

## Editorial

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This special issue, of the academic journal *arq.urb*, is dedicated to the curators of architectural exhibitions and, by extension, to the exhibitions themselves, which nevertheless appear as more or less parallel references of the experiences that the curators present to us, always, as personal testimonies that illuminate not only the field of exhibitions but, above all, the field of architecture.

The special issue, which begins with a historical presentation of the theme of architecture (and urbanism) exhibitions and the practices of its curators, was given by Fernando G. Vázquez Ramos, co-editor of this magazine and Professor at the postgraduate program of the Universidade São Judas Tadeu, also includes articles written by important professionals from different countries. Obviously from Brazil, as part of this issue: Agnaldo Farias, Architect, Professor at the Universidade de São Paulo, art critic, and curator; Carlos Eduardo Dias Comas, Architect, Professor at the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, and historian; Marcelo Carvalho Ferraz, Architect and

curator, founding partner of the award-winning Brasil Arquitetura office, and Renato Anelli, Architect, Professor at the Universidade de São Paulo (IAU), researcher, curator, and member of the Lina Bo and Pietro Maria Bardi Institute. Among the international contributions: Marilyns Nepomechie and Eric Goldemberg (USA), professors at the Florida International University Miami Beach Urban Studios; Pedro Azara (Spain), Professor at the Escola Técnica Superior de Arquitetura de Barcelona and curator, with especial dedication to archeological exhibitions; Victoria Wilson (England) was curator at the Royal Institute of British Architects and now serves as Collections Manager of the important Ramsbury Manor collection (Wiltshire, GB); Francesco Maggiore (Italy), coordinator of the didactic and scientific activities at the Francesco Moschini Fund (FFMAAM, Polytechnic of Bari). One of our Brazilian invitees, Carlos Eduardo Dias Comas, talks about an exhibition in the United States and his relationship with curators of MoMA, Barry Bergdoll and Patricio del Real, and Jorge Francisco Liernur, from Torcuato

di Tella University, Buenos Aires, Argentina, who also participated at the exhibition in the USA.

The specific tone and intentions of each of these articles are quite varied, which enriches the panorama presented, corresponding precisely to one of the main purposes of the journal when this issue was thought. Some of the texts have more direct relationships with specific exhibitions, such as the text by Agnaldo Farias (Peter Eisenman at MASP), Carlos Eduardo Dias Comas (Latin American Architecture at MoMA) or Victoria Wilson (Mies van der Rohe and James Stirling at RIBA). Others are broader considerations that, based on the experiences that the exhibitions carried out, cover the doubts, yearnings, judgments, decisions, and reflections about the architectural exhibitions themselves in our day.

The order of presentation is not accidental, although obviously the articles can be read independently following any order that pleases the reader (like an architectural adaptation of the widely known novel by Julio Cortazar, *Rayuela*). However, the journal's interest was to situate each of them within a larger context. Obviously, the authors did not write their articles aiming to combine them, they worked totally independently and freely. Notwithstanding, once the texts were received and read by the editors, a rather unitary approach was observed that demanded almost a specific order of presentation. A sequence that suggests a broader and, above all, a complementary sense.

The suggested order was as follows: a chronological presentation (Fernando G. Vázquez Ramos), an account of the exhibitions in Brazil (Agnaldo Farias), a political understanding of the function of exhibitions (Marcelo Carvalho Ferraz), the perception of an educational dimension (Renato Anelli), the critical recovery of the expository tradition and an openness to new possibilities (Carlos Eduardo Dias Comas), the thematic perspective as a field of exploration of the intentions of architecture (Marilys Nepomechie and Eric Goldemberg), the recognition of the past as an enriching experience of the present (Victoria Wilson), a relation between art, poetry and architecture (Francesco Maggiore) and, finally, an ethical questioning about the material [the artifacts] on display (Pedro Azara).

This order also relates to the topics covered. Thus, the texts written by Farias, Ferraz, Anelli, Comas, and Nepomechie and Goldemberg, are connected with one another by commenting expositions or themes in common, such as the exhibitions on Latin America in MoMA, or the few architectural exhibitions showing in Brazil. All of them bring, in one way or another, reflections on the meaning of the exhibitions (Anelli and Ferraz), the role of the institutions (Comas, Farias, Maggiore, Wilson), or the diligence of the curators (Azara and Farias), including their expectations and frustrations.

