

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

Spring 2019 | M 11am – 1pm | Avery 114

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Isamu Noguchi, *History Mexico (History as seen from Mexico in 1936)*, Mercado Abelardo Rodríguez, Mexico, 1936

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. This includes:

**Plastic Integration** – the application of art to architecture. 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. In some cases, artists developed works or practices whose main character was spatial.

**Architect as Artist** – the architect that acts as a painter, sculptor, etc.

**Monuments** – works that straddle between being architectural or sculptural.

**Architect | Artist Collaborations** – works which result from the close collaboration between architects and artists.

**Cinematic Space** – works which use cinema to express or highlight spatial, architectural, and/or urban works or their character.

January 28

## Introduction

## Plastic Integration

February 4

### University Cities as Testing Grounds

*Reading:* Carranza/Lara pp. 162-169; Carranza, "Horror Vitreo"; Larrañaga, "Towards the Visibility of the Invisible." \*

February 11

### Teatro San Martin + Other Forms of Plastic Integration

*Reading:* Damaz 68-98; Carranza/Lara 186-187; Film: *Fantasma*

## Artist as Architect

February 18

### El Eco: Emotional Architecture

*Reading:* Carranza, "Mathias Goeritz: Architecture, Monochrome, and Revolution"; Goeritz, "Manifiesto of Emotional Architecture"; Goeritz, "We are Fed Up..."; Barragán, "Pritzker Prize Acceptance Speech"

February 25

### Spatial Practices: Oiticica's *Tropicalia* and Gego's *Reticularea*

*Reading:* Carranza/Lara 246-249; "Ruptura manifiesto"; Oiticica, "General Scheme of the New Objectivity"; "Neo-Concrete manifiesto"; Carvahal, "Gego: Outside In, Inside Out."

March 4

[Poss. Reschedule]

### Hydrospatial City: Kosice

*Reading:* Carranza/Lara 267-271

## Cinematic House

March 11

[Bibliography Due]

### Film: *Hombre de al Lado + Canoas*

*Reading:* Joseph Rosa, "Tearing down the House: Modern Homes in the Movies"; Merchant, "Melodramatic Materials: *The Roof* and *The Man Next Door*"; Hessler, "Tamar Guimarães."

March 18 - 24

### Spring Break

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\* Most readings available at: [REDACTED]

## Architect as Artist

March 25

### Matta's Architectural Surrealism

*Reading:* Barnitz pp. 118-121/129; Carranza/Lara pp. 94-98; Matta, "Sensitive Mathematics-Architecture of Time."

April 1

### Juan O'Gorman's Cave House

*Reading:* González de Canales, "The Mask House: Juan O'Gorman, House in the Pedregal de San Ángel, Mexico, 1948-56."

## Monuments

April 8

[Outline Due]

### Monuments to Nowhere: Francisco Salamone

*Reading:* Carranza/Lara 84-85; Belluci, "Monumental Deco in the Pampas: The Urban Art of Francisco Salamone"; Sert, Giedion, and Leger, "Nine Points on Monumentality"; [Fragment of *Historias Extraordinarias*]

## Cinematic City

April 15

### Films: Brasilia / Valparaiso - City as Monument

*Reading:* Carranza/Lara pp. 199-205; "Pilot-Plan for Concrete Poetry"; Clarise Lispector, "Vision of Splendor"

## Architect | Artists Collaborators

April 22

### Smiljan Radic + Marcela Correa: Serpentine Gallery Pavilion

*Reading:* Radic, "2014 Death at Home"; Crispiani, "The Game of Opposites"

May 10

## Project Presentations and Booklets Due

## Course Requirements:

**Attendance and Class Participation (20% of grade)** - Each class will consist of a careful examination and in-depth discussion of the issues raised in the texts, presentations, etc. As such, attendance and active participation are obligatory as well as intensive reading and preparation of the material assigned. *If you can't be in class, please send me an email letting me know.*

**Reading Assignments** - The reading assignments are required and must be completed prior to the class for which they are assigned. You are expected to read and prepare to discuss the required readings in order to facilitate a collective discussion of all of the material.

With some exceptions, all of the readings will be on-line ( [REDACTED] ). Books can be purchased and, in most cases, are available at the Avery Library and/or as electronic resources. For class, make sure to bring any notes and/or copies of materials to class for reference purposes during the lectures and discussions.

**Final Booklets (80% of grade)** - This final paper is really considered to be a collaborative work of two students and is intended to be an academic and individualized research into a topic of the students' interest. The investigation should be centered on examining a work(s) from the twentieth century not covered in class (see also list of possible topics). The research should focus on the artist/architect; his/her works, ideas, projects, etc; the nature of the artistic intervention, translation, and/or collaboration; the typological, theoretical, formal, material, etc. issues addressed in the work; the historical and cultural context and their effects on the forms, ideas, decisions, etc.; the intended meaning, intention, etc. of the work; etc. The goal is to develop a small booklet that addresses these concerns: presenting the particularities of the work(s) within their historical, cultural, and art/architectural contexts both textually, photographically, analytically (through diagrams, drawings, overlays, marginalia, etc.). In any case, make sure you talk to me about the topic(s) that you are interested before starting. Finally, I am completely open to anyone who is interested in working on something related to the material of the class on your own or following a different presentation/research model; however, we would need to talk about this at length and find an agreeable topic and final product.

In order to avoid repetition of topics, there will be a Google Docs sign-up sheet; this will mean that the topics will be chosen/selected on a first come first served basis. In this way, at the end of the semester, we will have a very complete set of investigations centered on the theme of the class.

