

A4388: Plastic Modernity: Art, Sculpture, and Cinema in Latin American Architecture

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Mathias Goeritz and Luis Barragán, Torres de Satélite, Mexico City, 1958

Throughout the twentieth century, we find architects and artists in Latin America interested in exploring the relationship between art and architecture. We also find close collaborations and exchanges between artists and architects. While some countries –such as Mexico, Brazil, and Venezuela– developed very strong investigations on the relationship between the plastic arts and modern architecture (or, plastic integration), others explored it more casually; developing new forms of spatial practices and artistic expressions.

The most well-known examples of plastic integration are the Universities in Mexico City and Caracas which, in the 1950s, considered the monumental impact of the new architecture and the art to be placed on/in/near it. In the Mexican case, the dictates of the earlier socially minded avant-garde still held considerable weight: making the art legible and part of the communicative tradition instituted after the 1910 Mexican revolution. In Caracas, the architect sought instead works that were abstract and that helped to define the character of the modern architecture; as a result, he hired prominent European artists as well as progressive, young Venezuelan ones.

In 1963, when the critic Paul Damaz published *Art in Latin American Architecture*, the production and debates regarding plastic integration within Latin American architecture seemed all but exhausted. After all, the European call for integration of art into modern architecture advocated by various factions of the post-World War II CIAM had been in place since, at least, José Vasconcelos' influential muralism program for Mexican schools and public

buildings following the Mexican revolution. Discussions about what type of art was appropriate for modern architecture ensued almost immediately; questioning the style, form, and content and its relationship and application to architecture. As Damaz's book showed, however, the integration of plastic arts and the debates that accompanied it, however, continued (and, continue to this day) throughout the development of modern architecture in Latin America. What is clear is that architects were seeking artists (and closely collaborating with them) to develop art for their buildings, that artists were actively interested in developing architectural works or spatial practices, and that architects were equally interested in developing work more closely aligned to that produced by artists. In addition, there was a whole generation of artists trained as architects and vice versa who explored the limits and overlaps of both disciplines. Film has also played an interesting, yet marginal role, within modern architecture: it has aimed to capture and express the unique conditions surrounding the architecture, cities, and spaces that it has set to capture.

This class aims to address and discuss the various explorations and expressions of plastic integration throughout twentieth century Latin America in order to understand the reasons behind them, the cross-influences that existed, and the innovations that ensued.

The topics and case studies are:

Plastic Integration – the application of art to architecture. Case studies include UNAM (Mexico City), Universidad Central (Caracas), Ministry of Education and Public Health (Rio de Janeiro), Teatro San Martin (Buenos Aires). Debates surrounding “socialist realism” and the appropriateness of realistic or abstract art for modern architecture will also be addressed.

Artist as Architect – the artist acting as architect, landscape architect, and/or planner. Case studies include Mathias Goeritz's *El Eco* (Mexico City), Gonzalo Fonseca's Tower of the Winds for the Route of Friendship (Mexico City), Matta's *Sensitive Mathematics* and work for Le Corbusier's atelier, Roberto Burle Marx Odete Monteiro Garden (Brazil), Gyula Kosice's *Hydrospatial City*; spatial practices include Gego's *Reticulares*, Helio Oiticica's *Tropicalia*, and David Alfaro Siqueiros' *Plastic Exercise*.

Architect as Artist – the architect that acts as a painter, sculptor, etc. Case studies include Juan O'Gorman's Cave House (Mexico City), Francisco Salamone's Cemetery Portals in Azul and Laprida (Argentina), Solano Benitez's Tomb for his Father (Paraguay), Smiljan Radic's Charcoal Burner's House (Chile).

Monuments – works that straddle between being architectural or sculptural. Case studies include Alberto Prebisch's Obelisco (Buenos Aires), Juan Tirado Valle and Ramón Alva de la Canal's Monument to Morelos (Michoacán, Mexico), Mathias Goeritz and Luis Barragán's Satellite Towers (Mexico City), Angel Guido and Alejandro Bustillo's Monument to the Flag (Rosario, Argentina).

Architect | Artist Collaborations – works which result from the close collaboration between architects and artists. Case studies include Smiljan Radic and Marcela Correa's Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2014 (London) and Mestizo Restaurant (Chile), Diego Rivera and Juan O'Gorman's Anahuacali Museum (Mexico), Alberto Kalach and Jorge Yazpik's GGG House (Mexico), Nelson Bayardo and Edwin Studer's Columbarium (Montevideo), Mathias Goeritz and Ricardo Legorreta's Automex Factory (Toluca), Fernando Romero and Gabriel Orozco's Orozco House project.

Cinematic Space – works which use cinema to express or highlight spatial, architectural, and/or urban works or their character. Case studies include Cohn and Duprat's *The Man Next Door* on Le Corbusier's Curutchet House (2009), Alonso's *Fantasma* on Alvarez's Teatro San Martín (2006), Guimarães *Canoas* on Niemeyer's House (2011), Müller's *Vacancy* on Brasilia (1998), Ivens' *...à Valparaiso* on Valparaiso, Chile (1962).