “Brutalist connection” spread all over the world: the best of Brazilian, Israeli, Mexican, Japanese, Canadian, South African (and so on) Brutalism are neither copies of Le Corbusier nor of its British counterparts. Rather, they were exactly contemporary, and the best of them were truly creative accomplishments.
6. Banham begins his book with a bedtime story about the origins of the term Brutalism that suggests a connection with the classical Brutus profile of Peter Smithson and credits it to private talking among the mythical gods of the Far North at Uppala—a carefully forgetting to quote Le Corbusier and even titling the book’s first chapter with a biblical reference: “In the beginning was a phrase…” (shifting from John’s gospel Ver. 1). The narrative technique tends to the capture and is aimed to seduce beyond logic—but of course, it would not resist a more-crude rational analysis that would easily demonstrate the insubstantiality of such statements.
7. Just as an example among others: in their thorough study of Toronto’s “concrete architecture” of the 1950s and 1960s, McClelland and Stewart prefer not to use “the confused term Brutalism[…]” the word comes primarily from the work of English architects Peter and Alison Smithson, who, with their friend Reyner Banham, used the phrase the New Brutalism […]”. McClelland and Stewart do, however, offer some remarks about the possible influence of the Smithsons and the Le Corbusier on Canadian architects, see Michael McClelland and Graeme Stewart, Concrete Toronto: A Guidebook to Concrete Architecture from the Fifites to the Seventies (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2007), 12. Classical surveys written in the 1970s and 1980s—including Manfred Tafuri and Francesco Dal Co, Modern Architecture (New York: Electa / Rizzoli, 1986) and Kenneth Frampton, Modern Architecture: A Critical History (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985)—do not use the term or use it only in connection with the British New Brutalism. Other comprehensive history of architecture books written after the 1980s and 1990s ignore the subject entirely—for example, Josep Maria Montaner, Despuész del movimieno moderno: arquitectura de la segunda mitad del siglo XX (Barcelona: G. Gil, 1993)—or give a brief notice extracted from Banham’s book.
9. For example, Italian critic Renato Pedio originally published in L’Architettura, February 1959 and also quoted by Banham, The New Brutalism, 127; also Italian, Bruno Aliferi Zodiaco’s magazine editor considers the works of São Paulo architect Joao Baptista Vilanova Artigas as a “ricerca brutalista.” See Zodiac 6 (1964): 97.
11. The Portales neighborhood unity at Quinta Normal at Santiago, Chile, designed by Bresciani, Valdes, Castillo, Huidobro. He gives the design date of 1961-63, when in fact it was designed a decade before (1953), as can be seen in the original drawings housed today at the Centro de Documentación y Informacion Sergio Larraín Garcia-Moreno of the Catholic University of Chile at Santiago. Banham believes that “it seems extremely unlikely that there is any direct connection” between the Chilean architects and the LCC London City Council architects. In fact, if there is any connection, perhaps the inspiration is opposite what Banham would have believed, since LCC’s works are posterior to those of the Chilean architects. In addition, some of these Chilean architects had been employed, not for coincidence, at the workshop of Le Corbusier.
12. Although, not only or exclusively in São Paulo. In fact, the first “brutalist” project designed in Brazil seems to be the MAM-RJ museum, designed by Affonso Eduardo Reidy in 1953, immediately after the design of his first “brutalist” attempt in Paraguay-Brazil High School in Asunción (1952), and brutalism also flourished in Northeast Region of Brazil probably as an independent trend with scarce connections with the São Paulo counterpart.

CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE IN CONCRETE: BRAZILIAN WORKS
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The use of reinforced concrete precedes the modern design in Brazil, but it has embedded itself so firmly in the current idea of “modern Brazilian architecture” that it has become almost a metonymy: the material by the architecture. Be it in the Caroica School propositions based on Le Corbusie’s domino structural scheme, in Oscar Niemeyer’s free-form slabs and shell structures, in the straight lines and exposed concrete of São Paulo Brutalism in the 1950s, or in the structural plasticism of the 1960s and 1970s combining large spans, curves and large exposed concrete walls. Concrete and modernity seem to be, to Brazilian architecture historiography of the 1980s, two faces of the same desire of affirm the unity and continuity of Brazilian architecture [1]. Years of crisis, questioning and discussion when the attack to modern movement was often directed to reinforced concrete, and not to the design that ruled it. Although the Brazilian construction industry is structured mainly on the reinforced concrete technology, which is still hegemonic, the association between reinforced concrete and today’s contemporary erudite architecture in Brazil has lost the umbilical connection it once had. Nevertheless, contemporary architecture design has been capable of renewing the use of concrete, adapting the material to its themes. And what would they be? And are they quite different from those of modern architecture? The architect Rafael Moneo, in his historic speech “The solitude of buildings” [2] advocated the understanding of architecture as a construction. “I firmly believe that architecture needs the support of the matter, that the former is inseparable from the latter. Architecture arrives when our thoughts about it acquire the real condition that can provide materials only. By accepting and bargaining with limitations and restrictions, with the act of construction, architecture becomes what it really is.” Delivered in the years of crisis and revisions of the modern movement, it gave voice to a yearning that was already present in the architectural circles and seems imbricated with the revalorization of the “real city” to which architecture has to interact. Then, Moneo was alluding to the 1970s and 1980s situation, when an evident loss of importance of architecture was not receiving a proper response from the architects. “And therefore, although they would like to connect architecture with society and the reality in the past, often they take a wrong path and become prophets of Utopian dreams.” Such disconnection with reality would manifest through the drift with the construction itself, as something that necessarily polluted the purity of the design, as a consequence, the buildings became reduced to a mere reflection of their design. At the risk of being too optimistic, this text will search the contemporary Brazilian architectural themes on the connections they establish with reality and on the pleasure they have with the materialization of their propositions. An obvious and undeniable fact is that contemporary architecture seeks to disassociate itself from modern functional urbanism: there seems to be an enormous valorization of the densely built city, with its accumulation of people,
services, information, buildings from different periods, the friendliness of its environment with trade, its contact with art at shows, performances or installations. This revalorization of the real city cannot be distinguished from the public policies for the betterment of the periphery suburbs, reconsidered as the 21st century city at work, as it’s happening in Medellin, Bogota, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo. There, contemporary architecture blends with the irregular occupation, meshes with its interstices, creates accesses, opens squares, integrates urban flows. Apart from the benefits for the residents, the scale and novelty of these interventions generates a certain fascination and attracts visitors, resulting in a growing tourism inside these communities. Fig.1 & 2

The revalorization of the city is also of the key for the reconsideration of the architecture built in the late 19th century and early decades of the 20th century, usually classified under a generic “eclectic” tag. An architecture that “built the city”, in which the design of public buildings was not dissociated from the design of the empty spaces that confronted them, creating homogeneous and balanced ensembles, whose fragments are still present at the central areas of Brazilian cities. Mis-treated in the mid-20th century period during the economic development policies, this eclectic heritage is being recovered, by public or private initiative, mostly to house cultural programs. In many cases, contemporary architecture blends with and updates the old buildings, providing elevators and stairs, improving horizontal circulations, adding necessary technical facilities and expanding areas within the existing volume or in annexes. The city co-opts and values the eclectic architecture and is valued by its new role, enhanced by contrasting and unusual interventions, by the way those buildings, properly treated and lightened, stand out in urban areas, at a time when the vicinity of architectural pieces from different eras is perceived as an wealthy aspect of urban accumulation. Fig.3

This revalorization of the city by the recovery of the urban fabric also includes the old industrial zones and ports. Previously, they were associated with the soot expelled by various factories, lighted, stand out in urban areas; at a time when the vicinity of architectural pieces from different eras is perceived as an wealthy aspect of urban accumulation. Fig.1 & 2.

Another facet of urban accumulation revalorization is the integration of natural enclaves, forested or water edge areas, allowing the simultaneous enjoyment of city and nature. There are many examples: in Belém, capital of the state of Pará, several initiatives taken by the Department of Culture had focused on opening easier accesses to the Guajará bay (Estação das Docas, 2000; Nova Lusitânia, 2002), in Rio de Janeiro, parks envisage the recuperation of the mangroves ecosystem at Barra da Tijuca lagoon, as the one in the Professor Mello Barreto Environmental Education Park (Fernando Chacel and Sidney Linhares, 1993), in São Paulo, parks help the recovery of the metropolitan watercourses, like the Rodrigo de Freitas Lagoon, the Córrego do Céu (Corner of Heaven) park on the edge of the Billings dam (Baldoinri Architecture and Urbanism, 2010) or a public park occupies the former area of the demolished Carandiru prison complex with new equipments but also with contemplative areas recovering of the native vegetation (landscape architect Rosa Kliass, 2005). The landscaping seeks to retalivate natural ecosystems stretches that, once regenerated, should help a natural ecological imbalance. Elevated walkways traverse these areas, sidewalks and decks disclose the water surfaces on the cities edges. Many of these initiatives are embedded in environmental issues, but beyond that, it is possible to perceive a sensitivity that seeks the juxtaposition between, on one hand, the city, with all the possibilities it embodies, and, on the other, the natural environment areas. The same abrupt juxtaposition between artifice, taken here in the sense of an art product, and nature, is being sought in isolated buildings, outside urban centers, set in parks, beaches or rural areas. The buildings dialogue directly with the preexisting natural elements – stretches of forest, water, topographic features – by submitting to these elements, but by taking them as a theme or motif (Adriana Varejão Gallery, House in Ubatuba).

Beyond public infrastructural works, parks and plazas, urban flows, recovery of historic enclaves, integration of irregular settlements areas and regeneration of natural ecosystems, there is a current contemporary architecture that conforms the cities. Buildings of different historic periods conform the urban landscapes. Else the anonymous buildings, or the most powerful real estate industry ones, they seek to follow the visual trends of the time. But that do not always happen, especially when erudite architecture withdraws from reality, fueled by “Utopian dreams”, and so, does not generate resonances inside the urban landscape, which however, continues to be built and modified, while the vacuum left by the absence of the erudite example is filled with a longing for the past, or by false dreams of greatness. On the contrary, when erudite architecture turns towards the city, and adapts itself to fill its interstices and respond to its demands, it will more likely to influence the urban fabric. With few honorable exceptions, in Brazil, the architectural avant-garde propositions and real estate developers have been estranged, at least since the 1950s. However, in the last decade, and although in minimal proportion, the quality of architectural design seems to be turning into a bargaining chip, adding value to the real estate, or giving importance and crediblity to public policies on public housing, public education or urban design (3). This seems to be a signal that an increasing importance is being acknowledged to architecture.

Perhaps as part of the same act of bargaining with the limitations of reality, necessary for the interaction with the city, at least a significant part of the best contemporary Brazilian and Latin American architecture finds more pleasure in its materialization by simple and direct means, rather than by the use of difficult and complex formal exploitations. Concrete structures abound, combined or not with steel structures, wood, stone walls, concrete surfaces are counterpointed with lightweight panels of wood or metal, lath panels with plastic, wood and metal, wefts of natural fibers or plastic, translucent panels made of glass or polycarbonate. The textures of materials are explored, the incident light is filtered through wefts, perforated panels, translucent materials. The unity of material is not a unit of solity, different characteristics of reinforced concrete are explored, it can be simultaneously used by its structural versatility, by the weightiness and ancestral quality its walls may assume, by its elegant neutrality, as a wall that reveals the topography of natural landscape. The presence of reinforced concrete that can be seen in contemporary architecture only apparently gives continuity to its modern and Brutalist past, in it fact reflects very distinct themes and concerns.

