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THE HYPER AMERICANS!

MODERN ARCHITECTURE IN VENEZUELA DURING THE 1950s

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THE HYPER AMERICANS!

MODERN ARCHITECTURE IN VENEZUELA DURING THE 1950s

by

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To my parents,

inspiring witnesses of the recent past.

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THE HYPER AMERICANS!

MODERN ARCHITECTURE IN VENEZUELA DURING THE 1950s

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During the 1950s, Venezuela embarked in an architectural venture marked by aesthetic, programmatic, and technological explorations. Politically framed by the international tension of the Cold War, this period was distinguished by multiple commercial exchanges between Venezuela and the United States, specially based on the oil industry. Many cultural aspects of the Venezuelan life, including its urban and architectural production, changed because of this interrelationship. Yet the conventional view is that architecture in Venezuela was torn between the repetition of U.S. models and the purest creativity of its local designers.

Based on periodical publications of that time, and methodologically framed by the contemporary notion of transculturation and Gianni Vattimo's *weak though,* this research demonstrates that modern architecture in Venezuela, produced by both locals and Americans, went beyond a unilateral center-periphery influence, and ended up being the *hyperrealization* (intensified version) of U.S. ideals. In this sense, the research analyzes an aspect not studied yet

in depth: the connection between the long-term geographical profile of Venezuela and a unique geopolitical situation, as the basis for an outstanding architecture.

The dissertation examines how the Edificio Creole in Caracas, designed by American architect Lathrop Douglass for Standard Oil, and completed in 1955, was not the subsequent version but the advanced prototype of the Esso office buildings both in Louisiana and New Jersey. It shows as well how the Electricity Building in Caracas (1955), also designed by Douglass, and whose authorship has remained unknown until now, represented a unique opportunity both to explore the insertion of an "horizontal skyscraper" in downtown, and to reveal a complex network of professional and political relations. By examining Higuerote Beach Resort, a vacation and residential complex located near Caracas, the dissertation also demonstrates how American magazines were used by Venezuelans as the basis for an architecture that became original without the inspiration of a genius designer. Finally, this research analyzes the production of a *supernatural* architecture through the Helicoid Shopping Center in Caracas (designed by Arquitectura y Urbanismo C.A. in 1955), one of the most paradigmatic examples of modern Venezuelan creativity, and probably the utmost realization of the American Utopia.

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Introduction

ARCHITECTURE BEHIND BARS… BUT IT WAS NOT ALWAYS THE CASE: VENEZUELA IN THE 1950s

The doorway to the Esso Building seems to invite visitors by saying,
"why not stop in and visit with us a while?"

"The Esso Building,"
brochure published by Standard Oil Company,
Baton Rouge Refinery, 1950.

In the lobby, whose walls are covered with Venezuelan marble, sits the main receptionist,
and there are a news stand and a store selling Esso products.

"Oil company hopes new building will be the last,"
article on the *Edificio* Creole published by
Venezuela Up-to-date, March 1955.

A tall, electrified metallic fence and innumerable signs warning about security alarms keep visitors away from a long, five-story building located on the Scenic Highway in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Perhaps because of the dense pattern of the fence or just because no movement can be observed, the building simply goes unnoticed. Through the bars, industrial materials and light machinery can be seen right in front of the building, displayed randomly with no specific arrangement. The whole building and its immediate surroundings look like an improvised depot that nobody wants to visit. Paradoxically, the proliferation of security signs and an electrified wire are strong reminders that something important remains safely behind bars. Nobody is allowed to come in; nothing is allowed to go out.

More than two thousand miles away, in Caracas, Venezuela, another building faces a similar situation. Unlike the Baton Rouge structure, it doesn't go unnoticed; what is more, it shows a certain flow of people. However, the building is somehow excluded from its surroundings: a sort of political apartheid and a subsequent functional transformation make most visitors feel intimidated and unwelcome. A tall fence, although inherited from its former owners, has gained a different meaning. Here, electrified wires and warning signs have been substituted with a red

painted marquee: a persuasive ideological reminder. It is not clear whether these buildings are inmates or are being protected (or both). Nevertheless, it is evident they have undergone a segregation (and segregationist) process; they remain behind bars. But this was not always the case.

After its inauguration in 1950, the doorway of the Standard Oil office building in Baton Rouge seemed to invite visitors by saying, "why not stop in and visit with us a while?" A photograph included in an Esso brochure of the time depicted not just a transparent building, but people of the community showing great enthusiasm and genuine interest in visiting it. The Standard Oil office building in Caracas, known as *Edificio* Creole, in turn, had been planned to enjoy an excellent location, midway between downtown and a new residential district, and adjacent to the also new University City (Central University of Venezuela).[1] In its double-height entrance hall, visitors could not only be in contact with Standard Oil's latest news, but also buy Esso products in person. Both buildings certainly were open and accessible to their respective communities. More than mere office buildings, they projected the image of the corporation beyond their own limits.

Both societies, American and Venezuelan, have been strongly linked to the oil industry. Presently, the United States is the world's third largest oil producer, the eleventh oil exporter, and has the fourteenth largest proven reserves. Venezuela, in turn, is the world's eighth largest oil producer and the seventh largest oil exporting country, while its proven oil reserves are claimed to be the largest in the world.[2] During the 1950s, the United States was the world's largest oil producer (over 50% of the global production), as well as the largest consumer and

[1] Since 2003, by decree of President Hugo Chávez, the *Edificio* Creole has housed the Bolivarian University of Venezuela (Universidad Bolivariana de Venezuela). It was a direct consequence of the Venezuelan general strike of 2002-2003, in which *Petróleos de Venezuela* (PDVSA), a major state-run oil company, took an active part. After the strike, PDVSA underwent a deep re-organization, which included the dismissal of 18,000 managers and employees, as well as the re-functionalization of some of its buildings.

[2] See *Key World Energy Statistics from the IEA*, Paris: International Energy Agency, 2013, 15, http://www.iea.org/publications/freepublications/publication/KeyWorld2013.pdf (accessed on January 25, 2014).

importer. Petroleum figures had been shaped (and fostered) by two world conflicts. After World War II, in this sense, Venezuela ended up playing a highly significant role in the Cold War. It was the World's leading oil exporter until 1951, and the second largest producer (only surpassed by the United States) (*figure 0.1*). Venezuelan petroleum would eventually become even more valuable in the face of the Korean War (1950-53), the Iranian expropriation of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (1951), and the Suez War (1956). By that time, more than thirteen foreign oil companies worked in Venezuela, and of them, Creole Petroleum Corporation, a subsidiary of Standard Oil of New Jersey, was the most important by far.[3] As the world's number one oil producer at the time, Creole became not just Esso's "breadwinner," but also an industrial showcase in Latin America, if not in the whole Western Hemisphere.[4]

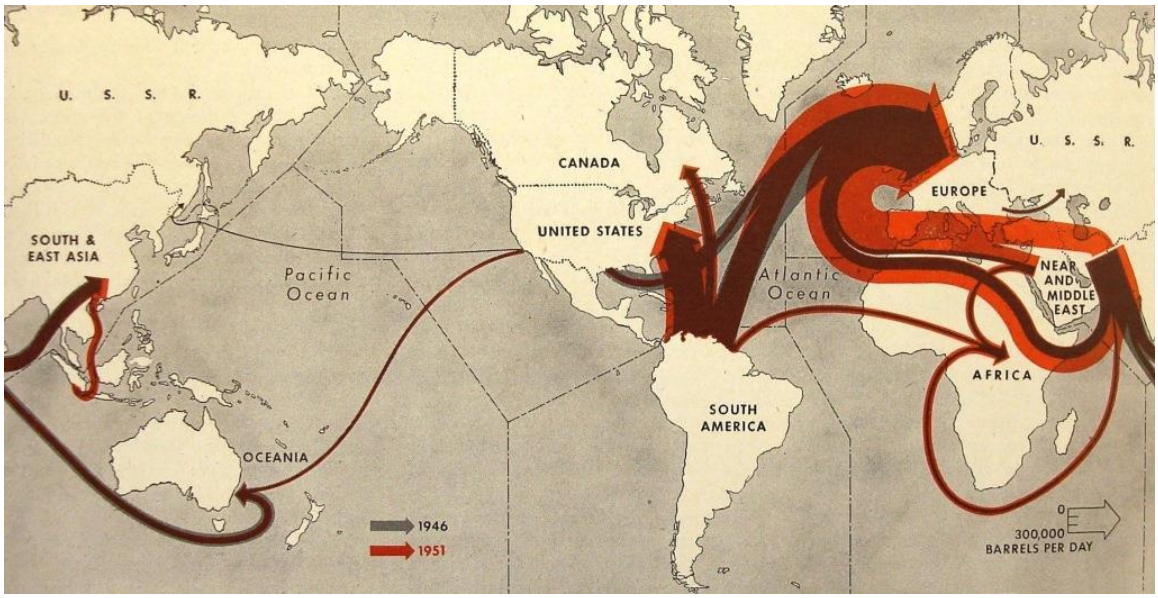

FIGURE 0.1
The flow of oil in 1946, indicated by black arrows. Red arrows show this movement as it was estimated for 1951.
Source: *The Lamp* (Sept. 1947), 10.

[3] In 1951 its daily average production in barrels was 815,070, much higher than the closest competitors: Royal Dutch Shell (569,899); Mene Grande Oil Co. (Gulf Oil Co., 264,676); Socony (55,778); Mercedes (24,865), and Texas (20,099) (see *Venezuela Up-to-date,* May 1952, 7).

[4] Benneth H. Wall. *Growth in a Changing Environment. A History of Standard Oil Company (New Jersey)/Exxon Corporation. 1950-1975* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1988), 396.

Apart from the oil industry, large-scale mining of iron began in the 1950s with concessions granted to Bethlehem Steel and the United States Steel Corporation. As a reliable supplier of hard commodities, particularly oil, Venezuela was regarded as the "billion-dollar cash customer." In 1954, for example, it bought US$532 million in U.S. products (including machinery, autos and trucks, food stuffs, textiles, chemicals, and dairy products, among others), and remitted to the U.S. some US$500,000,000 in payment for services. The level of commercial exchange was such that, by 1955, 35,000 U.S. citizens lived and worked in Venezuela. Moreover, politically framed by the right-wing dictatorship of Marcos Pérez Jiménez (1953-58), the country became a precious ally of the United States amid the Cold War's international tension.

Beside its oil reserves and its industrial potential, Venezuela enjoyed a strategically important geographic position, located at the northern end of South America and facing the Caribbean Sea (*figure 0.2*). As a consequence of its strategic location and its holistic relationship with the United States, Venezuelan culture underwent a deep transformation. From its social imagery and taste to its daily routine, Venezuelan life changed permanently. American influence ended up being not just evident, but deeply rooted in Venezuelan cultural structure. As Judith Ewell has described, Venezuelans studied at Harvard and preferred to play baseball instead of soccer.[5] Many American companies opened offices in Venezuela; Sears, Roebuck and Company, for instance, had six outlets in the country by the early 1950s. In front of one of them, close to downtown Caracas, was located a Pan American Airways office and a new office building, the latter designed for U.S. and local tenants by the American architect who had been responsible for the Esso office buildings both in Baton Rouge and Caracas. Nelson Rockefeller, who had fostered the design and construction of the Avila Hotel, the first modern hotel in Venezuela, was the key figure behind the creation of the Venezuelan Basic Economy Corporation (VBEC), responsible for producing and distributing food in the country. Strongly linked with Creole Petroleum Corporation and other oil companies, from which it had received $18 million to set its

[5] Judith Ewell, *Venezuela and the United States: From Monroe's Hemisphere to Petroleum's Empire* (Athens/London: The University of Georgia Press, 1996), 5.

projects in motion, and planned to strengthen and broaden the economy of Venezuela, the VBEC also led to cutting-edge building investments. In this sense, CADA Shopping Center in Las Mercedes neighborhood (Caracas), designed by U.S. architect Don Hatch, constituted the second time Venezuelans had contact with a self-service purchasing system.[6] There, they could acquire a huge variety of products and food (some of them imported from the United States), with many different brands, directly from the shelves. The U.S. presence was so intertwined with Venezuelan society that it was almost impossible to disentangle one from the other.

FIGURE 0.2
Central America and the Caribbean: the strategical location of Venezuela vis-à-vis the United States. Source: *The World Factbook 2013-14*, 2013.

[6] The first time had been *Todos,* a supermarket opened in Maracaibo (Zulia state), in 1949, also designed by Hatch. CADA Shopping Center in Las Mercedes was opened in 1954, and would be the first of a CADA supermarket chain in Venezuela.

CADA Shopping Center, however, did not only represent a novel way of acquiring products. Its architectural composition, spatial arrangement, building materials, and its relation with technology constituted a totally (and holistically) new experience for Venezuelan customers.[7] Besides CADA, there were many examples of private building investments. In this regard, one of the most conspicuous and significant examples was the Polar Tower in Caracas (1954), by architects José Miguel Galia and Martín Vegas. It was an International Style skyscraper, the first in Venezuela to use the curtain-wall system. However, private buildings were not the only type of architectural investment. Through a political-building program devised by President Pérez Jiménez, known as the New National Ideal (NNI), and financed by the increased revenues coming from the oil industry, Venezuela saw an unprecedented process of territorial and urban transformation. From new highways and avenues to large architectural ensembles, such as the Caracas-La Guaira Highway, the Humboldt Hotel on El Avila Mountain and its cable car system (which managed to communicate the capital city with the sea), and the University City of Caracas, the NNI translated petrodollars into grandiose schemes.

The difference between official and private ventures was, in any case, very subtle. If the American presence was closely intertwined with Venezuelan society, so were the government and private investments. The proliferation of avenues in Caracas, and highways connecting strategic places in the surrounding territory, was absolutely coherent with the birth of an unprecedented urban phenomenon. This phenomenon, by way of a new tradition, would eventually come to be a sort of Venezuelan "fingerprint:" the culture of the automobile. By means of daily publicity bombardment in local newspapers, Venezuelans became obsessed with

[7] The self-service purchasing system (on the shelf) implied a deep change in the Venezuelan society, traditionally accustomed to buy in local, small grocery stores or bodegas, served or helped by their owners. CADA led Venezuelans from a "handcrafted" buying method to a standardized, universal and mass-produced one. However, CADA also constituted a brad-new urban, architectural experience to which Venezuelan were not habituated. Both aspects were inseparably linked.

cars, particularly with U.S. brands. Such obsession had an architectural dimension in Caracas. Gas stations, dealership offices, and auto showrooms, designed by both local and U.S. architectural firms, and showing either rational or sui generis forms, became an integral part of the urban landscape.

Venezuela embarked during the 1950s in an extraordinary architectural venture marked by aesthetic and technological explorations that were a highly significant part of the U.S.-Venezuela bilateral agenda. In parallel with the dissemination of the International Style and its variations, immediately after World War II, Latin American architectural discourse deepened the ongoing discussion on regionalism, identity, and organic architecture. In keeping with this tendency, Venezuelan cities (and particularly Caracas) saw the appearance of new architectonic forms, new programs, new building materials, new structural systems, and particularly a new relationship between building and technology. This period was so prolific and rich that historians have usually regarded it as the "golden age" of modern Venezuelan architecture.[8]

Yet the conventional view is that architectural production in Venezuela was torn between the adaptive repetition of foreign models, following the influence of American culture as a passive

[8] On this respect, see José Rosas, "La Ilusión de una Nueva Arquitectura en Venezuela," in *Arquitectura x Procesos*, ed. Elisa Silva (Caracas: Fundación Espacio, 2010), 15-45. Venezuela, and particularly Caracas, became an international reference of prosperity and vitality in a broad sense. Its modern architecture and urban planning, as well as its music, art and fashion started receiving international recognition (see Graziano Gasparini and Juan Pedro Posani, *Caracas a través de su Arquitectura* [Caracas: Fundación Fina Gómez, 1969]); *Santiago de León de Caracas 1567-2030*, ed. William Niño and Rafael Arráiz [Caracas: Exxon Mobil de Venezuela, 2004]). In *1950, El Espíritu Moderno,* critic and historian William Niño stated that Venezuela achieved its "full modernity" during the 1950s, in contrast to the "early modernity" of the 1920s and 1930s (corresponding to the Juan Vicente Gómez era), and a "late modernity" during the 1970s and 1980s (Caracas: Fundación Corp Group Centro Cultural, 1998, 18 [my translation]). Even back in the mid-1950s, Henry-Russell Hitchcock recognized that Venezuela was "the newest area of architectural achievement in Latin America" (*Latin American Architecture since 1945* [New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1955], 45). Dirk Bornhorst, an exceptional witness of the time (and whose work will be extensively analyzed in this dissertation), stated that the 1950s' boom in Venezuela was a celebration of the new and the audacious; an optimistic time when everything was possible (see *El Helicoide* [Caracas: Oscar Todtmann Editores, 2007], 10 and 11). In Venezuelan architectural history, according g to him, "the 1950s were the incarnation of a unique, bold and lively architecture" (ibid, 32 [my translation]).

receptor, and the purest creativity of its local designers, which implied the total denial of external references. This dissertation will challenge such a view by examining specific cases of corporate and commercial buildings, as issued in periodical publications of the time. Instead of either a simple recipient that copied foreign patterns or a "cradle" of creative geniuses, the country became a huge laboratory to put a cutting edge architectural knowledge to the test.

Motivated by the notion of transculturation, and particularly by Gianni Vattimo's *weak thought*,[9] this study will demonstrate that modern architecture in Venezuela during the 1950s was more American in spirit than that made in the United States. The creation of such sui generis architecture, in this sense, was possible only because of the inextricable combination of a specific geographical location, the oil industry, and a particular local idiosyncrasy. Moreover, as architectural magazines, bulletins, journals, and newspapers of the time reveal, architecture in Venezuela (produced both by locals and Americans) went beyond a unilateral center-periphery influence, and ended up being the *hyperrealization* (an intensified version) of U.S. cultural ideals.

The critical approach that both transculturation and "weak thought" have adopted to analyze the center-periphery relationship (particularly in terms of how peripheries can geopolitically influence centers) perfectly matches the tendency to boost the American way of life, as I identified in 1950s Venezuela. Architecture (both as a professional discipline and a material production) as well as the city per se were probably the most conspicuous realms in which such intensification took place. In this regard, this dissertation demonstrates that the Edificio Creole, designed by American architect Lathrop Smith Douglass for Standard Oil in Caracas, and completed in 1955, was not the subsequent version of a U.S. corporate building (as it's believed), but the prototype for the Esso office buildings in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and Elizabeth-Linden, New Jersey, finished respectively in 1950 and 1953. Since the early stages of its design, in 1947, such prototype had been paradoxically conceived as a more complex version

[9] See *El Pensamiento Débil*, ed. Gianni Vattimo and Pier Aldo Rovatti (Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 1995 [originally published in Italian, 1983), 70, and Gianni Vattimo, *El Fin de la Modernidad* (Barcelona: Editorial Gedisa, 1998 [originally published in Italian, 1985]).

of its American counterparts. This dissertation shows as well how the Electricity Building in Caracas, also designed by Douglass in 1955, and whose authorship had remained unknown until now, represented a unique opportunity not only to explore the insertion of an "suburban skyscraper" in downtown, but also to reveal an intricate network of relations between American and local architects, builders, developers, private entrepreneurs (particularly Nelson Rockefeller), and the Venezuelan government.

It also discusses Higuerote Beach Resort, a vacation and residential complex located near Caracas, organized around a system of canals, organically arranged, a network of coastal public spaces, and an outstanding set of architectural pieces, all exhibiting free-flowing forms. The research, in this regard, illustrates how Venezuelans used American magazines as the basis for an architecture that became original without the inspiration of a genius designer.

Finally, this study analyzes the development of a *supernatural* architecture in Caracas, particularly through the examination of the Helicoid Shopping Center, one of the most conspicuous and paradigmatic examples of modernism in Venezuela, designed by architects Jorge Romero Gutiérrez, Pedro Neuberger and Dirk Bornhorst in 1955, and started in 1956. Because of its striking resemblance with two never-built projects by Frank Lloyd Wright (the Gordon Strong Automobile Objective and Planetarium, 1924, and the Pittsburgh Point Civic Center project, 1947-49), as well as the organic incorporation of cutting-edge technology into the building, and its sublime, awe-inspiring dimensions, the Helicoid may be regarded as the utmost realization of the American Utopia.

Beyond its main objectives, this study also attempts to demonstrate that despite the contemporary perception of irreconcilable differences between the United States and Venezuela in political terms, there is a structural compatibility linking both cultures, which began in the 1950s. The urgent need to "create" a modern Venezuelan identity, although paradoxically constructed from the otherness, left a deep mark in the Venezuelan *mentalité*. It

was the same need that led Venezuela to try out "a century of progress in five years," as stated in a well-known exhibition that took place in New York, 1957.[10]

ON JUSTIFICATION, SIGNIFICANCE AND METHODOLOGY

Since its beginning, in 2011, this critically-inspired research has sought to relate two different temporalities in Venezuela: its present time and its recent past. The choice of the 1950s, as a specific period in Venezuelan architectural history, was not by chance. The present strained United States-Venezuela relations unavoidably led me to examine, precisely, its opposite moment in the past: the gilded days of the bilateral relations between both countries. Such return in time, however, as Friedrich Nietzsche stated in his critical history, should not be blandly innocuous; it should not be tolerant.[11] More than condescending visitors to the past, historians, according to Nietzsche, should bring the past to trial. In this sense, by identifying present-day Venezuelans' dreams and nightmares, and formulating specific questions, this research went back in time in search of answers; to judge the Venezuelan recent past.

Cold War studies have certainly opened significant room for the United States-Latin America relations during the 1950s, as well as to their respective architectural productions. Comparatively, however, modern Mexican and Brazilian architecture (particularly the latter) have attracted much more attention than other Latin American countries. The Museum of Modern Art of New York, for instance, had already organized an exhibition about Brazilian architecture: "Brazil Builds," in 1943, based on Philip L. Goodwin's survey, and accompanied with photographs by G.E. Kidder-Smith.[12] That year, a special report published in the January

[10] The exhibition had taken place in the New York Coliseum, from April 14 to 29 of 1957, for occasion of the New York World Fair. Organized in an open, bright space, with rationalist aesthetic lines, "the exhibit covered an area of 1,800 square feet for the display of Venezuelan natural and manufactured products, with numerous mural photographs" (*Venezuela Up-to-date,* Jun. 1957), 9.

[11] See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Unfashionable Observations (Volume 2).On the Utility and Liability of History for Life* (Standford, CA: Standford University Press, 1995 [originally published in 1874]).

[12] Exhibition #213, January 13-February 28, 1943.

issue of *Architectural Record* endorsed the exhibition.[13] The Museum's second survey on Latin American architecture implied a widening of Goodwin's exhibition. *Latin American Architecture since 1945,* by Henry-Russell Hitchcock, actually included a broader scope of case studies.[14] In addition to Brazil and Mexico, the survey included nine other Latin American countries. However, the "specific weight" of these countries was not homogeneous. The exhibition presented 47 works; of them, fourteen were from Brazil, nine from Mexico, six from Venezuela, five from Colombia, and three from Cuba. Argentina, Chile, Puerto Rico and Uruguay were each represented by two works, while Panama and Peru were each represented by one. The Venezuelan presence was significant in this survey. It included Carlos Raúl Villanueva's Aula Magna and the Covered Plaza at the University City (1952-53), as well as the Olympic Stadium (1950-51); the Polar Tower, by José Miguel Galia and Martín Vegas (1952-54) (the latter a disciple of Mies van der Rohe at the Illinois Institute of Technology); the Housing Unit Cerro Grande, by Guido Bermúdez (1951-54), and the Montserrat Apartment Building, by American architect Roger Halle (1950) of Guinand & Benacerraf, a Venezuelan firm established by Carlos Guinand and Moisés Benacerraf, who had come from Harvard and Yale University respectively.

Although Hitchcock entitled his survey as *Latin American Architecture since 1945*, another title seems to be more appropriate: *Architecture in Latin America since 1945*. Probably not as phonetically rhythmical as the original, this hypothetical title would reflect a deep difference. It would not only be about architecture designed by locals, but architectural works designed by both locals and foreigners in Latin American soil. As a matter of fact, the survey did include the works of German architect Henry Klumb in Puerto Rico (Church of the Blessed Martin Porres, San Juan, 1950), Spanish architect Antoni Bonet in Uruguay (House for Gabriel Berlingieri, Punta Ballena, 1946-47), Le Corbusier in Argentina (House for Dr. Pedro D. Curutchet, La Plata, 1949-54), and the U.S. firm Harrison & Abramovitz in Cuba (American Embassy in Havana, 1952-53).

[13] Philip Goodwin and G.E. Kidder-Smith, "Architecture of Brazil," *Architectural Record*, Jan. 1943, 34-56.

[14] Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *Latin American Architecture since 1945* (New York: Museum of Modern Art), 1955. The exhibition, identified as #590, was on display from November 23, 1955 to February 19, 1956.

In this sense, this dissertation has focused on modern architecture in Venezuela, instead of modern Venezuelan architecture. The subtle presence of a preposition in the title makes a big difference in the content. It certainly allowed me to include works designed by American architects in Venezuela, but more importantly, the widening of the scope allowed me to present a more complete, more accurate and at the end a more real picture. What is more, such a widening may represent a significant contribution to American historiography. Lathrop Douglass' work in Venezuela, in this sense, can be regarded as the epitome of such historiographical contribution.

Well-known during the 1950s and 1960s, Douglass had a prolific architectural work. He was an expert in both shopping centers and office buildings, particularly oil industry architecture. As a matter of fact, Hitchcock reported Douglass' Creole Oil Building as one of the prominent structures designed by North American architects.[15] As an authority in these building types, Douglass was a prolific lecturer and author. He published his professional philosophy in many architectural magazines and book's chapters during the 1940s, 1950s and 1970s. He also played a significant role as a representative of the American Institute of Architects in the 1960s. Nowadays, however, there is not any historical account or bibliographical reference about Douglass; he has gone unnoticed by the vast literature of American architectural history. In this sense, it is particularly remarkable (although it sounds paradoxical) that a significant chapter of the American history is still standing in Venezuela; more importantly, such a missing part of the history can be explained through Douglass' production in Caracas: the Edificio Creole and the Electricity Building.

This discussion unavoidably leads to the Center-Periphery theoretical frame. The contribution of the "periphery" to the study of the civilizational "core" can be seen in Higuerote Beach Resort, whose remarkable set of architectural pieces was designed by engineers and draftsmen (non-architects) based on American periodical publications. It can be seen in Caracas' Helicoid too. Its programmatic and morphological uniqueness, its organic integration with cutting-edge

[15] Ibid, 20.

technology and the sublime character of its physical, real presence made this edifice the built epitome of Wright's automobile objectives.

THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL STRATEGY: THEORETICAL FRAME

The relationship between center and periphery has a long epistemological tradition. In a certain way, its study was established in the early 19th century; since that time, notions such as Empire and Colonization, and consequently Imperialism, have been unavoidably attached to each discussion on the core-periphery relationship. Special attention deserved, during the 20th century (particularly in the 1960s and 1970s), the formation of a social science theoretical body called Dependency Theory. Also known as Center-periphery model, it was intended to explain the holistic backwardness of both underdeveloped and developing countries, particularly those of Latin America. According to this theory, resources would flow from a backward periphery to developed centers, enriching the latter and impoverishing the former. Also, according to Brazilian anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro, civilizational processes would occur through two opposite ways: an *evolutionary acceleration,* in which societies that command new technologies progress in social terms (using sources from a backward periphery), and a *historical incorporation,* in which less developed societies are "towed" by the former, and buy their technology.[16] Particularly valuable to analyze the urban and architectural production, apart from Ribeiro's works, were the contributions of Fernando H. Cardoso and Manuel Castells,[17] whose works argued that underdeveloped and developing countries were not merely primitive versions of developed countries.[18] These works attempted to go beyond economics and examined the

[16] See Darcy Ribeiro, *The Americas and Civilization* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1971), 34 and 35.

[17] See Fernando Henrique Cardoso, "La Ciudad y la Política," in *Urbanización y Dependencia en América Latina,* ed. Martha Schteingart (Buenos Aires: S.I.A.P., 1973), 176-205; Manuel Castells, *La Cuestión Urbana* (México, D.F.: Siglo Veintiuno, 1974), chapter 1 "El fenómeno urbano: delimitaciones conceptuales y realidades históricas," 15-27, and Celso Furtado, *Dialéctica del Desarrollo* (México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1989).

[18] Dependency Theory was a reaction to Modernization Theory (a previous development theory), which stated that, with assistance, traditional or backward societies could be brought to development in the same way developed countries had done. These traditional societies, in this sense, would be covering the

civilizational influence, both cultural and technological. Although critical in its approach, the Dependency Theory only provided a unidirectional standpoint of influence.

This perspective had a deep effect on the architectural field. In English or Spanish, major studies on modern Latin American and Venezuelan architecture, have been torn between the unavoidable U.S. influence on the region and the regional resistance to such influence. In a certain way, both positions depend to each other: a regional resistance only makes sense insofar as the foreign influence is recognized. This Manichaean, dialectic perspective inspired a number of books that have advocated the pure originality of Latin American architecture. Even Hitchcock, who had certainly recognized the U.S. influence, was dazzled by both the new architectural production in the region and its alleged originality.

Besides the sheer creativity of Latin American architects (against foreign models) as a major hallmark, literature production has been characterized by the acknowledgement of regional differences (despite the dangerous tendency to embrace all the Latin American countries as a cultural unity); the use of the historical past to support the idea of a regional originality; the concern about the authentic versus the spurious; the dependency on foreign technology, as well as climate and territory. Such literature has included *New Directions in Latin American Architecture* by Francisco Bullrich (1969),[19] *América Latina en su Arquitectura* by Roberto Segre (1975), *The Changing Shape of Latin American Architecture: conversation with ten leading architects* by Damián Bayón and Paolo Gasparini (1979),[20] and *Nueva Arquitectura en América*

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same path that advanced societies covered in the past. According to Darcy Ribeiro, Modernization Theory was always linked to American sociology and academic anthropology. Studies on "structural dualism," "modernization," "social mobility," and on the transition from "traditional mode" to "industrial mode" societies would be examples of this trend (see Darcy Ribeiro, *Las Américas y la Civilización* [Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1992], 9).

[19] Originally published as *Arquitectura Latinoamericana* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana), 1969.

[20] Originally published as *Panorámica de la Arquitectura Latinoamericana* (Barcelona: Blume), 1977. The abundant use of iconography in this book contrasts with the Marxist rhetoric of Segre's *América Latina en su Arquitectura,* in which even one image was not included.

Latina: Presente y Futuro, edited by Antonio Toca Fernández (1990).[21] Literature originally written in English has been marked by Kenneth Frampton's Critical Regionalism. Emerging during the early 1980s, this concept emphasized the geographical conditions where the architectural piece is placed (topography, climate and light), its tectonics and its *haptic* nature (touch instead of vision).[22] Critical Regionalism, however, according to Keith Eggener, "inadvertently marginalized and conflated the diverse architectural tendencies it championed."[23] Moreover, as Argentine critique Marina Waisman stated, Latin American architecture seems to be an affirmation of local culture, instead of a Manichaean strategy of "resistance," as proposed by Critical Regionalism.[24]

More recently, and after decades of silence in literature written in English, Valerie Fraser's *Building the New World* (2000) represented an effort to retake modern Latin American architecture as a whole. According to Fraser, architectural production in the region during the 1940s and 1950s should not be regarded as an uncritical reworking of either European or North American modernism. Finally, *Latin American Architecture 1929-1960* (2004, edited by Carlos Brillembourg), featured a study of influence and counterinfluence between Le Corbusier and Oscar Niemeyer, as well as the creative collaboration between Carlos Raúl Villanueva and American sculptor Alexander Calder at the University City of Caracas.[25]

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[21] In this book, see particularly Cristian Fernández Cox, "Hacia una Modernidad Apropiada: obstáculos y tareas internas," 71-93, and María Isabel de Larrañaga and Alberto Petrina, "Arquitectura e Identidad en la Argentina," 164-188.

[22] See Kenneth Frampton, "Toward a Critical Regionalism: six points for an Architecture of Resistance," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Bay Press), 1983, and *Modern Architecture. A Critical History* (London: Thames & Hudson), 2007.

[23] Keith Eggener, "Placing Resistance: A Critique of Critical Regionalism," *Journal of Architectural Education* 55/4 (May 2002): 228.