The booklet should be approximately 40 pages long (without including bibliography). Of the 80% final grade for the Final Paper, 20% will be based on an annotated bibliography (due March 11), 20% will be based on an outline, preliminary draft, and research notes (due April 8). The final booklet is due on May 10, 2019 – with the intention of having some brief presentations of the research and outcomes. The booklet should be turned in both in its physical form and as a PDF document.

**Possible Topics Include:** One of the best sources of topics/works to analyze is Damaz's book, *Art in Latin American Architecture*. From there you can choose a work/architect/artist who you might be interested in further investigating. Damaz's book's publication date limits the works, however, to works created until 1963. There are many more contemporary works, collaborations, and other forms of investigations into plastic integration. If you are unsure of what you might focus on, please come and talk with me.

The following list can be seen as a preliminary list of suggestions (to be expanded):

- 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
- Solano Benitez's Tomb for his Father (Paraguay)
- Smiljan Radic's Charcoal Burner's House (Chile)
- Alberto Prebisch's Obelisco (Buenos Aires)
- Juan Tirado Valle and Ramón Alva de la Canal's Monument to Morelos (Michoacán, Mexico)
- Angel Guido and Alejandro Bustillo's Monument to the Flag (Rosario, Argentina).
- Diego Rivera and Juan O'Gorman's Anahuacali Museum (Mexico)
- Nelson Bayardo and Edwin Studer's Columbarium (Montevideo)
- Fernando Romero and Gabriel Orozco's Orozco House project
- Jorge Oteiza, Project for a Monument to José Batlle y Ordóñez (Montevideo)

Please keep in mind that no late work will be accepted. No exceptions. In addition, any instance of plagiarism and/or academic dishonesty will be reported and dealt with according to the Policy on Academic Honesty set by Columbia University. All quotes and ideas from sources other than your own must be properly referenced.

The instructor reserves the right to modify this syllabus and requirements as needed.

## Bibliography:

- Dawn Ades, *Art in Latin America: The Modern Era, 1820-1980* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).
- Jacqueline Barnitz, *Twentieth-Century Art of Latin America* (Austin: U. of Texas Press, 2001).
- Alberto Belluci, "Monumental Deco in the Pampas: The Urban Art of Francisco Salamone," *Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 18 (Argentine Theme Issue) (1992).
- Emilio Ambasz, *The Architecture of Luis Barragán* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1976).
- Luis Barragán, "1980 Pritzker Architecture Prize Speech" in *Barragán: The Complete Works* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996).
- Luis E. Carranza, "Horror Vitreo," *Praxis* 2 (2001).
- Luis E. Carranza, "Mathias Goeritz: Architecture, Monochrome, and Revolution," *Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 26 (Mexico Theme Issue).
- Luis E. Carranza and Fernando Lara, *Modern Architecture in Latin America: Art, Technology, and Utopia* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014).
- Rina Carvahal, "Gego: Outside In, Inside Out," in *The Experiment Exercise of Freedom* (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1999).
- Alejandro G. Crispiani, "The Game of Opposites," *El Croquis* 167 (Smiljan Radic 2003-2013).
- Paul F. Damaz, *Art in Latin American Architecture* (New York, Reinhold Pub. Corp., 1963).
- Defying Stability: Artistic Processes in Mexico, 1952-67* (Mexico, DF: UNAM, 2014).
- Mathias Goeritz, "Manifiesto of Emotional Architecture," *Casabella* (June 2001).
- Mathias Goeritz, "'The Route of Friendship': Sculpture," *Leonardo* v.3, n.4 (October 1970).
- Francisco González de Canales, "The Mask House: Juan O'Gorman, House in the Pedregal de San Angel, Mexico, 1948-56" in *Experiments with Life Itself: Radical Domestic Architectures between 1937 and 1959* (New York: Actar, 2012).
- Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *Latin American Architecture since 1945* (New York, Museum of Modern Art, 1955).
- Matta Echaurren, "Sensitive Mathematics – Architecture of Time" reprinted in *Drifts and Derivations: Experiences, Journeys, and Morphologies* (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, 2010).
- Jean-François Lejeune, ed., *Cruelty and Utopia: Cities and Landscapes of Latin America* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2005).
- Clarise Lispector, "Vision of Splendor" in Clarise Lispector, *The Complete Stories* (New York: New Directions, 2015).
- Salvador Lizárraga Sánchez and Cristina López Uribe, eds., *Living CU 60 Years: Ciudad Universitaria UNAM* (Mexico : [Facultad de Arquitectura], Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2014).
- Esther McCoy, "The New University City of Mexico," *Arts and Architecture* vol. 69, No. 8 (August 1952).
- Mari Carmen Ramirez, and Olea, Hector, eds., *Inverted Utopias: Avant-Garde Art in Latin America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).
- Smiljan Radic, "2014 Death at Home," *Bestiario: ARQ+2* (2014).
- Joseph Rosa, "Tearing down the House: Modern Homes in the Movies" in Mark Lamster, ed., *Architecture and Film* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2000).
- Josep Lluís Sert, Sigfried Giedion, and Ferdinand Leger, "Nine Points on Monumentality" in Joan Ockman, ed., *Architecture Culture: 1943-1968. A Documentary Anthology* (New York: Rizzoli, 1993).
- Federica Zanco, ed., *Luis Barragán: The Quiet Revolution* (New York: Skira, 2001).