During his recent visit to Brazil the literature Nobel Prize winner Orhan Pamuk said, about art creation: ‘We are free people, we are not slaves to our history and identity.’ [4] Although a Turkish national and a literary author, it seems possible to draw a parallel between the artistic drama appointed by the writer and Brazilian architectural reality, especially due to the fact that Turkey, just like Brazil, is not a central country, and thus generates expectations, internal and external, of an artistic production reflecting a peculiar “identity”. This issue becomes more delicate when it comes to architecture expressed in concrete, an issue that counts with strong a local tradition and a significant Modern and Brutalist heritage. For Pamuk, his literature, like any other, deals with humanity, the human being, and just by chance, he came across humanity in Istanbul. This seems an interesting measure to an artistic production that stands as the protagonist of a global culture. An architecture whose starting point is the local landscape and especially, the urban landscape.

Of course, the Modern heritage provides for an inescapable collection of formal references to contemporary creation. A collection that includes a number types that are still in use, from the high-rise buildings with its structural skeleton defined by columns and slabs (Fidalga 772), or the horizontal pavilion elevated from the ground [Museum of Bread, Burle Marx Education Center]; or also, postwar period solutions, like large blocks arranged in horizontal axis or central patios that ensure the flowing and ventilation of the internal spaces. The horizontal void “street” or “square” – was a tentative answer to the shortage of urban qualities in the modern urbanization areas. Its use by a contemporary architecture that is resuming the city seems out of question. However, in Brazil, the type still persists (Sebrae Headquarters, Pimentas Education Center for Art). The Brazilian territory has numerous enclaves of modern urbanization: from Brasilia to college campuses to administrative centers, beside recent urban expansions areas that are devoid of any cohesion and urban quality. It is interesting, in this case, the degree of tension that contemporary architecture establishes with this type, breaking or not its self-sufficiency and introspection. But the morphological world of contemporary architecture isn’t limited to developments of the modern movement, it also encompasses the traditional architecture: load-bearing walls (Fasano Las Piedras), paved plazas, hypostyle spaces (Dedé Cavias Square).

In Latin American countries, where social problems generated problematic urban realities, there is a tendency to create a separation between, on the one hand, an “architectural art” that produces small gems such as the country or beach houses for richer or powerful classes, and on the other, an architecture that responds to public policies intended to supply public housing and education to the general population. However, beyond the fact that sometimes the same architectural office responds to these seemingly disparate demands, it is possible to understand that the same artistic approach, interested in a deeper relationship with the landscape, defines the architecture in both cases. An architecture inspired by the preexisting elements of the landscape reveals sensitivity and makes use of a formal contention that seems healthy when it comes to be included in our complex urban reality. Finally, to assume the artistic condition of architecture – whether it is intended to bring the city to the slum areas or to design an art gallery – seems to be the quality assurance for the maintenance of its importance and consequently, its capacity of improving the Brazilian cities.
Figure 1. Elevator in the Rubem Braga complex, Rio de Janeiro (JMBM Architecture and Urbanism, 2006/2010)

Figure 2. Cable car of the Complexo do Alemão, Rio de Janeiro (Jorge Jauregui, 2008/2011)

Figure 3. Rodin Museum Bahia, Salvador (Brasil Arquitetura, 2002/2006)

Figure 4. Cultural Center KOKK, Registro, SP (Brasil Arquitetura, 1996/2002)

Figure 5. Parque da Juventude, São Paulo (Rose Kliass Landscape Architecture, 2003/2005)

Figure 6. Cantinho do Céu (Corner of Heaven) Park, São Paulo (Boldarini Architecture and Urbanism, 2008/2010)

Endnotes
1 For the historian Carlos Lemos, Mairinque Station, designed by Victor Dubugras for the Sorocabá Railways in 1907 is the first modern building in Brazil, where the reinforced concrete had been “employed within its aesthetic potential” – even when, in fact, the concrete covers an internal core of iron rail and expanded metal. Made in the early 1980s, the statement sought to unify all modern Brazilian architecture in the use of reinforced concrete and a common intention. Carlos A. C. Lemos, “Contemporary Architecture” in General History of art in Brazil. ZANINI, Walter, ed. São Paulo: Walter Moreira Salles Institute, 1983.

2 At the occasion of taking over the management of the architecture department of the Faculty of Design at Harvard University in 1985.

3 For example, recently inaugurated large housing complex in Heliopolis slum in São Paulo: Sabesp Complex I [architect Ruy Ohtake] and Commander Taylor Complex [Piratininga Associate Architects], or schools of the Foundation for the Development of Education (FDE) by several renowned authors.

4 Interview to the newspaper Folha de São Paulo, São Paulo, Wednesday, December 7, 2011.

6 IMPRESSIONS OF THE SESC POMPEIA BY LINA BO BARDI

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It is impossible that São Paulo can leave anyone indifferent. Everything is displayed on a large scale: crowds of all ages and walks of life on the sidewalks, walking briskly, huge and small buildings, mixed, cramped, heavy traffic and noisy; the network of roadways that carries the city limits far away.

Nature, intertwined with the city, is also shown as lush: the intense white light that produces high-contrast shadows, trees – rubber plant, tipuana, jacarandas – very abundant, old, leafy, with bright green leaves that show the remarkable moisture constant in the atmosphere, the sudden rain that starts as thick drops and in a matter of minutes, becomes an orange storm on the streets...

There, it seems that good construction does not need great technical requirements: there doesn’t seem to be the need for sophisticated heating enclosures, great insulation or nailing carpentry – despite this, there are many examples of well equipped and costly buildings, however these structures coexist with simpler and much less expensive construction in which the level of comfort is more than adequate for the environment of which we speak.

Furthermore, it is easy to perceive the general capacity for enjoyment, understanding the enjoyment as the ability to delight in the gift, the findings and the instantaneous. This impression has, not because people are happy and open, which they are - but because the work of generations on the city appears to have happened without hesitation, without bargaining, without misery ... with generosity and with a special emphasis on the construction of the public space of streets and parks.

Even listening to a normal academic-institutional presentation, someone from there suggested that to understand the presence of any building as a trace or a sign of the architect who thought it. Not yet claimed the value of the project as a trace of intention for the experts, but the building constructed as a trace of intelligence and emotion, for all kinds of observers.

It seems that the SESC Pompeia (1977-1986) by Lina Bo Bardi has largely collected in part those conditions that, in the preceding paragraphs, have been interpreted as virtues of the city of São Paulo, from the environmental to the poetic. Clearly, the building is the trace, the fingerprint of the person who thought about it and argued; moreover, it also appears to incorporate the signs of all people involved in its creation, it even seems to excuse the perception of the stranger on the town. It resembles the mark of someone who sees what you see, in other words, someone who can think and who has some emotional distance. Thus, the building set of the SESC Pompeia is presented as the trace of an immense intellectual work of the first magnitude, and understanding the intellect as the first requirement of poetry, like a huge poetic work. Pure delight.

In this situation, in which any learned commentary is necessarily dull, and any comment emotional, superficial, I find that it is best to share impressions and surprises of a building, which in its basic features, is well known to all. Surprise always comes when observed reality is confronted by its own prejudices and concerns: in this case, the evidence of the need to change the parameters-and-strataums that define what is good architecture or good urban planning – what is finally taught in schools of architecture and is diffused throughout the world, so that said definition incorporates the premises for whom and for what the, and the ratings for the building include more points of view, some of them radically different, as may be the ethical evaluation or formal analysis of the intervention. Also to know and broadcast the value of work that women architects have developed throughout the History of Architecture, far from receiving equal treatment, which would also entail a redefinition of the professional model.

Perhaps, the best way to show the prints themselves would be through the post photographs comments of the SESC Pompeia, photographic prints, taken with a more or less distracted manner, but cannot hide the photographic act.4

The sequence of six images has been organized according to the various scales of intervention by Lina Boardi even though the prints do not allow for easy order and are intermingled.

1. The dialectic city
Accordingly to Ignasi de Solá-Morales, the experience we have of the city has been constantly influenced by street photography. The images of industrial sites –among others- abandoned, obsolete, residual, forgotten, unused, indefinite, uncertain, vague, waiting ... it is difficult to consider them urban, despite their proximity to the city, we quickly recall the experience of freedom. According to the author, maintaining that recollection of freedom complicates the choice of design strategy, as it requires the keeping of the continuity of the pre-existing and at the same time transforming it, unfolding the action in the findings. The SESC Pompeia is an action in a vague terrain in which the architect has maintained continuity with the findings, preserving the joy and freedom. In the constructed complex, a strange sensation can be felt that occurs twice: the freedom to use, that is experienced by individuals who can wander through magnificently open spaces not bound to any program and with an intellectual freedom with which the architect addressed the intervention and whose design strategy is presented with clarity and readability in all scales of project. In the second case, freedom comes from the personal capacity, the availability of intellectual and ethical responsibility, testable data in this case but limited in the current context.

2. Vague Terrain
According to Ignasi de Solá-Morales, the experience we have of the city has been constantly influenced by street photography. The images of industrial sites -among others- abandoned, obsolete, residual, forgotten, unused, indefinite, uncertain, vague, waiting ... it is difficult to consider them urban, despite their proximity to the city, we quickly recall the experience of freedom. According to the author, maintaining that recollection of freedom complicates the choice of design strategy, as it requires the keeping of the continuity of the pre-existing and at the same time transforming it, unfolding the action in the findings. The SESC Pompeia is an action in a vague terrain in which the architect has maintained continuity with the findings, preserving the joy and freedom. In the constructed complex, a strange sensation can be felt that occurs twice: the freedom to use, that is experienced by individuals who can wander through magnificently open spaces not bound to any program and with an intellectual freedom with which the architect addressed the intervention and whose design strategy is presented with clarity and readability in all scales of project. In the second case, freedom comes from the personal capacity, the availability of intellectual and ethical responsibility, testable data in this case but limited in the current context.

3. Lines of desire
The entrance of the SESC Pompeia complex comes quietly, without fanfare. Once past the threshold, a small open space emerges, a kind of widening between streets -occupied with some trees and tables, as if it were a corner in the historic city- and preparing the starting mechanism of an inner street within the T-shaped plot, which gather the main circulation into the open air. However, this internal urban morphology hides another reality, the public space - if we represent it as Denise Scott Brown indicated, in a plan like that of Nolli for Rome - and the real circulation of this, is totally different, occurring through lines of desire, which arise in relation to the position of doors and programs.

Perhaps for this reason, having just entered, there is a kind of totem-an elaborate piece of concrete, systematic recesses to accommodate the signs, signaling in all directions, trying to demonstrate the apparent conflict between morphology and possible circulation.

Also surprising is the significant presence of printer’s hands, whose fist and button, give the impression of being dressed in a shirt and even a jacket. The architect seems to insist on the use of prefabricated symbols, from anonymous authors- printer’s hands, arrows, signs, coming from a printer’s catalogue, ready for use and that are common in ephemeral publications, printed in an economic way as are the leaflets, entrance tickets or bus tickets. It is implied that the purpose of the building is to be used, produce pleasure, through economic means, ignoring the artificial difference established between high and low class.

4. Social single-crop
The warehouse spaces is a reinterpreted pre existing space where all details are taken care of in order to achieve a comfortable and quiet atmosphere with no sound reverberation. It does not give the impression of an unfinished, incomplete work.

It is a space that can be understood as didactic, the adaptation to local climate through the use of simple brick enclosures, partially permeable to air, the natural light
is diffused, achieved by the partially glazed roof, the color of the crystals on the front of access, which projects colored spots on the floor, the continuity of space favored by a pavement of large slabs of gray stone, lightly interrupted by a figure of undulating water; the spatial integration of the metal structure through color, view; the facilities of access, which projects colored spots on the floor; the continuity of space favored by the partially glazed roof, the color of the crystals on the front.