[24] Ibid, 233.

[25] Respectively Kenneth Frampton, "Le Corbusier and Oscar Niemeyer: influence and counterinfluence, 1929-1965," 34-49, and Carlos Brillembourg, "Architecture and Sculpture: Villanueva and Calder's Aula Magna," 60-73.

Today the main concerns of the Center-periphery theory have evolved and spread in many different ways. The notion of *glocalization* (which states that is impossible to understand the global without the local); post-colonial theory (which analyzes the legacy of colonialism, and in which Homi Bhabha is inscribed); border studies, including the notions of hybridization and limits;[26] and queer theory, are somehow recent evidences of this epistemological dispersion from the Center-periphery model.[27] Even the notion of "rhizome" by Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze (a horizontal, non-hierarchical conception of knowledge, opposed to an arborescent, hierarchical one) can be associated to this process of theoretical transformation.

Nevertheless, for the specific purposes of this dissertation two trends turned out to be extremely useful: one that comes from *transculturation*, a term coined by Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz in 1940,[28] and particularly the idea of *weak thought* (or *pensiero debole*) by Gianni Vattimo and Pier Aldo Rovatti. Instead of the traditional, imposing and unidirectional term *acculturation*,[29] *transculturation* refers to a multi-directional process between cultural systems, by way of mutual interactions. It explores, in a critical manner, the interaction between the Latin American realm and other cultures around the world. As Felipe Hernández stated in *Transculturation* (2005), the term refers to "a multi-directional and endless interactive process between various cultural systems" which is in opposition to "unidirectional and hierarchical structures determined by the principle of origin that is always associated with claims for cultural authority."[30] In other words, the term transculturation "places the theorization of processes of

[26] See, for instance, *Lógica del Límite*, by Eugenio Trías (1991).

[27] Interview to Prof. Hector Domínguez, Associate Professor of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, College of Liberal Arts, The University of Texas at Austin. October 27, 2011.

[28] Ortiz (1881-1969), was also historian and ethnomusicologist.

[29] Usually related to the center-periphery model, the term *acculturation* means the process of transformation of a traditional culture by adapting to or borrowing traits form a developed society, as a consequence of an *historical incorporation.* In other words, it is the process of acquiring another culture.

[30] Felipe Hernández, *Transculturation* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), xi.

cultural exchanges between peripheries and centers on a more democratic basis."[31] Interaction (of multiple cultures), and (endless) transformation, are key ideas to understand *transculturation*. In this sense, a dynamic architecture that not only receives influences (and even less is the result of a mere endogenous process), but interacts with its varied sources, turned out to be useful to understand the bilateral relationship between Venezuela and the United States.

Vattimo and Rovatti's ideas, in turn, proved to be even more potentially applicable to my objectives. Dissatisfied with both the *logocentrism* that characterized the Western philosophical response to nineteenth century, and its illusion of epistemological certainty, Vattimo and Rovatti proposed a system based on hermeneutics, and emphasized the role of language and interpretation in philosophy, rather than epistemology's "strong thoughts;" hence, their proposal's name: *weak thought*. In such a critical perspective, the dialectical relation between center and periphery definitely gains different dimensions. The thesis behind *Il Pensiero Debole* (1983) affirms that periphery is able to affect the center, as in the metaphor of the "background noise," which is valid in the same degree as that of "who listen to."[32] In his essay on the dichotomy of monument and ornament, published in *La Fine della Modernità* (1985), Vattimo contrasted a type of art that is seen, an art to pay attention to, versus another kind of art, decorative, which would only be subject of a sidelong attention. What is important, according to him, is not the center against the periphery, the essence vis-à-vis the appearance, the lasting versus the accidental or mutable, the certainty of the object versus the vagueness and imprecision of the horizon; but the inconspicuous event, a background incident, precisely where the being happens.[33] This decorative, peripheral "experience" that interacts with the spatial,

[31] Ibid., xi.

[32] Pier Aldo Rovatti, "Transformaciones a lo largo de la experiencia," in *El Pensamiento Débil*, ed. Gianni Vattimo and Pier Aldo Rovatti (Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 1995 [originally published in Italian, 1983), 70. My translation.

[33] Gianni Vattimo, *El Fin de la Modernidad* (Barcelona: Editorial Gedisa, 1998 [originally published in Italian, 1985]), 80. My translation. The English version, *The End of Modernity*, was published by Polity Press in 1988.

structural "essence" of the building (and actually informs it), and which at the end of the day is also responsible for the subject's remembrance, would play a highly significant role in Vattimo's *weak thought*. As Ignasi de Sola-Morales pointed out, the present-day artistic universe "is perceived from experiences that are produced at discrete points, heterogeneous to the highest degree, and consequently our approximation to the aesthetic is produced in a weak, fragmentary, peripheral fashion, denying at every turn the possibility that it might ultimately be transformed definitely into a central experience."[34] Even culture, in general terms, has shifted "the center of its interests toward those regions formerly regarded as manifestly peripheral."[35] However, as he mentioned, it does not mean that aesthetic experiences, in the contemporary world, are at the center of the referential system. On the contrary, "they continue to occupy a peripheral position; but this peripheral position possesses not a marginal but paradigmatic value."[36]

In this regard, the possibility of elaborating a center-periphery, alternative history based on mutual interactions (where the marginal is able to inform the core), can be found for instance in *Empire, Architecture and the City*, by Zeynep Çelik. Analyzing the interactions between the Ottoman and the French Empires in Turkey during the 19th century, she demonstrated how the Ottoman architecture was "Frencher" than that found in Paris.[37] This kind of urban and architectural intensification, as Çelik indicated, can also be found in Latin America as Fernando Chueca Goitia asserts. According to Chueca Goitia, colonial Hispanic American architecture had "a plus of Spanishness." Architecture, which was a decisive art in Hispanic America, and ruled

[34] Ignasi de Sola-Morales, *Differences. Topographies of Contemporary Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997 [originally published in Spanish, 1995]), 61.

[35] Ibid, 60.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Zeynep Çelik, *Empire, Architecture, and the City: French-Ottoman Encounters, 1830-1914* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 4.

over the entire continent, was "more Spanish than that made in Spain."[38] The existence of a vice royal architecture, superior in effort and volume to what was done in Spain, clearly demonstrated that it was not a colonization process (since any colonization is an extractive operation); it was a permanent implantation, which root had been made to endure. The Hispanic American operation, in this sense, was one of reduplication: "it was a re-Hispanicization of the Spanish; a super-Hispanicization."[39] Actually, the battle fought in the Spanish Peninsula to Hispanicize the European vocabulary, was held again in Hispanic America to re-Hispanicize the architectonic vocabulary that the Peninsula received.[40] Placed in simple words, "Hispanic American architecture was the most Hispanic of all architectures."[41] This thesis, in fact, undermines the miscegenation theory, which claims that Hispanic American baroque can only be explained through the influence of local labor force.

Similarly, James Ackerman brings the center-periphery dialectic to a new dimension when he discusses about the sources of the Renaissance villa. Although the traditional scholarship regarded the Renaissance as a rebirth of the classical experience, he demonstrated how the villa received much more influence from the Middle Ages (periphery) than the classical culture (center). The ancient villa, according to him, had not been reborn, because it had never died; the medieval descendants had been capable to provide the quattrocento "with a more vital

[38] Fernando Chueca-Goitia, *Invariantes Castizos de la Arquitectura Española. Invariantes en la Arquitectura Hispanoamericana. Manifiesto de la Alhambra* (Madrid: Seminarios y Ediciones S.A., 1971), 166. Compared with architecture, he said, the other arts (painting and sculpture) were poor. Moreover, Christianity, language (Spanish) and architecture were the three big legacies Spain left in the Americas. Without these three factors, according to Chueca Goitia, the vast Hispanic American world hadn't been able to be structured.

[39] Ibid, 167.

[40] It is important to remember that, during that time, architecture in Spain was actually receiving a significant influence from different European origins.

[41] Chueca-Goitia, *Invariantes Castizos de la Arquitectura Española. Invariantes en la Arquitectura Hispanoamericana. Manifiesto de la Alhambra*, 167.

inspiration than the ruins of Rome."[42] The peripheral position that medieval architecture had respect to the 14th century would play, in Ackerman's perspective, a central role in the definition of the Renaissance villa.

By way of a tendency, these critical approaches can also be found in other academic fields. Recently, linguists of the University of Texas at Austin worked with remaining speakers of dying languages to preserve cultural memories. Hans Boas, Associate Professor of Germanic Studies, conducted hours of interviews with the last remaining speakers of one of the oldest dialects of this state, Texas German.[43] As he stated, the relevance of this study lies in the uniqueness of this dialect: a rare mixture of English, several German dialects (as immigrants brought in the 1840s), and 19th century standard German. Equally relevant has been the research of Barbara Bullock, Professor of French and Italian. By analyzing the small community of Frenchville in central Pennsylvania, her study provides invaluable evidence of how rural eastern French was spoken in the 19th century.[44] Beyond the original objectives of professors Bullock and Boas, these studies also show the potential of such migrant dialects: by way of either time capsules or living archives, they contain information that cannot be found anymore in their respective countries of origin

All these critical approaches certainly move away from the traditional influence-reception relationship that has characterized the center-periphery model. By deconstructing its unidirectionality, they show a surprising "inversion" of principles: the receptor, more than just an epitome, ends up being the hiperrealization of the original ideal. Moreover, they indirectly (and paradoxically) become custodians of what either is in process of disappearing or has

[42] James Ackerman, "Sources of Renaissance Villa," in *Distance Points. Essays in Theory and Renaissance Art and Architecture* (Cambridge, MA-London, 1991), 303-324.

[43] See Hans C. Boas, *The Life and Death of Texas German* (Durham: Duke University Press for the American Dialect Society), 2009.

[44] See "Linguistics work with remaining speakers…" http://www.utexas.edu/features/2010/01/11/dying_languages/ (accessed Jan. 11, 2010).

already come to an end in the respective countries of origin. In this sense, this dissertation (carried out by a Venezuelan citizen) represents a contribution to recover a vanishing part of the American architectural heritage.

REFINING THE STATE OF THE ART: ON GEOGRAPHY, GEOPOLITICS AND VENEZUELAN OIL INDUSTRY ARCHITECTURE

Besides the strategic theoretical frame, a general review of the literature produced on geopolitics is revealing. In *Empire, Architecture and the City,* for instance, Zeynep Çelik recognized Turkey as a strategically significant place in the international context. Eeva Pelkonen, in turn, analyzed Alvar Aalto's Finland, with particular regard to the technological and stylistic exchanges between Western and Eastern Europe, and the search for a local identity during a tense political period.[45] She cleverly coined the expression "key region," while Vladimir Kulić, in his doctoral dissertation on modern Yugoslavian architecture, defined the notion of the land of the "in-between."[46] This is the same geopolitical condition that Graziano Gasparini identified in the Venezuelan territory for the three centuries of Hispanic domination. Its long coast and openness to the Caribbean Sea had guaranteed its intervention in both the complex net of trading routes and the most important military episodes during the colony, with the consequently "trade" of architectural languages (not only with Spain, but with the Caribbean per se).

Although based on different principles, the *longue durée* character of such strategic condition can also be seen during the 20th century. The geopolitical significance of Venezuela in the last century, as a consequence of the oil industry and two world conflicts, has been undeniable. Scholarship on this matter, however, is not abundant. As Professor Valerie Fraser asserted in

[45] Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen. *Alvar Aalto: Architecture, Modernity, and Geopolitics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

[46] Vladimir Kulić, "Land of the In-between: Modern Architecture and the State in Socialist Yugoslavia, 1945-1965." Ph.D. diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 2009.

Building the New World, published in 2000, there was not much literature in English on Latin American architecture during the previous twenty-five years. After having being extremely interested in the region from 1940s to the 1960s, the United States seems to have recently developed a sort of academic "myopia."[47] In the case of recent academic production in English about modern Venezuelan architecture, the lack of information is quite obvious. The situation is even more noticeable when we attempt to analyze the bilateral relationships between Venezuela and the United States through their respective architectural production.

Probably the most remarkable works on the geopolitical importance of Venezuela have been, respectively in English and Spanish, *Venezuela and the United States: From Monroe's Hemisphere to Petroleum's Empire,* by Judith Ewell (1996), and *EE.UU. en Venezuela: 1945-1948. Revelaciones de los Archivos Estadounidenses* (U.S.A. in Venezuela: 1945-1948. Revelations of the American Archives), by Margarita López Maya (1996). Although exhaustive and rigorous, their subjects are not specifically architectural. In this sense, one of the most comprehensive literature productions on the relationship between architecture and geopolitics has been Jeffrey Cody's *Exporting American Architecture, 1870-2000* (2003), which shows the high level of investments, as well as the complexity and specialization of the American institutions involved in Latin America, particularly in Venezuela, during the Cold War.[48]

Regarding the specific influence of geography on Latin American architecture, Beatriz García Moreno's research deserves to be mentioned. In her *Región y Lugar, Arquitectura Latinoamericana Contemporánea* (Region and Place, Contemporary Latin American Architecture)*,*[49] she analyzes the concepts of *regionalism*, *region*, *place* and *identity*, as tackled by most of the Latin American Architecture Seminars (SAL). The Venezuelan case, in turn, does not have abundant production. Apart from those architectural works that merely describe the

[47] Valerie Fraser, *Building the New World. Studies in the Modern Architecture of Latin America 1930-1960* (London: Verso, 2000), 2.

[48] See chapter 5 "Architectural Tools of War and Peace, 1945-1975" (London/New York: Routledge, 2003).

[49] Bogotá: Centro Editorial Javeriano, 2000.

sui generis topography of Caracas (reminding us the principles of domestication of the nature, as stated by General Pérez Jiménez's New National Ideal), there is not a significant study on this matter; much less any that links the notions of geopolitics, climate and topography, or even geography and oil industry.

As expected, the production of Venezuelan academic literature on architecture has been traditionally related to the oil industry. However, there are only a few publications that analyze such relations in depth. Among these are *La Arquitectura del Petróleo* (Petroleum Architecture), by Pedro Romero (1997), and two of particular value for this research: "Modernity for import and export: the United States' influence on the Architecture and Urbanism of Caracas," by Lorenzo González (1996), which discusses the activity of Wallace Harrison and Robert Mosses in Caracas,[50] and "La Arquitectura Urbana de las Corporaciones Petroleras: conformación de 'Distritos Petroleros' en Caracas durante las décadas de 1940 y 1950" (The Urban Architecture of Oil Corporations: organization of the 'oil districts' in Caracas during the 1940s and 1950s), by Henry Vicente (2003).[51]

This state of the art gives an idea of the strengths and weaknesses of the sources available, and shapes the character of this research. In this sense, by way of an alternative history of mutual interactions (beyond the conventional relation center-periphery), based on the influence of geography, oil industry, and even culture, this research is intended to fill a significant gap in the contemporary architectural history.

SOURCES, ICONOGRAPHIC MANAGEMENT AND SOME METHODOLOGICAL FEATURES

The development of such an alternative history led me to extensively use specialized periodical publications in architecture as the main set of sources. Architectural magazines were not just one of the fastest means of disseminating professional developments of the time; they

[50] *Colloqui* (Spring, 1996b): 64-77.

[51] *Espacio Abierto* 12, 3 (July-Sept. 2003): 391-414.

illustrated the main trends in their respective countries. American magazines in architecture, which had a long tradition that went back to the late nineteenth century, had already achieved international reach by the Cold War, particularly in Latin America. Venezuelan architectural magazines, in turn, appeared just in the 1950s. Their release, however, was not shy; they were boosted by the modern movement, and at the same time they were boosters of modernity in Venezuela. Moreover, they played a significant role in both the transformation of Venezuelan society and the formation of a modern national identity.

This new identity, which included a renewal of nationalism and a rapid modernization of the country, left a deep mark in Venezuelan culture. Apart from its material achievements, and beyond the political narrative construction of the NNI, the 1950s modern Venezuelan identity was set up as a sort of myth, subject to multiple interpretations, and whose influence has endured until today. As Benedict Anderson stated, the myth as a "fragmented" narrative, but at the same time articulated and "articulator," leads us directly to the notion of *print-language*. This *print-language* — according to Anderson — would be laying the bases for a national consciousness by means of a unified field of exchange and communication: print and paper (where very different speakers would become "capable of comprehending one another"). It would be giving a "new fixity to language" as well, which in the long run helps "to build that image of antiquity," so central to the subjective idea of the nation.[52] Speakers of a variety of languages, veritable embryos of the "nationally imagined community," would become capable of understanding each other through the print media, thereby reinforcing the emergence of national identity.

Architectural magazines and print media (newspapers and periodical publications in general terms) constituted a virtual place of bilateral exchanges. American magazines had a decisive influence on Venezuelan architectural firms, while the boom of Venezuelan magazines during

[52] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London-New York: Verso, 2006), 44.

the 1950s came also accompanied by an internationalization process, whose epitome was probably *Integral,* a magazine closely involved with the Helicoid.

As expected, architectural periodical publications' contents were certainly shaped by specific editorial policies and the interests of writers and photographers. This publishing bias, far from representing a research setback, must be regarded as an inseparable part of a comprehensive picture. As an archival reference, magazines are a useful source of theory, criticism and advertising too. They are also set up as a reliable source of information in terms of architectural project and building production. And more importantly, they provide not only the state of the art in aesthetics and technology of the time, but also direct information of new building production, architectural authorship, and building's construction dates; information that has been forgotten by most of the major surveys in architectural history.

In this sense, the main U.S. magazines utilized in this dissertation were *Architectural Record* and *Architectural Forum*. However, it also included *Progressive Architecture* and *Texas Architect*. Other American sources comprised specialized journals, such as *The Lamp* and *Esso Oilways* (published by Standard Oil of New Jersey), *National Geographic*, and *Heating, Piping and Air Conditioning;* news and popular science magazines, such as *Life*, *Time*, and *Popular Mechanics*, as well as newspapers, such as *The New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times.* Venezuelan main sources, in turn, included *Integral,* as well as *Venezuela Up-to-date*, the Venezuelan Embassy's official bulletin in Washington D.C., and *El Universal*, a major local newspaper. Sources also included *The Daily Journal,* a Venezuelan English-language newspaper, *Boletín Informativo,* a bulletin issued by the building firm in charge of the Helicoid, and *Punto,* an architectural magazine.

The dissertation also incorporates archival investigation, both in the United States and Venezuela. In this sense, the research included material from the Harry Ransom Center, the Benson Latin American Collection, and the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, all at the University of Texas at Austin. The wide scope of this material ranges from the American technological sublime to oil industry architecture. Also in the United States, the research relied

on The American Institute of Architects Archives to corroborate significant information related to Lathrop Douglass and to reveal his professional ties.

In Venezuela, archival research included the City Manager Office in Caracas (*Dirección de Obras Municipales*, at the *Corporación de Servicios Municipales*, *Alcaldía del Municipio Libertador*), repository of key information related to Douglass' Electricity Building (together with copy of its drawings), as well as the personal archive of architect Dirk Bornhorst, the last surviving of the Helicoid's three designers, whose amazing volume and variety of both documental and iconographic information ended up being invaluable for this dissertation. Also significant, not as an archive but as an independent archival piece, was "Ciudad Balneario Higuerote," an unpublished dossier presented at the *IX Congreso Panamericano de Arquitectos* (Caracas, September 19th, 1955), which contained the whole set of drawings of Higuerote Beach Resort (a vacation real-estate development near Caracas), produced during its design process.[53] Finally, INFODOC, a database with non-conventional information, pertaining to the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism at Central University of Venezuela, was useful to identify the original urban variables that framed the design of Douglass' Electricity Building.

The research process also included interviews and e-mail exchanges. First of all, I retook an interview given by engineer Víctor Ron Pedrique in 2003, which contained invaluable information about the design and building process of Higuerote Beach Resort.[54] As for the specific purposes of this research, I conducted an interview with Sergio Bertorelli in 2010, son of Antonio Bertorelli (urban developer of Higuerote Beach Resort). Two special interviewees, for playing a direct role in the modernization of the country, were architects Fruto Vivas (2010) and Dirk Bornhorst (2012). Another interviewee was Professor Héctor Dominguez-Ruvalcaba of the

[53] The document was part of the personal archive of architect Arthur Kahn (Istanbul, 1910-Caracas, 2011), kindly provided by Professor Henry Vicente of Simón Bolívar University.

[54] Víctor Ron Pedrique was brother of José Antonio Ron Pedrique, urban planner of Higuerote Beach Resort.

University of Texas (2011),[55] whose epistemological clarity helped me to build a center-periphery theoretical frame. And last but not least, it is important to mention the contribution of architect Lathrop Howe Douglass, the son of Lathrop Smith, who kindly answered my questions through e-mail.

Furthermore, the emphasis placed on iconography also deserves to be mentioned. The extensive use of images, not only as a mere support of the text but as a rich source of new information, is certainly one of the most conspicuous characteristics of this dissertation. Most of the images were the subject of an iconological, "between the lines" analysis, following the Warburg School's principles.[56] The choice of the images was based on either their significance to exemplify a case or their power of communication. Likewise, I always try to select, if not rare images, at least those that were not commonly findable in traditional or well-known publications. The process of searching, capture, identification, cataloging, and digital edition of the images, in turn, implied infinite hours of work. The dissertation also included an effort to "clarify" iconography of the time, which was not in good conditions. This was the case of the drawings of Douglass' Electricity Building; plans and facades were totally redrawn in CAD for the specific purposes of this dissertation.

THE DISSERTATION'S STRUCTURE

The dissertation has been organized in three parts. The first and second one, respectively, revolve around modern architecture in the United States and Venezuela. The third part, in turn, features three case studies.

Containing chapters one to three, Part 1, "The United States of America: the practical, idealist neighbors," offers a wide overview of the main themes promoted by U.S. architectural

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[56] See in this sense, Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: the Use of Images as Historical Evidence* (London: Reaktion), 2001.

magazines that had a strong influence in mid-twentieth century Venezuela. The first chapter explores long-term nineteenth-century aspects in American architecture, which had a particular impact during the 1940s and 1950s. They included the increasing growth of architectural magazines, the concern with the professional formation, the inextricable relationship between building and technology, as well as the notion of technological sublime. The advent of new technology, particularly related to the modern phenomenon of movement and circulation, would define a landscape of mobility in the mid-twentieth century, whose architectural expressions, besides representing the vastness of the American territory, would adopt sui generis forms and considerable scales. Chapter 2 analyzes the International Style in America, its foundational office buildings, and particularly the difficulties it had to tackle since its early stages. The chapter also introduces businessman Nelson Rockefeller, a key figure who (along with architect Wallace Harrison) played an indirect, but significant role in the development of corporate architecture in the United States, and whose investments in Venezuela would be inextricably linked to the modernization process of this country. Chapter 3 explores other trends in modernism, parallel to the International Style, such as Regionalism and organic architecture. Starting with the great interest American magazines raised in modern Mexican and Brazilian architecture, the chapter analyzes the hybrid language employed in the U.S. embassy building program, and the significance of the climate control technology as an inherent part of the building. It also pays special attention to the diverse expressions of organic architecture in the United States, identifying themes prompted by architectural magazines.

Part 2, in turn, provides a wide and detailed picture of mid-twentieth century modern architecture in Venezuela, as well as an account of those aspects that shaped it, always under the viewpoint of local and U.S. periodicals. Entitled “Venezuela: the place, the circumstances and more,” and containing chapters four to eight, this section pays special attention not only to the American influence on architectural and urban production in Venezuela, but also to how the oil industry shaped Venezuelan culture in general terms. In this sense, chapter 4 analyzes the geopolitical relevance of mid-twentieth century Venezuela, based on both its strategic location within a *longue dur*ée key region (facing the Caribbean Sea, near the United States) and the gradual development of its oil industry since 1914, including the cultural tailoring of its oil law

(beneficial to foreign investments), and the eventual rise of U.S. companies, particularly Standard Oil of New Jersey through its subsidiary in Venezuela: the Creole Petroleum Corporation. Chapter 4 also discusses Nelson Rockefeller's ventures in Venezuela (parallel to oil business, but at the same time consubstantial with), including the Avila Hotel, the first modern hotel in Venezuela, designed by Wallace Harrison, and CADA Shopping Center by Don Hatch. Chapter 5 analyzes the impact of the oil industry in Caracas and on Venezuelan society at large. The definition of urban enclaves of modernity (influenced by the typical organization and dynamics of the oil camps), the culture of the automobile, and the overwhelming presence of automobile advertising and modern architecture in local newspapers were irrefutable indications of such impact. Chapter 6 analyzes the theme of publications and professional formation. It explores Venezuelan response to modernity in periodical publications and academic formation, and analyzes both the U.S. university programs in architecture as attractors for future Venezuelan professionals, and Venezuela per se as a professional destination for American architects. Chapter 7 discusses the political links between Venezuela and the United States during the Cold War, and regional-national connections alike (specifically between Texas and Venezuela), placing special attention to the New National Ideal in terms of both urban and architectural achievements. Finally, chapter 8 discusses Venezuelan demonstrations of boldness, beauty, progress and identity, as narrative constructions. The appearance of supernatural, sublime buildings (beyond the notion of organic architecture) both in magazines and in the real landscape; the consolidation of beauty contests as a new tradition; as well as the display of a number of Venezuelan exhibitions in the United States were clear attempts to construct modern myths.

Part 3 features four case studies, organized in three chapters. In this sense, chapter 9 introduces architect Lathrop Douglass through his academic formation and professional practice, and explores his architectural production in Venezuela. Starting with the analysis of the office buildings he designed for Standard Oil in the United States and Colombia, this chapter takes the Edificio Creole and the Electricity Building, both located in Caracas, and completed in 1954 and 1957 respectively, as a the first and the second case study. Chapter 10 discusses the complex process of design and construction of Higuerote Beach Resort, and the influence that American

magazines had on the staff of designers. Finally, chapter 11 analyzes the Helicoid, not only based on its morphological resemblance to the Gordon Strong Automobile Objective, but also on the organic integration of technology into the building, as well as on the terrifying presence of the building per se: a phenomenological dimension of the Sublime.

* * *

The Hyper Americans represents a "peripheral" contribution to recover a forgotten chapter of the American architectural heritage. Besides, more than only a picture of Venezuela during the 1950s, it constitutes a between-the-lines report on the bilateral relations of this country and the United States of America. This year, Venezuela celebrates the 100th anniversary of its oil industry. While the United States and Europe will commemorate the centennial of World War I, Venezuela will remember the *Zumaque 1* oil well, whose completion happened on July 31st, 1914; two events as unavoidably linked to each other as the destiny of both countries.

Finally, I would like to highlight the pedagogical value of this research. My studious concern for providing explanations and details along the dissertation was motivated by the desire to get the attention of my past, present and future students, particularly those who, during the last fifteen years, have seen the same president on TV, every day. As in the 1950s, contemporary Venezuela is undergoing a tense political time; for this reason, today, more than ever, a highly responsible, clear and critical pedagogy must be exercised in both countries. If the content of this dissertation is intended to be a critical "bridge" between the recent past and the present, it is also intended to be a bridge between both societies.

PART 1

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

THE PRACTICAL, IDEALIST NEIGHBORS

Chapter 1

The Always Latent Beginning: the Sublime, Building-Technology, and Architectural Magazines

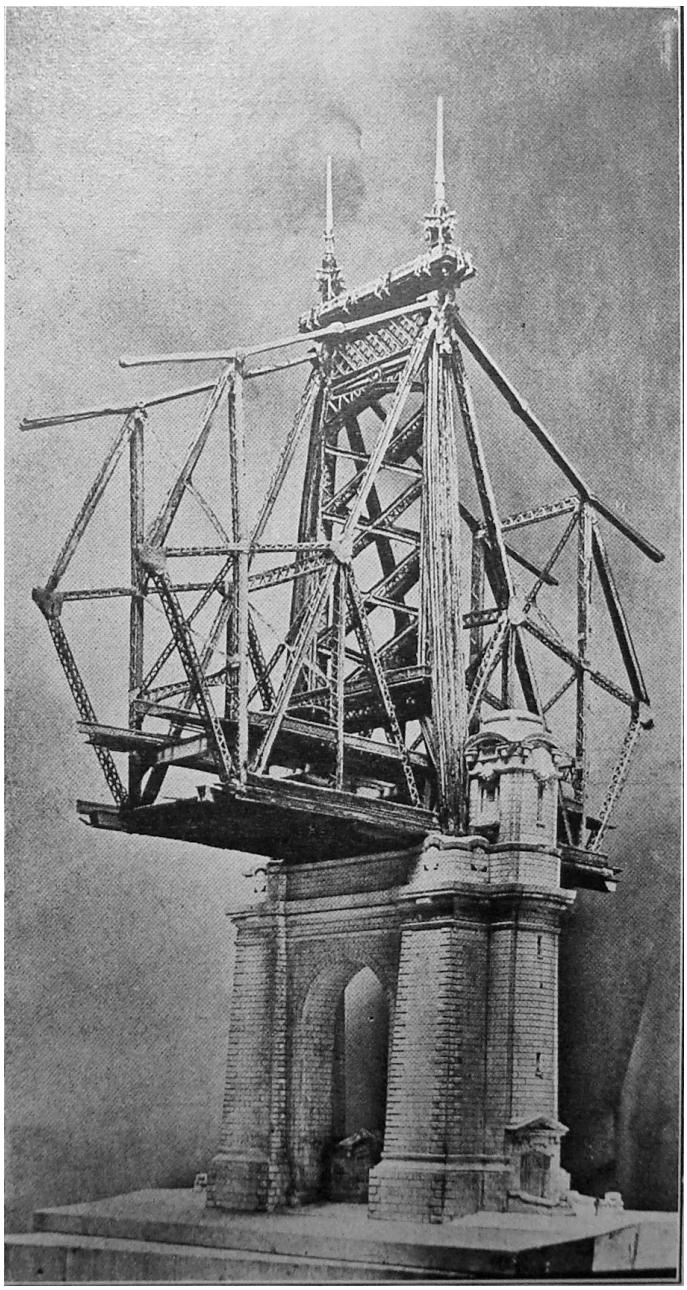

FIGURE 1.1
Gustav Lindenthal, Engineer, and Henry F. Hornboste, Architect, Blackwell's Island Bridge, New York City. Completed 1909. Source: *Architectural Record* (Oct. 1905), 260.

For the middle of the nineteenth century
the American sublime was no longer a copy of European theory;
it had begun to develop in ways appropriate to a democratic society
in the throes of rapid industrialization and geographic expansion.

David Nye, *American Technological Sublime*, 1994.

To amuse the public with Architecture, obviously is out of the question.

Harry W. Desmond,
Architectural Record, vol. I, no.1, July-Sept. 1891.

We should have stayed up north where we had climate control.

Alan Dunn, *Architectural Record*, Feb. 1947.

In its October 1905 issue, *Architectural Record* published an article entitled "New York Bridges," a harsh aesthetic critique on this kind of engineering structures, as they were erected in New York City until early twentieth century. According to its author, Montgomery Schuyler, the design of such conspicuous urban pieces should take into account more than mere technical aspects. Almost at the end of the article appeared the scale model of a new bridge, showing one of its piers inextricably linked to both its tower and the set of trusses. Very architectural, the pier exhibited classical elements, such as a Roman arch (by way of a triumphal arch), plinths, ashlar masonry, and solid cornices, combined with baroque segmental pediments. The tower, in turn, showed a slightly pointed arch, and a couple of pinnacles, which seemed to be not just the elegant continuation of the masonry pier, but also the natural progression of the truss system. It was the Blackwell's Island Bridge (*figure 1.1*). Completed in 1909, it had been designed jointly by engineer Gustav Lindenthal and architect Henry F. Hornbostel. Lindenthal, who had been appointed New York Commissioner of Bridges in 1901, "invoked the co-operation of the artistic with the scientific constructor," which eventually would be hailed as "an advance" by the whole artistic world of New York.[1]

[1] Montgomery Schuyler, "New York Bridges," *Architectural Record*, Oct. 1905, 258.

Three aspects of this example merit particular attention. The first, perhaps the most conspicuous, has to do with the strong link between building and technology, something that would eventually become more complex than a mere co-operation between architecture and engineering. Also noticeable in the Blackwell's Island Bridge is the huge contrast of dimensions: the grandeur of some gestures, compared with the minuteness of some details, seems to go beyond the limits of any traditionally architectonic, urban magnitude. The third aspect, probably not as obvious as the other two, regards the means of communication per se: a printed media, specifically an architectural magazine. Furthermore, the use of a scale model as an effective, comprehensible way of communication shows the interest of the magazine in attracting not only professional but also the general public's attention.