The presentation offers an approach regarding the birth and consolidation of architectural exhibi-

tions and the intentions of its creators, who at first were not considered as “curators”, but viewed as promoters or organizers of exhibitions, almost always interested in producing some kind of public commotion or agitation. The history of the institutional consecration of the exhibitions and the appearance of the curator as a professional figure dedicated to thinking and putting into practice this type of exhibitions is also reported in the presentation, which ends with the formulation of the concerns that led *arq.urb* to suggest this theme for this special issue.

The paper by Agnaldo Farias presents the situation of architectural exhibitions in Brazil, introduces the history of how they were consolidated, especially at the end of the 20th century, and discusses the role of architecture exhibitions within the great cultural institutions, such as the Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP), the Museu da Casa Brasileira (MCB), the Tomie Ohtake Institute (ITO) and the Centro de Arquitetura e Urbanismo (CAU) in Rio de Janeiro. Supported by his enormous experience as a curator, since he was the general curator of the ITO, at the São Paulo Biennial of Art, and now acts as general curator of the Oscar Niemeyer Museum in Curitiba, Farias confronts us with the most acute problems that exhibitions of this type have been having in contemporary Brazil. Its vicissitudes, conflicts, and challenges, since the prestigious institutions, that today could make expositions of architecture, find serious problems to develop them. Faced with this pas-

sivity, the author asks himself “how does the role of the museum remain as a center committed to the production of knowledge? What is the duty of a curator, indeed?”

The article by Renato Anelli begins with a questioning interwoven with that of Agnaldo Farias, almost continuing his thinking about the institutions that tried to develop some work on architecture exhibitions. Comments are complementary while enriching each other. In the sequence, Anelli describes his own experience as curator within the activities of Glass House (Lina Bo Bardi) and the Institute Lina Bo and Pietro Maria Bardi. The description is not only enumerative but it points out the difficulties, not only functional but mainly conceptual, that the assembly of exhibitions presents in the specific situation of the house-museum.

The paper by Marcelo Carvalho Ferraz seems to try to answer the questions made explicit by previous authors when he states that “designing or constructing an exhibition is a strong political act”. In this manner of questioning the social role of exhibitions, Ferraz focuses on the intentions of architectural exhibitions that propose to reveal an object that is slippery for them, since the purpose of architecture is not to be exposed, but to serve as a material basis for life. Thus, exhibitions should be conceived as communicative forms that lead the viewer to an enlightening understanding, the author argues that the curator can (and should) “enlighten the spectator’s walk creating a new reality.” The defense of the un-

derstanding that exhibitions need their own grammar, which is not necessarily that of architecture itself, but develops relationships with cinema, literature, and theater, reinforcing the appeal towards a particular understanding of the curator's duty as a political communicator of a complex social reality, as architecture is.

The article by Carlos Eduardo Dias Comas puts us in front of the vicissitudes of the great international shows managed by powerful cultural institutions that invest in architectural exhibitions from practically the beginning of this genre of a cultural phenomenon. This is the specific case of the exhibition "Latin America in Construction: Architecture, 1955-1980", held at MoMA in 2015, organized by Barry Bergdoll, Patricio del Real, Jorge Francisco Liernur and Carlos Eduardo Dias Comas himself. This assembly retakes another from the same museum, from 1955, "Latin American Architecture since 1945". After 60 years, the eyes of the curators of the museum turn again to the region trying to rethink, now with the help of local experts, what happened to the architecture, from Mexico and Cuba reaching the Southern Cone between 1955 and the 1980s. The retrospective extends the proposal of the previous paper [by Victoria Wilson] from a specific place to an entire region, but starting from the same assumption, how architecture is capable of expressing socio-political conditions, always in the light of the culture of the social groups that shaped it (see also the text written by Marcelo Ferraz). The panora-

mic vision that introduces this article is not limited to the point of view of the territorial scope of the exhibition on canvas, but it also covers the view of the curators who participated in the selection and assembly of the material, since the visions of South Americans such as Liernur and Comas, converge with Americans like Bergdoll. Patricio del Real is an interesting aggregator, because being Spanish, but working for years in the US, includes a European vision in the treatment of the issue, which certainly improves it.