It highlights the rhythmic activity of the space-like a dance or frozen music through a succession of concrete platforms, linked by a flight of stairs, producing a kind of semi level that scales the height of use within the single space, achieving a variety of environments, suitable for different sensitivities and needs, and makes it easy for people to wander through the volume of the warehouse, occupying it. The furniture design is also highlighted - seats, tables, chairs, in a natural wood with visual strength, quilted textile pieces in a very deep blue and strategically occupying available space. Everything is displayed with a certain air of everyday normality and with strong, vigorous elements, despite the fact that in every detail there is a formal development, linkable to existing disciplinary discussions in its time and at present.

And finally, the majority of public building uses occur, unexpectedly, in view of everyone. The built complex is shown up and down, completely full of people doing something collectively or individually, but in view of everyone. We understand that the SESC Pompeia in fact is trying to avoid social monoculture, a characteristic of private institutions that sort and group people with irrelevant criteria.

5. Another architecture

The entrance hall to the theater, given its proportion and scale, is a surprising, beautiful and delicate space where environmental comfort is controlled by ventilation and natural lighting.

Here also, are two highlighted elements: the stairs and the concrete walkway of volumetric care and spatial display- like a dance no doubt- both in their implementation material, projecting the study and design of the wooden formworks in meetings with the horizontal and vertical plan and the execution of the edges of concrete, almost too perfect. The second impressive element are the two sliding wooden doors, perfectly constructed, and fully air-permeable, more like a crochet curtain or a net curtain in some films by Visconti-that a door, sifting the light and gently marking what is the lobby. This spatial demarcation also takes advantage of the design of the pavement, similar to that employed in the exterior: a paving stone with a strip of fine, dark finish, to facilitate travel and mark the circulation. In addition, this detail also speaks of the incorporation into the building of disabled people of different ages and gender.

The action at SESC Pompeia constantly reminds us that the architect has thought about the issues for whom and for what in each item designed, questions alone that can radically transform the project. It also shows that sustainability, rather than a technological issue is an ethical approach that should take care not to consume more than necessary, making it essential to redefine the levels of comfort and the means by which it is achieved, as this building is exemplary.

6. The world as a project

The SESC Pompeia is full of small items designed with great precision. Benches often appear for resting or waiting, near the stairs or elevator, the architect assuming that many people, even going to play sports, can get tired. They are not left to fall, or are imped, they are pieces designed with all the delicacy and clarity. Something similar happens with the design of hand and defense rails, in which we see a fine-tuning of materials and meetings, all amazing, both by the availability of the team of solutions and its visual success.

The carpentry is also designed with the same success, as already stated, and integration into the project. Each space is solved by what is best for its use, plenty of sliding doors, as in sports fields.

The SESC Pompeia clearly expresses the notion that the world we live in is the world we have built together, rescuing the value of use as an argument of the project and construction of the building. The same things are used in different ways, depending on who employs it and every need can be solved differently. The principle of use or finality is always individual and accurate, never generic.

The value of use assumes that each individual is free and expresses this freedom in their usage of instruments, in this case of the buildings. Designing for everyone, so anyone can feel at home well treated-appropriating the environment, facilitating widespread access-while specifying- to the individuals to design buildings with a gender perspective. The SESC Pompeia is also exemplary.

Post Script

These impressions are too specific and partial, leaving aside all the critical exposition of the arguments of the project. However, it seeks to influence the idea that, in fact, we see what we have already learned to see. It is perhaps for this reason that the most intense journey always happens through reading and study, so that it is even possible to see new aspects in the photographs taken by you, in light of new thinking- and perhaps one was not able to see in place.

In 2014, the centenary of the birth of Lina Bo Bardi will be celebrated. The architect is often presented from an almost exotic, extrovert profile. This is not seen in her buildings, but instead is highlighted in the footprint of the intelligence of someone who seemed to understand and transfer to the construction the idea that poetry does not follow the rules, and if so is only incidental, the rules derived from poetry.

Pure delight.

Endnotes

1 This work is widely documented: among other see: ZG, n. 23-24, Lina Bo Bardi, Editorial Gustavo Gili, Barcelona, 2002, page 112

2 LE CORBUSIER, Los tres establecimientos humanos, Poseidon, Barcelona, 1981, page 6: “Es necesario decir siempre lo que uno ve, sobre todo es necesario siempre -lo cual es más difícil- ver lo que uno ve”

3 VENTURI, Robert, SCOTT BROWN, Denise, Architecture as signs and systems for a mannerist time, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge-London, 2004, page 168: “[…] Through this article I learned the clumsy but useful word dysfunctional and pondered Merton’s caveat that seemingly dysfunctional phenomena must be functional for someone, otherwise they wouldn’t exist; the question being, ‘For whom?’ and ‘Why?’ […] This brought up one more aspect of architectural view of functionalism: its subjectivity, and a further criticism of the practice of architects: they seldom ask, ‘Who should define function?”

4 DUBOS, Philippe, El acto fotográfico. De la representación o la recepción. Paidós Comunicación, Barcelona, 1986, page 11: ‘Lo que se fotografi a es el acto mismo de fotografiar” Denis Roche

5 UNGERS, Oswald M., The dialectic City, Skira, Milán, 1997

6 UNGERS, Oswald M., The dialectic City, Skira, Milán, 1997, page 19: “The modern city is dialectical; it is both thesis and antithesis. It reflects the contradictions of society also its technical systems. It is no longer possible to find unified forms or consistent solutions which still incorporate everything in a single system. […] Rather than being a unified concept, the city is now a structure made up of “complementary places”.”


8 ABAÑOS, Iñaki led , Naturaleza y arquitecto, Editorial Gustavo Gili, Barcelona, 2009, page 131: “[…] Cómo se puede actuar en un terraverge para no convertirse en un agresivo instrumento de los poderes y de las razones abstractas? Sin duda atendiendo a la continuidad. Pero no a la continuidad de la ciudad planeada, eficaz y abstracta, sino, todo lo contrario, a través de la escucha atenta de los flujos, de las energías, de los ritmos que el paso del tiempo y la pérdida de los límites han establecido.”

9 VENTURI, Robert, SCOTT BROWN, Denise, Architecture as signs and systems for a mannerist time, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge-London, 2004, page 138: “Borrowing from the transportation planners, we drew ‘desire lines’ across the lake between academic sciences and medical sciences and between arts and sciences. Then we designed our buildings around the desire lines.”


11 GODFREY, Jason, Bibliographic, Editorial Acanto SA, Barcelona, 2009, page 144, ‘Carusochka’s Tickets.’ “Todos los billetes están ordenados de acuerdo a los 70 países donde fueron recogidos y tienen un diseño bastante aarono, si bien, al mismo tiempo dan testimonio del orden que hemos creado en nuestro mundo. Los billetes, invariablemente, tienen un diseño anónimo y han sido impresos de una manera económica, razón por la cual mantienen un atractivo permanente o para los diseñadores”

12 GODFREY, Jason, Bibliographic, Editorial Acanto SA, Barcelona, 2009, page 69, ‘Alphabets and other signs.’ “En su introducción, Mel Goding establece los objetivos simples de Alphabets & other signs: ‘No tiene ningún programa. La intención es que sea usado; el propósito es que cause placer’. […] Combinadas con las páginas de Arts et Métiers Graphiques encontramos secciones que contienen selecciones aparentemente fortuitas de billetes tomados de varios catálogos de tipos y complementos empleados por los impresores tales como flechas, indicadores e incluso una página dedicada a manchas de tinta prelaboradas y listas para su uso.”

13 Walker, Enrique (ed.), Lo ordinario, Editorial Gustavo Gili, Barcelona, 2010, ‘Cuatro artículos sobre Los Ángeles’ Reynier Banham, page 28: “En los extremos opuestos de la escala, las zonas lujosas como éstas y los suburbios desastrosos como Watts son ejemplos de la característica menos atractiva de Los Ángeles: su tendencia a fragmentarse en áreas de monocultivo social autodenotadas y especializadas. Monocultivos funcionales también pues en Los Ángeles. […] uno se priva de esos encuentros fortuitos con amigos o extraños que son una de las recomposiciones tradicionales de la vida urbana”

14 PURINI, Franco, La arquitectura didáctica, Colegio oficial de aparejadores y arquitectos técnicos de Murcia y otros, Valencia, 1984, page 39: “[…] La funcionalidad, la estabilidad y la economía de los edificios no serán consideradas como fines, sino como simples medios para alcanzar la ‘belleza’, entendida como la más alta de las contribuciones que la arquitectura puede dar a la cuestión social.”

135
La relación de la arquitectura con la Naturaleza se manifiesta a través de la forma: "El arte de la arquitectura es en consonancia con la naturaleza; ella expresa los límites de la naturaleza y los en su seno propio".[6] Lo que sucede es que la arquitectura obtiene su razón de ser de la geometría, y ésta la obtiene de la Nature. "Nature c'est mathématique, les chefs-d’œuvre de l’art sont en consonance avec la nature; ils expriment les lois de la nature abstractivas;..." (Le Corbusier).

Le Corbusier sugiere que la arquitectura debe ser "boîte à miracles" y que "la boîte à miracles est un cube". En este sentido, la arquitectura debe ser un espacio donde se pueden expresar todas las posibilidades y fantasías, como lo manifestó Le Corbusier en su Modulor, un sistema que permite la adaptación de los edificios a las necesidades de los seres humanos.

En el caso de la arquitectura moderna, la armonía y la proporción son fundamentales para el diseño. Le Corbusier utiliza la geometría como base para su trabajo, y su Modulor es un buen ejemplo de esto. La arquitectura debe ser tanto una función como una expresión artística, y su diseño debe ser guiado por la razón y la belleza de la forma.

En resumen, el diseño arquitectónico debe ser un equilibrio entre la función y la belleza, y la arquitectura debe ser un espacio donde se pueden expresar todas las posibilidades y fantasías. Le Corbusier es un ejemplo de esto, y su Modulor es una prueba de que la arquitectura puede ser tanto una función como una expresión artística.
Contemplating these cubic boxes laying smoothly and competently in the landscape, or contemplating the landscape poetically cut by geometry, we conclude that, after all, the boîte à miracles is still a beautiful idea [18].

Endnotes
1 "Des dieux! Géométrie et deux sièges ensemble!" - Le Corbusier, L’Art décodé d’aujourd’hui. 1929.
8 VITRUVIO. Tratado de Arquitectura. São Paulo, Martins Fontes, 2007, p. 168, livro 3–caps. 163) http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/L/Roman/Texts/Vitruvius/5*.html [this recognition does not preclude other numerous historical references, compiled by Le Corbusier throughout travel, readings, sketches and projects, especially the references to the architecture of the Renaissance, the example of the now classic study of Colin Rowe (“The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa, Palladio and Le Corbusier Compared”) (1947).]
demonstrate a simple symbolism. The building either does not want to have a story, it wants to remain abstract, or it does not want to have an explicit intention. It is in short a tour de force too large to accommodate its contents. The blind facade here is never an exemption. And there is an unnecessary competition in the set in which neither the architecture nor art prevails.

Voils
The Sebrae headquarters building in Brasilia seems to have in common with the previous two structures only the institutional use and intensive employ of concrete as a plastic element. The environmental context in which they operate is completely diverse, just as the types of contracts are, this last one having been chosen through a national architecture competition, won by architects Alvaro Puntini, João Soledê, Jonathan Davies (Grupo SP) and Luciano Margotto.

Here the emphasis is given to the passages allowed between the pilotis, a common feature of Brasilia city, where you can choose the walking direction without having to necessarily follow closed paths imposed by obstacles such as blocks unlike any other city in the world. Therefore, there is a permeability of a continuous floor, free and undivided.

The intentions expressed by the architects were: 1) emphasis on internal spatiality, aiming at the integration of users as well as the natural and built landscape, 2) maximum flexibility for the organization of offices, 3) concern in obtaining great environmental and economic performance.