As a holistic phenomenon, the nineteenth-century modernization process in the United States brought cultural changes in terms of professional definition, academic formation, and particularly periodical publications. When the earliest program in architecture began its activities in the mid-nineteenth century, *Architect's and Mechanic's Journal*, the first professional architectural periodical in America, had already been circulating for two years. Architectural magazines, by way of a unified field of communication, gathered coherently fragmented narratives, and started laying the bases not just for the professional practice of architecture in the United States, but for an American consciousness of architecture at large. Moreover, by undergoing a gradual process of internationalization during the twentieth century, architectural magazines would exert a potential influence abroad, particularly in Latin America between the 1930s and 1950s.

In this regard, one of the most recurrent topics published in these periodicals was the inextricable bond between building and technology. Besides the continuous interest in developing a genuine American style (and shaping the aesthetic taste vis-à-vis the general public), magazines paid close attention to how architecture organically incorporated technology into the building, particularly in terms of environmental comfort. Advertisements, reports, articles and cartoons reflected such interest.

Nevertheless, as the Blackwell's Island Bridge suggested, American interest in technology was broader. The fascination with spectacular technology has been a notable part of American culture. Such captivation, the *technological sublime* to use David Nye's term, was consubstantial with the breathtaking vastness of the American landscape. As the twentieth century advanced, particularly after World War II, the increasing number of automobiles, the suburbanization process, as well as the growing fascination with new transportation technology would lead architects' creativity to propose uncanny projects, in which apparently incompatible programs (never combined before) were merged into a single building. Either built or not, these impressive structures, real inheritors of the American technological sublime, would attract attention of magazine editors, and shortly inaugurate a sort of landscape of mobility in the United States.

SHAPING CULTURE AND SPREADING KNOWLEDGE: PROFESSIONALISM AND PUBLICATIONS

Right after the Independence War (1775-1783), and until the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the newly formed United States was devoted to construct its own identity. The Constitutional government was a kind of experiment in applied Enlightenment, which rejected monarchy and attempted to re-create the natural society. From Benjamin Henry Latrobe's rationalist attitude to Thomas Jefferson's idealism, the United States was searching for its own symbols of democracy through its architecture. It was also remarkable of those early years the American concern with the development of the profession, and then, during the second half of the nineteenth century, the generation of academic programs in architecture. In this regard, the initiative of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1861 was shortly followed by the University of Illinois in 1870, Cornell in 1871, Syracuse University in 1873, the University of Pennsylvania in 1874, and Columbia University in 1881.

However, there was another component in this cultural, architectural process without which would be impossible to understand the whole picture: the publishing industry. As a matter of fact, the growing number of books published in the United States between 1785 and 1820 was a

clear demonstration of this, and also a sign of nationalism and modernization. As a matter of fact, the growing number of books published in the United States between 1785 and 1820 was a clear demonstration of this, and also a sign of nationalism and modernization.[2] The interest in publications would continue and increase throughout the years. Especially remarkable, in this sense, was the boom of periodical publications, in particular specialized magazines during the nineteenth century. Moreover, the gradual popularization of photography in the United States came along with the increasing number of periodicals.[3] Professional architectural periodicals, in turn, started appearing in 1859. Although large in number, these magazines unfortunately tended to be short-lived.[4] Among those that managed to go into the twentieth century were *Architectural Record,* published by The Record and Guide in New York City, whose first number dates back to 1891, and *Brickbuilder,* from Boston, which ran between 1892 and 1916, and then was renamed *Architectural Forum* (1917-1945; 1954-1974).

These long-lived magazines, however, underwent a gradual process of internationalization throughout the twentieth century. In 1903, *Architectural Record* only offered a domestic distribution through its three-dollar yearly subscription. Nevertheless, by 1913, its "yearly subscription" established a significant difference: United States $3, foreign $4, single copies, 25¢. By 1942, subscription rates in *Architectural Record* had achieved certain complexity:

[2] The impressive literary production of Asher Benjamin since the late eighteenth century was a clear demonstration of this, particularly his first two books, *The Country Builder's Assistant* (1797), regarded as the first American pattern book, and *The American Builder's Companion* (1806), whose title reflected Benjamin's interest in defining a local practice, different than the British.

[3] The first U.S. specialized literary magazine appeared in 1815, *North American Review,* which was published continuously until 1940 (and eventually resumed in 1964). It was followed by *Scientific American* in 1845 and *Harper's Magazine* in 1850 (the latter devoted to literature, politics and culture).

[4] The list of nineteenth and early twentieth century magazines included, among others, *The Architect's and Mechanic's Journal* (New York, 1859-1861); *Sloan's Architectural Review and Builder's Journal* (Philadelphia, 1868-1870); *New York Sketch Book of Architecture* (1874-1876); *Architectural Sketch Book* (Boston, 1873-1876); *American Architect and Building News* (Boston, 1876-1938); *The Inland Architect and Builder* (Chicago, 1883-1908), and *Quarterly Architectural Review* from San Francisco (launched in 1879, and then renamed *California Architect and Building News*). Apart from these magazines there were also practical journals for contractor and builders.

"United States and Possessions, Canada, Cuba, Mexico, Central and South America, $3 the year, $5 for two years, $6 for three years; elsewhere, $5 the year; single copy, $1."[5] The magazine had even designated a "circulation manager." On the occasion of the special edition on Frank Lloyd Wright, published by *Architectural Forum* in January 1938, the magazine had a similar yearly subscription rate: "U.S. and possessions, Canada, Cuba, Mexico, South America, $4; elsewhere, $6; single copies $2." During the 1930s and 1940s the Latin American market seemed to be constituted by Cuba, Mexico, and a nebulous region called "South America." Nevertheless, by the early 1950s, the subscription's geographic picture was different (and so the rates):

> U.S., U.S. Possessions, and Canada: $5.50 for one year, $9 for two years, $11 for three years. Elsewhere, subscriptions from those who by title are architects or engineers, $6.5 for one year, $11.5 for two years, $15 for three years; subscriptions from all others outside U.S., U.S. Possessions and Canada, $20 a year. Single copy price, $2.[6]

"Elsewhere" and "all others outside U.S., U.S. Possessions and Canada" defined a new balance of forces and a different geopolitical map in the Americas after World War II. Academic programs in architecture, in turn, seemed to have undergone a similar process. By 1951 the *University of California*, for instance, paid attention to foreign student applications; examination in English for foreign students, as well as foreign student advisers were topics among its regular procedures.[7]

Magazines played, in this sense, a significant role in shaping both American taste and the professional practice abroad. They became an intermediate place between architecture and society; a sort of professional representative, adviser, interpreter or exegete. Readers of

[5] See *Architectural Record*, Jan. 1942.

[6] See *Architectural Record*, Oct. 1953.

[7] *University of California Bulletin* 5 (Berkeley, CA, Aug. 10, 1951), 6, 7, 29. As a matter of fact, the process of internationalization of US universities (which had begun in the 1900s, and had showed a steadily rise until World War II) would experience an extraordinary boom during the 1950s and 1960s. Since the mid-1950s, the foreign student enrollment in the United States tripled over the next fifteen years. In this regard, see Teresa Brawner Bevis and and Christopher J. Lucas, *International Students in American Colleges and Universities* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 61 and 141.

architectural magazines were not only architects. After all, despite the fact that the subscription rate was cheaper "for those who by title" were architects or engineers, *Architectural Record* was also available for those non-architects who wanted to enjoy either the latest works, advertisements, or the severe critique by an academic *auctoritas*.

They ruled the taste; they decided what was right and wrong in aesthetics. It was not by chance that the first *Architectural Record* issue, in 1891, started with a very eloquent image: the spotless, gothic style of Beverley Minster, East Yorkshire, England, built between 1220 and 1420. Its choir and nave, looking west, showed an exquisite spatial proportion, love for details, and, particularly, coherence of style. The magazine did not choose a revivalist nineteenth-century building; its choice was an original gothic structure, an exemplary case – almost pedagogical – of purity and awe. The critical analysis of style and recommendations of good taste, however, had a specific section in the magazine: a sui generis series entitled "Aberrations." Its first case would be the Edison Building, on Broad Street, New York City, a building whose odd composition (which included Egyptian, Classical Revival, and Second Empire Baroque) fairly deserved to be analyzed in such series (*figure 1.2*).

Obviously, architectural trends during the 1940s and 1950s were different. Nevertheless, the ruling role they played in aesthetic terms, in the United States and abroad during the first half of the twentieth century, was undeniable. This concern with the notions of style and morphological expression was actually an important characteristic of American architecture, and consequently of the American culture. As a matter of fact, since the late eighteenth century we have witnessed the continuous effort of the United States to construct an identity through its architecture. Moreover, probably because of the flexible sense of style that characterized the architectural production after the Civil War, American architects embarked in a discussion about the meaning of good taste. It was not by chance, that an increasing interest in the origin and growth of "American taste" pervaded periodical publications.

Nevertheless, if style has been one of the most persistent topics in American architectural magazines, it is also true that there has been another issue, probably more remarkable, which has accompanied the growth of American architecture, and has been subject matter of periodical publications, either by means of advertisements, reports, articles or cartoons: the integral relationship between building and technology.

FIGURE 1.2
The Edison Building, Broad Street, New York City. The first case study in the series of "Aberrations." Source: *Architectural Record* (Oct.-Dec. 1891), 135.

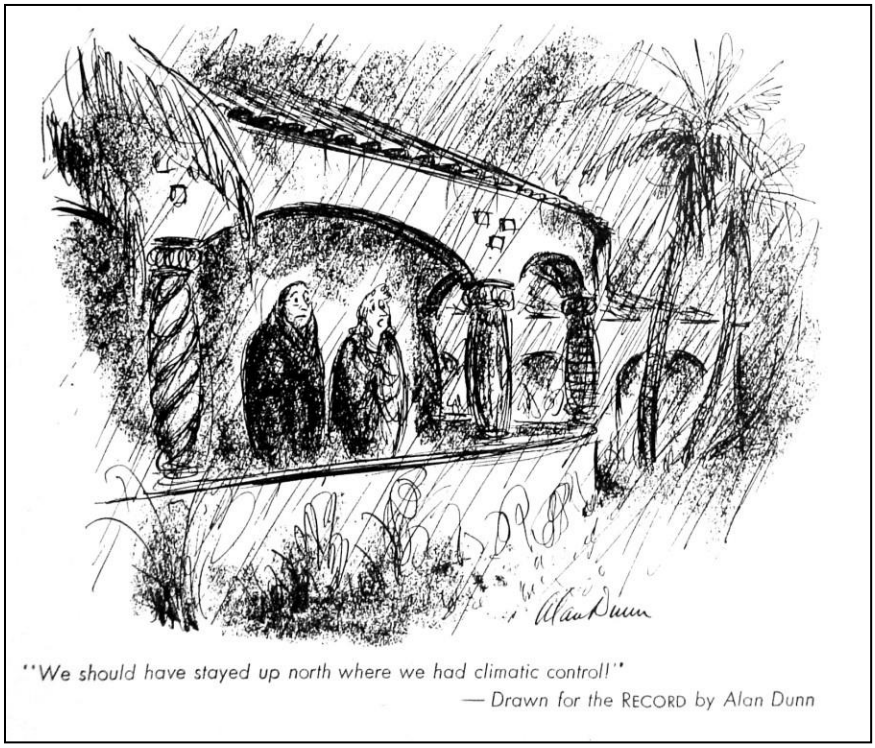

FIGURE 1.3
Style and climate control. Cartoon by Alan Dunn. Source: *Architectural Record* (Feb. 1947), 7.

Under the protection of a massive porch, a couple reflects on their vacations. It is raining hard. "We should have stayed up north," she says, "where we had climate control!" She is clearly disappointed; he looks preoccupied, as if his mind were elsewhere. Despite the tropical setting, both are wrapped up warmly. It's clear that they are tourists; they are not familiar either with local traditions or simpler ways to manage such a weather setback. The porch in which they are looks as heavy as their coats. Solomonic columns, segmental arches, tile roofs, and a tall parapet (besides the well-known palm trees, and weeds) are direct hints of a geographical location: either Florida or any place south of the border (perhaps Mexico). A second building in the background, with round arches and tile roofs too, accentuates even more the traditional character of the place (*figure 1.3*). This was a cartoon published by *Architectural Record* in 1947. Its author was Alan Dunn, a regular contributor of that magazine since the 1930s, and also a highly prolific cartoonist of *The New Yorker*.

Two years before, in February 1945, *Architectural Forum* had published the advertisement of an aluminum corporation based in Detroit. The image accompanying the ad depicted a very comfortable interior dominated by pure lines and simple furniture. A couple of inclined, projecting windows allowed the view at a distance of a lake surrounded by woods. Hermetically closed, the building made it possible to enjoy nature without the "natural" risks and inconveniences associated with a wild environment. It was an air-conditioned house. From its vent, however, more than just fresh air seemed to be blowing: crotchets, quavers and semiquavers were flowing along with a mechanical breeze. Here, everything is light; everything is floating. "The air-conditioning system in the home of tomorrow could be designed to bring radio programs as well as fresh air into every room." The advertisement was even categorical on this respect: "we will shortly see many other things that will make living more comfortable – more leisurely – more pleasurable" (*figure 1.4*).

Despite the differences between these images, they have two aspects in common. The first one regards the specific architectural representation. Both the cartoon and the advertisement are concerned with the accurate expression of their respective styles. The second aspect in common is technology. In the case of Alan Dunn's cartoon, technology is present by absence. The couple of tourists are deeply missing the technology they left behind (in the North); that kind of technology they are accustomed to, and that makes possible a comfortable place for living: environmental power or climate control. In the advertisement, the presence of technology is obvious. Moreover, in contrast to that rainy-baroque scene brilliantly represented by Dunn, the aluminum corporation ad shows a future-oriented image. As a matter of fact, this sort of domestic science fiction is particularly revealing. Released during the war (notice the "buy war bonds" message in the bottom corner), this advertisement shows a significant concern with climate control, and more importantly, an intertwined relation between building and technology.

It was not, however, the first time that such relation appeared in architectural magazines. Since their inceptions, American architectural magazines have called attention to technology;

cartoons and advertisements, in this regard, have been a highly rich source to understand the building-technology binomial. Regardless their specific dates of publication, some of these ads are particularly revealing in terms of how both American architects and society have seen the imbrication of architecture and technology, from mechanical systems and appliances to lighting and acoustics. In 1908, for instance, *Architectural Record* published a sui generis advertisement that depicted a domestic scene like any other. However, an iconological analysis reveals both different layers of reading and complex relations between its components. In the illustration, there appeared a housewife wearing a tall, stiff collar, a long skirt (also probably a corset), and high heels, and sporting a Gibson Girl hairstyle; in her double role of woman and wife, she was also wearing an apron. The interior space was clean and simple. Coincidentally, the open door revealed the public (or semi domestic) realm. By way of a scene in movement, she was placing bowls in the refrigerator, while an ice company employee, from outside, was loading ice into the appliance through a rear compartment. McCray Refrigerators – the advertisement said – "may be arranged to be iced from the outside of the building (…) They are built substantially, with high grade workmanship and of the proper cold, tight and sanitary materials (…) They are lined with white opal glass, wood, and tile"[8] (*figure 1.5*). In spite of its wardrobe-like aspect, the doors' visible hinges and handles corroborated the "mechanical" nature of such appliance. It embodied style and technology. It worked as a mediator between genders; it also mediated between the public and private realms. Metaphorically, it was a wall, a window and a door at the same time. But particularly, more than a simple appliance, that refrigerator worked as comfort device, inseparable from the building. It was an intrinsic part of the house.

Such economy of gestures, which demonstrated the organic integration between device and architecture in the United States, can be found not only in innumerable advertisements along the decades, but also in cartoons. The 1950s, in this regard, followed and deepened such technological trend; one more time, Alan Dunn's critical drawings turned out to be highly suggestive. One of his cartoons, published in Architectural Record in July 1955, shows two workers providing the last touch to a brand new building (probably an enclosed shop). The first

[8] McCray Refrigerators advertisement, *Architectural Record*, Jan.-June 1908, 95.

one is opening a hole in a huge blank wall, while the other is waiting alongside to complete the work; close to them, a wall-split air conditioning unit is ready to be installed.[9] It made possible to isolate the interior space from the surrounding environment, but at the same time it was one of the few links with the exterior. This sort of minimalist gesture somehow reminds us the McCray Refrigerator advertisement of 1908: it shows the unavoidable link between building and appliance (*figure 1.6*).

However, as many other advertisements showed, the integration between building and technology was confined neither to appliances nor to climate control. In March 1950, *Architectural Record* publicized the Miller Fluorescent Troffer Lighting System, a product by the Miller Company of Connecticut, which not only provided "good light," but also a "structural aid" (*figure 1.7*). Using the slogan "lighting becomes a structural element," the advertisement depicted a battery of ribs seen in perspective and forming a sort of pergola (with a grey shading, probably representing the luminous source). Exemplifying the capabilities of the system, the ad showed a geometrically well defined "structural ceiling for interiors" as well. Moreover, by incorporating a premeditated resemblance of the painting Avenue by British artist John Tunnard into its graphic design, the advertisement managed to combine abstract art, architecture, building structure and lighting.[10]

Another unavoidable technological aspect magazines dealt with was mobility. The same year, *Architectural Record* published a Westinghouse advertisement in which a sort of mastermind, symbolized by a giant head flouting over a metropolis (probably New York City), seems to control and coordinate the vertical transportation in skyscrapers. Selectomatic, an ingenious electrical intelligence with a nervous system that "continuously regulates the entire elevator

[9] See *Architectural Record*, July 1955, 15.

[10] See *Architectural Record,* March 1950, 74. A reproduction in miniature of Avenue was located in the bottom left of the advertisement. See also The Miller Company, *Painting toward Architecture*, text by Henry-Russell Hitchcock; foreword by Alfred H. Barr, jr. (New York: Dwell, Sloan and Pearce, 1948), 92-93. For a discussion on the possible influence of Tunnard's work in the design process of Higuerote Beach Resort in Venezuela, see Part 3 of this dissertation.

bank and automatically matches elevator service to the varying traffic patterns," established not only a "new era for elevators," but also a new kind of relation between the building and a mechanical system (through an "electrical intelligence"), as well as a model of economy and efficiency (*figure 1.8*).[11] This principle was also shared by Honeywell of Minneapolis, which publicized its "master control center," proudly displayed before the public on the first floor of the Second National Bank building of Houston.[12] In here, a single operator could maintain complete control over the entire heating and cooling system; its Colorgraphic panel at the rear wall showed the operating conditions of heating and air conditioning plant to insure "peak efficiency and economy" (*figure 1.9*).

Finally, the amalgamation between building and technology reached even subliminal levels in advertising. A Honeywell ad published by *Architectural Record* in 1950, for instance, showed a massive building-like device rising above a two-story school (*figure 1.10*). By way of a morphological metaphor, or perhaps a synecdoche, this sort of streamlined monument was actually a room thermostat, exaggerated in size to indicate its importance: "because nowhere is personal comfort more important than in the school."[13]

Whether as heating, air conditioning, vertical transportation, lighting or even as building acoustics, modern American architecture pursued the integration of technology into the building. From built-in appliances (or to-be-built-in) to structural incorporations and centralized controls, the range of such integration was also wide. No matter whether the character of such technology was mostly mechanical or intelligently electrical, periodical publications irrefutably demonstrated how integrated technology was into American architecture. It is not by chance that "Architectural Engineering (Technical News and Research)" was a constant section in *Architectural Record* during the 1950s. Since July 1946, Architectural Engineering provided articles and valuable information on air conditioning and heating systems (involving the building

[11] See *Architectural Record,* Jan. 1950, 25.

[12] See *Architectural Record*, July 1950, 29. The Second National Bank building of Houston was designed by architect Kenneth Franzheim.

[13] "As important as the building itself," Honeywell advertisement, *Architectural Record,* March 1950, 27.

structure); lighting; building materials (either new, particularly plastics, or well-known materials used in innovative way, such as steel and reinforced concrete); acoustics; efficient furniture; modular design; prefabrication, and moving stairways. Moreover, the magazine had issued an earlier version of this section since July 1940, known as "What's New in Materials and Equipment?" (later renamed as "News on Materials and Equipment," in November 1940).

Magazines, however, not only published advertisements and articles; they also reported how American architects incorporated technology into their designs. Time and again domestic, industrial, commercial and institutional architecture showed their commitment with technology along the pages of periodical publications. As a matter of fact, 1940s and 1950s architectural magazines provided evidence of how American people lived in buildings that put structure, space, ornamentation and cutting-edge technology together, particularly in terms of environmental control. Heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) was always integral part, not only of houses, but office buildings as well. HVAC was also matter of increasing concern and interest in the design of American architecture abroad, both for corporate and consular buildings. And more importantly, such incorporation of technology ran in parallel with the development of the International Style, in office buildings, and exotic, hybrid languages, in U.S. embassies around the world.

American society has become so accustomed to thermal comfort that it is difficult to say if well-tempered buildings are social conquests or just the result of professional lucubrations over time (or both). From the centralized core of services in Catherine and Harriet Beecher's mid-nineteenth century model of Christian house[14] to the Auditorium Building in Chicago (1889) by

[14] See Catherine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, *American Woman's Home or, Principles of Domestic Science; Being a Guide to the Formation and Maintenance of Economical, Healthful Beautiful and Christian Homes* (Hartford: Stowe-Day Foundation, 1975 [originally published in 1869 by J. B. Ford and Co.]). An early version of the Christian house model was published in *A Treatise of Domestic Economy for the Use of Young Ladies at Home and at School*, by Catherine Beecher (New York: Source Book Press, originally published in 1841 by Marsh, Capen, Lyon and Webb). Also, for an account of earlier developments of heating, see Benjamin L. Walbert, "The Infancy of Central Heating in the United States: 1803 to 1845," *Bulletin of the Association for Preservation Technology (APT)* 3, no.4 (1971).

Dankmar Adler and Louis Sullivan, who managed to integrate a highly complex HVAC system with the building's interior ornamentation,[15] and the Milam Building in San Antonio, Texas (1928), the first skyscraper in the country completely equipped with air conditioning,[16] American architecture had been committed either to incorporate cutting-edge comfort technology into its buildings or incorporate already-known technology in an innovative (modern) way. As noticed since early twentieth century, there was definitely a close relation between comfort and productivity, and American people gave more thought each year to comfort, health and personal efficiency.[17] The 1950s constituted, in this sense, a decisive step toward the full environmental control, either by "concealing" or "exposing" the HVAC methods. Moreover, the decade also showed clear hints of "intelligent" control, pursuing the maximum of economy and efficiency.[18]

DEFINING A LANDSCAPE OF MOBILITY: ARCHITECTURE, ENERGY AND TRANSPORTATION

The incorporation of technology into architecture, however, was not only limited to everyday comfort and efficiency. An impressive image of the Blackwell's Island Bridge, advertising the

[15] Three years after its completion, *Architectural Record* dedicated an accurate twenty-page report to the Auditorium: Dankmar Adler, "The Chicago Auditorium," *Architectural Record* 1, no.4 (Apr. June 1892), 415. As Adler asserted, the Auditorium's machinery was so complex that an accurate description would far exceed the limits of any magazine article. Besides the intricacy of boilers, large steam engines, and electric motors in the building's heart, Adler and Sullivan also paid special attention to both the HVAC and lighting design, and its integration into the building's aesthetics. Incandescent electric lamps bloomed from rosettes in the ceiling and from the elliptical arches that formed the body of the house; the air conditioning vents, in turn, coincided with circular moldings also located in such arches. The Auditorium also had ten passenger elevators and other four for service use, all hydraulic powered.

[16] Herman Wordsham, "The Milam Building," *Heating, Piping and Air Conditioning* 1, no.3 (July 1929): 173. It is interesting to notice that, regardless such technological incorporation, architect George Willis conceived both the Milam's volume and style in a traditional way.

[17] Ibid, 181.

[18] On this regard, see Reyner Banham, *The Architecture of the Well-tempered Environment* (London: The Architectural Press/The University of Chicago Press), 1969, particularly chapters 9, 10, 11 and 13. The terms "full control," "concealing," "exposing" and "intelligent," as used in this passage, are actually in debt with the titles of these chapters.

National Lead Company in *Architectural Record* (1910), showed a different nature in the use of technology. Accompanied with the slogan "closing the gap," the image depicted only a fragment of this bridge whose colossal dimensions, nevertheless, made everything seem smaller. The minuteness of the people congregated to see the movement of the crane reminded us the bridge's model published in the same magazine five years before (cf. *figure 1.1*). Such a surrealistic vision, emphasized by the diaphanous, mysterious texture of the crane and the structure, recalled the American landscape's awe-inspiring images; it accurately expressed the notion of technological sublime.

As David Nye asserted in *American Technological Sublime*, the North American continent possesses "every feature that a theory of the natural sublime might require," including mountains, deserts, endless swamps, vast plains; hundreds of unusual sights, notably Yellowstone, Niagara Falls, and the Great Canyon, as well as tornadoes, floods, and other natural disasters.[19] "It would be tempting to say that had no theory of the sublime existed," he stated, "Americans would have been forced to invent one."[20] Time and again, architectural magazines witnessed the presence of the technological sublime, either implicit or explicitly, in advertisements or engineering works, during the first half of the twentieth century. In 1942, amid World War II, *Architectural Record* published a small sample of drawings by Hugh Ferris. The Tennessee Valley (TVA) dam and a grain elevator in Kansas City were two of more than 100 sketched studies of "dynamic American architecture" that Hugh Ferriss had produced in 1941, as part of the Brunner award from the New York Architectural League (*figure 1.11*). Probably one of the most influential architects in producing an imagery of the Sublime, and particularly the technological sublime, Ferriss was well-known for his conté crayon sketches of skyscrapers at night, lit up by spot lights. In this occasion, however, he delineated two engineering works with a built-in movement.[21] It was not by chance that he called his Brunner award project as "dynamic" architecture.

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[19] David E. Nye, *American Technological Sublime* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994), 1 and 7.

[20] Ibid.

[21] See *Architectural Record,* Jan. 1942, 10.

The sublime scenes that combined horror and admiration for visionary, colossal structures gradually incorporated technology in a very particular way. As a matter of fact, during the 1940s and 1950s, American imagery (and imagination) seems to be captivated by dynamism, energy and mobility. In 1946, Richard Buckminster Fuller, another influential designer, developed a transportable house (easy to ship and assemble on site), known as Fuller House (*figure 1.12*).[22] This circular-plan building, made of stressed aluminum skin, was actually the second version of his Dymaxion House, developed in the 1920s as part of larger structure: the 4D Tower, a 10-story-plastic-aluminum apartment house that could be transported by air (*figure 1.13*).[23]

Undoubtedly, the driving force behind Fuller's proposals was transportability. Such a new ability of architecture either to be moved or travel around easily was in fact part of a broader concept, totally intertwined with the modernization process: mobility. After the Lincoln Highway's dedication in 1913, and as the U.S. Routes developed since the 1920s (and later the U.S. Interstate Highway System during the 1950s), the United States saw the invention and proliferation of roadside facilities. They included restaurants, lodges, bus stops, and service stations. Domestic tourism became one of the favorite post-war themes in U.S. architectural magazines. The March 1950 issue of *Architectural Record,* for instance, dedicated its cover to this topic. Its eloquent composition gathered many different things: a black glove; a pair of sunglasses; a rabbit foot keychain (with a couple of keys, either of a hotel room or of an automobile); a photograph of a Wright-esque building and some streamlined parked cars, and a map (in which corner could be read "Esso") (*figure 1.14*). All these objects, apparently unconnected, were in fact part of the same experience. The building was the Tucson Biltmore Motor Hotel, in Tucson, Arizona, designed by architect Arthur T. Brown, and the map was a

[22] See "Cycle of Evolution. The work of R. Buckminster Fuller," *Architectural Record,* June 1955, 155-162.

[23] Light enough to be carried by a Zeppelin, the 4 D Tower consisted of a centralized mast working as a structure and containing the services (water, electricity, sewer and air circulation system) at the same time. The zeppelin would drop a bomb in the countryside, opening a crater to install the base of the tower. Each unit of the tower constituted his Dymaxion House. See Buckminster Fuller, *4D Time Lock* (Albuquerque, N.M.: Lama Foundation, 1970 [originally published in 1929]).

courtesy of Esso Standard Oil Co.[24] It was a good demonstration of how developed the domestic tourism industry was in the United States at the time. But more importantly, it was a clear expression of the modern experience of mobility.

Architectural magazines paid close attention to those new architectural projects that were changing the face of both U.S. urban and suburban environments, as well as the territory in general terms. Somehow these projects defined a sort of landscape of mobility, in which transportation was a key factor. In this regard, one of the roadside facilities that recurrently caught the attention of architectural magazines was the service station. U.S. suburbs and highways saw the appearance of a new type of gas station (more commonly known as service station), which responded to a new kind of demand and at the same time transformed the appearance of the U.S. landscape. Unlike its pre-war predecessor, compact and with a traditional touch (which reminded the American domestic architecture), this brand new post-war service station was open and spacious, as well as committed to its corporate image. An advanced station designed by architect Frederick Frost, and published in 1944, exemplified very well this trend: its "drum" shape entrance (by way of metaphor of an oil barrel or a can of lubricant), its streamlined details, and its spaciousness probably caught the drivers' eyes (*figure 1.15*). Oil industry, marketing, urban planning and architecture certainly were interlinked components of modern movement and mobility. This change had been prompted by the "growing congestion of downtown shopping areas and the subsequent decentralization" that had been under way in urban communities for a decade.[25]

Architecture and automobile, in this sense, looked to be the perfect match; and it was so. Nevertheless, architects' inventiveness, or probably the need for going further, led to combine different (or multiple) programs which had never been merged before. Either because such functions were totally new or just because they were actually combined for the first time, the

[24] The Tucson Biltmore Motor Hotel photograph was by Maynard Parker, a well-known Los Angeles-based architectural and garden photographer.

[25] "Service Stations," Architectural Record's Building Types Study, 86, a collaborative report developed jointly with *National Petroleum News'*s editor, *Architectural Record*, Feb. 1944, 73.

results would be very original, and sometimes astonishing. The more innovative the project was, the more technology had to be incorporated into the building.

In a collaborative report published jointly with *National Petroleum News* and *Architectural Record*, some U.S. leading architects showed how they pictured the present and the close future of service stations.[26] As designers, they tackled the uneasy task of combining multiple programs (never combined before or not commonly juxtaposed) in which movement and transportation were the most important aspects. One of the projects presented was a station for a shopping center, based on modern merchandising and town planning, designed by Henry S. Churchill (*figure 1.16*). In his approach (either for the center of a small community or the way downtown in a large one), the station itself came last instead of first among the elements considered. First came "a shopping center with unobstructed pedestrian access from the neighborhood as well as motor access from a main thoroughfare; second, adequate off-street parking; third, a service station suitably related to the parking lot."[27] The form of the projects had been adjusted to give the motorist the best possible long-distance sight-lines toward the service station, the drug store, the supermarket, and the stores.

However, the proposal that definitely attracted attention was a Station for a Municipal Airport, with two levels, for cars and planes, designed by J. Gordon Carr (*figure 1.17*). As visualized, this gas station would service automobiles, coming both from the airport itself and from the passing super-highway, and also smaller private planes. Between the station and the airport terminal building Carr had proposed a wide parking area (*figure 1.18*). Circulation being the first problem, the station was developed "in a two-level scheme, with cars serviced above, planes below." Besides having easy access, either from highway or airport, cars also had an easy route through the station, a two-story circular building, moving around the circle to a 'dock,' and then moving on around to the exit ramp. An indicator sign on the entrance canopy told the driver which stalls were free. The canopy extended over two stalls, for protection against bad weather (*figures 1.17*

[26] Ibid, 71-76.

[27] Ibid, 76.

and *1.19*).[28] Cars were fueled from a mechanism recessed in the platform. Private planes, in turn, were serviced at the level of the flying field, taxiing in directly to the apron. After the plane took its position on a turntable, the servicing apparatus rose from its recess in the apron; then it was lowered again (by hydraulic mechanism) to leave the apron free of obstructions. Then the turntable, which operated electrically, turned the plane around to face the field (*figure 1.20*).[29]

In this project, the unusual combination of two apparently-incompatible programs, and the unavoidable incorporation of technology were very remarkable. Regardless of its science fiction character, Carr's project was entirely viable. However, if it had been built, this service station would probably be a striking, fantastic presence. The character of this airport definitely moved away from the other works that accompanied *Architectural Record*'s Building Types Study 86.