The paper by Marilys Nepomechie and Eric Goldeberg describes the setting up of a thematic exhibition on social housing developments established in the twentieth century in Latin America. The article points to two significant issues: an indirect one, which evidences the importance given in the USA to the architectural experiences developed in Latin America, especially those of the post-war period, a condition that brings it closer to the text of Carlos Eduardo Dias Comas, which addresses a similar subject; and a direct one, which demonstrates how the presentation of a specific issue, in this case, regarding the large social housing complexes, can construct a broader approach capable of achieving the greater meaning of architecture, not its essence, of course, but its intentions and the general orientation which, at least in a certain period of Western history, architecture has manifested. It is precisely this contextualization that is why, although with a theme centered on Latin American production,

the exhibition places other international experiences, such as that of the Japanese metabolists, for example, to syntonize them with what was being done in America.

The text of Victoria Wilson brings us the adventures of compose a unique exhibition in its genre. We affirm that it is unique due to the union between architects of different generations in the same place of deployment, separated by time, but with a specific project and client in common. We refer to the proposals for Mansion House Square in London, one in 1962 and another in 1984. The architects are: the German, naturalized as an American citizen, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969), and the Englishman Sir James Frazer Stirling (1926- 1992); the client, English tycoon Lord Peter Palumbo. As the author states, “taken as a whole, the story of the site at Mansion House can be seen as a fascinating microcosm of Britain’s changing attitudes to both [modern and] contemporary architecture,” resuming the narrative of urban changes taking place in the City of London for the last fifty years. The exhibition itself was thought as a moment of reflection on this historical and cultural, aesthetic and political, social and economic path, through which the architecture and its understanding (reception and use) by the society has passed. A return to the circumstances of the past, with the precise purpose of thinking the present.

Francesco Maggiore introduces us to the hectic

world of cultural institutions dedicated to architecture shows, opening a field that links exhibitions with collections, libraries, universities, and museums. Art presents itself as an integrating element and permanent contact between different expositions that the author describes to us. In this direction, and in favor of a philological research that analyzes the reflective and autonomous aspects of the architecture project, the author traces the exhibitions of the Austro-American architect Raimund Abraham (1933-2010), the Spanish architect Juan Navarro Baldeweg (1939), the Dutch architect Jozef Maria Johannes (Jo) Coenen (1949), the Norwegian architect Sverre Fehn (1924-2009), the American architect Steven Holl (1947), the Portuguese architect Alvaro Siza Vieira (1933) and the Italian-Argentine architect and artist Clorindo Testa (1923-2013). As the author states, they are “seven monographic exhibitions dedicated to seven masters of architecture that have defined some of the most significant orientations of contemporary architecture”.

Finally, closing the issue, the paper by Pedro Azara has two parts. It questions, in the first part, through a personal story, the origin of the pieces that can be exposed in an exhibition. Especially in those which use archaeological artifacts. The most recent cases are from the Middle East war, particularly the ones that resulted from the attacks of the Islamic State, are fundamental to the author’s argument. They also highlight a situation that includes the smuggling of works of art and

the huge black market that formed around them. Azara points out not only issues related to the quality and value of the exhibitions (cultural, artistic, monetary too) but also to the ethical and moral integrity of those who expose the artifacts (which implies the curator and the institution that sponsors them). The second part narrates in a very detailed way how to set up an exhibition, which includes: location and selection of works, loans between institutions, the transfer of the works [artworks, artifacts, objects] from one place to another, rooms, museography (set design, assembly, lighting, security), and ultimately, the tremendous effort of the curator and his collaborators.

We hope that the texts compiled here will be of interest to our readers and may encourage and disseminate knowledge in the Architecture and Urbanism disciplines, as we see writings such as the following promote debate and critical reflection, which is undoubtedly the mission of the journal.

*Fernando G. Vázquez Ramos*

*Eneida de Almeida*

**Editors**