The main characteristic of the building is the generous central courtyard. Its interior spaciousness relates to Brasilia’s climate and the sky light freely pervades it. Public activities are mainly performed on the lower floor and administrative functions are distributed on the upper floor. Around this internal square, stands the “Consultancy” spaces, while the ground floor hosts the dining hall and the lobby, with terraces facing the city. In the center, there is the volume that houses the auditorium and the cafeteria.

The parking spaces housed on a single level open to one side isolate the cars and leaves the other levels to users. The hard core of the building, moved to the margins, the hard core of the building, moved to the margins, the hard core of the building, moved to the margins, the hard core of the building, moved to the margins. The blind facade here leaves the idea of compactness and robustness dormant.

The set of boxes are defined by their levels of transparency and robustness. The block on the corner of the museum produces an ambivalent materiality/immateriality making the issue of perception explicit. Its gestalt value of figure / ground alternates throughout the day when the descriptive case reflects its environment and over time penetrates the skin and shows the interior as a phenomenological object. By night, the skin becomes a curtain and a literal transparency puts us in the position of the voyeur as in the film Rear Window by Hitchcock. The school box is more intimate: closure, skin and structure merge into a single element leaving the idea of compactness and robustness dormant.

There is a magnificent game with reference to water, the slope of the terrain allows it to be captured in the stream, channeling, enclosing and framing it to sit on the balcony and receive the sea. The route is forcefully winding, both in subtle deviations and small jumps.

The Adriana Varejão Gallery in Inhotim, designed by Rodrigo Cerqueira Lopez is a pavilion housing two works by the artist himself. At first glance one could interpret it as a sequence of lake, ground floor, first floor and terrace where the route is related and inferior to the exhibited work, but this would be a reduced interpretation. Every space in this path evolves from its predecessor; the mirror of the lake countering the landscape, the ground floor following the lake and penetrating under the box, the first floor accessible by loose stairs penetrates the closed box and becomes a bench for resting and appreciating the work “araujas” (tiles) and the terrace is gradually discovered from a walled exterior and ramps that flee back into the Inhotim landscape.

An odd object on the landscape, there is an element of “harshness” in this work; the heavy structure, the concrete, and the evidence of the lines of the formwork, the raw nerves, and the heating tubes in plain view: attitudes of high-grade processing that go beyond the simple bare intentions. There is a clear sense in preserving a tectonic of monastic simplicity through a generic materiality and if possible in a state of rawness in answer to antithesis facing the development of high-tech.

The box, art right and sold as a bunker, clearly interpreted as an “implant” in the terrain, forms a geographical location, an artificial entrenched topography. While the attentive gaze becomes aware of the details, there is a great effort to keep up appearances, so that the pure and crystal clear box is revealed as such. In this sense, there is sterility in its detachment in all the contours of the terrain, leaving the box “loose” with a faint line of light between it and the ground. When there is contact, in other words, when there are external elements in contact with the box, it is somehow denying them, disengaging from them, showing that they are superfluous, the devices connected. This happens on the terrace where the box is again connected to the higher ground by loose stairs and steel.

The appearance of the box is almost an intermezzo between being prey and being free and its freedom “floats” suspended and reflected on the edge of the artificial body of water. It is the water that ultimately imposes a narcissistic lightness as opposed to the heaviness of the bunker. It is the water that penetrates and leads or misleads us inside its cavernous interior.

The Burle Marx Education Centre designed by Arquitetos Associados is distributed in accordance with a concise program. Auditorium, library and school are each wrapped in their own volume, an art right box for the first, and more permeable ones for the others. The boxes are framed by a large slab in a “U” shape that supports a reflecting pool on the terrace, where a work by artist Yayoi Kusama can be found. The set is organized by plateaus from the outdoor amphitheater to an open bar and finally diverging into the background with a gap in the middle where the most significant volumes arise.

The creation follows a geographical logic; the work is arranged at the end of the lake, with the ambivalence between floating over it, or placed as a barrier and dyke. The relationship with water gives a special meaning in relation to exterior/interior which is presented as continuity in the landscape, at times as something more intimate, as in

THE BOX AND THE WATER
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Broadly speaking, the recurring common denominator of these three works is the idea of the box, and the theme of water is its status differentiation. The compact design of the box, or the fight against it, is seen as a simplistic design strategy. It is about defining a container and putting in its womb, without further questioning, the program functions, apply all the architectural knowledge in sensory situations and conceptual brushstrokes to finally reveal a particular tectonic. Hans Beltings would classify the heart of the discussion of contemporary architecture as “supermodernistas”, possibly identified as minimalist by Josep Maria Montaner or perhaps as “monolithic”, according to Rodolfo Machado.

The Bread Museum of Brazil Architecture consists of a restored old mill and is made up of two unique pavilions on an scantily plot of land. The new blocks, defined by its plan - museum and school - refer back to the topic of the box. Each one operates independently, there is no spatial continuity, the spaces do not evolve from one to another, they are simply connected by an exterior timber walkway which immediately lets us know that we have just left one place and are on our way to another. There is no hierarchy or reverence between the new and the old, the latter standing out due to its distinct shape. The outdoor patio is basically made up of what was “left-over” from a logical creation of loose volumes on the site. The recurring use of concrete, the idea of a neutral material in its harsh and obvious state is repeated in the pursuit of a tectonic simplicity - although there is poetic license on the timber railing of the walkway and mainly on the pillars whose capitals simulate firewood.

The creation follows a geographical logic by occupying the corner with a block and closing the background along the stream, with the other. There is a certain amount of ambivalence with the relationship with the ground, the museum is detached from the terrain by the floors featured on the ground, leaving the box looser, higher and cleaner; the school on the other hand uses, although briefly, the subsurface as a reservoir, which breaks the notion of the pure box and brings it closer to the interpretation of a warehouse.
the case of the water courtyard. The water is recurring in the terrace houses where its fragmented form holds hundreds of floating stainless steel balls by Kusama.

The materiality does not occur with such “brutality” as in the other two works, it is somewhat more refined, although there is an insistence in the generic question, already industrialized and with a clear mastery of the materials catalog. The brise "technology" is the element that breaks the discourse of minimum expression.

In the three works cited, if we pull away from the box we can see different themes among them. Cervoño’s box, as an airtight and secure bunker emerges hidden in the landscape, the box of Brazil Architecture exposed to its own phenomenological narrative using the corner as a background curtain and Arquitectos Asociados box with a multiple interpretation, presents us with the ambiguity between continuity and rupture with the landscape. Finally, the water issue also presents a different thematic. The narcissistic mirror, floating and falling, the canal and trench delimiting and marking the territory, or the dyke and lake that integrate while at the same time depart. The fact is that since classical times, the theme of the box and the water is not exhausted as long as there is a possibility to describe.

Endnotes

IN CONCRETE AND BEYOND WALLS
Carlos Eduardo Dias Comas

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To compare is to estimate, to measure or to notice similarities and differences between two or more objects; in this case, three recent works of architectural designed by Brazilian architects with apparent concrete, chosen from a larger list made by the editor of this issue. Here the selection criterion was the location outside the metropolitan precincts, implying low volumes in which the concrete was an option and not a must, regardless of differences in use, scale, situation, provenance, and treatment of the material.

Thus, we have a tribute to immigrants ethnicity, the leisure of elegantly relaxed leasing, and the promotion of an international post-1970s art collection. The Museum of Bread (Ilópolis, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, Marcelo Ferraz and Francisco Fanucci, 2008) stands on a downtown corner lot of a southern town of 2200 inhabitants, 205 km from Porto Alegre, capital of the state. The Fasano Hotel Las Piedras [Punta Del Este, Maldonado, Uruguay, Isay Weinfeld, 2013] is a 480 ha resort 40 km from the airport of Punta Del Este, beach town with cosmopolitan visitors. The Adriana Varejão Gallery [Brumadinho, Minas Gerais, Brazil, Rodrigo Cervoño Lopez, 2008] part of the Institute of Contemporary Art and Inhotim Botanical Gardens is located on a 100 ha farm near a 30,000 inhabitants town, 60 km from Belo Horizonte, capital of the state. Three strands of Brazilian architecture are being recognized here: Ferraz and Fanucci collaborated with Lina Bo Bardi, Weinfeld was Aurelio Martinez Flores’ assistant, Cervoño Lopez worked with Paulo Mendes da Rocha. The concrete roughness exacerbated in the Museum reflects the boards of its formworks. The Gallery prefers the smooth, paneled, almost precious concrete. The Hotel bets on a twofold approach, rough on the outside and soft inside, like a shellfish.

Reflexive thought soon discovers similarities in the use. All three ventures imply tourism: said cultural in Ilópolis and Inhotim, enabled by fiscally rewarded sponsorship, and openly recreational in Las Piedras, enabled by the potentially lucrative investment. The expectation of financial return is shared, though diffused in Ilópolis and Inhotim. The Ilópolis example is modest compared to the ambitiousness of Inhotim, but to contribute to the regional revitalization is a goal of the Mills Path, the overall plan that includes the Museum of Bread. The preservation of mills as museums of their own kind is supported by connections with food, training, exhibition and accommodation issues. Cultural equipments include shops, restaurants and auditoriums. Inhotim is no exception. Its surprising popularity is now stimulating real estate projects in the surroundings, small hotels and the high-level land parceling of its founder Bernardo Paz plans have the same spirit of Rogerio Fasano’s foreign adventure, except the lack of meat tanning in the sun by the river or by the sea. Culture and commerce do not fight these days.

Ilópolis shows obsolete industrial equipment. Inhotim features avant-garde works of art among native vegetation. Las Piedras show off the powerful rich and famous. The genotype is the same. The three ventures exhibit to preserve and preserve to exhibit – while recycling production establishments as service establishments. The aura of the past do matters. The persistence of a building, topography or main view brings positive ecological connotations. On the other hand, all recycle to revitalize. The expression of renewal or innovation is also part of the role. In Inhotim, the requirement doesn’t need an explanation. But it is not less important in the hotel where the sophistication of the target clientele includes a lifestyle of relaxed luxury, than in the Museum where the standards recommend the differentiation of distinct eras: the one of the preserved mill and the one of the bakery school and the exhibition pavilion with which it is now associated.

From this perspective, tourism aspires to be qualified. One way or another, exclusivity is a shared trait. The three projects require a public of different cultural levels, with more than a hefty bank account in the case of the hotel, and not at all thin in other places, at least, capable of bearing with the burden of the difficult access. The local environment provides first of all labor-force. The distance from the metropolitan walls is illusory. The three projects are equated as outposts of smart global tribes, segments of a multifaceted culture. The botanical garden compensates the esotericism of contemporary art, but this is what fuels curiosity and seeks the matching containers. The sunset, the pool dug in the rocks and the golf course do not require a doctorate for its admiration, and would be perfectly compatible with a neoclassic construction, but nothing would have less chic. Without the mentoring of its architects based in Sao Paulo, smart people, it is possible that Ilópolis, lost in deep Rio Grande do Sul, would emulate the kitsch identity of Serafina Correa’s Via Genoa, almost next door[4]. For better or worse, there seems to be a niche in the Brazilian market for which the erudite architecture is appealing, modern association is important, and the apparent concrete is admired as a virtue – or as a sophistication.

Well-put demands cause consequent reactions. The similarities and differences of the program have fair formal return. Boxes of elementary volume are connected by walkways and enclose the courtyard at the Museum; are clearly isolated in the Hotel and in the Institute, where the Gallery stands as a landmark in the middle of a clearing. In larger ventures, the parti allows the construction in stages, it takes advantage of the landscape, it removes any temptation of being bombastic; in Ilópolis, it directs the harmonization with the smaller scale of preexisting houses. Originality is given by highlighting the specific site, complemented by landscaping that deftly works the green, water and stone. The composition is intimate and engaging at the Museum, but it states its urban nature by respecting the alignment. Keeping the horizon unimpeded, it becomes rhymatic and expansive in the hotel. It comes segmented and picturesque at the Institute: large empty spaces and winding paths multiply negotiating the mountainside. Regarding the built volumes, the extensive repetition appears only – logically – in the Hotel bungalows, spread through the lot along curved paths. The privileged differentiation shows the program specificity and a situation without major geometric complications. It is a matter of decoration, the appropriate character expressed by the emplacement, materiality, construction and figuration.