In any case, such sui generis buildings did not always remain as "paper architecture." In late 1950, New Yorkers witnessed the inauguration of a simple, but uncommon new building: the Port Authority Bus Terminal or just Manhattan's Bus Terminal. The growing interstate bus traffic in the city during the 1940s, and the urban chaos created by eight separated bus stations scattered throughout midtown, had demanded the construction of a centralized structure. However, it turned out to be more than only a bus terminal. Apart from the wide array of shops, the terminal also provided access to the New York subway, and more importantly, it worked as a huge connection machine between its primary program and New York thoroughfare. Since the development of the expressway had brought more cars to the city, the Port Authority Bus Terminal provided parking space as an integral part of its functions. The resulting image was frankly uncanny: an immense building inserted in a sort of chaotic display of skyscrapers, whose organic connection with the highway system made it almost impossible to separate building from infrastructure (*figure 1.21*).[30]

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[28] Ibid, 74.

[29] Ibid, 75.

[30] See "Bold New Roads. Expressways Are Changing City Shapes as They Help Untie our Traffic Knots," *The Lamp*, March 1954, 21.

Undoubtedly, technology had a special place in architectural magazines during the 1940s and 1950s. By setting up a non-precedent scale, nineteenth and early twentieth-century U.S. architects and engineers had inaugurated a new kind of awe-inspiring imagery: the technological sublime. The integration of technology and building (particularly in terms of climate control), in turn, was a constant search in U.S. architecture. Moreover, binomial building-technology was a quest that ended up going beyond the limits of specific architectural types. As the twentieth century advanced, the advent of new transportation technology after World War II led architects to propose new building types. The unusual combination of programs (either because they were totally new or just because they were in fact combined for the first time) resulted in impressive, almost surrealist architectural images during the 1940s and 1950s, which echoed the early twentieth-century engineering works. The technological sublime seemed to equate a new landscape of mobility in the United States.

This sort of *long durée* interest represented a unique opportunity to use, test, and improve technologies in architecture. Now supported by the increasing internationalization of American architectural magazines, it would eventually lead the professional practice, the public opinion, the international attention, and the private interest to a different level: it would be an inseparable issue from corporate architecture and the International Style during the Cold War.

FIGURE 1.4

"Air-conditioned music:" air-conditioning system and radio programs to make living more comfortable. Bohn Aluminum & Brass Corporation, Detroit, Michigan. Source: *Architectural Forum* (Feb. 1945), 187.

FIGURE 1.5

McCray Refrigerators, the household appliance loaded from outside. Source: *Architectural Record* (Jan.-June 1908), 95.

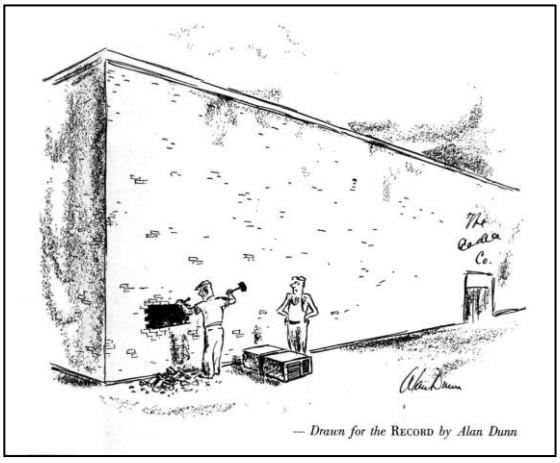


FIGURE 1.6

A wall-split air conditioning unit: the unavoidable, minimalist "key stone" of the building. Cartoon by Alan Dunn. Source: *Architectural Record* (July 1955), 15.

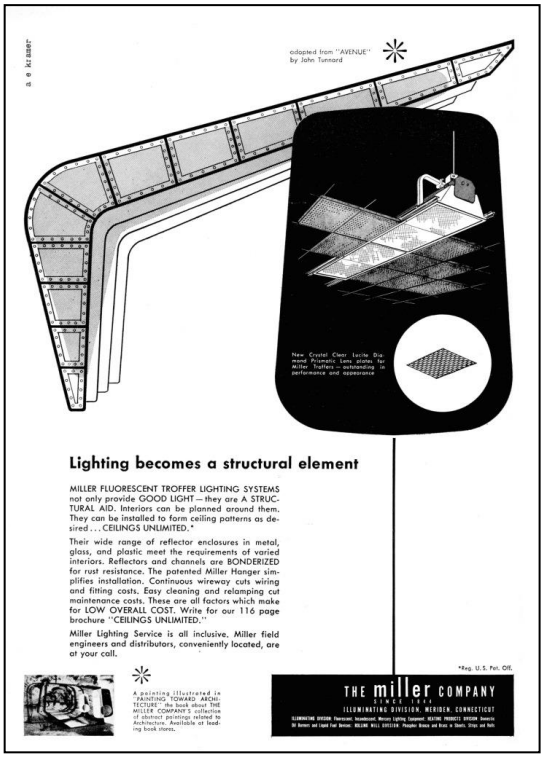


FIGURE 1.7

Lighting as a structural element, The Miller Company advertisement. Source: *Architectural Record* (March 1950), 74.

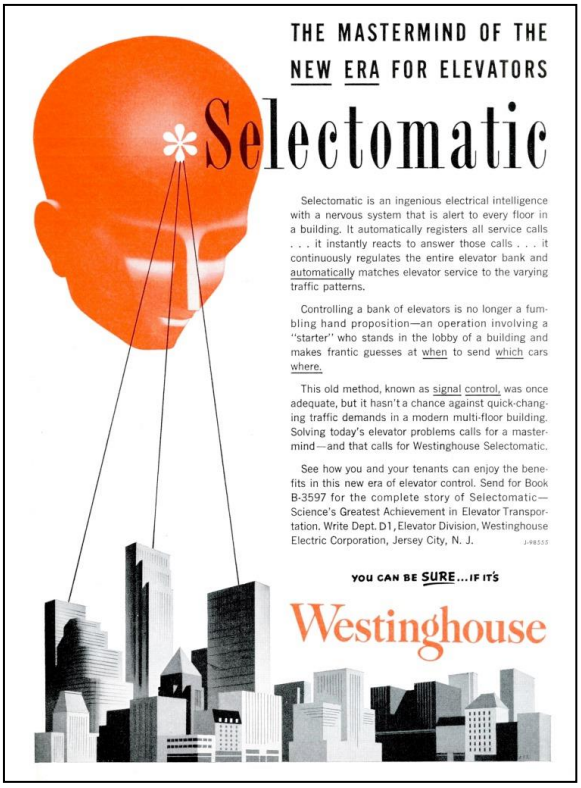


FIGURE 1.8
"The new era for elevators," Westinghouse advertisement. Source: *Architectural Record* (Jan. 1950), 25.

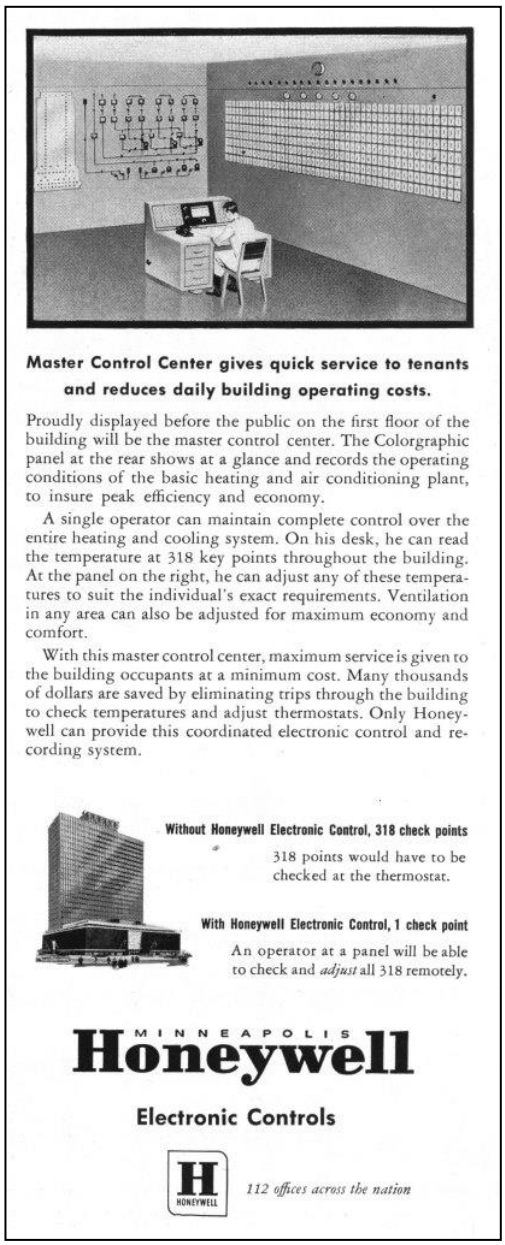


FIGURE 1.9
Master Control Center, at the Second National Bank of Houston, by Honeywell Electronics. Source: *Architectural Record* (July 1950), 29.

FIGURE 1.10
An architectural metaphor: a building-like thermostat, a Honeywell advertisement. Source: *Architectural Record* (March 1950), 27.

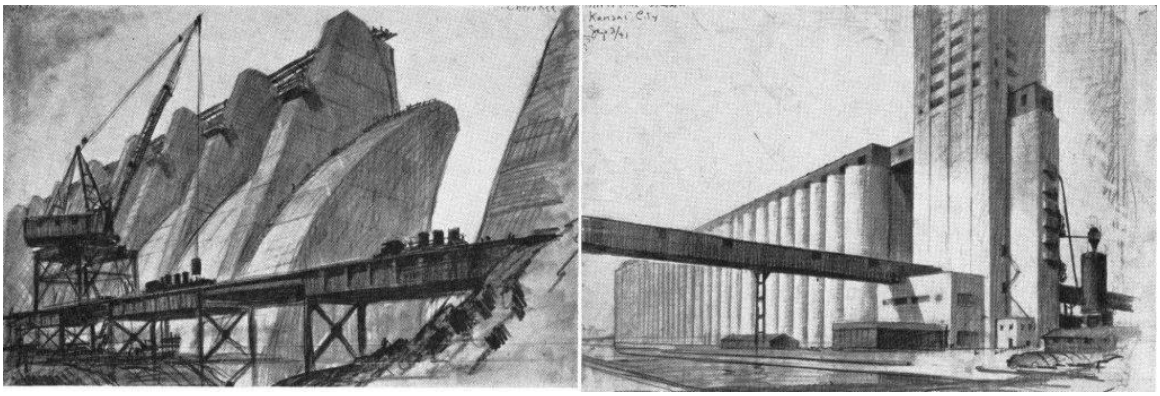


FIGURE 1.11
TVA dam in Tennesse and a grain elevator in Kansas City, two of "more than 100 sketeches studies of dynamic American architecture" produced by Hugh Ferriss in 1941. Source: *Architectural Record* (Jan. 1942), 10.

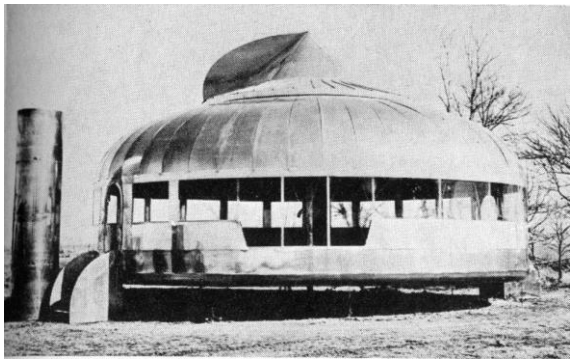
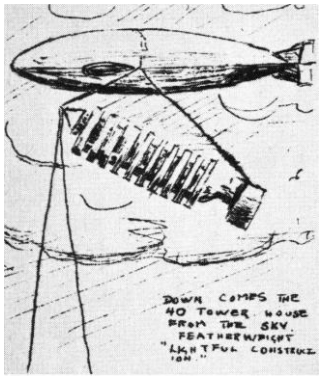


FIGURE 1.12
Buckminster Fuller, Dymaxion House or Fuller House, 1946, and its respective aluminum container (on the left). Source: *Architectural Record* (June 1955), 159.



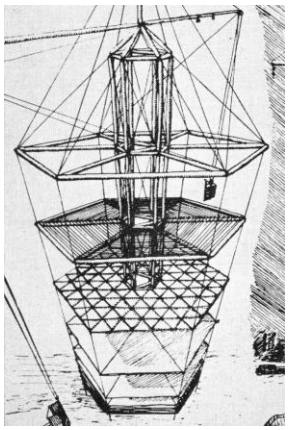


FIGURE 1.13
Buckminster Fuller, Graf Zeppelin transporting one of the 10-story apartment houses. "Down comes the 4D Tower from the sky, featherweight 'lightful construction'." On the right: components of each Tower unit. Source: *Architectural Record* (June 1955), 158.

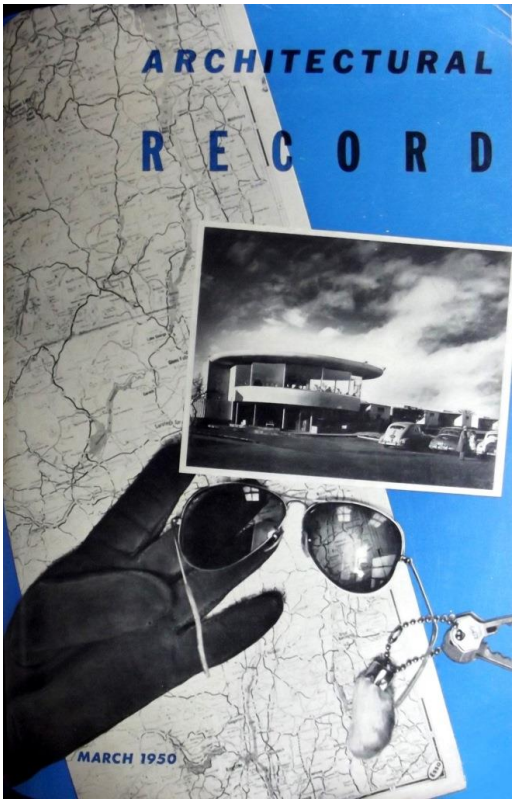


FIGURE 1.14
Architectural Record issue dedicated to domestic tourism. Source: *Architectural Record* (March 1950), cover.

FIGURE 1.15
Architecture of mobility: Frederick Frost, Architect, advanced gas station in current use (model), for Mobiloil. The "drum" shape was a trademark. Source: *Architectural Record* (Feb. 1944), 73.

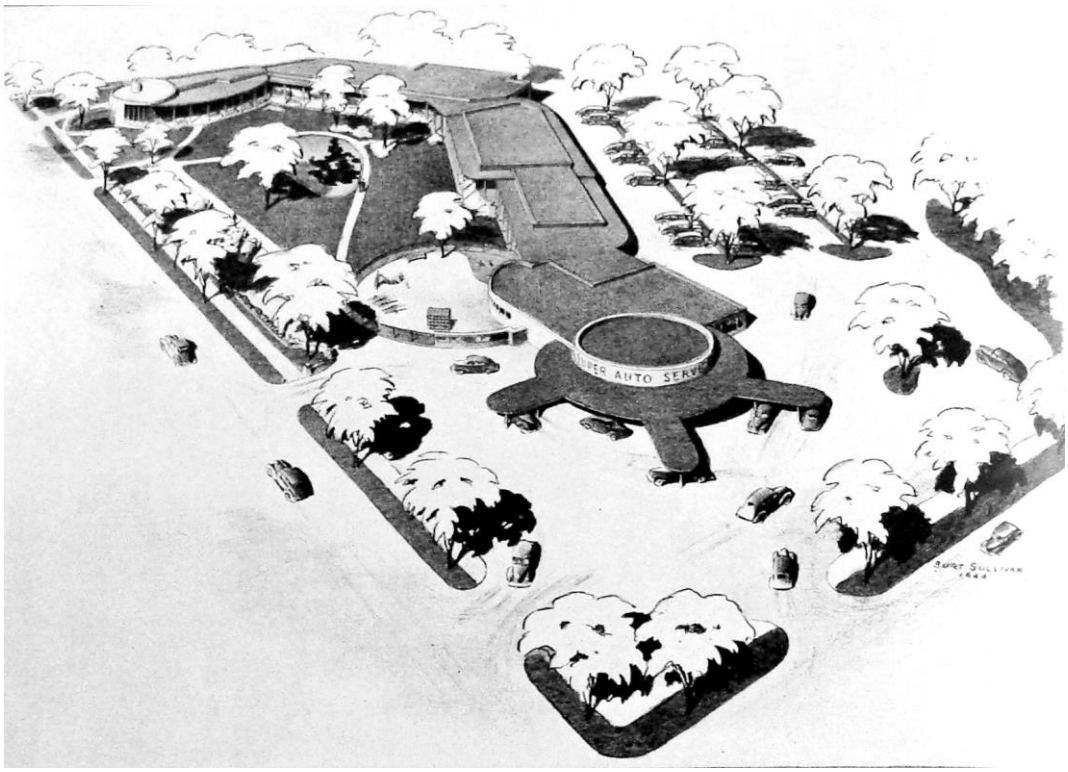


FIGURE 1.16
Architecture of mobility: Henry S. Churchill, Architect (with assistance of Clarence S. Stein), a Station for a Shopping Center. Drawing by Burt Sullivan. Source: *Architectural Record* (Feb. 1944), 76.

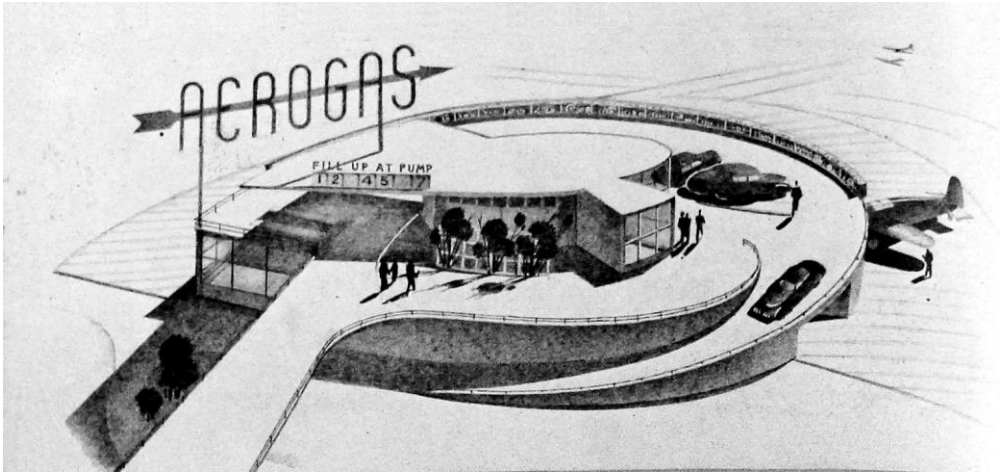


FIGURE 1.17
Architecture of mobility: J. Gordon Carr, Architect, a Station for Municipal Airport with two levels, for cars and planes. Plane service level. Source: *Architectural Record* (Feb. 1944), 74.

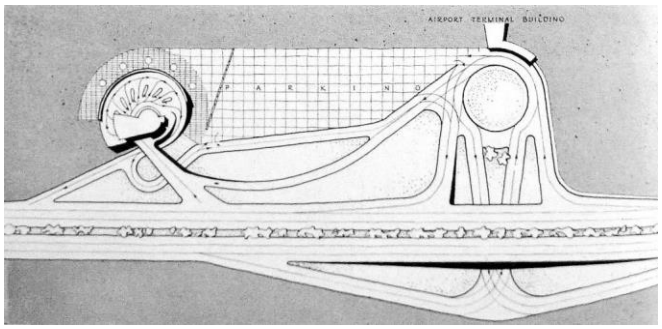


FIGURE 1.18
J. Gordon Carr, Architect, a Station for Municipal Airport. General plan: station (left), airport terminal building (right), and parking area between both. Source: *Architectural Record* (Feb. 1944), 75.

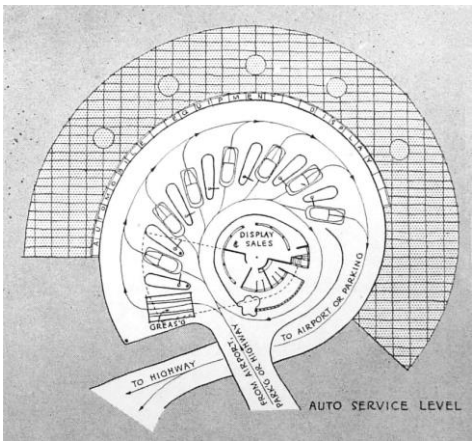


FIGURE 1.19
J. Gordon Carr, Architect, a Station for Municipal Airport. Plan of the auto service level. Source: *Architectural Record* (Feb. 1944), 75.

FIGURE 1.20
J. Gordon Carr, Architect, a Station for Municipal Airport. Plane service level. Source: *Architectural Record* (Feb. 1944), 75.

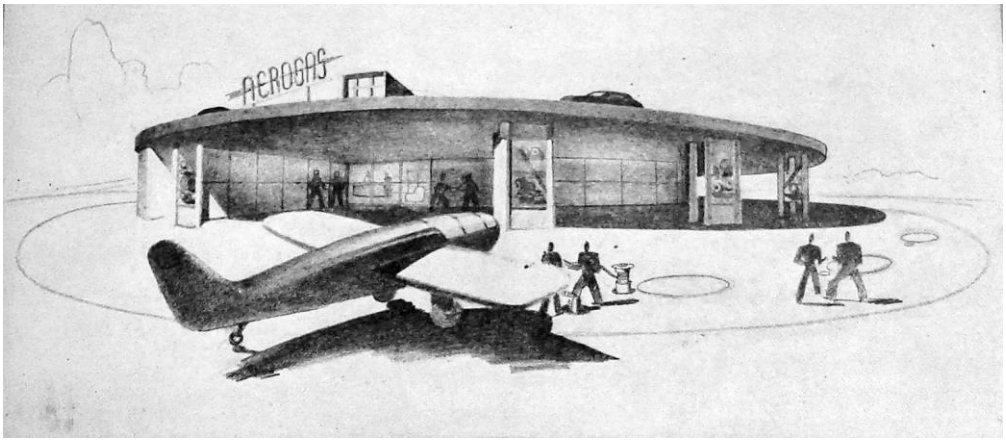


FIGURE 1.21
Manhattan's Bus Terminal, New York City, 1949-50. The roof of the building provided parking space for cars from the Lincoln Tunnel. Source: *The Lamp* (March 1954), 20.

Chapter 2

American Architecture during the 1950s: Meanderings, Key Figures, Technology, and the Many Faces of Modernity

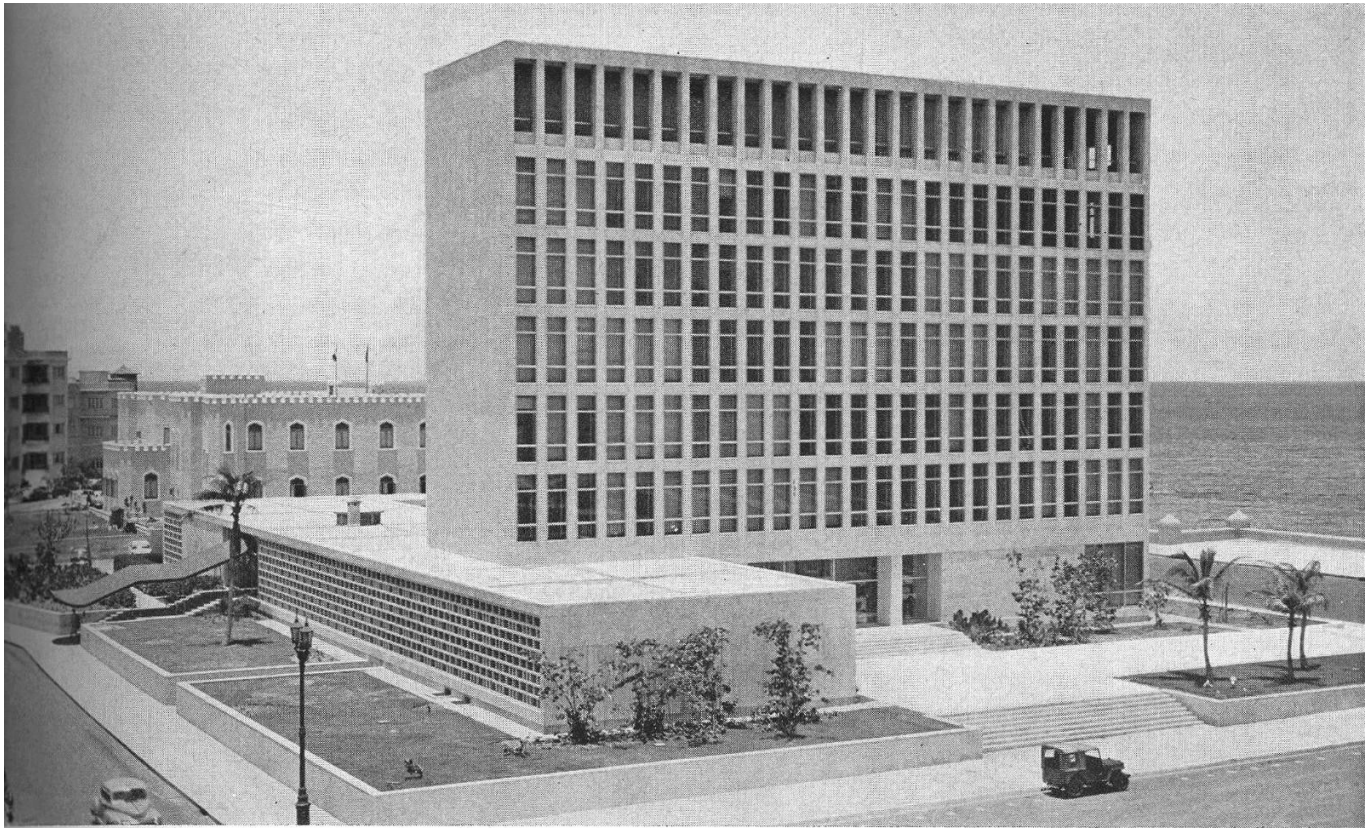


FIGURE 2.1
Harrison & Abramovitz, U.S. Embassy Building in Havana, Cuba, completed in 1952. Photo by J. Alex Langley. Source: *Architectural Record* (Apr. 1955), 205.

Rockefeller support was a last-minute entry into the picture.

Warren R. Austin, US Ambassador to the UN, Dec. 1946.

A mid-1950s photograph shows a rational, semitransparent office slab, partly interlocked with a lower building, and a simple, but eloquent system of exterior areas. Its volume composition, balanced and regular, equates the lack of applied decoration on its surfaces. Actually, the building's main façade exhibits a clean, sensible spandrel-mullion reticule. The approach to the entrance is equally clear. Moreover, some classic aspects in the building's composition denote a particular urban attitude toward its immediate context: a subtle podium (by way of stereobate, which the whole set is lain on), two generous steps, and a sort of open, spacious parvis (*figure 2.1*).

Such purity finds sharp contrasts in the surrounding environment. A neo-gothic, crenellated construction, perhaps from the early twentieth century, stands right behind the building, while the well paved streets look almost empty; probably because of the hour. Just two cars can be seen, including a World War II Jeep passing by before our building. The sunlight is bright, and the sea in the background just strengths the climate sensation: warm and humid.

The building in question was the U.S. Embassy in Havana, Cuba, completed in 1952, and designed by Wallace Harrison and Max Abramovitz. The former had been coordinator of the United Nations Headquarter project six years earlier, and had been a key figure in the development of modern architecture in the United States. He would eventually be responsible for the design of significant corporate office buildings, some of them for the oil industry. But more importantly, he had developed a close relation with the Rockefeller family, particularly with Nelson Rockefeller (grandson of *Standard Oil* founder and chairman), who regarded Harrison as his favorite architect.

Published in the April 1955 issue of *Architectural Record*, the photo revealed some of the most relevant aspects of American architecture during the 1950s. First of all, the U.S. Embassy Building demonstrated the level of development that modern architecture had acquired in the United States, particular such kind of modernism (clean, balanced, and deprived of applied decoration), known as *International Style*. Also, Harrison & Abramovitz' building had showed the commitment of the United States to this style, and how it had become a synonym of corporate image. Moreover, either American corporations or the nation per se had found in the *International Style* the best way to express its identity abroad: rational, efficient, transparent, universal and democratic. American architecture had become a product for export.

Nevertheless, by the early 1950s there were not many office buildings designed in the United States that had followed the International Style principles. During a period of almost thirty years, from 1929, when Howe & Lescaze designed the Philadelphia Saving Fund Society Building, to 1958, when Mies van der Rohe's Seagram was completed (the American office building's epitome), there were only a few cases of pure International Style buildings in America. The Equitable Building, by Pietro Belluschi (Portland, 1946-48), as well as its prototype (1943), and Lever House, by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (New York, 1950-52) were some of these sporadic examples. Regardless of the commitment of the United States to modernity, the development of the International Style in America meandered. Two of the most important U.S. architectural icons, the United Nations Headquarters and even the Seagram, were achieved and won over to the International Style cause only at the last minute.

Oil industry architecture did not escape such circumstances either. Although Standard Oil, Mobil Oil, and later Socony-Vacuum's office buildings had certainly been developed using cutting-edge technology, particularly in terms of climate control (and so was the U.S. Embassy in Havana), their massive compositions as well as their applied ornament were far from the International Style.

The meandering development of the International Style in America, and its gradual (and eventual) success, revealed the close connections between clients and architects. The case of

Rockefeller and Harrison would be paradigmatic, and would show the inseparable links between corporate image, architecture, American idiosyncrasy and more importantly, a particular *Weltanschauung* (worldview) during the Cold War.

THE SEED AND THE APPROPRIATE SOIL: THE INTERNATIONAL STYLE IN AMERICA

At the end of Second World War, the 15,000 registered architects in the U.S. (and more than 8,000 A.I.A. members) were facing a very particular conjuncture: an increasing demand of housing. The outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, in turn, had changed the course of the construction industry. As *Progressive Architecture* asserted, "the recent events have made accurate forecasts of building construction well-nigh impossible and some of the projects shown in the pages that follow may not be built."[1] However, this conjuncture was about to change; the 1950s was not definitely a homogeneous period. As the decade moved forward, architectural production showed a two-fold becoming. Commercial buildings started gaining significance, and more importantly, new aesthetic values, combined with technical issues, displaced the 1930s Streamline Moderne as a representative language, regardless of the program.

In 1932, a modest exhibit entitled "Modern Architecture – International Exhibition" opened at the Museum of Modern Art of New York. The exhibit ("Exhibition 15," as it appeared named in the Museum's archives) included a selected anthology of a contemporary *style* as it had developed in Germany, Holland and France, and spread throughout the world. Unlike the production of the early generation of modern architects, fragmentary and contradictory, such a contemporary style had disseminated internationally as a unified system. It was what the exhibit's organizers, Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, called *International Style*.[2]

[1] "1951 Design Survey," *Progressive Architecture*, Jan. 1951, 45.

[2] After a careful process of selection, interviews, and assembling photographic and documentary material, the exhibition was arranged in three sections. The first one, "Modern Architects," displayed models, drawings and photographs of buildings designed by the Bowman Brothers, Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, Raymond Hood, George Howe and William Lescaze, Richard Neutra, Jacobus Johannes Pieter Oud, Mies van der Rohe, and Frank Lloyd Wright. The second one showed projects by architects throughout the world, influenced by the European avant-garde masters, while the third section focused on large-scale

Along with the exhibition, Hitchcock and Johnson worked on a book which recorded and organize both the projects on display and the guiding ideas of the Style. As expressed in its Introduction, the International Style's principles were very simple: "There is, first, a new conception of architecture as volume rather than mass. Secondly, regularity rather than axial symmetry serves as the chief means of ordering design. These two principles, with a third proscribing arbitrary applied decoration, mark the productions of the international style."[3]

Despite the fact that the exhibition had neither broad media coverage nor remarkable attendance, American idealism and pragmatism would find in the International Style a fertile ground for their expression. The neutral grid of space defined by the skeleton frame seemed to have meant much more to modern architecture; it supplied American society with "some particularly cogent and convincing symbol."[4] The end of World War II represented a golden opportunity for exploring and conveying such aspects. After all, American corporations were eager to do business around the world, and architecture was ready to "represent" them. In a few years, however, American business architecture ended up representing much more than just corporations; by means of combining technology and a particular style, it turned out to be a tireless quest for fundamental values in the American culture.

