

Search for theses, data, articles, etc.

[About](#) [Explore](#) [Log In](#) [Upload](#)

2012 THESES DOCTORAL

Building a Continent: The Idea of Latin American Architecture in the Early Postwar

Real, Patricio del

In January 1943, New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) opened Brazil Builds. This exhibition has been widely credited as initiating the international appraisal and celebration of Latin America's modern architecture. Responsive to the war context and to the museum's engagement with the Office of the Coordinator of Inter American Affairs directed by Nelson Rockefeller, this exhibition presented a clear overlap between politics and modern architecture culture in the Americas that aimed to create a unified and defensible Western Hemisphere. This is a story that, although consistently repeated and alluded to, has never been told because studies of Brazil Builds have emphasized a singular national frame. This dissertation studies the overall trajectory of MoMA's engagement with Latin American modern architecture and culture in the late 1930s and 1940s, and posits its endeavors as leading to the 1955 exhibition, Latin American Architecture since 1945. It argues that the promise of a better world made in 1943 with Brazil Builds was staged in 1955 as a threshold for the entire region and as demonstration of the advantages of a US-led postwar modernization. This work articulates the historical conditions that, in 1955, allowed the British Architectural Review to talk about a "Latin American manner" in architectural modernism. Architectural historians and critics outside the region noticed the contours of a Latin American modern style on the period roughly between 1939 and 1955 and deployed historiographic strategies to include the region's buildings within the history of Western architectural modernism. Rather than a study of an architectural style, this dissertation presents Latin American modernism as a historical concept born out of the tensions between similarity and difference with Western culture at the time of the hegemonic rise of the United States. The need for a regional construct named "Latin America" permeated postwar modernization before the unfolding of the bi-polar world of the Cold War. This work shows that the idea of Latin American architecture was subordinated to early postwar political and cultural anxieties in the United States and highlights MoMA as a key stage in the construction of this historical concept, beyond the specifics of any single exhibition. This study engages international modern architecture culture as refracted through the museum and the varied cast of characters and events supported by this cultural powerhouse to reveal overarching strategies that enabled the idea of Latin America. Guided by US postwar economic and political strategies, the multiple mirror images and distortions produced at MoMA made modernism in the Americas a contested ground challenged by regional Latin American powers and European cultural centers. This dissertation examines five exhibitions that involved the entire museum (Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art), the Department of Painting and Sculpture (Portinari of Brazil) and the Department of Architecture and Design (Brazil Builds, From Le Corbusier to Niemeyer: 1929-1949 and Latin American Architecture since 1945), as well as other related events that influenced architecture culture during this period. This work positions Latin American modern architecture within a Western postwar culture and delineates the forms of inclusion and exclusion--of what and who was modern--that created both physical spaces and mental maps of postwar modernity giving a transnational image of the Western World.

Geographic Areas

Latin America

Subjects

Art Architecture Latin Americans

Files



delReal_columbia_0054D_10950.pdf application/pdf 25.2 MB



More About This Work

Academic Units

[Architecture](#)

Thesis Advisors

Martin, Reinhold I.

Degree

Ph.D., Columbia University

Published Here

October 10, 2012



[About](#) | [FAQ](#) | [Policies](#) | [Developers](#) | [Credits](#)

✉ ac@columbia.edu

Academic Commons provides global access to research and scholarship produced at [Columbia University](#), [Barnard College](#), [Teachers College](#), [Union Theological Seminary](#) and [Jewish Theological Seminary](#). Academic Commons is managed by the [Columbia University Libraries](#).

Latin American builders modified the baroque style to suit the environment of the New World. Areas plagued by earthquakes needed thicker walls. Tropical regions required wood ceilings to provide better ventilation. Architecture The most important trend in architecture of the early 1800's was neoclassicism. This style originated in France. It used columned facades and other forms inspired by the classical architecture of ancient Greece and Rome. Architecture Several large building projects were undertaken in different parts of Latin America during the 1900's. The University of Mexico was designed in 1950-53 by a group of more than 150 architects, including Juan O'Gorman and Félix Candela. It combines modern architecture with the work of Mexican muralists. The architecture of the United States demonstrates a broad variety of architectural styles and built forms over the country's history of over four centuries of independence and former Spanish and British rule. Architecture in the United States is as diverse as its multicultural society and has been shaped by many

Download

DOI

<https://doi.org/10.7916/D8736Z1J>