In Ilópolis, the exhibition pavilion gains a prominent position, maximum transparency to highlight the purpose and contemporaneity of the volume, minimum thickness of slabs cantilevered by irregularly spaced tree-columns, two concrete slabs and four wooden panels. It strongly contrasts with the closed and rooted mill while it emulates its vertical boards and the status as a monument. Undisclosed as it befits a workspace, the bakery school appears subsidiary, rough and Beton brut: closed and isolated as three boxes; its formwork is horizontally arranged to heal up the debate. In Inhotim, the Gallery is an elevated ark with the ends supported by the slope. The entrance slit reminds of children’s piggy banks and ATMs. The triangular reflecting pools that announce it give it a scent of a cave. The remarkable minimalism is in the service of an interior crypt. The plan defined by elementary geometric shapes and concrete walls made of smooth formwork panels emphasize the rough content and necessary rearticulation of the exposed works, which Varejão produced in conjunction with the architectural project. At the Hotel, the bathrooms have local stone bases under blind supporting walls, protecting the privacy of the guest and echoing the rustic scenery. The internal domestication of the Brutalist reference lives up at the spa with a dash of structural audacity. In counterpoint with the evocation of the 1960s, the lounge bar uses glass panes with silicone gasket and slabs with minimal edges in balance. In any case, the architecture is served well tempered, and the formal and figurative coherence of the work impresses[2].

What we have here is exceptional architecture in more than one meaning and context, among which the actual field of authored contemporary architecture. It rejects the extravagance and heroism, seeking to please its audience. Realistic in its context, it removes any temptation of being bombastic; in Ilópolis, it directs the harmonization with the smaller scale of preexisting houses. Originality is given by highlighting the specific site, complemented by landscaping that deftly works the green, water and stone. The composition is intimate and engaging at the Museum, but it states its urban nature by respecting the alignment. Keeping the horizon unimpeded, it becomes rhymatic and expansive in the hotel. It comes segmented and picturesque at the Institute: large empty spaces and winding paths multiply negotiating the mountainside. Regarding the built volumes, the extensive repetition appears only – logically – in the Hotel bungalows, spread through the lot along curved paths. The privileged differentiation shows the program specificity and a situation without major geometric complications. It is a matter of decoration, the appropriate character expressed by the emplacement, materiality, construction and figuration.

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What we have here is exceptional architecture in more than one meaning and context, among which the actual field of authored contemporary architecture. It rejects the extravagance and heroism, seeking to please its audience. Realistic in its understanding of the professional mission, it accepts to transform the world slowly, operating over tradition into variation and expansion. It retrieves the spirit of the early Caroica’s school with equal sensitivity to ambivalence and an expanded architectural repertoire lacking in curves. Therefore, it is easy to dismiss it. As Henny-Russell
Hitchcock explained, the formal revival or survival lacks dramatic appeal. That is, it won’t sell a book, magazine, or newspaper[3]. The problem, it can be argued, comes not from architecture, but from criticism that reduces art to an emblem, impatient with the game that sharpens the eye and mind, requiring attention to detail and the unobvious in order to truly illuminate the concrete work and its circumstances. The exercise here exposed is far from being exhaustive, but it is not unreasonable to expect it to be stimulating. Comparing is necessary and pleasurable[4].

Endnotes

1 Via Genoa is a street built in Serafina Corea (11,000 inhabitants) with “replicas” of icons of Italian tourism: the Coliseum, the Villa Rotonda, the castle of Manosotka and the House of Romeo and Juliet, see Alessia di Bia, “Architectural Fictions For The Construction Of Identity”, Horizontes antropológicos (Anthropological Horizons) 16, 173-188, Porto Alegre: December 2001, reproduced in http://www.scielo.br/pdf/ha/v7n16/v7n16a10.pdf.

2 Its maintenance seems easier in Inhotim and in Las Piedras than in Ilopólis, where the charm of the provincial context, aesthetically essential, may eventually disappear as a victim of the success of the Path of the Mills. Unlike the community association responsible for the Museum of Bread, Paz and Fasano have control of all dimensions of the respective projects of much larger scale.


4 The astute criticism of Ana Carolina Pellegrini contributed decisively to the development and improvement of this text. To her I also owe the idea of preservation as the common trait of all three works.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF REINVENTION – BETWEEN THE OPTICAL AND THE HAPTIC

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The architecture of reinforced concrete in Brazil has been presenting technical advances which allow the architects to conduct diverse creative exercises. When observing the Brazilian architectural legacy in this context it is easy to perceive that this material has enabled innovations from the very start. Even though the concrete has boosted construction, it is evident that its use is not always accompanied by a certificate of architectural and construction quality. The landscape of the large cities with large demographics condenses, most frequently, erected buildings which are poorly constructed and lack creativity. These contribute, among other factors, to an opacity of the landscape that gives the city visitor a “distacted” or “casual observation” far from the possibility of consolidating references.

In historical terms, in the first decades of the 20th century, the reinforced concrete was not seen as a material of aesthetic value. It came to be treated as a material that imitates the stone because it is characterized by the same kind of structural strength [1]. Its development, regarding use and form, achieved greater versatility during the modern movement despite its presence in earlier buildings that marked Brazilian architecture history. The unusual formal aspects allied to openings contrasts, structural solutions and landscape insertion, or some of its buildings expressive presence in the landscape during the modern period and afterwards, bestowed on reinforced concrete a privileged status. With the advancement of construction technologies and materials architecture is been gradually transformed. There happens a diversification of forms, ideas and intentions, from small to large projects under the pressures of market and other issues.

Commercial architecture, for example, acquires a generality that refers to a new space/time construct, suitable for contemporaneity. Despite a fragmented and ambiguous condition, several characteristics drive the new architecture in concrete, particularly those resulting from innovative, creative and critical processes, endowed with aesthetic qualities, and providing experiential living spaces.

The works of Loducca Advertising Agency in São Paulo, SP, Adriana Varejão Gallery, and Burle Marx Educational Center, located in the Inhotim Center for Contemporary Art, Brumadinho, Minas Gerais, are examples of reinforced concrete buildings materializing exuberant designs and landscape insertions. Concentrated in exploring and enhancing concrete and integrating it with other light and flexible materials, with better light propagation and thermal isolation performance, these architectures announce new aesthetic concerns. Quoting artist historian Alois Rieg and his principle of “the will of art”, these works and their peculiarities show a willingness of architecture, i.e., the construction as a dynamic value, a real power, a complex driving object [2].

These works have a second point in common: the ability of understanding the landscape physically. They differ from the geographic area and convey the observer a feeling of an intense presence. The landscape provides a characteristic virtuous moment, meaning, an experiential moment, which fills the spectator with empathy towards the architectural object[3].

Spaces that incite sensations and promote a direct relationship with the figures and the figurative fields of their surroundings[4]. These works often go beyond the mere contemplative optical sense as they evoke a sense of investigation, entering, touching. They are architectures endowed with power of presence which inhabit landscapes, whether those of the intensely urban, edgy city, or the ones of the humus, of the slow steps and away from urban centralities.

The Loducca Agency building is considered a renovation landmark of Jardim America quarter in São Paulo. With three floors it does not intended to attract the viewer’s eye by its height, but rather by its warm if intriguing and intensive scale an urban Pandora. A concrete cubic frame serves as a door and fits the front façade protected by an undulating membrane of wood, while in the rear façade concrete, glass and translucent panels intersperse. It’s a biological facade that goes beyond the traditional role of brise soleil providing solar and acoustic protection, since it generates an intermediate gallery between glass and louvers, an unoccupied spot, place of inspiration and pause from daily rush. Despite the clear boundary between the public and private dimensions of the exciting horizontal cubic block, the third dimension of the cedar strips attached to concrete install a haptic sensation and generating a receptive character[5]. It explores the sense of touch, which gives the object a sense of proximity that attracts the distant look, generating resonances and pregnancies.

The interiors are centered around the monolithic stairs, positioned on the floors that are exacerbated by the absence of subdivisions and natural light, culminating on the terrace/square, a place of contemplation. The fluid ambiances allow a continuous view of the exterior, softened by the functional spaces. The absence of separations detaches the viewer/user from the haptic memory perception, but melts him/her in the recognition of the spatial image transmuted into icon objects. As a whole, the work is as if the matter, in particular the concrete, the glass, the wooden membrane, needed an intuitive artist’s body to achieve its desired shape.

The Burle Marx Educational Center mission is to systematize and enhance the upbringing and the educational vocation of the activities that are developed in Inhotim[6]. Located next to the access lane, near the front desk, its architecture stands out as a space endowed with penetration into the natural landscape, mediating the transition between arrivals and departures of visitors. The horizontal nature of the block, cut and structured in concrete, allows external and internal paths filled with sensations, which explore the vicissitudes of the materiality of the artificial lake and the tectonic creatively ensured in the predominance of natural landscape. Unlike the advertising agency, the figurative side of the object almost fully adheres to the environment figuration, turning ambiguous the visual evidence of the surrounding, as well as the limits of construction in relation to the exuberance of the landscape. The building gently advances from the irregular topography of the terrain towards the lake, defining itself on both surfaces. The simple entry on the one hand, that goes from the gathering point chosen as enunciator of the movements that go through the outdoor amphitheater, the balconies, the library, the workshops, the auditorium, and culminates with the elevated square. It is designed over a large reflecting pool, which besides giving lightness to the path also receives botanical species and the dematerialized spheres of the Narcissus Garden artwork. This construct, strengthened by the sense of transition and enhanced with the plaza/ terraces and a visitor movement, a place where the visitor, through landscape begins.

The terraced facades, cut by transparent and opaque glass sheets, the brise-soleil presence, the internal closures with glass finishing are governed by a diagram of light and shading, providing environmental vivaly. The interiors create a rhythmic succession of events through the haptic perception, which allows a relationship with the user’s movement and an understanding of physicality by the sight and touch[7]. Lines that break and manifest when details are touched and fluidly is created. In this combination of affections, the spatiality allows a connection between the subject movement and the movement suggested by the architectural solutions.

Designed to house the artworks of Adriana Varejão, the two-story gallery with a roof terrace is materialized in a parallelepiped composition with blind walls delicately arranged on the ground that hence folds in two levels. In this arrangement the striking reinforced concrete building levitates over the reflecting pool while shaping up simultaneously as a place of conduction and penetration and as a monolith, marked by its absolute immobility[8]. Even though inserted in the same lush landscape of Inhotim, the object Gallery differs from the Educational Center as from the fixedness of the Cartesian geometry from the dynamic animation of the sensorial exploitation. Starting from the massive gravity condition, as an object devoid of temporality, the Gallery establishes, by its unfoldng movement, a temporary dynamics of haptic settings. When the optical sense of the distant look is broken, and the entrance square cut by the reflecting pool that penetrates the ground floor
is reached, one commences the architectural tour. Intertwined with architecture, the
tenuous surface and the artist works materialize an association that absorbs
and tenses the observer. The eye contact that this combination of spaces provides
leads to a feeling of movement, creating an anthropomorphic sensation in which the
observer may be led to forget himself and become obsessed with the objects. The
stairs that surround the reflecting pool suggests a way out, a pause.

On the second floor, the blue color of the aqueous surface is transmuted into
the great dimensions tiled art-work and it reveals a place of contemplation,
enlightenment. This one deviates from the predecessor by promoting slow
movements in which the tension relax among the Baroque-like panels, the
precious paneling of the concrete, and the light coming from the skylight. From this temporary
shelter, it is possible to reach, by the ramps encased between concrete walls, the
roof garden, a place chosen to be an artistic sanctuary for the birds. The solidity of
its deck, far from the multi-faceted surface of the ground floor, reveals its mediation
between the artistic delicacy and the landscape exuberance that unfolds beyond the
spatial and enfolded with virtuality.