A CORPORATE IMAGE: IDENTITY, REPRESENTATIVENESS AND TECHNOLOGY

One year before the exhibition at the MoMA, *Architectural Record* had published a short note on a new skyscraper in Philadelphia. It was one of the seven buildings reported in the "Portfolio of Current Architecture." The note was actually very laconic: "Bank and office building, Philadelphia Saving Fund Society. First study of project now under construction, rendering by

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dwellings in the United States and Europe. In this sense, see Terence Riley, *The International Style: Exhibition 15 and The Museum of Modern Art*, New York: Rizzoli/Columbia Books of Architecture, 1992.

[3] Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International Style,* New York/London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995 (originally published in 1932 under the title *The International Style: Architecture since 1922*), 36.

[4] Colin Rowe, "Chicago Frame. Chicago's Place in the Modern Movement," *The Architectural Review*, 120, 285.

Hugh Ferriss. Howe and Lescaze Architects."[5] Nevertheless, the impressive image accompanying the text was quite revealing. Rendered by the most celebrated delineator of the time, it showed a corner-32-story tower, resting on a partially glazed, granite podium, and interlocked with a transversal volume. Unlike its contemporaries, the Philadelphia Saving Fund Society (PSFS) Building had neither a set-back silhouette nor a massing facade. Indicating clearly the stories, the tower's façade was an alternate arrangement of ribbon windows and horizontal spandrels (*figure 2.2*). The principles displayed at the MoMA exhibition matched perfectly. The first American International Style skyscraper had been born.[6]

The PSFS Building was completed in 1932. It was one of the first office structures to provide full air-conditioning as a standard feature in its rental space.[7] As a pioneer case, this early attempt would stand alone during more than ten years. The Second World War changed much more than just the European geography; the transformation was both comprehensive and holistic. The United States had emerged victorious and strengthened from the conflict. Excited and driven by profits earned during the war, American corporations went further than their predecessors. Architecture, in this sense, would play a significant role. By idealizing the rational industrial process, the International Style was perfect to express "this confidence in American know-how and industrial might."[8] After 1945, architecture became a form of advertisement; American corporations attempted to establish their public images through buildings. Now, the relation client-architect was twin-track cooperation.

In September 1948, *Architectural Forum* published an extensive report on an impressive 13-story building in Portland, Oregon, which would set a benchmark for office skyscraper design:

[5] See "Portfolio of Current Architecture," *Architectural Record* (April 1931), 306.

[6] It is important to notice that the PSFS Building was completed in 1932, the same year that the MoMA exhibition. Nevertheless, its design process had been started before, in 1929.

[7] The first American skyscraper to offer full air-conditioning had been the Milam Building in San Antonio, Texas, in 1928. See chapter 1 of this dissertation.

[8] Leland Roth, *American Architecture. A History* (Boulder: Westview, 2001), 412-413.

the Equitable Building.[9] Pietro Belluschi, Its architect, actually achieved a national reputation with this commission. The cleanliness of its lines and materiality, the sobriety of its proportions and dimensions, and specially a brand new, unfamiliar form of transparency were its unmistakable features (*figure 2.3*). The building's layout was as simple as powerful. Its plan was elongated, arranged along a frame of eleven by three modules, and organized around the core of services and vertical circulation (*figure 2.4*).

The elevation of the building was as candid as its plan: Equitable's own banking rooms and stores on the street floor, and ten floors of office space above. Finally, the penthouse was occupied by Equitable officers. Nevertheless, it was necessary "more than the mere repetition of a tried and trusted plan" to guarantee a *successful* building. Actually, the Equitable incorporated "just about every characteristic demanded by postwar tenant: year-round air conditioning; good natural illumination and artificial light sources; sound control; attractive, durable finishes; and a structure and utilities" which permitted changes in office partitioning with a minimum of fuss and bother (*figure 2.4*).[10]

The Equitable Saving & Loan Building's construction had been started in 1946. Nevertheless, it was not the first attempt of Belluschi to design a corporate building. In May 1943, *Architectural Forum* had published a five-page report on an "Office Building" (as it was named), which bore a strong resemblance to the building published five years later. Actually, it was the Equitable's prototype. For this early version, like the Equitable, Belluschi had proposed an elongated plan. The core of services and elevators was rigorously situated on the middle of the plan's length, while staircases were located at both ends. Once again, the circulation was displayed centrally along the plan (*figure 2.5*).

[9] See "Equitable Builds a Leader," *Architectural Forum*, September 1948, 98.

[10] Ibid., 98 and 100. Its office space's 8 ft.-modular subdivisions, and its continuous ducts in celling permitted electrical, communication or air conditioning outlets at any desired point, while the air was exhausted through slotted windows sills.

Although the report did not indicate a specific location, the building was hypothetically placed in Portland. Moreover, Bellushi proposed a very sui generis, novel response to the building context based on the separation between automobile and pedestrian traffic. The office slab actually worked as a permeable frontier between a pedestrian promenade, along with the Main Street (free of automobile traffic), and a transportation area.[11] As a prototype, Portland's Office Building shared general characteristics with the Equitable: the same glass-and-metal sheathing, for vastly increased daylight, year-round air conditioning, and distinguished interiors. Equitable's officers for sure saw the merit of this early version, and gave Belluschi a "green light."[12]

The zenith of the glass towers came, however, with two buildings located in New York City. Also regarded as pioneers of this kind of skyscraper, they "officially" inaugurated the beginning of the golden age of glass towers in the United States. They were the quintessence of the American corporate office tower.

In 1950, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM, a Chicago firm founded in 1936) sought building permits for a 22-story block office building to be located at 378-388, Park Avenue; the owner was Lever Brothers.[13] Eventually known as Lever House, this new building had been designed by Gordon Bunshaft,[14] and would be the first curtain wall skyscraper in New York: its stainless steel

[11] The building was set back from Main Street, creating a wide pedestrian access flanked with two-story community facilities. Gardens and trees also made this area an integral part of the paseo. The opposite area included two-level auto parking, bus concourse and autogyro landing space. The building per se offered a transition between those dissimilar areas, as well as a vertical connection, linking the first and second floors of the community facilities through a long, easy ramp. This programmatic ability of the building was also conveyed in the flexibility of the typical office floor. See "Office Building," *Architectural Forum*, May 1943, 108.

[12] "Equitable Builds a Leader," 98.

[13] Office for Metropolitan History, "Manhattan NB Database 1900-1986," search parameters: Year: 1950; Architect: Skidmore, Owing & Merrill, http://www.MetroHistory.com (accessed on Nov. 22, 2012).

[14] Bunshaft had been architectural designer at Edward Durrell Stone's office in 1937, and then at Skidmore, Owings & Merrill from 1937 to 1945, when he finally became a partner in SOM's New York branch. See *American Architects Directory,* s.v. "Bunshaft, Gordon," New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1956, 73. Bunshaft eventually would design the Lyndon B. Johnson Library and the Cid Richardson Hall,

and heat-resistant glass façade was bolted to a skeleton of reinforced concrete (*figure 2.6*). Started in 1951, the building immediately received attention from the print media.[15] The historical circumstances in which Lever House appeared published in *Progressive Architecture* deserve to be mentioned. Criticism was as harsh with the commercial buildings designed at that time as quite positive with Bunshaft's project:

> In the office-building category we ask the reader to ponder the general quality of design. With few exceptions – and the fine new building shown at the right of this page is an outstanding one – it is painfully evident that the buildings are the result of the commercial client's prime demand for utmost rental space (…). In this context, it is interesting to observe that, while the general design level has improved in certain other categories (…), the office building (…) today tends to be routine if not downright dull.[16]

Lever House was completed in 1952. Three years later, and very close to that location, a new glass skyscraper would be erected. In April 1955, *Architectural Forum* published an article on what would be the first skyscraper office designed by the "Chicago's famed" architect, Mies van der Rohe. It was also his first work in New York City. Soon, the building would become one of the most significant icons of the modern movement. It was the Seagram Building.[17] In terms of commercial architecture, the Seagram was Mies' first skyscraper office building, and the first for his partner-ad-hoc, Philip Johnson (*figure 2.7*).[18] Mies gave "no moment's rest to himself or his

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both at the University of Texas at Austin, dedicated in 1971 (see Lawrence Speck and Richard Cleary. *The University of Texas at Austin. The Campus Guide*, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2011, 197-201). Bunshaft received the Pritzker Prize in 1988.

[15] See "19 Stories Held to One Fourth of Site to Achieve Light and Air for 280,000 Sq. Ft. without Setbacks," *Architectural Record*, June 1950, 12; "Commerce: Office Buildings," *Progressive Architecture*, January 1951, 79.

[16] "Commerce: Office Buildings," 79.

[17] "Seagram's Plans Plaza Tower in New York," *Architectural Forum*, April 1955, 9.

[18] They relied on Kahn & Jacobs, of New York, as an associate firm (see Kahn & Jacobs' Roster Questionnaire, 1953, The American Institute of Architects Archive, *The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects*, s.v. "Kahn & Jacobs [firm]," [ahd4002927] [accessed 01/08/2013]). Other associates included Severud-Elstad-Kruger (structural engineers), and Jaros, Baum & Bolles (mechanical engineers),

clients until all had accepted a simple shape with simple columns 'all the way down to the ground,' as contrasted with the complicated framing imposed by setbacks."[19] This "glass-enclosed head to toe" skyscraper marked the beginning of a whole sheer-glass-corporate-tower generation. But it was also regarded as the zenith; the golden age of glass towers in the United States. It was both a groundbreaker and a piece par excellence, at the same time, of the U.S. corporate architecture.

A PIECE OF CAKE?: OBSTACLES AND LAST-MINUTE ACHIEVEMENTS

The design process of the Seagram, however, would not be so expeditious. In 1954, Pereira & Luckman, a Los Angeles architectural firm, submitted an application before the NY City Department of Buildings for a 31-story office building, to be located at 375, Park Avenue.[20] The project had an estimated cost of $10,000,000; more than twice the amount of Lever House.[21] In August of that year, *Architectural Forum* had published a short note on the project. A photograph of the model showed a massive building, with a slight set-back Art Deco touch. Its symmetrical composition was emphasized by protruding Herculean stacks located in the corners. Both the central volume and the stacks featured vertical stripes by way of broad ornament. Finally, the whole set rested on a four-story pedestal (*figure 2.8*). It was all about integrity, tradition and craftsmanship, as Seagram's values established.

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which were among the usually employed contractors by Kahn & Jacobs, as well as George A. Fuller Co. (general contractors), and Cushman & Wakefield, Inc. (rental agents).

[19] "Seagram's Plans Plaza Tower in New York," 9.

[20] Application #97. Office for Metropolitan History, "Manhattan NB Database 1900-1986," search parameters: Owner: Seagram, http://www.MetroHistory.com (accessed on Jan. 5, 2013).

[21] Ibid. The design team also included architect George Wheeler McLaughlin, from Hawaii. McLaughlin (1909-1995, AIA 1957) had his office in Honolulu since 1939. He had been awarded 2nd Medal of Beaux-Arts Society (Emerson Prize) in 1933. Between 1930 and 1932 he worked with William Pereira as an Assistant in the Chicago World's Fair; then as a Design Consultant in the New York World's Fair from 1936 to 1940.

Nevertheless, if the photography was somewhat modest, the note per se was definitively unfavorable. A month before, Seagram-Distillers Corporation had made public the model (a "man-sized" one) of its proposed new headquarters. "Critical catcalls in the architectural world" were very harsh: "some said that the 38-story building, schedule for erection by 1957 on Manhattan's Park Ave., looked like an enormous cigarette lighter. Others thought it resembled a big trophy."[22] Similar reaction even in the heart of the Bronfman family came swiftly. Closely involved in the Seagram Building's design process, and also responsible for the important choices and decisions, was the daughter of Samuel Bronfman (head of the Seagram group), Mrs. Phyllis Lambert. Having seeing Pereira & Luckman's first version of the building in the Paris edition of the *Herald Tribune*, and "not adequately impressed," she "crossed the ocean and joined the building committee, headed by Ellis D. Slater, president of a Seagram's subsidiary;" hence the selection of Mies as the new architect.[23] The end of the story is well-known.[24]

Since 1929, when the design of the PSFS Building commenced, until 1958, when the Seagram was completed, almost thirty years had passed. Within this long period of time (in fact, a generation), the office building type in the United States was gradually gaining definition. Progress had been made, however, only through a few buildings. After the PSFS, the next significant office building would come seventeen years later, with the Equitable Building (1946-48) or perhaps before, with its prototype, the Portland Office Building (1943). Then, in the early fifties came Lever House (1950-52), and finally, after the almost-approved Art Deco proposal, the Seagram Building by Mies van der Rohe (1954-58). Certainly each of them was concerned both in defining a clear corporate image, and implementing a cutting-edge technology (particularly in relation to climate control). It is obvious that these buildings were not isolated efforts; each one implied a step forward the consolidation of the International Style in the

[22] "Seagram Plans a Monument," *Architectural Forum*, Aug. 1954, 52. Notice the slight difference between the quantity of floor levels provided by the Office for Metropolitan History and the magazine.

[23] Ibid.

[24] For a detailed account of this process, see Phyllis Lambert, *Building Seagram* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 29-37.

United States, specifically in relation to the office building type. Nevertheless, they did not precisely constitute a construction boom.

As a matter of fact, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of The American Institute of Architects, *Architectural Record* published a special report on office buildings in June 1956. A panel of fifty architects and scholars was invited to nominate buildings in existence at the time whose over-all significance had been most important in the stage-by stage development of U.S. architecture.[25] According to such panel of experts the ten most significant office buildings were (in order of preference) Carson Pirie Scott Store (Chicago, 1899-1904, by Louis Sullivan); Rockefeller Center Buildings (New York, 1932-40, by Reinhard &Hofmeister; Corbett, Harrison & Mac Murray; Hood & Fouilhoux); Lever House; PSFS Building; Monadnock Block (Chicago, 1891, by Burnham & Root); Daily News Building (New York, 1930, by Hood & Howells); Woolworth Building; United Nations Secretariat (New York, 1952, Wallace Harrison & Consultants); Equitable Building, and Alcoa Building (Pittsburgh, 1952, Harrison & Abramovitz).[26] Of them, only five buildings had followed the International Style principles.

Apart from Lever House, the PSFS, and the Equitable, the panel had chosen the Alcoa Building, a thirty-story construction with a sui generis aluminum curtain wall (actually the first skyscraper with all-aluminum façade), and a centralized HVAC system. However, the building that would definitely attract the media attention was the U.N. Secretariat. Despite the fact it was not a

[25] "One Hundred Years of Significant Buildings. 1: Office Buildings," *Architectural Record*, June 1956, 147-154. The panel had been constituted by Max Abramovitz; James S. Ackerman; Wayne Andrews; Leopold Arnaud; Turpin C. Bannister; Pietro Belluschi; Marcel Breuer; Gordon Bunshaft; John E. Burchard; Alan Burham; Leslie Cheek Jr.; Kenneth J. Conant; George Bain Cummings; John Ekin Dinwiddie; Donald D. Egbert; Walter Gropius; Talbot F. Hamlin; Henry Russell Hitchcock; Arthur C. Holden; Joseph Hudnut; Philip Johnson; Edgar Kaufmann; George Fred Keck; Morris Ketchum Jr.; A. Lawrence Kocher; Ernest J. Kump; Maurice Lavanoux; Edwin Bateman Rorris Sr.; Hugh Morrison; Richard Neutra; Eliot Noyes; G. Holmes Perkins; Buford L. Pickens; Antonin Raymond; Earl H. Reed; Henry Hope Reed; John W. Root; Paul Rudolph; Eero Saarinen; Paul Schweikher; Vincent J. Scully Jr.; G.E. Kidder Smith; Edward Steese; Hugh Stubbins; Walter Taylor; William W. Wurster, and Minoru Yamasaki. The rest of the panel had returned anonymous ballots.

[26] Ibid.

corporate edifice in the strict sense, this building would play a significant role in defining the technical and aesthetic standards of office buildings and corporate image. From late 1946, when the location was finally chosen (at the last minute), to 1952, when the building was completed, the World Capitol project would demonstrate its commitment to the International Style.

As *Architectural Forum* reported in February 1947, the "prize architectural plum of the year, and possibly of the decade," had been awarded to the New York architect Wallace Kirkman Harrison, in his appointment as Director of Planning for the projected skyscraper capitol of the United Nations. Though the UN Headquarters was not a corporate building, it reflected very well the aspirations of the International Style: a tall slab, stripped of ornaments, in balance with lower, oblong buildings, all displayed like sculptural objects along an open area. Certainly the Secretariat's 39-story semi-transparent slab (commanding the whole ensemble), the General Assembly's curve building, and the Library and Conference's oblong buildings, corresponded to the International Style's handbook: volume (instead of mass), balance (rather than symmetry), and simplicity (rejection of applied ornament).

Having passed through several possible locations, the project was finally placed in New York City, specifically in Manhattan, on the First Avenue (from 42nd-48th street), along the East River. This choice brought Nelson Aldrich Rockefeller into play, who had arranged in 1946 the purchase of the lot from William Zeckendorf, vice president of the real estate concern, Webb & Knapp, Inc. (*figure 2.9*). Zeckendorf had given John Davison Rockefeller, Jr. an option on the $8,500,000 site, as the United Nation committee was about to make a final decision on the location of the permanent headquarters. John D. Rockefeller's offer of the area as a gift to the United Nations was actually "the factor" that enables New York "to win over Philadelphia and San Francisco, the leading contenders until that time."[27] The negotiation process, however, was not easy. Under dramatic circumstances, the proposal had been made on December 11, "at almost the last minute of the eleventh hour."[28] Nelson Rockefeller, who was in Mexico at that

[27] "Rockefellers Hail Zeckendorf's Role," *The New York Times*, Dec. 18, 1946, 19.

[28] As Warren R. Austin (US Ambassador to the UN) disclosed, it was only at 1:30 o'clock that morning that he knew Rockefeller was going to make "a specific suggestion;" between that time and 9 a.m. (time of the

moment, and concerned that New York was apparently far out of the running, flew on to New York "at once" to have a meeting with Austin and officials of the Mayor's site group.[29]

What was here at stake was clearly more than a site and a last minute offer. It was a battle between two very different ways of understanding the post-war world, and architecture was definitively in the middle of this discussion. Moreover, both architecture and site (including of course architects and donor) were absolutely interwoven to each other. It couldn't have been in any other way. It was all about the seed sown in the appropriate soil.

As a Director of Planning, Harrison had full authority to prepare the plans for the World Capitol. Co-designer of the Rockefeller Center and one of the leading architects in the country, he had been since the beginning the unanimous choice of the U.N. Headquarters Advisory Committee.[30] Along with Max Abramovitz, he had a large list of buildings designed, either as an architect or an associate architect.[31] Moreover, it was not the first time that Harrison and Nelson Aldrich

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UN committee meeting to make a final decision for some other place), "the chief delegate had to confer with Washington and local officials to be able to present 'top assurances' of complete support" (see George Barrett, "Six Blocks in Area. Surprise Gift proposal Puts City Back in Race for World Capital," *The New York Times*, Dec. 12, 1946, 1).

[29] Ibid.

[30] "Harrison Named to Plan U.N. Site," *Architectural Record*, Feb. 1947, 10.

[31] Despite many of them being located in New York, the list included works throughout the United States and abroad. After having graduated from the *École des Beaux-Arts* in Paris, and the American Academy in Rome, Harrison commenced his professional practice in 1923; during two years he worked in the firm McKim, Mead & White, and then in Bertram Goodhue's office. From 1925 to 1926, he worked as Associate Architect in the New York City Board of Education. In 1927 he joined Frank J. Helmle and Harvey Wiley Corbett (Helmle, Corbett and Harrison, active until 1929), and then Roy McMurray (Corbett, Harrison & McMurray, 1929-35). He also held academic positions in two prestigious Schools of Architecture: Columbia University (1926-27) and Yale University (1938-41). During the Second World War he was Director of the Office of Inter-American Affairs, and by 1947 he was President of the Architectural League of New York. See Harrison & Abramovitz' Roster Questionnaire, 1947, 1949 and 1953, The American Institute of Architects Archive, *The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects*, s.v. "Harrison & Abramovitz (firm)," (ahd4002388), http://communities.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/Wiki%20Pages/ahd4002388.aspx

Rockefeller saw each other along the way. Harrison had designed in 1939 his Guest House in Terrytown (NY), as well as his Residence in Seal Harbor (Maine, completed 1941), and an alteration on his Residence in New York City. Harrison also had received commissions from other members of the Rockefeller family, particularly from Laurance Spelman and Winthrop, brothers of Nelson Aldrich: a Residence alteration in New York City, 1940, and eventually another alteration in 1948, also in NYC, respectively.[32]

The UN Headquarters was finally completed in 1952 (the very same year that the U.S. Embassy Building in Havana). It decidedly followed the International Style's handbook (*figure 2.10*). Furthermore, the incorporation of climate control technology in order to increase the workers' efficiency also indicated its corporate filiation.[33] As a matter of fact, both the World Capitol's building and its location in New York City were in debt to John Davison Rockefeller, Jr. and his son Nelson, epitomes of corporations, and heads of one of the major oil companies in the world: Standard Oil. It seemed, consequently, that oil industries either had adopted the International Style as the architectural language for their office buildings or were about to assume it. Nevertheless, the reality turned out to be far from this.

[32] Ibid.

[33] See *Report to the General Assembly of the United Nations by the Secretary-General on the Permanent Headquarters of the United Nations* (Lake Success, New York: United Nations, July 1947), 31.

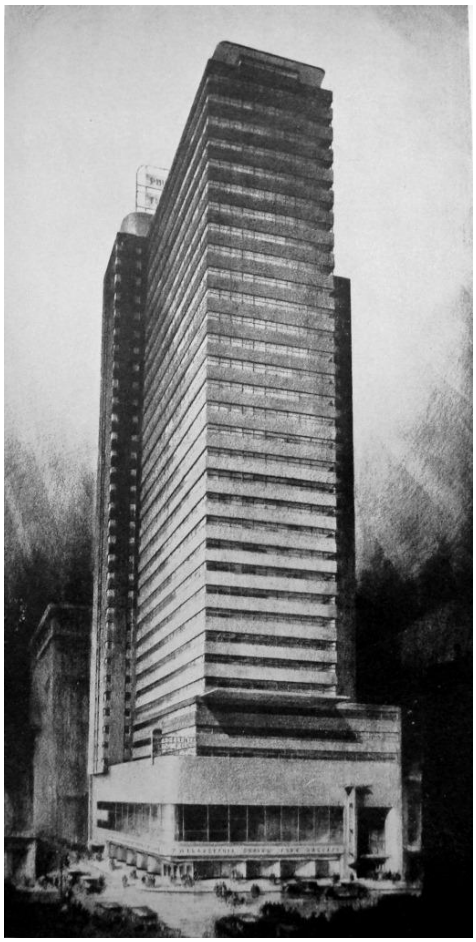

FIGURE 2.2
Howe & Lescaze, Philadelphia Saving Fund Society, Philadelphia, 1929-1932. Rendering by Hugh Ferris. Source: *Architectural Record* (Apr. 1931), 306.

FIGURE 2.3
Pietro Belluschi, architect, Equitable Saving & Loan Building, Portland, Oregon, 1948. Its huge areas of sea-green glass not only reduced solar heat, but also to cut down sky glare to a point where blinds or shades were not needed for comfort. Source: *Architectural Forum* (Sept. 1948), 101.

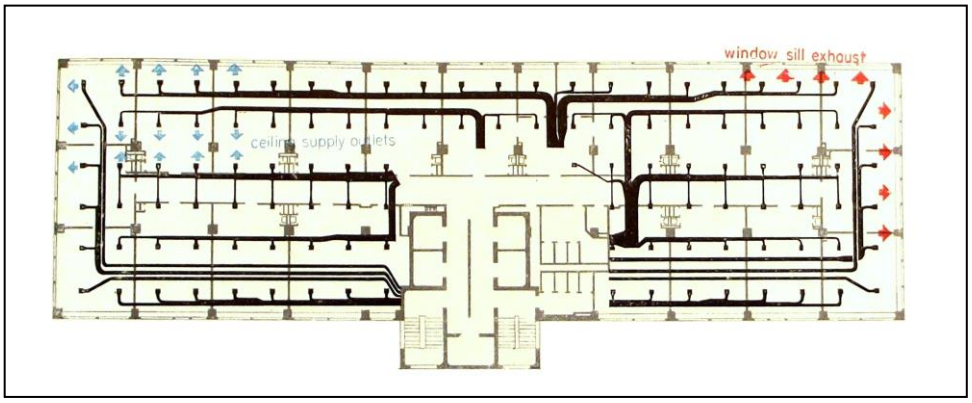

FIGURE 2.4
Pietro Belluschi, architect; J. Donald Kroeker, mechanical engineer; Ross B. Hammond, general contractor, Equitable Saving & Loan Building, Portland, Oregon, 1948. Air conditioning system's distribution on a typical office floor plan: ceiling supply outlets (blue arrows), and windows sill exhaust (red). Source: *Architectural Forum* (Sept. 1948), 103.

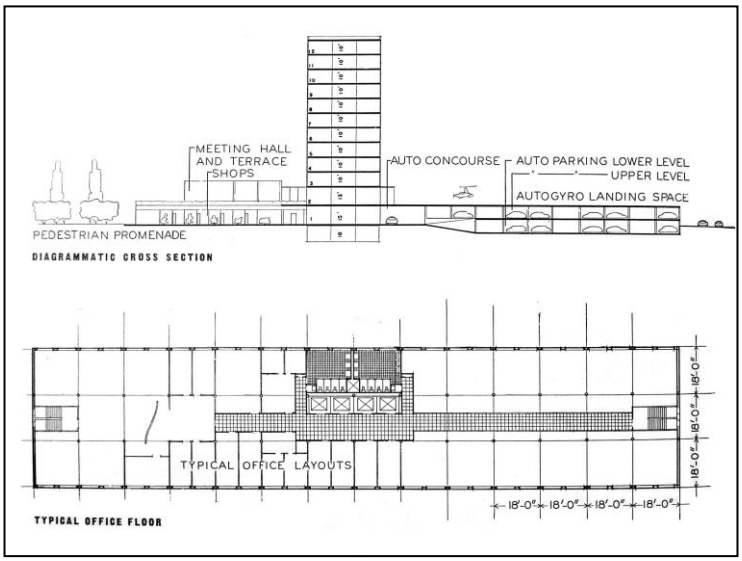

FIGURE 2.5
Pietro Belluschi, Office Building, Portland, Oregon, 1943. "Prototype" of the Equitable Saving & Loan Building. Main Street is located on the left (pedestrian promenade). Source: *Architectural Forum* (May 1943), 110.

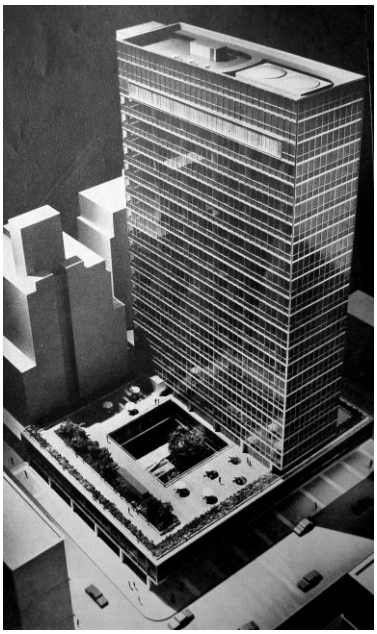

FIGURE 2.6
Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, architects (Gordon Bunshaft, designer), Lever House, New York, 1951-52 (designed in 1950). Source: *Progressive Architecture* (Jan. 1951), 79.

FIGURE 2.7
Mies van der Rohe, architect, Philip Johnson and Associates Kahn & Jacobs, partner-ad-hoc, Seagram Building, New York, designed in 1954; completed in 1958. Source: *Architectural Forum* (Apr. 1955), 9.

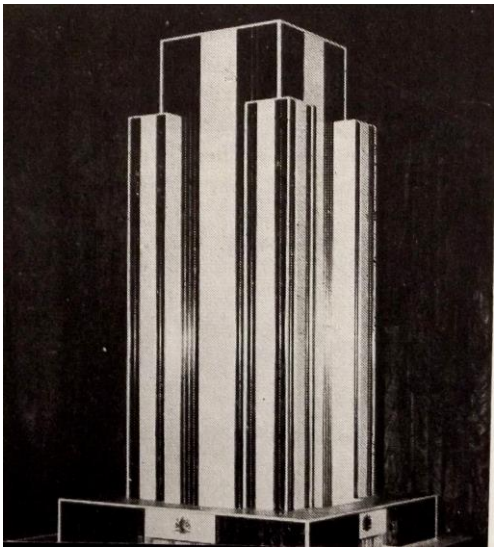

FIGURE 2.8
Pereira & Luckman, architects, with G. W. McLaughlin, Seagram Building (project), New York. Source: *Architectural Forum* (Aug. 1954), 52.

FIGURE 2.10
Wallace Harrison (Director of Planning) and Board of Design Consultants, United Nations Headquarters, New York City, 1947. Schematic rendering by Hugh Ferriss. Source: *Architectural Record* (July 1947), 10.

FIGURE 2.9
United Nations site offered by J. D. Rockefeller, Jr. Condition at the moment of the purchase; the financial arrangements were made by Nelson Rockefeller. Source: *The New York Times* (Dec. 12, 1946).

CORPORATE… BUT NOT SO MUCH! OIL INDUSTRY ARCHITECTURE IN THE U.S.A.

Corporate buildings in the United States did not always follow the International Style principles. Parallel and dissimilar paths can be found, paradoxically, in oil industry buildings during the 1940s and 1950s. Since 1885, when Standard Oil moved the location of its headquarters from Cleveland, Ohio, to New York City, the architectural representation associated with oil corporations has been anything but homogeneous. Established in Lower Manhattan at 26 Broadway, this new Standard Oil ten-story building office had been designed by Ebenezer L. Roberts in a Renaissance Revival style (*figure 2.11*). Ten years later, in 1895, the building underwent an expansion through the construction of six additional stories, on this occasion designed by Kimball & Thompson in a more elaborated Renaissance Revival Style. Lastly, envisioning a final expansion, in 1920 Standard assembled a larger site around the original lot, through purchases and long-term leases. On one of the largest lots in lower Manhattan, Thomas Hasting (of Carrère & Hasting,[34] with Shreve, Lamb & Blake, associate architects), would eventually design the architectural image of the oil industry giant in the heart of New York: a complex massing thirty-one-story skyscraper, crowned with a stepped pyramid, which combined eclectically figurative and narrative motifs (including the "SO" cipher) with Renaissance-inspired ornamentation.[35]

FIGURE 2.11
Ebenezer L. Roberts, Jersey Standard's Headquarters at 26th Broadway, New York, as it looked like in 1885. Rendering prepared for the 75th Anniversary of Jersey Standard. Source: *The Lamp* (1957), inner cover.

[34] Carrère & Hasting had been the architectural firm hired to design the New York Public Library Main Building (1897-1911).

[35] See Betsy Bradley, *Designation Report on Standard Oil Building,* New York: Landmark Preservation Commission, September 19, 1995, Designation List 266 LP-1930 (accessed on Dec. 24, 2012), http://www.nyc.gov/html/lpc/downloads/pdf/reports/standardoilbldg.pdf

Because of the World War I and the subsequent recession, the Standard Oil headquarters at 26 Broadway was among the few tall buildings (constructed in the 1920s), that followed the New York City Resolution of 1916; its set-back massing silhouette was a consequence of this change.[36] The building was completed in 1928, after having executed several phases pre-established in the project. From the headquarters building in New York, and during the next twenty years, John Davison Rockefeller's associates "directed the Standard Oil Company that monopolized the American oil industry, endured a sensational anti-trust decision, and retained a dominant role in the international oil business."[37] The building was finally sold in 1956. However, a new and more impressive building venture of Esso was yet to come.

In its Building Previews #50, of May 1946, *Architectural Forum* published a detailed three-page report entitled "Postwar Skyscraper." Accompanied by a set of renderings, plans, and photographs of the project's model, the review presented a new 33-story office building that would tower "over the block of low brownstones adjoining Rockefeller Center on the north."[38] It was the new Esso building, located at 75 Rockefeller Plaza, and planned to consolidate the metropolitan offices of Standard Oil Company of New Jersey (*figure 2.12*).[39] Its designers, Carson & Lundin, Architects, and Wallace K. Harrison, Consulting Architect, had been associated with the Rockefeller Center for many years, and consequently designed this new building in harmony with the existing constructions:

[36] The New York *Zoning Resolution of 1916* (or just *Building Zone Resolution*, as officially designated) was a provision adopted to prevent the massiveness of some skyscrapers, and consequently to guarantee sufficient air and light in the streets below. It imposed limits of massing building at certain heights, and restricted towers to a specific floor area ratio. The resolution was interpreted as a series of setbacks. See Board of Estimate and Appointment of the City of New York, *Building Zone Resolution (Adopted July 25, 1916)*.

[37] Bradley, *Designation Report on Standard Oil*, 1.

[38] *Architectural Forum*, May 1946, 91.

[39] John W. Harris Assoc., Inc., Builder; The Haswin Corporation, Owner; Standard Oil Company of New Jersey, Tenant. Ibid., 91-92.

> Uninterrupted vertical piers, similar to those on Center buildings, accentuate the tower, which is the central element of the design. Flanking the tower on 52nd Street, but extending only partially though the block to 51st, are two ten-story wings which consolidate the lower floors into a T-shape plan. Roof gardens which top the two-story entranceway on both 51st and 52nd Streets tie in with the Rockefeller gardens, further linking the new building to its progenitors.[40]

Regarded as one of the first postwar skyscrapers, the building showed "novel features" in its design. It was the tallest New York office building to be completely air-conditioned, and not merely air-cooled.[41] Also, as a result of "recently instituted zoning laws,"[42] the building had some morphological improvements. Unlike former constructions in this area, this new tower could occupy "only 65 per cent of the land area above the second floor," a ruling that resulted in the setbacks utilized for the aforementioned roof planting. The strategy of roof gardens, however, was not the only element that linked Carson & Lundin's skyscraper to its "progenitors" at Rockefeller Center. Despite its rational lines, a closer observation of its façades showed the persistence of ornaments usually applied ten years before. Between the remarkable display of mullions, and as a direct consequence of technical demands, there was an arrangement of wide spandrels, ornamented with vertical strips (*figure 2.13*).

Standard Oil saw its new Manhattan headquarters completed in 1947. That very same year, but now in the West Coast, architects Walter Wurdeman and Welton Becket designed the General Petroleum Building (*figure 2.14*). Located in Los Angeles, California, and finished two years later,

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[40] Ibid., 92.

[41] *Architectural Forum*, May 1946, 92.

[42] Ibid. After the *Building Zone Resolution* was adopted in July 25, 1916, there were innumerable amendments throughout the decades, until the New York building codes were reformed in 1961. The first amendment came as early as December 15, 1916; the last one occurred in December 9, 1959. The "recently instituted zoning laws" mentioned in *Architectural Forum*'s report, probably refers to these modifications: Article III 8 on Height Districts (6/28/40); Article III 8(a to h) on Height Districts (12/2/44); Article III 9(e) on Excess height (2/25/46); Appendix on Height Map Designations (6/28/40), and Appendix Rules 1, 2, 3(a, b, c, e and f) on Height Map Designation (6/28/40). See City Planning Commission, Department of City Planning, *Zoning Resolution. The City of New York, including all amendments adopted prior to November 1, 1960 together with addenda*.

the edifice was planned to house the Socony offices.[43] Because of high land values, Wurdeman and Becket had to face a challenge: to condense the plan to obtain maximum floor area in the height allowed (150 ft.). Since setbacks were impractical and unnecessary for this height, the result was a relatively oblong, symmetrical building, which organization revolved around two courtyards. In own words of the architects, the building did not radically differ in concept from office buildings of the past, except for three aspects. First of all, it featured removable office partitions. Offices could be laid out in any multiple of 7 ft. (a window was given in each module).[44] Secondly, the building was provided with thin aluminum fins for sunshades. Wurdeman and Becket devised a grid system of fins to keep sun off the glass, particularly on the west facade, because of the solar incidence in California (west and south).[45] In this sense, a fin at each 7-ft. module, or at each window mullion, provided shade on that façade through the hot period "so as to save 300 tons of refrigeration by limiting impingement of direct sun on glass."[46] Finally, the building had an extremely light steel frame, considering earthquake ordinances.[47]

The building was completed in 1949. Doubtless, the building had been provided with a good climate control system and, somehow, with a flexible plan organization. Likewise, Wurdeman and Becket had taken into consideration a very basic aspect for any oil industry building office: parking. A separate garage was to be constructed near the building, "on a site already owned by

[43] Standard Oil Company of New York, one of the 33 companies formed after the breakup of the original Standard Oil Co. of New Jersey, ruled by the Supreme Court of the United States in 1911. After the dissolution of John D. Rockefeller's Standard, the two most important companies were Socony and Jersey Standard (Standard Oil of New Jersey). Eventually, Socony and Vaccum Oil Company merged in 1931 to form Socony-Vacuum.

[44] "General Petroleum Building, Los Angeles," *Architectural Record,* Oct. 1947, 134.

[45] The building was oriented so the main façade faces west and slightly north.

[46] "General Petroleum Building, Los Angeles," *Architectural Record,* 135.

[47] Wurdeman and Becket also paid much attention to the chromatic appearance of the project, both in its facades and interior space. Simplicity depending on color, in this sense, was "the theme of this building." The main body of the building was warm grey-beige terra cotta, while spandrels were grey-green terra cotta, and the base of black granite. Fins, in turn, were aluminum, grooved vertically to eliminate glare. Interiors also showed studied use of color (ibid, 134).

the company."[48] The architects had taken into account most of the aspects a corporate building should have. Nevertheless, its organization revolving around two courtyards, as well as its massive appearance put the General Petroleum Building far from the International Style principles still. Moreover, the specific location of the parking area, in a garage separated from the building, seemed to be a secondary decision, taken either by the architects or the clients.

The new decade would bring Wallace Harrison again into play, this time for a company different than Esso. In 1953, Harrison & Abramovitz received the commission to design the Socony-Vacuum Building in New York City. Located at 130 E. 42nd Street, this new tower had larger floor area than the Esso Building in Rockefeller Plaza. An impressive perspective published by *Architectural Record* in October 1953, showed a massive, symmetrical skyscraper, whose stereometric arrangement combined setbacks and verticality. A central, rectangular tower, flanked by two lower blocks, lay on a three-story base, by way of podium (defining a kind of covered commercial gallery, with free-standing columns). A subtle entablature (almost imperceptible) and roof gardens crowned the tower and the lateral blocks, respectively. A dense arrangement of mullions, running uninterruptedly from bottom to top, and corresponding to a series of wide spandrels, defined the effect of innumerable squared windows displayed throughout the façade. Located at 130 E. 42nd Street, the Socony-Vacuum shared a particular context with other significant buildings: near the Grand Central Terminal (a Beaux-Arts building, completed in 1913), and facing the Chrysler Building across the 42nd St. As shown in the perspective, the Woodstock Tower, an Art Deco edifice erected in 1929, rose in the background (*figure 2.15*).

The Socony-Vacuum Building in fact shared more than a context with those buildings; it absorbed their styles. If the General Petroleum Building was far from the International Style's principles, Harrison & Abramovitz' building was even farther. Its extremely massive composition, its setbacks, as well as all the details and ornaments on its façade demonstrated its Art Deco filiation.

[48] Ibid, 134.

Oil industry buildings certainly used cutting-edge technology in their designs; some of them even tried to combine HVAC systems with sun breakers and fins. Moreover, they attempted to incorporate such sun-shading structures into the aesthetic composition of their respective façades. The total synthesis (i.e. technical and aesthetic), however, had not been achieved yet. Actually, these buildings were far from what Mies van der Rohe and SOM would produce just a few years later in New York City. Carson & Lundin's Esso building, Wurdeman and Becket's General Petroleum Building, and Harrison & Abramovitz' Socony-Vacuum Building were surely corporate, but not so much. They looked to be anchored in a pre-war aesthetic. As a matter of fact, they were stylistically not so different than the Headquarters of the Brazil Division of Esso, in Rio de Janeiro, an eight-story Art-Deco building, designed by Robert R. Prentice and completed in 1932 (*figure 2.16*).[49]

The winding development of the International Style in the United States had several milestones along the path. Lever House and the Seagram Building in New York City certainly constituted watersheds par excellence of the *Style* in America. The United Nations Headquarters, a victory *in extremis*, also represented a significant contribution. Previous achievements, however, should not be left behind. Pietro Belluschi's explorations during the 1940s, in this sense, managed to combine functional flexibility and technology; somehow, Belluschi's search and interest were shared with other American architects. Actually, by 1953, when Harrison & Abramovitz received the Socony-Vacuum Building's commission in New York (and SOM's Lever House had just been finished), Standard Oil completed its brand-new office building in New Jersey. Its architect would design several Standard Oil buildings abroad during the 1950s. His name was Lathrop Smith Douglass, a real pioneer who managed to integrate efficiency, flexibility, economy, comfort and corporate image. His explorations in combining a new architectural type with cutting-edge technology were initially tested abroad and then incorporated into the American repertoire. Douglass' work went not just beyond the International Style's canons, but also beyond the U.S. borders.

[49] The U.S. Embassy Building, designed by Harrison & Abramovitz in 1947, would be located diagonally in front of the Esso Headquarters.

In fact, the United States had certainly demonstrated an aptitude for exporting its knowhow; the U.S. Embassy Building in Havana was actually a good example of this. Nevertheless, some of these buildings abroad turned out to be more than just a mere exportation; they were real experiments in which both cutting-edge technology and aesthetic innovations were put to the test.

This story gained much more complexity as American Modernity showed more than only one face. As depicted in the photo of *Architectural Record* (see *fig. 2.1*), there was another element in the U.S. Embassy Building that contrasted with its design's purity, and which was also (and paradoxically) part of its architectural composition: the pierced screen wall displayed in the lower, one-story building. Aesthetically, it articulated all the disparate aspects involved in the building's different facades. The pierced screen surely denoted a primary concern with climate control, but also connoted the need to create a sort of exotic image. By using such a hybrid language, the building marked the territory with a rational, universal presence, and at the same time made a kind of concession to the local culture – or rather, to an idealized local culture.

This aspect leads to a very different topic, highly published by architectural magazines in the 1950s: the appearance of International Style variations, as well as parallel trends in modern architecture. U.S. embassy buildings would become a fertile type to explore hybrid languages, while *organic architecture* would manage to synthesize form, space, structure and function in a single architectural system. These other modernisms, as the International Style did, would rely on technological explorations, and would be especially interested in the relationship between building and technology.

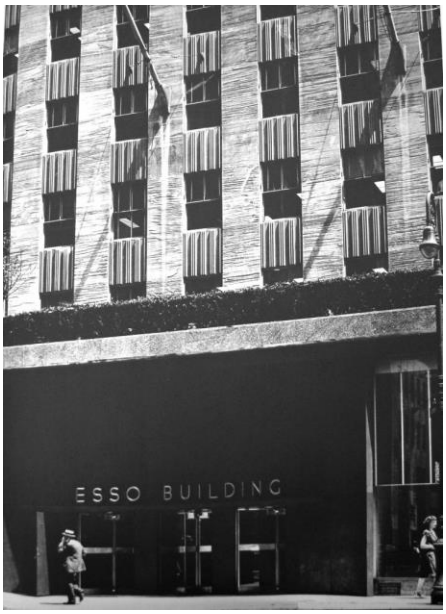

FIGURE 2.13
Carson & Lundin, architect; Wallace Harrison, consulting architect, ESSO Building, New York. Completion: 1947. Ornamentation detail in façade. Source: *The Lamp* (Sept. 1951), 25.

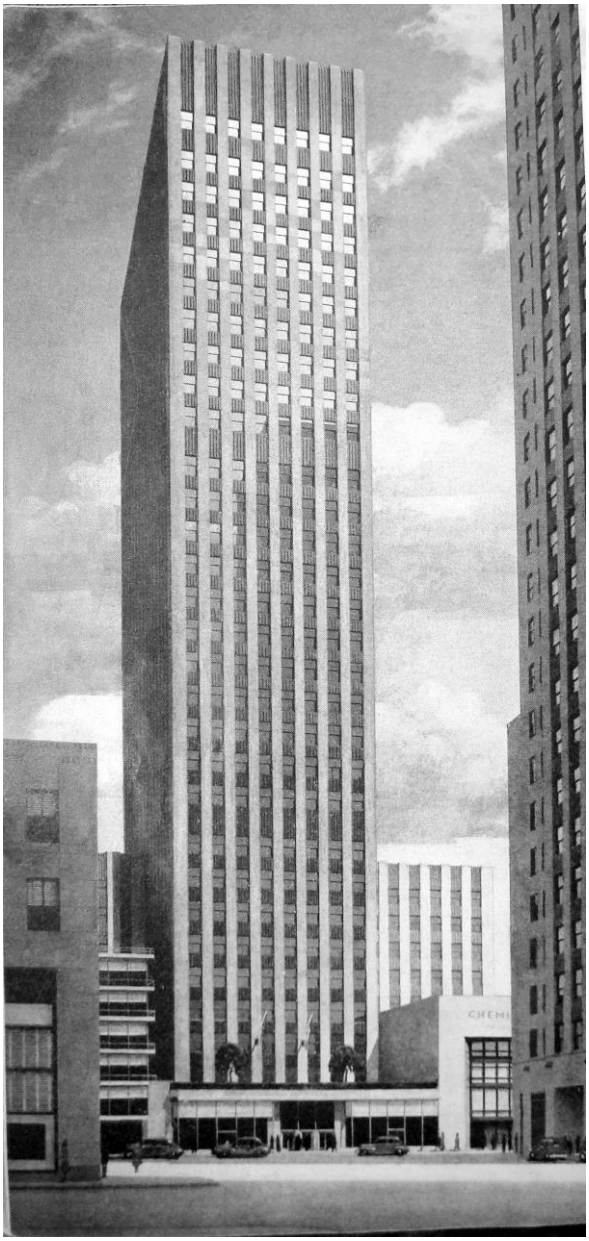

FIGURE 2.12
Carson & Lundin, architect; Wallace Harrison, consulting architect; John W. Harris Assoc., Inc., builders, ESSO Building, New York. Project: 1946; completion: 1947. Rendering showing the relationship of the building with existing construction. Source: *Architectural Forum* (May 1946), 92.

FIGURE 2.14
Walter Wurdeman and Welton Becket, architects, General Petroleum Building, Los Angeles, California, completed in 1949. Source: *Progressive Architectural* (Jan. 1951), back cover.

FIGURE 2.15
Harrison & Abramovitz, Socony-Vacuum Building, Designed in 1953; completed in 1956. "New York's biggest commercial project since Rockefeller Center." Source: *Architectural Record* (Oct. 1953), 11.

FIGURE 2.16
Robert R. Prentice, Headquarters of the Brazil Division of Standard Oil (with an *Esso* sign atop), 1932, located in the photo between the Monroe Palace (foreground) and the Santos Dumont Airport (background). The U.S. Embassy Building was located behind the round-cornered edifice. Source: *The Lamp* (Sept. 1954), inner cover.

Chapter 3

Other “Branches” of Modernism: Regionalism and Organic Architecture

Al crear esta publicación, no se pretende otra cosa que informar a nuestro estudiantado del movimiento artístico-cultural de los pueblos del mundo y de nuestro propio país. Preocuparlo, señalarles que si bien el universitario por su formación ha de ser fundamental cifra en el desenvolvimiento de un país culto, el arquitecto como artista ha de conjugar en sí una sensibilidad más receptiva que le dé sustento a su quehacer creador.

Como una realización más de extensión cultural, nos trazamos el camino recto de buscar en lo universal la proyección de los valores, sin determinar ni jalonar; simplemente extrayendo de toda tendencia o movimiento lo que consideremos importante para el análisis.

Nuestro formato no pretende romper cánones ni deslumbrar. Por otra parte nos obliga la circunstancia económica a mantener una línea sencilla. Nuestro propósito se centra apasionadamente en ofrecer un contenido que logre desarrollar conciencia de relación intelectual en la mayoría del alumnado de arquitectura; coadyuvar en la tarea para la formación del futuro arquitecto según el espíritu que informa el nuevo plan de estudios de nuestra Facultad: El arquitecto es el individuo que ubicándose en su medio y en su época crea y realiza espacios donde se lleva a cabo la actividad del hombre, por lo tanto su labor es fundamentalmente creadora. El Arquitecto tiene una doble responsabilidad ante la sociedad; por una parte, la función social que le impone su integración a la comunidad, y por otra, la calidad plástica que exige el contenido estético de su acción sobre el espacio. Ambas plantean tres tipos de disciplina, una socio-política que lo vincula a los problemas fundamentales de la comunidad y su país; una plástico-espacial que lo prepara para expresar correctamente los valores culturales de la sociedad y otra constructiva que lo capacita para ejercitar eficazmente las técnicas conducentes a la realización de los espacios creados.

1

ENERO 1961

PUBLICACION DE LA EXTENSION CULTURAL
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UNIVERSIDAD CENTRAL DE VENEZUELA

PUNTO

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MUSEO GUGGENHEIM - F. LL. WRIGHT

FIGURE 3.1
First issue cover of *Punto*, showing the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York City, by F. Ll. Wright. Source: *Punto* (Jan. 1961).

The most beautiful government building in the Western Hemisphere.

Philip Goodwin,
on the Ministry of Education in Rio de Janeiro, 1942.

In America we often think and speak of "regionalism" as a naïve and rather soft-headed variation of our architectural mainstream.

Pietro Belluschi, 1955.

In January 1961, *Punto*, a Venezuelan magazine in architecture, launched its first issue. Its cover proudly exhibited Frank Ll. Wright's Guggenheim Museum in New York. An exterior view of the building showed an organic, massive composition contrasting with its surroundings. This unusual presence (particularly in New York City), besides its evident aesthetic values, was a reminder of evolution, movement, and technology, all significant aspects of modernity. It was also a metaphor of urban dynamics: no less than a "road" for pedestrians (*figure 3.1*). Such a general *parti*, however, was not new in Wright's repertoire; he had utilized it in other previous works and projects. Moreover, it was not the first time the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, or even Wright's projects or buildings, appeared in a Venezuelan architectonic periodical. During the 1950s, his works, writings and thoughts were object of interest of both Venezuelan magazine editors and readers.

Three years later *Punto* published four articles on modern American architecture. The author, Michel Ragon (a prestigious French critic of art), criticized the overelaborate style that American architecture had achieved since the mid-1950s, particularly with Eero Saarinen. According to Ragon, after Mies van der Rohe's decisive influence in Chicago and New York, American architects had either uncritically repeated the steel-glass boxes' scheme throughout the U.S. cities or reacted against it by means of "baroque," organic compositions. By losing its way, "the United States had betrayed modern architecture." Ragon's Manichaean viewpoint, however, did not take into account the existence of other modernisms, instead of only one trend opposed to the International Style. The modern movement was much more than just steel-glass boxes and

"baroque" compositions. Moreover, some American architects were part of a long architectural tradition that would harvest a unique set of works during the 1950s.

U.S. architectural magazines were eager to report such off-center manifestations, and probably one of the earliest and richest sources on this matter was Latin America. Mexico had been the natural south-of-the-border source for *Architectural Record* during the early twentieth century. Nevertheless, since the 1940s, modern Brazilian architecture began to stand out from the region. Curved forms, sun-shading elements (*brise-soleil*, screens, and pierced walls), ramps, and open ground plan constituted the basic repertoire of this parallel modernism, which combined machine-age technology and a regional vocabulary. Regardless of its uniqueness, modern Brazilian architecture bore certain resemblance to Mexican production at the time.

Furthermore, such genuine concern for combining modernity and a spirit of the place would be also embraced by the U.S. consular building program. In searching for an appropriate official style abroad, U.S. consular architecture would gradually move from the International Style to a hybrid language. By combining rationalism with local elements, such as screen walls, arches and traditional building materials, the State Department and American architects attempted to devise unique buildings, purportedly adapted to specific foreign conditions (both cultural and geographical). However, they neither ended up being so climatically adapted nor so unique in terms of style: the unavoidable incorporation of air conditioning into the embassy buildings made unnecessary the use sun-shading structures, i.e. screens and louvers, which in turn would paradoxically become universal. Regardless of the context, either in Latin America or Asia, the consular representation of the United States tended to use a similar repertoire. In any case, as an architectonic exploration, the official program of U.S. embassies managed to create a large list of remarkable buildings with doubtless aesthetic value. In this sense, American architectural magazines were proud to report, amid the Cold War, the achievements of such significant building program. This interest also came along with a growing fascination with academic explorations, discussions, and concepts, such as *genius loci*, vernacular traditions, and identity; a trend usually known as Regionalism.

The coexistence of other "modernisms" would eventually be evident, not just in the U.S. embassies around the world, but also in the well-known *organic architecture*. As American as the assimilated *International Style,* the organic architecture movement would be characterized by its curved forms, its integrity (synthesis of form, space, structure and function), and its continuous technological explorations. In this sense, the mid-twentieth century would see the use of new materials, bold combination of colors, as wells as ribs, vaults, shells, and geodesic domes, and the incorporation of movement in different ways. These aspects definitely aroused the interest of Venezuelan magazines' editors.

As part of a long tradition in the United States, organic architecture had actually been a matter of interest since the nineteenth century. However, it would be just from 1908 on, through Frank Lloyd Wright's article "In the Cause of Architecture," when the concept started gaining more attention in the U.S. print media. Eighteen years later, at the request of *Architectural Record*'s editor, Wright embarked on writing a series of homonymous articles in which he expounded his personal philosophy on architecture. His writings, along with his projects and constructed buildings (as published in books and magazines), aroused the interest of Venezuelan readers around four general themes: composition, building materials, incorporation of technology, and the "Guggenheim" as a very particular category.[1] Apart from his houses, the Guggenheim Museum (as well as the V.C. Morris Gift Shop in San Francisco, 1948, and eventually the Gordon Strong Automobile Objective and Planetarium, 1924) would turn out to be inspiring both in terms of form and complex functionality.

NEWS FROM ABROAD (OR THE INEVITABLE OTHERNESS): FROM MEXICO TO BRAZIL, AND BEYOND

On April 30, 1939, the New York World's Fair had its grand opening. Among all representative buildings placed under the motto "the world of tomorrow," adjacent to the river and the French

[1] In this regard, see "Carta de Texturas #2," *Cruz del Sur*, June 1952, 40; "Museo de Arte Moderno de Caracas," *Integral* 2, Nov. 1955; "La Dinámica de Chicago," *Integral* 12, 1958; Bruno Zevi, "Arte de Hoy, Museo de Mañana," *Punto* 1, Jan. 1961; Michael Kuhn, "Problemas del Espacio Humano," *Punto* 16, Feb. 1964, and Salvador Pinoncelly, "Arquitectura Contemporánea," *Punto* 22, March-Apr., 1965, 33-38.

Pavilion, and close to the American Art Today and the American at Home buildings, there was a simple building designed by the then young architects Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer: the Brazilian Pavilion. The project had been carried out with the executive collaboration of Paul Lester Wiener, an American architect and urban planner (*figure 3.2*). By using *brise-soleil*, ramps, open ground plan, and undulating forms, its designers wanted to show more than a simple representative pavilion; it was thought as a "built" expression of a local identity vis-à-vis the international community of the Fair. It was a sort of narrative construction made architecture.

Seventeen years later, in April 1956, *Architectural Record* published a large article about "Architecture of Brazil," written by Carleton Sprague Smith, a musicologist, and expert on Hispanic and Brazilian culture (also co-founder and Director of the Brazilian Institute of New York University). The Brazilian pavilion at the New York World's Fair in 1939 "indicated that there was a new architectural movement in Portuguese-speaking America," he said. Soon afterward, "Philip L. Goodwin's comprehensive study *Brazil Builds*, published by the Museum of Modern Art in 1943, supplied an excellent account of it."[2] Undoubtedly, Smith was referring to the interest that Brazilian architecture had aroused in the U.S. context. Nevertheless, it was not the first time that Latin American architecture, or just architecture in Latin America, appeared in a U.S. specialized magazines. As early as 1912, *Architectural Record* already showed its interest in modern Mexican architecture, particularly in those structures that combined traditional forms with new materials and techniques.[3] Such an interest firmly increased after World War II. In 1949, *Architectural Record* included a report about Mexico City, where much modern architecture had "bloomed against the rich background of former periods."[4] The June 1956 issue of *Architectural Forum,* for instance, presented a short reference about the Acapulco Airport, designed by architects Mario Pani and Enrique del Moral (*figure 3.3*), which featured an airfoil

[2] Carleton Sprague Smith, "Architecture of Brazil," in *Architectural Record,* Apr. 1956, 187.

[3] See Montgomery Schuyler, "The Architecture of Mexico City," *Architectural Record*, Sept. 1912 (Part I), and Nov. 1912 (Part II)

[4] Susanne Wasson-Tucker, "Mexico," *Architectural Record*, March 1949, 70-83.

roof, and a "main hall cooled by breezes and speckled by sun through an open lacework of concrete tile (also used in the control tower)."[5]

Apart from Mexico, Brazil was unquestionably the other Latin American "giant" that caught the American attention. It had all the ingredients to devise an engaging architectural story: "larger than the United States plus another Texas," a tropical climate, a population of 55,000,000 inhabitants, a rich colonial history, and an appealing contemporary history.[6] In January 1943, amid World War II, *Architectural Record* published Philip Goodwin's trip report to Brazil (mentioned in Sprague Smith's article thirteen years before). Goodwin, an AIA member, representing both the American Institute of Architects and the Museum of Modern Art, had made a flying trip to Brazil, accompanied with G.E. Kidder-Smith, another AIA member, who was responsible for the set of photographs. Goodwin had traveled "in the interest of closer relations" with American's "good neighbors of South America and of better understanding of their architecture."[7] The hot sun, the humidity, and the heavy rainfall in some district had been, according to Goodwin, major factors in designing buildings in Brazil. "The answer to the problem of protection from torrid elements," he said, had been "traditionally thick walls of masonry, with small openings." The answer in the twentieth century, in turn, was "a wide variety of large louvers used as permanent or movable 'brise soleil'."[8] Although Goodwin was neither specific nor explicit, such a "wide variety" of sun-shading structures also included concrete grills and screens, as Niemeyer and Costa implemented in the Brazilian Pavilion, or Pani and Del Moral in the Acapulco Airport.

Architecture in Brazil had also other engaging aspects (at least, engaging for Goodwin and American readers). "Young Brazilian architects adopted the philosophy of Le Corbusier," he said, "and naturally, adapted his form as well." They were also influenced by the Bauhaus. The

[5] "Airports abroad," *Architectural Forum*, June 1956, 127.

[6] Smith, "Architecture of Brazil," 187.

[7] Philip Goodwin and G.E. Kidder-Smith, "Architecture of Brazil," *Architectural Record*, January 1943, 34.

[8] Ibid, 35.

contribution of the United States, in turn, had come largely "through the influence of the skyscraper, with its elevators, its modern plumbing, and efficient lighting rather than through any design cliché." Nevertheless, Brazilian architecture seemed to have gone beyond Corbusian clichés. Precisely, among the multiple examples that Goodwin and Kidder-Smith's large report presented, there was a particular case that illustrated well the new stature of Brazilian architecture: the Seaplane Station at Santos Dumont Airport, by architect Atlio Correa Lima. The attractiveness of its design lay in the contrast between the spiral, sculptural stair with the simple, rectangular masses and plane surfaces of the building. The reinforced concrete structure of the stair, in turn, complemented the wall lining in yellow travertine. Finally, the limit between functionality and ornamentation was very subtle: the raised-outline wall map and its clock were both decorative and informative, while its curvilinear ceiling and lamps were integral parts of its design (*figure 3.4*).

Even more remarkable in terms of plasticity was the New Elementary School in Rio de Janeiro by architect Eneas Silva. Regardless of all the invariable characteristics in a classroom (those unavoidable functional aspects), Silva came up with a very different resolution, in which lighting, temperature control, ventilation and acoustics requirements had been exploited in the project's benefit. Morphological plasticity, in this sense, had come along with local values (*figure 3.5*). This project had been part of an *Architectural Record* report, published in July 1953, in which two American schools were compared with this Elementary in Rio de Janeiro. Silva's work, as well as the Brazilian Pavilion, the Acapulco Airport of Acapulco, and the Seaplane Station at Santos Dumont Airport were only a few examples among many published in American architectural magazines between the 1940s and the 1950s. Beyond the well-known buildings designed by Oscar Niemeyer, such as the Church of St. Francis (Pampulha, Minas Gerais, 1943), the own house of the architect (Rio de Janeiro, 1953-54), the Ministry of Education and Public Health (Rio de Janeiro, 1937-42), as well as Lúcio Costa's Apartment Houses (Rio de Janeiro, 1947-53), and Affonso Eduardo Reidy's Pedregulho Apartment Houses (Rio de Janeiro, 1948-50), Brazilian architecture seemed to be proud of its modern achievements, vis-à-vis the international community of readers, and the American printed media was eager for publishing it. As Sprague Smith pointed out in 1956, Brazilians had "a sense for curved and undulating

forms and a delight in rhythmic patterns – witness the samba. If architecture can be described as frozen music, some of the buildings being put up in Brazil today are related to the art of Euterpe."[9]

By describing the Brazilian Pavilion, he defined the characteristics of the new Brazilian architecture. Apart from the "purity of style, a subtle curved façade, an open ground floor on pilotis capable of accommodating large crowds," and a "wide ramp leading to the second floor," he also identified its "honey-combed louvers" as one of the most distinctive morphological aspects. Such element was not exclusive to modern Brazilian architecture. After all, Pani and Del Moral had used in the Acapulco Airport. Moreover, as published in architectural magazines, the resemblance between Mexico and Brazil during the 1940s and 1950s (in terms of architectural vocabulary) seemed to be stronger than that between mid-twentieth century Mexico and its own architectonic production in 1912.

Paradoxically, the 1950s would bring similar morphological expressions in totally different contexts, not just geographic but also cultural. By way of a crossroads, the search of Latin American architects for identity in a complex modern age would meet the quest of U.S. architects for local values in foreign countries. Such quest would come along with cutting-edge climate control technology. As a matter of fact, both aspects would dominate the official representativeness of the United States abroad.

[9] Smith, "Architecture of Brazil," 194.

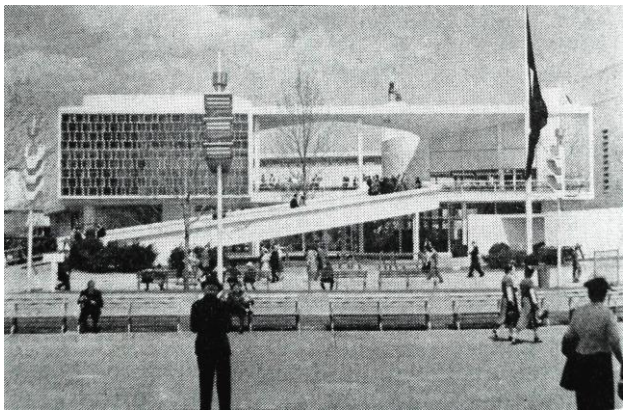

FIGURE 3.2
Oscar Niemeyer and Lúcio Costa, Brazilian Pavilion, N.Y. World's Fair, 1939. Source: *Architectural Record* (Apr. 1956), 188 .

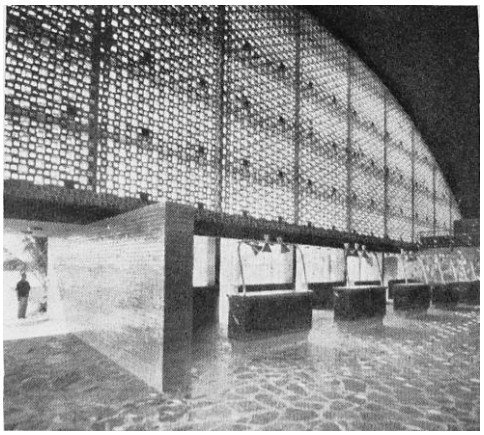

FIGURE 3.3
Mario Pani and Enrique del Moral, Acapulco Airport, Mexico. Source: *Architectural Record* (June, 1956), 104.