In this architectural constellation design aspects and features, although distinct,
are compelling presences that do not fail to scrutinize, investigate, “weave” affective
spaces. They are points, spatialities aimed at being continuously explored to be
experienced, breaking the patina of time.

Endnotes

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CONTAINMENT, INTEGRATION, PERMANENCE
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Two things often seem to characterize the contemporary architecture scenery: va
reckless vision of the present and an ill-informed vision of the past. On one side
the power circle of erudite architecture – including publications, awards, cultural
institutions and schools with an international reputation – only rewards and considers
it ‘creative’ and worthy of attention the extravaganza: works that cause immediate visual
impact, which appear to have a high degree of complexity and state a relationship with
scientific discoveries, even it only in an allegorical way. On the other hand, modern
architecture is still criticized for its alleged indifference to the site. The criticism of the
modern is unfair and unfounded: have the critics thoroughly studied modern works to
reach that conclusion, or do they speak from hearsay? For such statement is not true,
nor it is counterpointed with something better: neither the contemporary production is
always sensitive to the site.

The three works here reviewed – the Burle Marx Education Center, the SEBRAE
headquarters in Brasília, and the Fasano Hotel Las Piedras – seem to follow quite
different paths from those preferred by the architectural jet set and the international
critics. Besides their attitude of rejection of the easiness, they look close to each
other by sharing some characteristics. They are all somehow descendants from the
best modern architecture produced in Brazil in the recent decades, especially in
1950s, 1960s and 1970s. They share something that may almost be called modesty,
a willingness not to “steal the show”, to be a component of a spatial relations

system. They all adopt elementary configurations, isolated or combined prisms with
rectangular base, as the fundamental component of their forms. Finally, they are so
linked to the sites where they were built, that it would be practically impossible to
explain them without mentioning their respective locations.

The Burle Marx Education Center, built at the Inhotim Center for Contemporary
Art in Brumadinho, Minas Gerais, designed by architects Alexandre Brazil Garcia
and Paula Zasnicoff Cardoso, can be considered as a shadowy space between two
water plates. The building is defined by a ribbed U-shaped slab, under which
the library, art studios and the auditorium are harbored, leaving an ample space
between them, through which the air and people circulate, always in view of the
surrounding nature. The building is not very noticeable, since its upper floor level is
almost that of the surrounding terrain, which means that one becomes aware of
its existence only when one is next to it. This kind of camouflage is accentuated
by the fact that it is covered with a water garden that helps maintain stable the
temperature of the spaces bellow.

The Sebrae-DF building, by Alvaro Puntoni, Luciano Margotto, João Sodré
and Jonathan Davies, won a competition held in 2008, and demonstrates a clear
understanding of the site where it was built – in the broadest sense –, responding to
it in a positive and enriching way. The design looks like configuring two buildings:
one above the pedestrian access level, the other below it, leaving between them
an almost empty floor. This void allows the circulation of air and its passage over
reflecting pools, deployed in the lower building, helps minimize the effects of the dry
atmosphere of Brasilia. The displaying of work and meeting spaces around a large
inner courtyard provide shading and open spaces and connects the building with the
architectural history tradition, also Brazilian. In the upper U-shaped level, two parallel
wings house the workshops, joined by two connection stretches hosting services and
circulation devices. The northwest and southeast exposure of the two office wings
requires the facades to be protected, which is achieved by the use of pivoting blinds
made of perforated metal sheet, a solution that decisively contributes to the external
appearance of the building.

At the Fasano Hotel Las Piedras, in Punta del Este, Uruguay, designed by Isis
Weinfeld, we are faced with a rare sensitivity for the location and its pre-existences –
to use a very common term of the 1970s and 1980s. The result is a kind of ‘primitive
chic’, a phrase used here to recognize the combination of sophistication with simplicity
achieved by the author. The adopted strategy results in the perception of the bungalows
and service buildings as part of so many rocks found at that location when the architect
arrived there for the first time. The lack of an overt landscaping or a perceptible formal
system for the deployment of the bungalows bestows an overall naturalness that is
uncommon in this kind of projects, where normally a historicist or vaguely oriental
architecture predominates, or even square meter is carefully covered with exotic plants,
not always in tune with the architecture.

In all three cases there can be found a significant restraint in expression that gives
them a greater chance of permanence. By not choosing spectacular forms or fashionable
configurations and elements, the three projects acquire a degree of neutrality and
insensitiveness that seem beneficial to its immediate users and to the overall culture of
these places. It is clear that no project can be completely neutral and timeless: these
architectures are affiliated to an easily identifiable modus operandi situated in a given
time and space. However, it is clear that the authors act as discreetly as their creations,
giving up their starring role, so dear to their contemporaries, and allowing the buildings
time and space. However, it is clear that the authors act as discreetly as their creations,
giving up their starring role, so dear to their contemporaries, and allowing the buildings
to be the protagonists. As Jorge Luis Borges said about his writing: “… what is good
doesn’t belong to anyone but the language or tradition”. This contained expression is achieved through the use of elementary forms, a limited
range of materials, and a reduced minimum of architectural elements. It is worth noting
that this reduction in the number of elements has nothing to do with the reductionism
of what is usually labeled ‘minimalism’; all the elements necessary for the proper
construction and comfort of the users are present.

One of the supposedly negative factors of modern architecture identified by its many
critics is that in most of its buildings there are no intermediate and small scales: its
design focuses on large and concise elements that define the building as a form. This
is an interesting topic that deserves further investigation and discussion, since it is the small
scale that determines the relationship of each individual with architecture. However, in
cases here briefly discussed, there certainly are small-scale elements that successfully
play this role. In the Education Center, it’s the horizontal blinds, the metal railings and
furniture visible everywhere; in Sebrae, the pivoting panels that protect the main facades
and avoid the monodarity that would result from the use of many similar elements; in
Punta del Este the small scale is introduced by the tridimensionality of the concrete
texture, which changes a continuous surface into something that looks like a web.

Buildings like the three here discussed enable a moderate optimism about the
cultural significance of architecture and its role in creating a beneficial physical
support to human life.
It is generally agreed that since the 1990s Brazilian architecture is trying to reassume our Modern architecture values, also by the use of reinforced concrete, that was somewhat neglected in the two previous decades. Its expressive qualities have been re-evaluated, together with the aesthetic exploitation of the structural elements, extensive use of exposed materials, and the broad social spaces that characterized the São Paulo architectural schools in the 1950-1970 period. But this revisiting holds some peculiarities that have to be understood.

The reinforced concrete has opened new possibilities, challenging architectural conventions of the past and the limits imposed by traditional materials. In Brazil, the gap between the principles transmitted by Modern architecture and the local technical and building conditions has enabled the integration and mediation of industrial and artisanal elements in appropriate constructive solutions. The progress made by engineers in the field of concrete calculations, plus the unprepared workforce have assured concrete as a viable economical option that many architects helped to make experimental.

After the 1950s the building structure has been explored as an expressive device, standing out by its plasticity, lightness and formal elegance. But since 1980s this architecture has been criticized due to the indiscriminate repetition of its elements, emptied of their meanings[1]. This criticism was part of a phenomenon that occurred throughout the world, particularly in England and the United States[2].

Nurturing on the main achievements of our modern architecture, contemporary Brazilian architecture was avoided falling into formalism or rolling into formalisms, selecting past examples of a more harmonious relationship of the building with the place, its climate adaptation and constructive consistency. There is a greater pragmatism in seeking ways of generating spaces that gives the building its programmatic character, to the limitations and potentialities of the site, the qualities and scarcities of the location, region and costs. There is a certain emphasis on tectonic aspects[3], with more experimentation and constructive and technological variety, by the use of innovative solutions and juxtaposition of materials, trying to demonstrate the design intentions without hiding the fragmented construction process steps[4]. It faces the challenge of an architecture whose construction process is gradually becoming the assemble and articulation of parts and pieces already available in the market[5].

In this sense, contrary to what one might expect, the concrete is assuming a renovating role, as can be seen in some works illustrated in this collection - the Sebrae headquarters (Alvaro Puntoni, Luciano Margotto, João Sodré and Jonathan Davies), the house in Ubatuba (Angelo Bucci) and Deodoro Sports Complex (BCFM Architects).

The headquarters of Sebrae construction resumes the tradition of institutional buildings that helped consolidate the quality of modern Brazilian architecture. Starting from the urban restrictions of Brasilia, the topography and the institution role, flexible spaces were created, concerned with a clear relationship with the city and the environmental and energy performance. Three essential elements characterize the image of the project: a free facade with metal louvers, the expressive side closed walls, the pilotis revealing the inviting and quite generous spatiality. The strategy of hanging a volume in the empty space supported in a few points on a rugged topography has roots in the houses that Lina and Reidy conceived at the same time between 1950 and 1951. But as Léonidio noted, Bucci’s work is not a plain continuation of this tradition, it is a development that revolates this heritage.

Bucci’s emphasis would not be on the boldness and beauty of the structure itself, as an iconic object to be admired, but on the space and the disposition of the voids. In this house, this can be verified in the treatment of the large recessed pillar. It is an essential part in the articulation of the house; also, it is surrounded by a staircase that connects the two volumes near the slope and connects the house with the ground. However, this tectonic presence, which exults the structural accomplishment, is not emphasized, it is dissolved in the presence of wood, vegetation, the openings towards the sea, the people and objects at the different rooms that open onto this space. Only gradually we realize its centrality and robustness; which recalls the impression that Jorge Luis Borges had when entering a hotel room in Iceland and finding out, groping in the dark, a huge round column inside it.[7]

The Sports Complex at the Deodoro Vila Militar in western Rio de Janeiro was designed for house shooting, horseback riding and archery competitions, field hockey and modern pentathlon for the Pan American Games in 2007. The project was aimed to help revitalize this city area after the Games, considering its spaces management and maintenance for community use. Thus, besides the challenge of meeting the specific and rigid rules of each sport federation, the different and almost irreconcilable flow of athletes, delegates, referees, media and general public, the buildings needed to be flexible and absorb the likely changes in use after the event. Despite the enormous scale of the complex, the BCFM office strategy was to design the facilities in a non-isolated way, as a group expressing unity, which was done, according to its author, through a “minimum formal repertoire that could be assembled in various ways, according to the specificities of each sport and place.”[8] In order to achieve this goal the range of materials was reduced and prefabrication of components was partially adopted to reduce costs through economy of scale, accelerating the construction and providing visual unity to the whole. The mixed-materials building system had in concrete one of its important protagonists: it must cast in loco (columns, retaining and protective walls) or precast (bleachers stairs, and slabs in general). Metallic structures and closings (dry-walls, roof panels, louvers and glass), which are clearly independent from the structures, were then added. Coatings practically did not exist and when the assembly of these elements had been finished, the work was largely done.

The architecture construction achieved by an assembly process is still a novelty in Brazil, and it is sometimes seen as something limiting; but it may also open a range of expressive possibilities. The Shooting Pavilion, for example, has extremely rich spaces, like the open space covered by a concrete grid lined with wood, or the fluidity of the access promenade. In this complex, the architects faced a central problem in contemporary architecture, that is, trying to make a unique architecture connected to the place, when its elements are, increasingly, coming from other places and largely prefabricated. The detailing come to be understood as a crucial element in the design process, especially in projects of this scale, requiring the articulation of different materials, speed, cost reduction and flexibility.

The works here discussed show how this new generation of architects considers the proper construction as a means of expression, and believes it should be, and they prove it to be, honest, clear and well designed. The care with junctions and joints of materials, how materials are handled, the level of detail and the clear exhibition of the parts and finishing, the constructive honesty, a mixture of traditional and prefabricated materials, and the demonstrative traces of the construction process point out to a promising path for Brazilian architecture, in which the concrete still seems to be a major player.