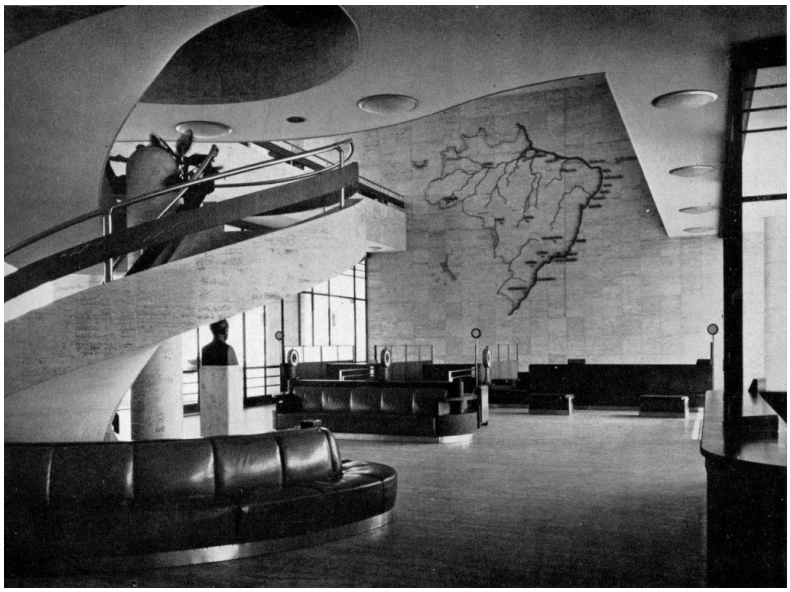

FIGURE 3.4
Atlio Correa Lima, Architect, Seaplane Station at Santos Dumont Airport, waiting room. Source: *Architectural Record*, Jan. 1943, 47.

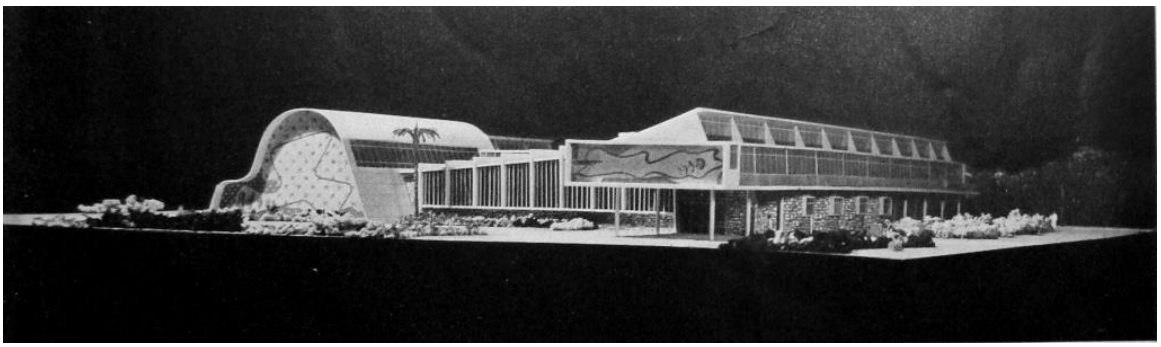

FIGURE 3.5
Eneas Silva, Architect, New Elementary School in Rio de Janeiro. Source: *Architectural Record* (July 1953), 132.

IDENTITY BY PROXY: AMERICAN EMBASSIES

In 1953, the United States Embassy building in Havana entered officially into service. Designed by Harrison & Abramovitz, and completed in 1952, the building was one of the most significant post-war American consular structures. Its composition was as simple as effective: a semitransparent seven-story slab, articulated to a one-story podium, showing wide spandrels and numerous mullions in its east and west facades (see *figure 2.1*). Its urban location, in turn, was also very eloquent: in the northern part of Havana, on the *Malecón* (seafront), close to the city's hubbub (Vedado neighborhood), but at the same time facing the Gulf of Mexico, and particularly the Straits of Florida. A bird's eye perspective published by *Architectural Record,* 1952, showed the project with a dramatized effect. Slightly enlarged and particularly surrounded by a local atmosphere, the illustration featured two courtyards and perforated walls displayed along the lower volume, as well as exuberant tropical vegetation (*figure 3.6*). The building's design, however, was firmly based on rational, universal principles. It was also air-conditioned (despite the fact that window parts were movable "to take advantage of fair weather").[10] Equally influential had been the U.S. Embassy in Rio de Janeiro, a 13-story building also designed by Harrison & Abramovitz in 1947. Like the U.S. Embassy in Havana, it had a strategic urban location: in Rio de Janeiro's vibrant South Zone, near the Santos Dumont Airport and the recently inaugurated Museum of Modern Art (opened in 1948, designed by Affonso Eduardo Reidy), almost in front of the Esso Headquarters, and "commanding" the access to Guanabara Bay. Completed also in 1952, it had two distinctive morphological features: a wide receding entablature and, particularly, a curvilinear lower volume interlocked with the building. Regardless of such a gesture, the building was mainly rationalist (*figure 3.7*). Both embassy buildings had something in common; something that seemed to go beyond the International Style's principles: the search for a local repertoire, even by means of slight gestures.

The development of U.S. official interests abroad had not followed a straight path. Until the early 1950s, it had been a haphazard process. Even at the beginning of the 20th century there were complaints about the lack of a real "American brand of diplomacy." It seemed that the

[10] See "U.S. Embassy Building, Havana, Cuba," *Architectural Record*, Apr. 1955, 205.

United States was searching for the most appropriate visual metaphor to represent itself abroad. During the 1920s and 1930s, before the International Style's appearance on stage, palace and plantation-house types were very common as official American representations abroad. The U.S. Embassy Building in Rio de Janeiro, designed by Frank Packard and completed in 1923, was a good example of this. A classical portico combined with local taste elements, such as tile roofs and a courtyard (the so-called "Portuguese Colonial Style"), conveyed a clear message: "a demand for special treatment and respect by demonstrating both understanding and control of local mores."[11] This building would eventually become a model for futures projects. The U.S. Embassy in Mexico City, for instance, designed by J.E. Campbell and completed two years later, was even more august than its predecessor. In this case, visitors were received by and impressive six-free-standing-column portico, composed with colossal order.

Dissatisfaction with some links between geopolitics and the International Style, as well as the rejection of moldy historicist vocabulary, "led to an alternative and even more ambitious strategy".[12] A radical change came in late 1953, following a reorganization process in the Department of State. After all, diplomatic buildings should not be just mere quarters for diplomatic activities, but expressive emblems. In this respect, the *Foreign Service Buildings Act Amendments* of 1959 was clear as suggestive: "It is apparent that the architectural design of the buildings which our Government erects abroad becomes, in most instances, a physical symbol of our Government and our people."[13] The statement of Loy W. Henderson, Deputy under Secretary of State for Administration, during the hearings before the Foreign Operations Committee on Foreign Affairs House of Representatives, was very eloquent on this respect:

[11] Ibid, 68.

[12] Ron Robin, *Enclaves of America. The Rhetoric of American. Political Architecture abroad, 1900-1965* (New Jersey: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992), 147.

[13] *Foreign Service Buildings Act Amendments, 1959. Hearings before the Subcommittee on State Department Organization and Foreign Operations Committee on Foreign Affairs House of Representatives*. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1959), 10.

> When I came into the Department 4 years ago, I was a proponent of the classical and traditional style for our overseas buildings. I must confess that after having been exposed during these years to the enthusiasm of our architects for new ideas and forms, I am commencing to realize that restrained contemporary architecture has much to offer in beauty combined with utility. In competent hands it can be inspirational.[14]

By 1959, the American official representation abroad had gained such relevance that Henderson began his statement presenting, for the committee's consideration, an increase of $100 million in authorization for the Foreign Service Buildings program.[15] After World War II, a new internal division in the State Department had been created. Known as the Office of Foreign Buildings Operations (FBO), it had complete autonomy to decide upon morphological aspects, such as architectural style. It was a responsibility that its predecessor, the more technical Foreign Service Buildings Commission (FSBC), never had. Architectural language, embracing new technology and a system of symbols, would gradually gain paramount importance. Moreover, as an ideological and representational mechanism, capable to evoke emotions, consular buildings were placed in the heart of the discussion between the *Zeitgeist* and the *genius loci*. Actually, responding to this kind of new strategy, the Department of State had the necessity of forming a new policy body: the rotating Architectural Advisory Panel (AAP).[16] From 1953 to 1959, the AAP approved a "crash program" of hundreds of diplomatic edifices, always based on those architectural and symbolic concerns. Moreover, the FBO instructions warned architects that

[14] Statement on Feb. 24, 1959, ibid, 2-3.

[15] Ibid, 1.

[16] The AAP formation for the FBO in 1955 consisted of Pietro Belluschi (Fellow of the American Institute of Architects [FAIA], 1948), designer of the Equitable Building, and at the time Dean of the School of Architecture and Planning in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Henry Shepley (FAIA) of Shepley, Bulfinch, Richardson & Abbot, Boston (successor firm to the architecture practice formed in Boston, 1874, by Henry Hobson Richardson), and Ralph Walker (FAIA), of Voorhees, Walker, Smith & Smith, New York. It was chaired by Colonel Harry A. McBride (former Foreign Service officer, Assistant Secretary of State, and from 1939 to his retirement, Administrator of the National Gallery of Art). See "Architecture to represent America abroad," *Architectural Record,* May 1955, 187.

"they were not dealing with abstract problems but with issues that affected the course of nations and events that were far beyond the sphere of architectural problem-solving."[17]

It didn't take long for architecture magazines to reflect this growing interest. *Architectural Record's* May 1955 issue included a significant report on this matter. Entitled "Architecture to Represent America Abroad," it stated the fundamental concerns regarding the consular program: how to adapt the building to local conditions and cultures. The report's subtitle, in turn, was very eloquent: "Regional expressions of American architectural thinking are sought for State Department Building."[18] The challenge had been set, and it would not be easy to accomplish.[19]

One of the projects that immediately draw attention in the *Architectural Record*'s report was the U.S. Legation Office Building in Tangier, Morocco. Legendary for its multicultural influences and its strategic significance during the 19th and 20th century, and close to the Strait of Gibraltar, Tangier was definitely part of a key region; a gate between the Western world and the Middle East. For this three-story building, Hugh Stubbins & Associates proposed pierced concrete sun screens shading the large glass areas, marble facing both ends, and "an arcaded patio landscaped with water pools and orange trees."[20] The building was surrounded by one-story elements, forming an entrance court. Finally, some architectural views were dominated by the presence of arches (*figure 3.8*).

Another project the May 1955 issue featured was the U.S. Office Building in Asuncion, Paraguay. Designed by Keyes, Smith, Satterlee & Lethbridge, the building had a reinforced concrete

[17] Robin, *Enclaves of America*, 150.

[18] "Architecture to represent America abroad," *Architectural Record,* May 1955, 187-192.

[19] For a comprehensive list of U.S. consular and embassy buildings published in *Architectural Record*, see Appendix 1. The list was elaborate ad hoc as part of my research paper for Prof. Christopher Long in Methodologies of Architectural History, Fall 2009.

[20] Ibid.

structure, native brick interior partitions, and stucco on brick exterior walls. Its iconography, however, was particularly conspicuous. Louvered windows, a projecting marquee, and a series of segmental arches surmounting the structure (by way of "umbrella roof above the main roof") defined the character of the building. The illustration, in turn, managed to complete the scene by combining exotic vegetation (which includes the unmistakable palm trees' silhouette) with the American flag flying in the wind (*figure 3.9*). Because of the extreme heat and humidity, the building was completely air-conditioned. Particularly similar was the U.S. Office Building in Djakarta, Indonesia, designed by Raymond & Rado. As in Asuncion, this two-story building showed sun louvers (this time, of metal) and a segmental-arch marquee; the arches surmounting the structure, in turn, seemed to have been replaced by individual overhangs in concrete. The building was also provided with air conditioning. Again, the artist's imagination contextualized the building within exuberant vegetation, while the American flag made a balance with the well-known palm trees (*figure 3.10*).

The report also included the U.S. Embassy Office Building and Residence in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, designed by Michael M. Hare. Concerned with their typological representation and iconography, Hare used native features, such as perforated walls, high ceilings, patios and verandas. Local materials and construction typical of Honduras were combined with new technology: bearing wall with reinforced concrete floor and roof slabs (*figure 3.11*). In this case, no air conditioning was used since the climate was "ideal."[21]

American consular buildings aroused a great interest in *Architectural Forum* as well. In May 1955, and under the title "U.S. Department Overseas," the magazine published a list of twenty three projects, which were being carried out in different stages around the world. One month later, *Forum* released an even larger report on Edward D. Stone's project for the Embassy Office in New Delhi, India. Stone, who had designed the Hotel Phoenicia in Beirut (1953-1954),[22] proposed a classical composition: a building lying on a podium, organized around a courtyard,

[21] Ibid, 189.

[22] See "Commerce: New Markets," *Architectural Forum*, Jan. 1955, 111, and "Luxury Hotel for Air-Conscious Beirut," *Architectural Record,* May 1957, 220. The Phoenicia Hotel would open in 1961.

and surrounded by columns, by way of *peristasis*. Nevertheless, his proposal also had a conspicuous set of pierced walls wrapping the building, and a very thin entablature (too light to be classical). As a result, the architectural effect was definitely hybrid, involving both Western and Eastern monumentality (*figure 3.12*). Regardless of all these features constituing a good recipe for a thermally comfortable building, the Embassy Office was provided with central air conditioning (while staff quarters were equipped with A/C individual units).[23] Interest in American embassies grew very fast; it was literally a chain-reaction process. For architectural magazines, the U.S. representation abroad was undoubtedly a very appealing topic.

In January of that year, *Architectural Forum* had published an impressive twenty-one-page report, entitled "US Building Abroad," showing some of the most significant architectural projects and urban developments around the world, involving American interests. Regarding the significance of such a tremendous building investment, and the reasons behind it, the article offered an eloquent explanation:

> First, it means we are building up the basic welfare of other nations, creating climates unfavorable to communism, readying countries for industrialization and democratic independence, making them prosperous enough to buy more of our products (…) Second, our industry and commerce are expanding in search of new sources of raw materials, new markets for finished products. To serve increased travel and trade, hotels and stores are springing up along the new commercial routes (…) Third, we are helping build defenses for ourselves and our allies (…) And fourth, we are keeping up strong governmental and public relations through our official missions: new embassies, consulates, libraries, information services.[24]

Regardless of the different nature of factors involved, particularly economic and political (but also including social and national security issues), there was an impressive coherence of ideas, synthesized in a holistic strategic project. In other words, this was all about geopolitics;

[23] "Architecture to represent America abroad," *Architectural Record,* 190.

[24] "U.S. Building Abroad," in *Architectural Forum,* Jan. 1955, 99.

embassies, in this sense, would have paramount significance. The United States had avoided the trappings of conventional colonialism, and the U.S. diplomatic structures were designed and constructed more as symbols of America than just functional abodes to house government's representative. Actually, the role that they played would go beyond their aesthetic values. In semiotic terms, these symbols abroad worked as substitutes for the use of military might. Since late nineteenth century, according to Ron Robin, American military presence overseas had increased with the "growing perception of a symbiotic relationship between the nation's well-being and the affair of others." In this regard, "the United States consistently sought to display surrogate representations of its power."[25]

In June 1956 *Architectural Record* dedicated a substantial section to the "Second Group of American Embassy Buildings." Some projects, previously mentioned in the same magazine, were now generously depicted. Among the office buildings presented (eleven altogether), one project definitely drew attention for its environmental response: Jose Luis Sert's Office Building for Bagdad, Iraq (*figure 3.13*). Based mainly on sun protection devices, the building skillfully combined modern techniques with traditional materials and forms: within a structural scheme of poured and precast concrete, glazed tile and teak wood were blended to produce "a whole ensemble of interesting shapes and colors."[26]

Finally, the last proposal presented in *Architectural Recor*d's June issue attracted readers' attention, given its particular rationality: different from the International Style, and at the same time one step ahead of the "regionalist" tendency, characteristic of most of the U.S. Embassy edifices of the time. It was the Office Building for Port-au-Price, Haiti, designed by Don Hatch (*figure 3.14*). Overlooking the bay, the building was partially air conditioned "with the use of colored aluminum fins and heat resistant glass to reduce the glare of the sun."[27]

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[25] Ron Robin, *Enclaves of America*, 5.

[26] "Second Group of American Embassy Buildings," *Architectural Record*, June 1956, 160.

[27] Ibid, 165. The report was ambiguous about the climate control technology used in this building. It was not clear whether the building was only climate conditioned (by using "fins and heat resistant glass") or it actually had an air conditioning system.

In October 1957, *Architectural Record* published a third group of American embassies. Entitled "American Architecture Designed for Export," the article provided not just up-dated information (including new announcements, such as Harris Armstrong's project for the Office Building in Basra, Iraq), but also a more mature review on U.S. consular architecture. Recognizing the achievements of American architects in searching for an appropriate official style abroad, in particular their approach to regionalism, the article stated that it "might be opening up a great break-through for contemporary architectural effort."[28]

Almost during the entire decade, American representation abroad received a lot of attention and resources. It couldn't have been any other way. During that time the stakes were high in geopolitical terms, and the United States took very seriously its image in the international arena. It was not by chance that Loy Henderson highlighted the significance of architecture as a messenger of the American culture (embracing foreign contexts and traditions): "we all agree that it is important that the architectural styles of our buildings have dignity, that they be appropriate to the sites and that they be of a character which will create international friendship."[29] The first impression that many people had of the United States (and probably the only one) was what they received when they entered a consular office.[30]

The design of American embassies, legation offices, consulates, housing buildings and staff quarters constituted an architectural field of exploration by itself. The quest for a synthesis between the *Zeitgeist* and the *Genius Loci* was always present. This was actually framed by a specific architectural discussion, which capitalized both professional and academic interests during those years: the so-called Regionalism. The spirit of place (in contrast to the spirit of the age), vernacular traditions, and identity started arising interest in periodical publications. In an article entitled "The Meaning of Regionalism in Architecture," published by *Architectural Record*

[28] "American Architecture Designed for Export," *Architectural Record,* Oct. 1957, 237.

[29] *Foreign Service Buildings Act Amendments, 1959,* 3.

[30] Ibid, 241.

in 1955, Pietro Belluschi (then Dean of the School of Architecture and Planning at MIT) reflected on the transcendence of wise practices in architecture, identifying some lessons in term of tectonics and form. Using examples of primitive, vernacular and historic dwellings, as well as traditional urban settlements, Belluschi showed the close relationship between place and local heritage.[31]

The search for an appropriate official representation abroad was as serious as engaging to American public opinion. As a topic, it represented a *liminal,* transactional space between the U.S. Government (through the Department of State), American universities, and the American Institute of Architects. It was not surprising that the topic consequently had a privileged room in American architectural magazines. In this sense, the morphological representation of the otherness turned out to be both fundamental for U.S. consular architecture during the Cold War and a highly attractive topic for periodical publications. The image of Embassy buildings gradually underwent a move from a grandiloquent classicism (with incidental insertion of local iconography) and Rationalism to a hybrid style, combining new building technologies and local repertoires. This architectural regionalism, which characterized most of the U.S. embassy buildings, paradoxically became "international." Local elements, such as screens, piercing walls, louvered windows, projecting eaves, and arches were found in American consular buildings either for Africa, Asia or Latin America. More than how the United States saw itself, this was about how America saw the otherness. In fact, probably one of the most noticeable differences between American embassies and the diplomatic buildings of the other countries was the underlying assumption that U.S. embassies should "fit in" and "reflect" their respective surroundings. While diplomatic buildings in Washington "made no particular effort to look 'American,' American architects tried hard to capture the 'foreignness' of faraway places in their designs for U.S. embassies abroad."[32]

[31] *Architectural Record*, Dec. 1955.

[32] Jane C. Loeffler, *The Architecture of Diplomacy. Building America's Embassies* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2011), VIII.

Less conspicuous, but equally important, was the blend between building and climate control technology. Most of the American embassy buildings were provided with air conditioning. Despite the presence of sun-shading devices and projecting eaves, their respective designs included from the start provision for air conditioning as an integral part of the project. The issue concerning thermal control was beyond the comfort of consular officials and employees; it had to do with security too.[33]

The stylistic exploration of U.S architects in embassy buildings, as well as their peers' production in Latin America (particularly Brazil and Mexico), however, were not the only one trend parallel to the International Style at the time. In fact, as *Progressive Architecture*'s editors stated, architectural trends in the early 1950s were moving between two extremes: a "highly rationalized direct statement of technic and purpose," on the one hand, and a "personal romantic approach to organic architecture," on the other. Within both ends, many individual expressions were possible.[34] And it was true. Apart from the International Style, the United States in the mid-twentieth century was highly interested in the Regionalism's implications for American architecture, as well as in organic architecture. Unlike the former, the latter had an already-open chapter in the U.S. history. Deeply rooted in the American imagery, the tradition of organic architecture actually dated back to the late-nineteenth century.[35] Nevertheless, during the 1950s, its weight in architectural magazines would be simply undeniable.

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[33] When one of the Foreign Operations Committee's members harshly asked Loyd Henderson about the "unauthorized" decision to use air conditioners in the consular buildings, he responded: without air conditioning, "entertainment would have to be outdoors or with windows and doors open. There was a feeling that times may come when there would be a lack of security in a wide open building" (*Foreign Service Buildings Act Amendments, 1959,* 21). Later, during the same hearing on February 24, 1959, Donald L. Jackson, representative of California, praised the job of the FBO on this matter: "Having labored the air conditioner, I want to make it clear that, by and large, I agree that some tremendous things have been done by your operation in the Latin American area during the last 12 years. The whole character of our residences and embassies has changed and for the better" (ibid, 24).

[34] "1951 Design Survey," *Progressive Architecture*, January 1951, 45.

[35] As far as this part of the Dissertation is concerned, *organic* architecture is characterized by its plastic character (sinuosity of forms), the indissoluble relation between structure and space, and the nature of building materials. As for the first two aspects, see Bruno Zevi, *The Modern Language of Architecture* (1978).

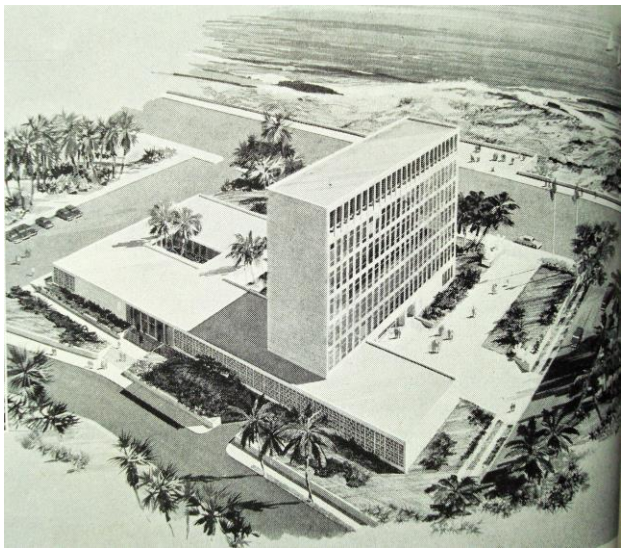

FIGURE 3.6
Harrison & Abramovitz, U.S. Embassy in Havana, Cuba, completed in 1952. Source: *Architectural Record* (Aug. 1952), 160.

FIGURE 3.7
Harrison & Abramovitz, U.S. Embassy Building in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1947. Source: *Architectural Record* (Apr. 1955), 198.

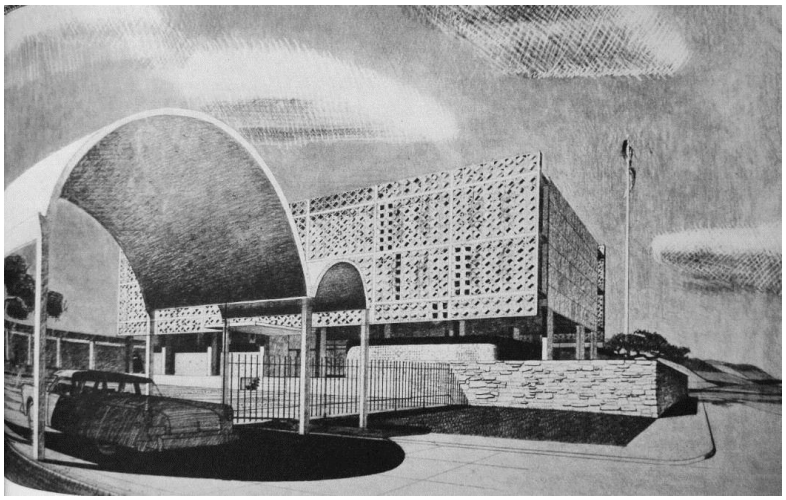

FIGURE 3.8
Hugh Stubbins & Associates, Architects, U.S. Legation Office Building, Tangier, Morocco. Source: *Architectural Record* (May 1955), 187.

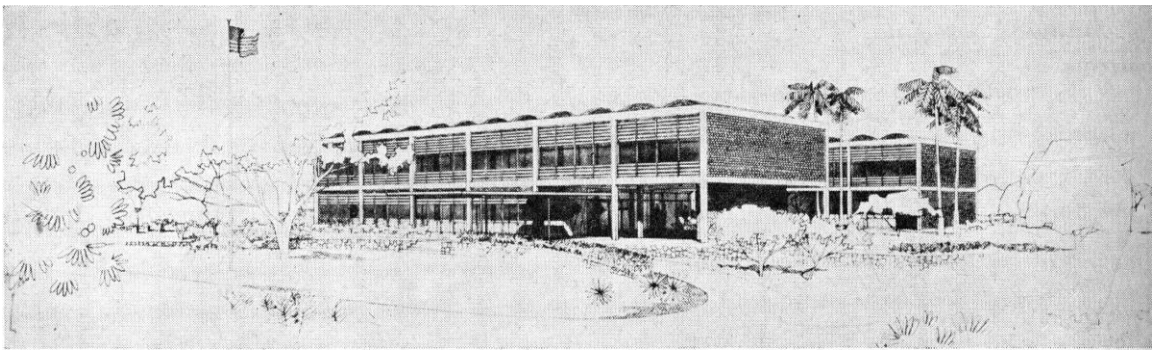

FIGURE 3.9
Keyes, Smith, Satterlee & Lethbridge, U.S. Office Building, Asuncion, Paraguay. Source: *Architectural Record* (May 1955), 188.

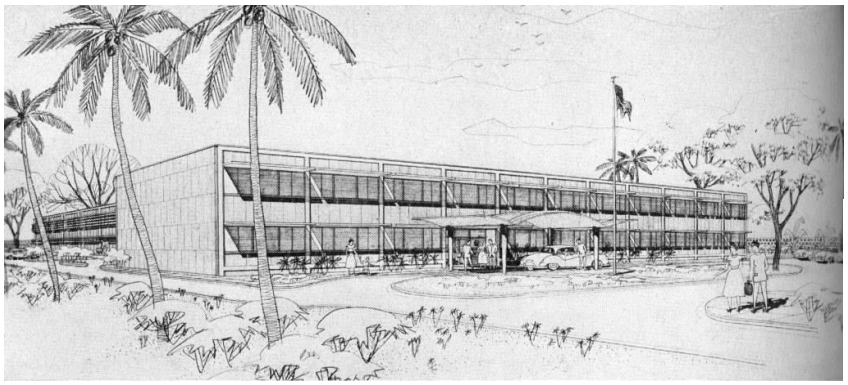

FIGURE 3.10
Raymond and Rado, U.S. Office Building, Djakarta, Indonesia, completed 1955. Source: *Architectural Record* (May 1955), 192.

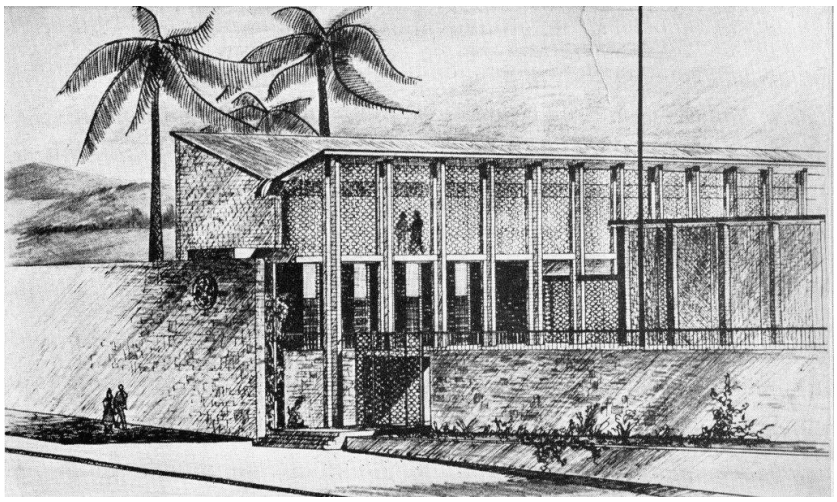

FIGURE 3.11
Michael M. Hare, U.S. Embassy Office Building in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, completed 1954. Sources: *Architectural Record* (May 1955), 189.

FIGURE 3.12
Edward D. Stone, U.S. Embassy Office, New Delhi, India. Sources: *Architectural Forum* (Jun. 1955), 115.

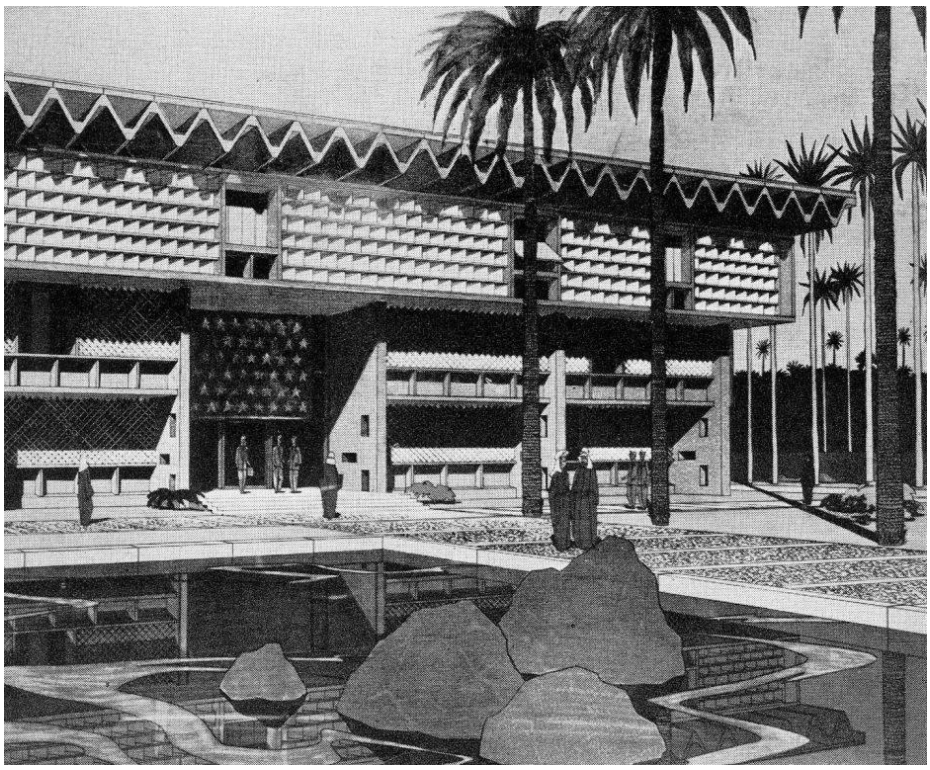

FIGURE 3.13
Jose Luis Sert, U.S. Office Building, Bagdad, Iraq. Source: *Architectural Record* (June 1956), 160.