Endnotes

3 The concept of tectonics, developed by Kenneth Frampton in the 1980s, seeks to relate the architecture with the know-how through understanding of building techniques passed down from generation to generation by master builders, contractors and builders as essential for culture and identity of a nation. Kenneth Frampton, Studies in Tectonic Culture, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995.
Having to perform the varied manifestations of the human nature, buildings are shaped according to assumptions favoring the emergence of some of these manifestations over others. These priorities somehow distinguish among classes of buildings. The house we live in, the office we work in, the temple in which we sublimate the limitations of the human being are environments that favor certain conditions of occupation and movement in space providing distinct modes of interaction between people.

The ritualistic formality of the religious temple, for example, is obtained by building up a unbroken body in which the structure, shape, epidermis, and space are orchestrated to get the clear sense of metaphysical overcoming. During events of high complexity, as in the festivities of devotion to the superior entities, in wedding ceremonies or entrenchments, the architecture of the building manifests itself as co-participant, and not as a mere setting of the event. In fact, the building is the medium to their consumption, but also an opportunity for unanticipated events. Movies have systematically explored the unexpected during wedding ceremonies - see the classic The Graduate (1967), by Mike Nichols, for example - or during tribal societies or "lost" civilizations rituals – see the Hollywood clichés in adventure movies.

It is true that movie pictures, as fictional pieces, are defined by the interpretation of their authors who point out certain aspects over others, in order to constitute a coherent narrative. There are few works that can faithfully portray the multiplicity of events sheltered by the architectural work or provide means for its understanding. Mon Oncle (1958) and Playtime (1967), by Jacques Tati allow, by debating the conflict between different structures, subcultures and urban ways of life, the observation of their effects on the interface forms mediated by architecture, whether at the domestic, working or urban environment.

The argument put forth is not new. In fact, the relationship between architecture and behavior has been extensively studied since the 1960s, including almost deterministic conceptions – if the architecture has such and such properties, human behavior will occur in a particular way, to those of probabilistic nature – if the architecture has such and such properties, it is likely that certain conditions of occupation and movement will follow some patterns as observed in loco.

Anyway, what would be the relevance of this issue to the specific context defined by the collection of constructions here gathered?

Fundamentally, to observe to what extent the structural elements can be seen as leading constituents of space, be it as a driver of the movement, or shaper of the eye, or as organizer of environments for human occupation. Hence, as a mean to structure the interaction among the inhabitants of the architectural space. A demonstration of this properly architectural condition can be performed by analyzing some of the works gathered here, especially the ones with a public nature: the Turkish Square, the Burle Marx Center and the Varejão Gallery. There is an intrinsic relationship between the structural components of the referred works - less evident in the Turkish Square, and appreciation of art works, urban and natural landscapes. The movement of people, either as the result of forced or free exploitation of the architectural space is also structured according to a dynamic relationship between observation and exhibition (to see and to be seen).

In the two buildings belonging to the Inhotim Cultural Institute, the respective deck slabs are accessible and work as the beginning or the end of a route (Varejão Gallery) or several exploratory routes (Burle Marx Center), or as places to stay, even considering their exposure to nature’s natural elements. In the Varejão Gallery, the interest lies in preparing and conducting the fond of art visitor from the majestic natural environment into the controlled and isolated interior. The rigorous conduction of the movements and the visual apprehension is prepared before entering the gallery, be it by the positioning of the access walkway on the massive volume of concrete the axis of symmetry, on the upper floor, or by the distinct displacement of the access of the lower deck to the aluded symmetry.

From the upper deck, the enjoyment of the landscape and the artistic work Birdies – from Inhotim to Demin (2003-2008) is linked with the large exhibition nave of the first floor by means of an enclosed ramp that surrounds it, in the first twisting gesture of the movement sequence designed by Rodrigo Cerviño Lopes. Symmetrically arranged on the ground level, the same twist is orchestrated along the exhibition walls. The stairs to the upper floor define the axis of symmetry by the twisting motions peripherally distributed downstairs and upstairs, being responsible for creating the revolving motion to appreciate the beautiful Coelacanth Causes Seagoon (2004-2008). Involved by the work, immersed in a space of symmetric inducing motion, the centrifugal journey always leads to peripheral movements up or down, according to the route or the visitor’s desire. In this game, the structural elements are designed to allow space and matter to lead the architectural experience, with little opportunity for the emergence of unanticipated events.

At the Burle Marx Center, designed by Brasil and Zasnicoff, a building whose main purpose is to house educational activities, the movement axes are varied and overlapping. Varied, since they lead to specific areas, such as the auditorium, recreation room, library, coffee shop, or they use the built structure to overcome barriers - the lake and the topography, or make the path more pleasant – with shadows and landscape views, proximity of water, etc. Overlapping since the deck slab, which is also a place to see and to be seen, is the platform that allows the transposition of levels, the second system of stairs and ramps. In the Center, there is a strong sense of conduction of movement to (building as a destination) and through (building as a passage), and the creation of large areas of permanence, whose focus of attention is to foster interaction between the various visitors of Inhotim. The purpose is achieved by the design of a modular system of concrete columns supporting the slab deck, and by fitting the building into the existing topography. The only jarring note in this fortunate arrangement lies in the platform to appreciate the work Narcissus Garden Inhotim (2009), by Yayoi Kusama, which does not allow the transposition to the opposite shore of the lake, forcing the return of visitors by the same path: an undesirable consonance with the enclosed ballet of Kusama’s spheres.

Unlike the spaces subject to private control, as in Inhotim, the city presents itself to the free movement and occupation, according to the conditions imposed by the social norms and cultural habits. In the Turkish Square, by Alban and Gramacho, the exercise put forward is to make agreeable an urban stretch of the arid town of Juazeiro. The structuring of the public space is achieved by the modular arrangement of columns that support braided shading surfaces. To the proposed grid some benches are added, and according to their disposition, a circulation system is structured, defining the most important quality of successful public squares: the articulation between lines of movement and areas of permanence. Again, to see and to be seen is a necessary privileged mechanism for social interaction, governed by unpredictability.

The inclusion of a fourth building wouldn’t be improper, to exemplify a most fortunate achievement in which the structural components alone are enough to establish spatial definitions. The design of the Chapel of Nossa Senhora da Conceição, by Paulo Mendes da Rocha and Eduardo Colonnelli (2004-2006), built in Recife, intervene in a ruined building defined by a brick walls rectangle surrounded by a mixed masonry archway, only partially completed. By turning it into a religious shrine, the architects are driven by meeting the demands of the catholic rituals and are delimited by the set of elements that characterize it – the narthex, the nave, the altar, the choir, the sacristy and the bell tower.

The peculiarities of the Nossa Senhora da Conceição Chapel is in the means used to promote the spatiality of the catholic temple by the positioning of two columns supporting a covering slab. Its placement in the already existing rectangular space is enough to structure the ritualistic experience, according to the sequential and dual layout between the narthex and the altar, following to secular rules. The focus is on the column–altar, repository of beautiful soulful image by Francisco Brennand. The "Windbreak" column is a barrier to linear motion and it establishes the division of the path in order to frame it on the inside, splitting the nave in two aisles. Entering the chapel, the similar other column, the choral ruse, reduces the height when entering the space. No other architectural element is necessary to constitute the religious space – hierarchy, contrast, movement, occupation, appreciation, sublimation, all present due to the arrangement of the structural elements in space. Despite the unusual shape, the small temple does not differ from those found from the earliest centuries of occupation of Brazilian territory.

In the proposed dialogue between the structural elements and the architectural space of the Nossa Senhora da Conceição Chapel, there are a richly contrived overlapping of formal routes, secularly constituted, and a pleiad of unanticipated events, suitable for the construction of numerous fictional narratives - or not.

THREE CONTRIBUTIONS TO CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURAL CULTURE AND HERITAGE

Monica Junqueira de Camargo

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The purpose of this exercise was to select three works from a pre-established list and write a critical essay about them. My choice was a totally intuitive act, of pure empathy...
with their propositions. Beyond the recognition of their contribution to the architectural culture of the 21st century, a first attempt to articulate this trio was to scrutinize what induced me to choose such diverse projects, apparently with nothing in common. Their comparison did not give me any clue, except that I would have liked to have designed them, that they move and seduce me, provoking concerns, raising doubts, opening issues and instigating reflections.

As I focused more on provocations than on seductions, their affinities blossomed, more in a cultural than in a formal way. They resembled less in their results than in the problems they faced: the concern with the place, the careful construction, the structural challenge, the use of concrete, and finally, the involvement with various aspects of environmental, architectural and cultural heritage.

The issue of preservation is undoubtedly one of the major concerns of the 21st century – and it also appears in the chosen works. Along with technology, preservation is a field that has mostly raised contemporary studies, and the concept of sustainability is inseparable from their concurrence. The increasing of the built territory and a more effective preservation of heritage buildings, coupled with the absence of a single theory, or a system of values embracing the multiplicity of approaches to architectural problems, imposed a new perception of the pre-existing conditions, affecting and changing architectural paradigms. To realize the relationship of these three works with their respective heritage issues was essential to understand their design decisions, opening a research path to be explored.

Here we have three separate challenges. A beach house on a terrain with 28 meters difference in elevation inscribed in an environmental reserve, requires minimum earthmoving. A cultural space next to a restored mill from early twentieth century, an evidence of the Italian immigration in the Rio Grande do Sul state sierra, at the small town of Ilópolis. An institutional building, the national headquarters of SEBRAE - Support Service for Small and Medium Enterprises – winner of a national competition, occupying a block in the South Wing of Brasilia, the capital of the country and a UNESCO architectural World Heritage.

The three robust columns, strategically located, hold the cover slab on which the volumes are hung, a solution that allowed the slab itself to work as an artificial plot, minimizing the earthmoving.

The design composition in three volumes interspersed with vegetation, besides meeting the specificity of uses, such as the independence and isolation of certain areas, creates a sequence of open and closed spaces, dissolving the boundaries between inside and outside, as if fluctuating in a continuous change. Despite the complete immersion of the work in the landscape and the porosity of the volumes, the architecture is never mistaken for nature. Bucci succeeded in establishing a strong relationship between both, without one being inferior to the other, and the more they distinguish from each other, the more they put each other in value. The openings were ingeniously fixed so as to allow the same perception of different spatial situations, creating angles that favor certain fragments of the landscape, whose views are incorporated to the living spaces as works of art.

The restoration sought to recover the mill, restore the productive process and reinstate it to the life of the city by the implementation of a program that, besides the mill, offers a new exhibition space, a bakery workshop and sales, for which the creation of two new blocks was required.

The project consolidates the extensive experience of its authors in similar challenges and experiences shared with Lina Bo Bardi, with whom Marcelo Ferraz worked. The two new blocks made of concrete, glass and wood, lower than the Mill and slightly elevated from the ground, display a discrete but evident presence. Perpendicularly and independently arranged by the Mill, they intentionally rely on a very different material language framing the valuable heritage building, as if the mill emerged from them, letting the buildings to complete each other, but also creating a healthy dependence, as if the old could not live without the new anymore.

Attention to cultural heritage, Fanucci and Ferraz investigated the traditional mills construction in search of references for the project – like the concrete columns with the wooden tripartite chapter, whose design is inspired by the internal structure of the mill, deepening the dialogue between them.

While the first two works have faced a direct struggle with the preservation issues, the Sebrae headquarters deals with an abstract condition – the dialogue with a cultural heritage which makes it an even more complex problem: ghosts frighten more than the most ferocious animals. Besides, designing a building inside Brasilia’s Piano Piloto is a commitment with the architectural culture of the country.

The Brazilian architectural culture has a deep intimacy with reinforced concrete, and the concrete structure to have its “original aesthetic design” completed.

The project submitted by Lucio Costa at the competition for the new capital, stands out for the clarity of ideas and reveals a deep understanding of the problem to be faced, vis-à-vis the history of Brasilia. In this project, the architects were able to rescue the best of Lucio Costa’s proposal, i.e., the urban public dimensions in the configuration of the urban space, doubtless the most significant trait of the new capital. Keeping alive Brasilia’s peculiar spatial tradition the Sebrae Headquarters also aggregates contemporary values, thus becoming a landmark of 21st century architecture.

The ensemble comprises two prisms on stilts connected at both ends, where the circulation system and infrastructure is mostly concentrated, forming a completely open central void, which reinforces the public nature of the ground floor. The offices are distributed in three underground levels and two upper floors with the work areas concentrated on the above and facing the central void.

Although there alternates only two types of external surfaces, one of metal panels and the other of concrete, interrupted by the circulation areas voids, there are no two equal facades. On the northern side the theater volume curve advances and detaches from the building’s boundary, unveiling the building’s interior to public contemplation. The appreciation of the public dimension is present in every design decision.

The three works contribute to the architectural heritage debate, but also to other issues, as refined works that reveal a profound constructive knowledge, a critical thinking and a methodological approach. Not only an erudite knowledge, but also a life experience based on the know how to look around, to give attention and having pleasure in the making of architecture, managing to reconcile the frank willingness to be bold and at the same time, the necessary caution not to make mistakes.

**SUBLTE DISTANCING FROM THE EXPERIENCE**

Renato Anelli
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The Brazilian architectural culture has a deep intimacy with reinforced concrete, and its development during the 20th century was marked by the highlighting of the formal potential of its structures, built with this technology. The most famous internationally known Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer based his work on taking this position to the extreme, exploring the full capabilities of the material, testing its tensile strength as much as the understanding of bold forms, attuned with the figurative character of modernist visual arts.

In 1958, during the construction of Brasilia, Niemeyer explains in an article that the architecture should not depend on the addition of secondary elements affixed to the concrete structure to have its “original aesthetic design” completed.

In those years, the correlation between form and structure was being developed by several architects. In the early 1950s, Affonso Reidy achieved an exquisite design on the Brazil-Paraguay Experimental College (1952) and the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro (1953). After Brasilia, from the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of the University of São Paulo (Vilanova Artigas 1961–68) building to the Brazilian
from structures to closings, from roofs to floors. São Paulo emphasized this strategy, seeking preferably monolithic concrete pieces, Museum of Sculpture (Paulo Mendes da Rocha, 1986-92), Brazilian architecture at than an adaptation to different family sizes of the residents, as proposed by the a culture of differentiation of the individual consumer in the midst of a mass society, of the Unité Housing by Le Corbusier in the 1940s. However, this is more the case of experiences of Gropius in his prefabricated houses in 1920, to different apartments flats. There is a strong resemblance to the modernist modular variations, from the product according to demand. Namely, the buyers define the apartment according real estate strategy to customize the apprehension of the interior variations.

The concrete is used in two ways – prefabricated, and cast in loco. Bellow, some prefabricated volumes support the metal roof, being closed by colored plastic plates or by glass plates, floor to ceiling. Some details were produced with cast in loco concrete, allowing for cantilevers and small variations which the museum character, creating an apparent randomness which fil ters the surface of the volumes eludes such bipartite division, as it also blurs the structural role for which the wood, as if it would not be able to meet the structural role for which the specificity of the previous mill. In the exhibition building, wooden bars over the reinforced concrete columns receive the cover slab, like transparent chapters, its delicacy causing certain awe in the contrast between the weighty appearance of the concrete cover and the delicacy of the wood, as if it would not be able to meet the structural role for which it was intended.

Embedded in very different social and productive urban situations, these three works consciously move away from former buildings to which the concrete was the hegemonic material. Perhaps it is a distancing coming out from experience. The presence of an intense game of lively colors and of wood seems to denote an intention to soften the presence of the concrete. The observation that the aging of the apparent concrete surfaces, in the São Paulo climate, resulted in gloomy and aggressive tones, may corroborate this interpretation. On the other hand, industrial roofing systems offer greater lightness at lower cost than those of cast in loco concrete. The pathologies of the rooftop of the FAU USP show how little was known, when those first apparent concrete buildings were constructed, about the behavior of this material over time.

However, it would be incorrect to point out that this kind of approach is the only one consistent with the contemporary moment, as other recent works in Brazil and abroad incorporate other new technological developments and point to the possibility of resumption of monolithic apparent concrete forms. Alvaro Siza’s building for the Iber Camargo Foundation, with its white concrete gleaming as a clear stone on the horizon of the river Guabiruba demonstrates the poetic potential of this material, yet to be explored, thanks to advances in reinforced concrete technology. Those who detain the technical knowledge also know how this image, though beautiful, is illusory.

HEIRS OF MODERN TRADITION
Salvador Gnoato
Architect at the Federal University of Pará (UFPA) (1917), PhD at the University of São Paulo (USP) (2002), professor at the Pontifical Catholic University of Pará (PUCPAR), Docomomo Brazil executive secretary (2012-2013).

In the late 1980’s Brazil rebuilds its democracy and starts a new process of socio-economic development and international integration. In architecture, after nearly two decades of crisis, criticism, and even some postmodern attempts, the works and denominations of modernity are again valued. Simultaneously, a new generation of architects attuned to the international debate will claim, in their works, their heritage in the face of modern Brazilian tradition. A tradition that is still alive: in 2011 a set of white concrete buildings was inaugurated in the Cultural Center in Avilés, Spain, designed by Oscar Niemeyer; who, in spite of being over one hundred years age, maintains an intense creative
activity. An intense creator, an opus of great richness and variety: if we were to trace his creative genealogy, it would be necessary to return to his first experiments with the plan libre inspired by Le Corbusier, quote the large marquee-covered footpath in Ibirapuera Park (1951-53), the pure and resolute volumes that appear with the Museum of Caracas (1954), and the perennial contrast between geometry and gesture that animates his work.

Another veteran Brazilian architect, Paulo Mendes da Rocha also maintains his creative spark active. The works of the National Coach Museum in Belém, in Lisbon, and the Art Pier, located in Vitória, his hometown, are underway.

This modern tradition is not limited to the mentioned masters, it includes a rich variety of talented authors – and a young generation of architects is also helping to understand and appreciate. If the example of ~100-year old Niemeyer always deeply touches any Brazilian architect, perhaps the reappraisal of the São Paulo masters from the mid-twentieth century is the most fruitful vein that is been exploited by the new generations. There are many masters, but one cannot fail to highlight the enormous talent and profound influence of the works of Rino Levi, Oswaldo Bratke, Vilanova Artigas and Lina Bo Bardi, among others.

Naturally, the new generations of architects do not take up this tradition literally or repetitively. And as it might be expected, they use it to make choices and cut out pieces. Their preference seems to lie mainly in the lessons offered by these masters through the works in which the use of reinforced concrete is the main disciplinary element of the spatial arrangement, when the compositional strategy combines simple volumes, while the aesthetic treatment prefers natural and casual materials.

In 2006, the exhibition Collective: Contemporary São Paulo Architecture, held at the Maria Antonia University Center at USP, proposed to gather, as a first record, the works of one part of this generation of architects who were often working in teams, with some flexibility of composition, even if redefined for each work. The great master of this group is Mendes da Rocha, who, according to Ana Vaz Milheiro “mobilizes the tradition of São Paulo and, simultaneously, positions himself well beyond his point of origin” [1].

Many members of this exhibition are part of the São Paulo School, which, led by Cyrus Pirondi and team, represents a new proposal for teaching as full-time and six-year course, maintaining an association of teachers detached from any university.

At 1990 the competition for the Brazilian Pavilion at Expo ‘92, in 1992, awards the work of Angelo Bucci, Alvaro Puntoni and staff, which reinterprets the São Paulo school proposal of a single concrete structure block on few pilotis, in this case only four support points, distributing the uses along the mezzanines permeated spaces. This project, though not executed, can be taken as a starting point for this generation works.

The team that designed the headquarters of SEBRAE in Brasilia [2010] comprises one of the possible recombinations including architects Alvaro Puntoni, Luciano Margotto, João Sodré and Jonathan Davies. This was perhaps the first experience of the team members with a significant size and prestige program, and the project was the winner of a national competition.

Situated in the wide-open territory of Brasilia, a modern urbanism remarkable example, Sebrae Brasilia defines two ground-levels taking advantage of the site slope, its pilotis level open to public spaces linked with the city streets. Independent reinforced concrete structure on lower floors and steel structure in the upper ones optimize the cost and speeds the execution. Large louvers made of perforated steel plates reinterpret classical solutions of modern Brazilian architecture. The design of the auditorium, laterally closed by a curved blind apparent concrete wall, containing the circulation and infrastructural services, gives personality to the building.

Circulations and curved concrete marqueses supported by steel pillars reminiscent of the marquee of Ibirapuera, and the central courtyard integrated with access points reminds of the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of the University of São Paulo (FAUUSP, 1962) by Artigas, where many architects of this generation studied.

Marcelo Ferraz worked in the experiments carried out in Salvador, Bahia, by Lina Bo Bardi, who knew how to use her European erudition while absorbing Brazilian cultural traits and its mixture of Portuguese origins and African descendants contributions.

The state of Rio Grande do Sul has a strong presence of Italian immigrants who left a legacy of several wheat and corn mills built on wood. The Museum of Bread [2005] in Ilópolis, by Marcelo Ferraz and Francisco Fanucci was the first one to be restored and complemented.

Two new pavilions “enclose” the reconstruction of the old wooden Colognese mill. The Bakery Workshop is a single block of apparent concrete, with brutalist gargoyles, connected to the Mill by a wooden walkway.

The Museum of Bread is a glass box suspended from the ground. The concrete pillars have a “chapter” formed by pieces of wood that support the slab, a clear influence of Lina Bo Bardi. One of the pillars is purposely asymmetrically situated. The solar protection is achieved by large wooden sliding panels and heavy velvet curtains.

Although they have not worked directly with the old masters, other architects also reinterpret the modernist concepts with great attention to constructive detail and choice of materials, such as Marcos Bertoldi, based in Curitiba, and Marcio Kogan and Isay Weinfeld based in São Paulo.

Consistent with their training in the Mackenzie Faculty of Architecture, Mario Biselli and Artur Katchborian office adopts different poetics in accordance with the peculiar program and the location. Biselli splits his activity between his office and the academic teaching at Mackenzie. His interest in steel structures dates from his adolescence, when he used to visit his father’s company committed to bus coaches production. From the Uruguayan architect based in São Paulo, Hector Vigliecca, he took the taste for entering competitions, nurturing an especial respect for the state of Paraná architects lessons, other frequent competition winners.

The complex program of the Pimentas Municipal Center for Art and Education [2008] by Biselli and Katchborian in Guarulhos, São Paulo, is solved on a single block covered with an elegant steel structure. The classrooms and other facilities, sheltered on concrete blocks of various sizes, protrude out of this structure boundaries.

Located in a poor neighborhood in the metropolitan area of São Paulo, the Pimentas center creates an interesting public space in the 250 meters long “street-square”, which covers all the place, where students, teachers and visitors circulate and enjoy the leisure areas.

In addition to its resemblance with the late 1950s schools designed by Vilanova Artigas, Biselli’s project makes reference to the Convention Center of Pernambuco [1977] by Joel Ramalho Junior, Leonardo Da b and Guilherme Zamoner.

With no dogmatism, this generation of architects uses the vocabulary of Brazilian modernist masters, with parsimony in the choice of formal solutions, with constructive rigor in the use of concrete and steel structures, and with a more intense use of industrialized components.

Endnotes