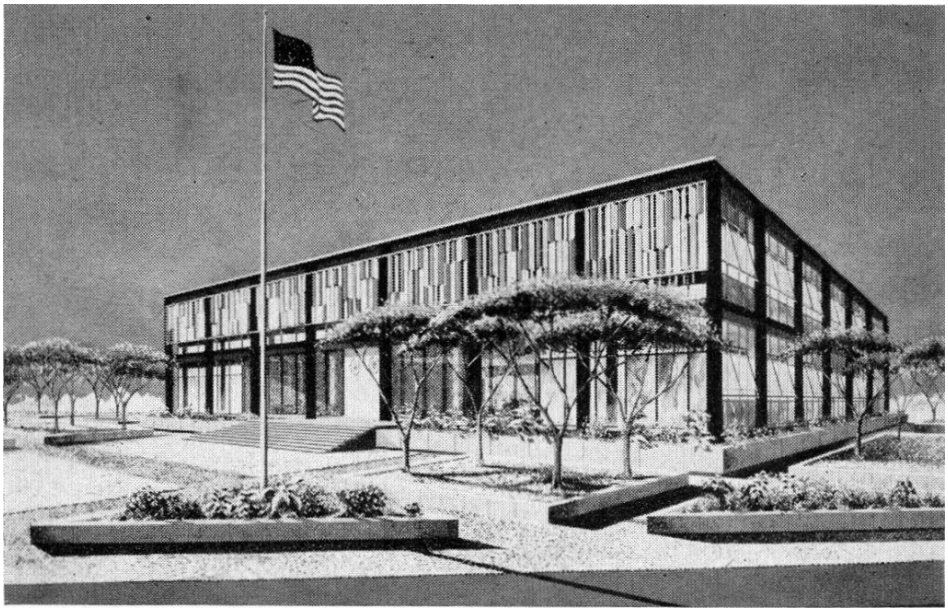

FIGURE 3.14
Don Hatch, U.S. Office Building, Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Source: *Architectural Record* (June 1956), 165.

MATERIALS, INTEGRITY, CURVED FORMS AND MOVEMENT: ORGANIC ARCHITECTURE

As early as 1943, Alden B. Dow exhibited a model of his "proposed plastic house" during a meeting of the Society of the Plastics Industry. "Reaching far into the imaginative," as stated by *Architectural Record*, that all-plastic, circular house was certainly a celebration of morphological and expressive freedom. Dow was a prolific architect from Michigan, also a former Frank Lloyd Wright's apprentice, whose career included dozens of buildings designed during the 1930s and 1940s. He had also developed strong links with Texas through R.J. Pfeiffer, secretary and manager of Dow's office in Houston.[36]

In his proposed plastic house, Dow had chosen the circle as the main motif of the plan. According to him, in curved lines there was a sense of "spaciousness not achieved by straight lines."[37] The photo accompanying the report of *Architectural Record* showed a complex display of volumes and spatial systems, all based on circles with different dimensions, intertwined one to each other. Free-standing columns and pergola roofs also contributed to create a highly dynamic composition (*figure 3.15*). All-plastic building materials were selected "because of their flexibility and variety of form, color and texture." Actually, the curvilinear freedom of his project was "organically" complemented with very vivid, imaginative colors. Moreover, concerned with the quality of housing in the United States at the time, and against the standardization of mass production, Dow saw his proposal as integral part of a free, changeable urban context.

However, Dow's endeavor was not isolated. The year before, *Architectural Forum* included a report on the National Gypsum Company, in Buffalo, New York, a rational building designed by Backus, Crane & Love, which exemplified "industry's new determination to provide its workers

[36] Dow had studied three years at University of Michigan, and finally earned his Bachelor of Architecture at Columbia University. In 1933, and during six months, he studied with F. Ll. Wright at Taliesin, Wisconsin. He was member of the Texas Society of Architects; AIA 1938; FAIA 1956. See Alden B. Dow Membership Files, The American Institute of Architects Archives, *The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects*, s.v. "Dow, Alden B. (1904-1983)," (ahd1011567), http://communities.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/Wiki%20Pages/ahd1011567.aspx (accessed Dec. 13, 2012).

[37] "Plastics in Future Home Building," *Architectural Record,* Dec. 1943, 124.

and management with working facilities."[38] In this sense, there was a small but significant area within the building that deserved special attention: the Display Room. This specific commission was given to Don Hatch (who would eventually design the U.S. Consular Building in Port-au-Prince).[39] For the Display Room, Hatch proposed a series of undulating fluted surfaces that recalled Alvar Aalto's Finish Pavilion at the 1939 New York World's Fair (*figure 3.16*). The chromatic layout, however, was totally different: cocoa brown for walls, lacquered Chinese red for lath screen, jade green for rugs; saddle brown for leather upholstery, and limed oak for all exposed wood. Lighting, in turn, was provided by a combination of fluorescent lamps and pin-point spots for the picture boxes. In short, a remarkable place that conveyed the image of the company; an example that many corporations would probably follow "in their postwar developments."[40]

Thirteen years later, in June 1955, *Architectural Forum* published a short review on a small commercial installation located at 430 Park Avenue, New York City. It was an Auto Showroom for Porsche and BMW cars, commissioned by Max Hoffman, a well–known importer of luxury European automobiles into the United States. Its designer had been the epitome of American organic architecture: Frank Lloyd Wright (*figure 3.17*). The first thing that drew attention in this work was the particular use of materials, colors, and quality of surfaces. Wright colored the Auto Showroom warmly and "gave it surfaces which contrast and complement the steely shine of the beautifully detailed, but unrelenting industrial products."[41] A remarkable set of photographs by Ezra Stoller (1914-2004), renowned New York photographer of modern architecture, managed to catch such effect.[42]

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[38] "Office Building for the National Gypsum Company," *Architectural Forum,* Oct. 1942, 65.

[39] A brief biographical note on Don Hatch will be provided in chapter 4 of this dissertation.

[40] Ibid, 62.

[41] "Frank Lloyd Wright designs a small commercial installation: a showroom in New York for sport cars," *Architectural Forum,* July 1955, 132.

[42] Stoller was the first recipient of a Gold Medal for Photography from the American Institute of Architects. See The American Institute of Architects Archives, *The AIA Historical Directory of American*

Even more sui generis, however, was Wright's kinematic interpretation of what an auto showroom should be: "he made the cars move." Customers could not walk easily among these cars; they stood and watched them go by you on a large turntable, "each presenting itself for brief inspection." Then, people mounted a steep ramp where the cars were arranged in line, to be seen again one by one. Wright actually emphasized circulation for cars, not people; the showroom had the atmosphere of a garage, congested, "but flattering to the cars."

In this occasion, the organic character of the project went beyond the direct structural metaphor with Nature. As stated in the magazine "manufacturers of autos and architects share some theories about structures: the Porsche is not built on rigid steel bar frame, as most cars are, but is continuously stressed membrane structure somewhat like Wright's original Guggenheim Museum design."[43]

Organic architecture actually paid special attention to circulation as integral component of their designs. This concern of organic architecture with coherence and integrity was also seen in some utopian projects. In February 1960, *Progressive Architecture* published a fully-automated supermarket where shopping could be completed in as little as 10 minutes (*figure 3.18*). Commissioned by Daitch-Shopwell chain, the project was designed by Pratt Institute professor William N. Breger and Michael Brill. The functional program was as engaging as futuristic. The shoppers entered the building and, after checking pets or children in a central ground-floor area and receiving a tag with a code number, took the elevators to the top of the seven-ramp structure. From here, customers moved slowly down on a circular belt, just stepping off to mark with their code number any item wished. Then, upon reaching the checkout station on the ground level, customers entered their code tags to review their list of purchases. Finally, after

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Architects, s.v. "Ezra Stoller (1914-2004)," (ahd3001158), http://communities.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/Wiki%20Pages/ahd3001158.aspx (accessed Dec. 11, 2012).

[43] "Frank Lloyd Wright designs a small commercial installation: a showroom in New York for sport cars," *Architectural Forum,* 133.

paying the automatically-rendered bill and picking up their children or pets, they drove to a parcel pick-up area where they presented the receipted bill and received the groceries.[44]

This apparently disconnected set of examples provides a good sense of how prolific organic architecture was in the United States. In fact, the long tradition of organic architecture in the United States saw, during the 1940s and 1950s, a virtual boom of new materials, vivid contrast of colors, and structural elements, now arranged in very original forms. The incorporation of new technology and new building systems was inherent part of the process. It was also remarkable the relation that some of these projects had with the notions of circulation and movement. They were certainly not awe-inspiring to be regarded as sublime pieces. However, as other works that managed to equate their dimensions and sui generis character with the American landscape did (as analyzed in chapter 1), these examples of organic architecture also incorporate real movement through cutting-edge technology.

The long list of parallel modernisms in the United States during this time included works with remarkable expressions. Explorations on Regionalism and the search for an "ideal" local language, as expressed in American embassies around the world, in turn, would echo Carlos Raúl Villanueva's University City in Caracas. As the editors of *Punto* headed the presentation of the magazine in 1961, they did not pretend anything but to inform the students "about the artistic and cultural movements both around the world and in our own country." It was meaningful that a magazine, issued by the Central University of Venezuela, acknowledged the influence of an American architect in the Venezuelan cultural context.

[44] "Circular Supermarket Saves Shoppers Steps," *Progressive Architecture*, Feb. 1960, 72. The project's model was shown at N.Y. Coliseum.

FIGURE 3.15
"Alden B. Dow introduces his proposed plastic house to the Society of Plastics Industry." Source: *Architectural Record* (Dec. 1943), 124.

FIGURE 3.16
Don Hatch, display room at National Gypsum Company, Buffalo, New York, 1942. Source: Architectural Forum (Oct. 1942), 65.

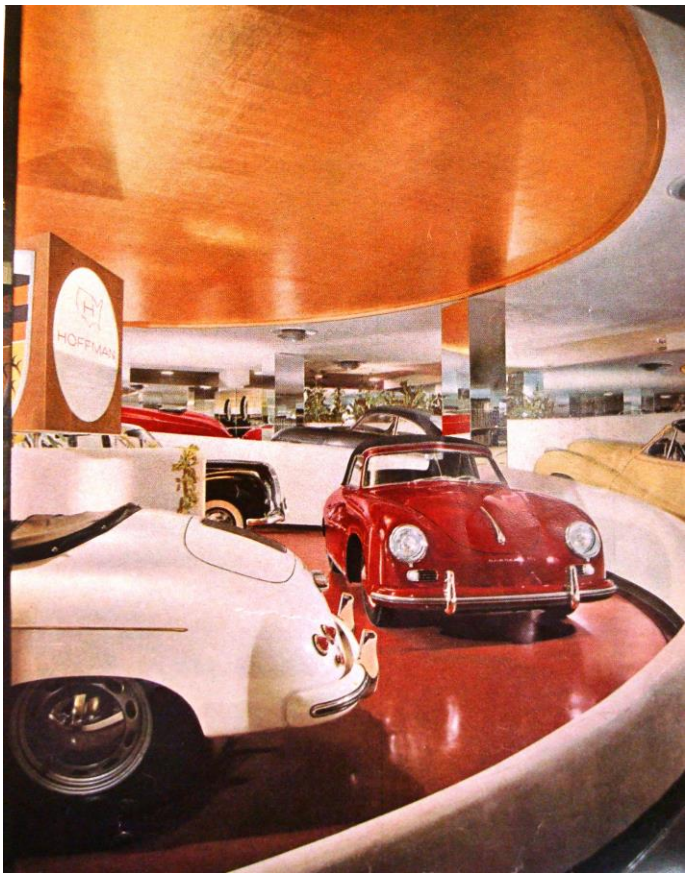

FIGURE 3.17
Frank Lloyd Wright, Showroom for Porsche and BMW cars, New York. Photo by Ezra Stoller. Source: *Architectural Forum* (July 1955), 133.

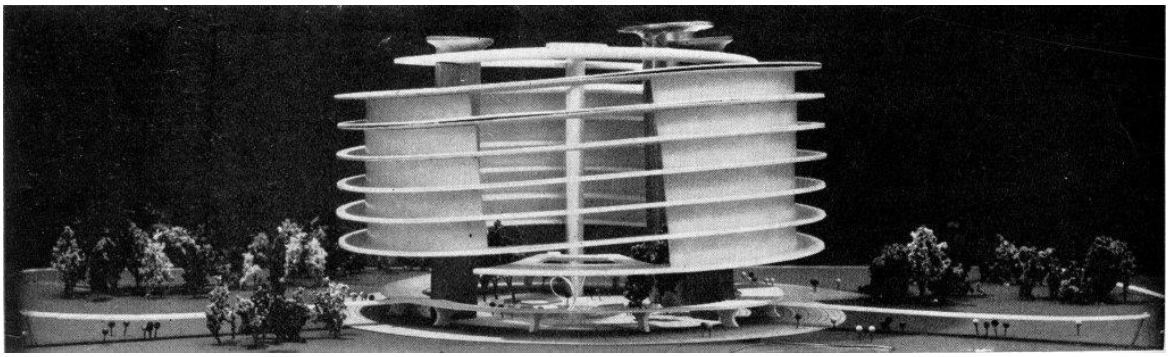

FIGURE 3.18
William N. Breger and Michael Brill, Circular Supermarket (project), New York. Source: *Progressive Architecture* (Feb. 1960), 72.

PART 2

VENEZUELAN CONTEXT:

THE PLACE, THE CIRCUMSTANCES, AND MORE

Chapter 4

Geopolitics and Oil Industry: Investors, Business and Architecture

FIGURE 4.1
Wallace Harrison, Avila Hotel, Caracas, 1942. The first modern hotel in Venezuela. View from the entrance. Source: photo courtesy of Creole Petroleum Corporation. Paul Patrick Rogers Collection (Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin).

In no area of the world have U.S. entrepreneurs and their government advisors had such complete freedom of action.

Darcy Ribeiro, on mid-20th century Venezuela.
The Americas and Civilization.

In a photograph of the early 1940s, a streamlined automobile crosses an old fashioned threshold of stone and wood, partially covered by climbing plants. In the background, bathed in morning sunlight, and dappled by the foliage of trees and shrubs, a modern four-story building reveals its clean, sheer forms and details. An attentive look at its facades, however, shows an unorthodox composition and a very singular architectural vocabulary: two angled wings, a horizontally disposed battery of small square windows, bull's eyes arranged vertically, and even more remarkable, wooden balconies attached to the volume (a closer view would also reveal a traditional tile roof running above the central balcony, and an undulating marquee indicating the building's entrance). The back of the photo is equally revealing. Typed on a small sticker, a descriptive reference of the building states (both in English and Spanish): "The Hotel Avila, situated in the foothills of the Avila Mountains, in the *Urbanización* (Suburb) San Bernardino, is one of the several excellent hotels in Caracas and a favorite stopping place for tourists." Below it, a stamp makes a subtle recall of the image's origin: "if used, please credit Creole Petroleum Corporation" (*figure 4.1*).

Both as an image and an archival piece, this photograph shows an intricate network of relations. The Avila Hotel, the first modern hotel in Venezuela, had been designed by Wallace Harrison for Nelson Rockefeller, the grandson of the founder of Standard Oil Company. Its unique hybrid language was a clear metaphor of a double nationality, American and Venezuelan. An alleged local, traditional style and a sort of international, eclectic modernism were synthesized in the building. Yet the hotel was regarded as *modern* not just for its unconventional repertoire, but because of its location (a new residential neighborhood in the suburbs of Caracas), and its innovative, rationalist building procedures and management.

The links between Venezuela and the United States had been neither recently established nor were they artificial; they had been the natural consequence of a *longue durée* geographical relationship, which encompassed Venezuela's strategically attractive location in a critical region, and its physical proximity to the United States. Early connections during the nineteenth century had ranged from naïve mutual approaches to a more decisive diplomatic intervention in 1895 (against British expansionism, and framed by the Monroe Doctrine); from the proposal to improve the Port of La Guaira in 1847 (by celebrated architect Thomas Ustick Walter) to the continuous concern of U.S. commercial interests for the political events in Venezuela. But apart from the fluctuations of domestic and international policies, the awe-inspiring landscape of Caracas and surroundings, and the unavoidable influence of topography on its buildings, as recorded in early twentieth-century photographs, there was a potential sign of similarity between both cultures.

The relationship, however, was gradually shaped and intensified during the twentieth century. It had been the result of historical conjuncture, which involved the worldwide development of the oil industry, and particularly the last-minute lucky strike of the U.S. oil companies in Venezuela (a fascinating story known as Anglo-American rivalry that would eventually put Creole Petroleum Corporation, a subsidiary of Standard Oil in Venezuela, in a leading position among all companies operating in the country). It had been also the consequence of a gradual tailoring of the Venezuelan petroleum law (more than just a legal frame, a cultural "device" of negotiation), which, compared to other oil countries in the Western Hemisphere (such as Mexico), turned out to be very favorable to U.S. companies. The interest of Rockefeller in a tourism facility was not by coincidence, and neither was his interest in Venezuela at large (nor his selection of W. Harrison). More than just a connection, the multiple links between Venezuela and the United States had become a broad bilateral relationship; even an alliance. In other words, the strong bond between both countries had been mainly the result of the geographical place and the historical circumstances, in which cultural aspects had played also a subjacent, significant role.

In the 1950s, Venezuela would eventually become the U.S. "billion-dollar cash customer," and by 1955, approximately 35,000 Americans already were living and working in the country. Many

cultural aspects of Venezuelan life unavoidably changed as a consequence of this relationship. The investments of Nelson Rockefeller went beyond his previous venture, and through the International Basic Economy Corporation (formed in 1947 to promote the economic development of various parts of the world), he established C.A.D.A., a food warehouse enterprise that turned out to be highly successful. The first of this chain, the C.A.D.A. Shopping Center (located in Las Mercedes, a new residential neighborhood of Caracas suburbs), completed in 1954, was designed by American architect Don Hatch (who would eventually be responsible for the U.S. Embassy building in Caracas). The quality of its spatial arrangement and its technological features, which included climate control, were commendable. This remarkable piece of architecture managed to combine the scale of a wholesaler with the self-service experience of a large supermarket, an everything-under-one-roof shopping center.

Customs and tastes of Venezuelan costumers would never be the same. The formula was simple: place and circumstances (and behind the scene, culture). The result would be unique.

VENEZUELAN GEOGRAPHY AS A *LONGUE DURÉE* CONDITION

On the northern coast of South America, facing the Caribbean Sea, lies the nation of Venezuela. Bounded on the west by Colombia, by Guiana on the east, and Brazil on the south, it covers approximately 916,445 square kilometers (353.84 square miles). Despite the fact that it is not among the world's largest countries, it has a high diversity of biomes. In January 1939, Anne Rainey Langley published in *The National Geographic Magazine* a very detailed account of such magnificent contrasts. Having come with her husband, an American oil company representative, she lived for several years in Quiriquire, an oil camp in northeast Venezuela. She found a country that was undergoing a process of modernization, but still linked to nature and history. In the article she described a country in which streams were infested with caymans, snakes abounded in water and on land, but, above all, in whose trees, coconuts grew and wild orchids bloomed in profusion.[1] "We are not immune to a snake sharing our shower," she said. However, the country

[1] Anne Rainay Langley, "I Kept House in a Jungle," *National Geographic*, Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society, Jan. 1939, 100.

she found had incipient highways and a cathedral-like university (Caracas University), which was six years older than Harvard; a country where old and new mingled, and where horse-drawn vehicles still competed with automobiles.[2] Moreover, she found a territory with a remarkable topography, irrevocably intertwined with history and technology. Among the 37 images that accompanied her article, there were two that particularly drew attention. The first one showed the country's capital sprawling across a plateau 3,025 feet above the sea. In this broad view of Caracas toward the east, spires and steeples of many churches rose above colonial red-tile roofs. In the northwestern part of the city, *La Pastora* Church and *El Calvario* Chapel stood on respective eminences, while the Cathedral's tower and the new Art-Deco Ministry of Education building (by arch. Guillermo Salas) stood out in downtown. The whole scene unfolded at the foot of "massive Mount Avila" (*figure 4.2*). Even more impressive was the view of Tacagua Valley, from the advantage point of Mora's Rock on the Caracas-La Guaira old highway. Motor highway and railroad zigzagged sharply up the steep sides of a rocky gorge, twisting 23 miles from one end to the other. Here, the unique contrast between an awe-inspiring territory and the modern transportation technology created a surreal scene (*figure 4.3*), an image that recalls the grandeur of the American landscape and the close link between it and modern engineering works.[3]

However, the presence in Venezuela of "madam Langley" (as people in Quiriquire addressed her) was not by chance; it was the result of a very sui generis crossing of places (both real and imaginary), with traditions and history, and particularly with geographical conditions, and the apparently capricious – but actually unavoidable – lines of the historical circumstances. When Christopher Columbus approached Paria Peninsula's coast in eastern Venezuela (incidently, only 70 miles from Quiriquire), during his third voyage in 1498, he speculated that it might be the location of the biblical Garden of Eden. He found not only flat, impressive lands (which he regarded as the most beautiful in the world), but particularly a very mild climate. As he

[2] Ibid, 113. Her reference to Caracas University as a "cathedral-like" building is a consequence of its Neo-gothic facade, a remodeling of the colonial Franciscan convent, by architect Juan Hurtado Manrique in the 1870s. It was the first time this style appeared in Venezuela.

[3] *Cf.* images 1.3-1.5, and particularly 1.6, from chapter 1.

continued his approach, he indulged in watching a large river's estuary, and stopped thinking about gold and pearls. At the threshold of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, he truly believed that he was about to reach Paradise.[4] Later, as Spanish colonization developed and economic competition among European monarchies emerged, seeking the control of trade routes and establishment of colonies, relations with the Spanish Crown gradually changed. As Graziano Gasparini asserts, the location of Venezuela and its long coast would guarantee its inevitable participation in the region's main episodes during the three centuries of Hispanic domination. The confrontations outside cities such as Cartagena, Veracruz, Havana, Panama and San Juan de Puerto Rico, during the sixteenth century, reveals a strategic significance, politically and economically superior than that in Venezuelan's coastal cities. Venezuela had, nevertheless, "other attractiveness to satisfy avarice and profits; among them, Cubagua's pearls or Araya's salt, which originated a maritime traffic without precedent between Holland and such a famous salt mine." Venezuela also had a mirage of fabulous wealth, such as the myth of El Dorado, with its legions of fervent and fanatic treasure hunters.[5]

There is no doubt that the Spanish Crown's Caribbean possessions were politically and economically more important than Caracas, and much more so than its city-port La Guaira. However, Venezuelan cities and fortresses along the coast were erected with different responsibilities. Apart from their commercial functions, the set of Spanish domains in Venezuela brought a defensive (military) significance. Gasparini suggests a metaphor to explain the arrangement of military buildings throughout the Caribbean: the keys and the system. Like a mechanical lock, the fortresses (keys) allowed – or blocked – ships' entrance into the Caribbean (system). In this sense, of the 21 "keys" attached to the Spanish domains in the Caribbean Sea, six were located in Venezuela, the highest concentration in the whole "system." Moreover, from the two major routes Spain utilized to enter the Caribbean, one and a bifurcation of the other were controlled by the Venezuelan "keys."

[4] Isaac José Pardo, *Esta Tierra de Gracia* (Caracas: Monte Ávila Editores [primera edición: 1955], 1988), 22.

[5] Graziano Gasparini, *Las Fortificaciones del Periodo Hispánico en Venezuela* (Caracas: Armitano, 1985), 33. My translation.

But Spaniards were not the only ones to have keys and systems; there were other networks of non-Hispanic keys. The region was strategically so attractive that it could not go unnoticed by other monarchies. A parallel set of pirate-friendly ports, basically constituted of Port Royal (Jamaica), Tortuga (Haiti) and Nassau (the Bahamas), was displayed on the Spanish-Crown Caribbean system during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In this sense, a map published in 1731 by Jean Baptiste Bourguignon d'Anville, a well-known French geographer and cartographer, showed the Caribbean islands and particularly the *Province of Tierra Firme*'s strategic location (Isthmus of Panama, Venezuela and Colombia). Both systems, the Spanish and French, overlapped each other on the map. It appeared in a transitional period, in which the once irrefutable Spanish power in the Caribbean Sea was debilitated, and the pirate activity in the area was coming to an end (*figure 4.4*).

Apart from its weather and its seismicity, a hill topography (predominantly in Caracas), a long coastline, and a particular geographical location (lying to the north of South America, facing the Caribbean Sea, and open to Europe, particularly Spain), have defined somehow the character of Venezuela; it is a *longue durée* condition that has marked its national culture and identity. Nevertheless, beyond this structural aspect, Venezuelan history has also shown an integral coherency between its geographical condition and specific historical *conjunctures*.[6] It is not a coincidence that, during the early twentieth century, the country opened up to the United States. With different economic principles, as well as transformations in power relationships worldwide, Venezuela was about to do a volte-face in its international political relations. Its links with Spain (political, economic, and even cultural) were about to be replaced by others; the change was inevitable. Like an equation, both physical and human Venezuelan geography have played a specific role depending on the historical circumstances. The geographical-framework

[6] Terms like *longue durée*, *structure* and *conjuncture*, as used in this chapter, are inspired by the *Annales* School. See *On History*, by Fernand Braudel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980 [originally published in French, 1969]), particularly "History and the Social Sciences. The Longue Durée," 25-54.

conditions found in Venezuela during the colony were reloaded with a different set of principles, ending up in a totally different system of relations.[7]

In this key region called the Caribbean, where ethnic, commercial, political and military routes have crossed each other time and time again, the geographical framework has been continuously *re-semanticized*, depending on the historical circumstances. The Venezuelan physical location, its size, climate, topography, demography, and natural resources have interacted with international politics and technological advances. It is not about the influence of geography on international relations, but the inextricable mutual interaction between both. The odd encounter of madam Langley with a snake in her shower was not by chance; it was inevitable. She was lucky enough to live for several years in a key region during a specific historical conjuncture. In another passage of her article she related the other face of the jungle she lived in:

> Within the camp we have a commissary containing imported canned goods from the United States. Our own chlorinating system safeguards us against the typhoid and dysentery germs that formerly took heavy toll among Venezuelans in this section. As an additional precaution all fresh fruits, vegetables, and eggs must be washed before eating. A company power plant provides electricity and running water for the entire camp. The latest movies arrive by plane twice each week.[8]

This sort of enclave referred to the daily routine in an oil camp, a way of life that would eventually pervade the nation, and particularly the city of Caracas. But even before the new rules of the oil industry appeared in the country, the United States and Venezuela already

[7] A third aspect, based on the notion of a short time span, tells us about how a simple *event* – or series of events and regular practices – might be capable of modifying a *structure*. On this aspect, see chapter 9 of this Dissertation: "Construction of Modern Myths: Demonstration of Boldness, Beauty, Progress and Identity," particularly the subchapter "Before and After Susana Duijm."

[8] Anne Rainay Langley, "I Kept House in a Jungle," *National Geographic*, Washington D.C.: National Geographic Society, Jan. 1939, 97.

maintained relations. The principles of such incipient relations would be based no less than on a geographical proximity.

FIGURE 4.2
Caracas' colonial red-tile roofs in 1939. *La Pastora* Church (left) and *El Calvario* Chapel (right) stood on respective eminences; the Cathedral's tower and the new Art-Deco Ministry of Education building stood out in downtown (center). The whole scene unfolded at the foot of "massive Mount Avila." Photograph by Ernst G. Holt. Source: *National Geographic* (Jan. 1939), 118.

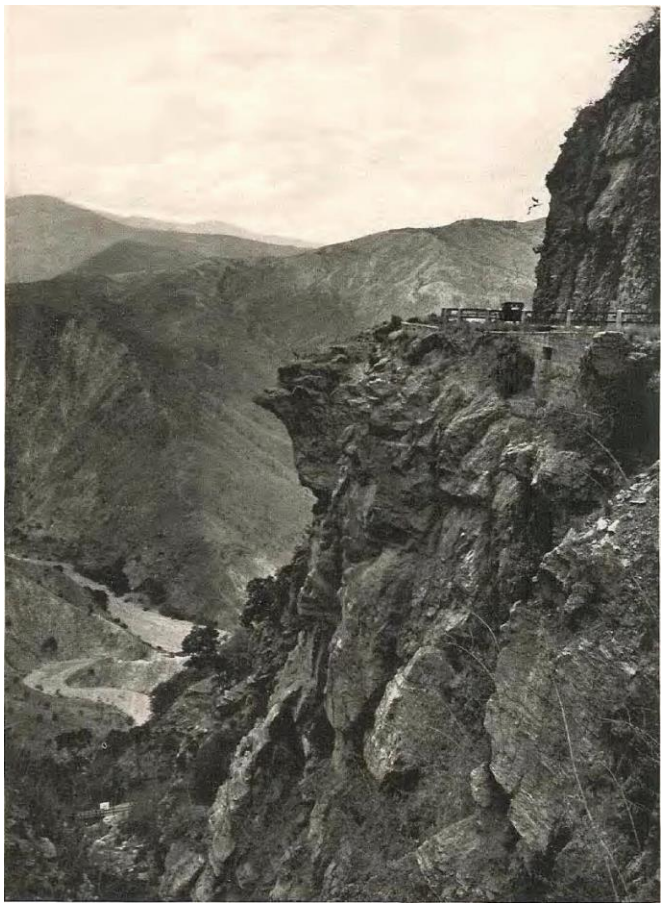

FIGURE 4.3
View of Tacagua Valley from Mora's Rock, Caracas-La Guaira old highway. Motor highway and railroad zigzagged sharply up the steep sides of a rocky gorge. The railroad bridge (far below) spanned the river bed. Photograph from Globe. Source: *National Geographic* (Jan. 1939), 116.

FIGURE 4.4
D'Anville, "Carte des Isles de l'Amerique et deplusiers pays de Terre Ferme sitúes au devant de des Isles & autour de Golfe de Mexique. Par le Sr. D'Anville geographe ordre du roi," 1731. Section of the original map showing the *Province of Tierra Firme*'s strategic location (Isthmus of Panama, Venezuela and Colombia) and its relation with the Antilles in Spanish colonial time. Source: The Benson Latin American Collection (Early Maps). Courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin.

EARLY CONNECTIONS

By 1840, taking advantage of the construction of the road to Caracas, the Venezuelan Government considered it necessary to improve the conditions of the old installations in La Guaira, a city-port located 6.4 miles (10.42 Km) from Caracas. The government decided to call upon a foreign engineer to handle the project, "taking into account the lack of local professionals in Venezuela, capable of solving this kind of problem."[9] The project counted on the support of local storekeepers and dealers, but particularly of John Boulton, a British trader who

[9] Leszek Zawisza, *Arquitectura y Obras Públicas en Venezuela, Siglo XIX*, v.2 (Caracas: Ediciones de la Presidencia de la República, 1988), 177.

had joined with an American citizen, John Dallett, to establish in 1833 the Red D line, a major navigation company in Venezuela.

El Promotor, a local newspaper, in 1843 published some articles by a Venezuelan traveler in the United States, who regarded Thomas Ustick Walter as the appropriate professional to carry out the works in the port of La Guaira. By that time, Walter had begun his prolific activity as an architectural theoretician. In 1841, he had accepted the position of professor of architecture at the Franklin Institute. That very same year, he had also started a series of lectures on architecture, an activity that would span twelve years and include different institutions both in Philadelphia and Washington, DC.[10] His most important commissions, for which he became well-known, were in the future: the U.S. Capitol's dome, whose construction lasted from 1855 to 1863, and the expansion of its wings, from 1851 to 1859. La Guaira's commission had come ten years before.

The building process was completed in 1847 at a huge cost of 275.000 Venezuelan pesos (currency of the time). The work received some positive comments in local newspapers. However, the vast majority of articles and official reports brought negative opinions.[11] But this setback was not representative of the incipient bilateral relations between Venezuela and the United States. Actually, the U.S. Congress had assigned funds for the victims of the Venezuelan earthquake of 1812. Only once, prior to the turn of the century, had Congress released large funds for an overseas activity.[12] Although the United States provided little assistance during the Venezuelan independence war (1811-1823), it officially recognized the Republic of Gran

[10] See Jhennifer A. Amundson (ed.), *Thomas U. Walter. The Lectures on Architecture, 1841-1853* (Philadelphia: The Athenæum of Philadelphia, 2006).

[11] One of the members of the Govern Commission regarded the work as "inappropriate, since the breakwater was not so resistant, and might eventually be covered by sand" (see Leszek Zawisza, *Arquitectura y Obras Públicas en Venezuela, Siglo XIX*, 179).

[12] Ron Robin, *Enclaves of America. The Rhetoric of American. Political Architecture abroad, 1900-1965* (New Jersey: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992), 16.

Colombia[13] "before any other independent Latin American nation," and praised Bolivar as "the George Washington of the Southern Hemisphere."[14] News on the almost constant political fears in Venezuela during the nineteenth century drew attention of American newspapers. In the 1860s, a *New York Times*' correspondent wrote from Caracas:

> The importance of the political events which are transpiring in this interesting country involve so many commercial interests and enterprises that I am induced to give them undivided attention, rather than extend my letter with particulars of the various enterprises themselves, in regard to coal, petroleum, cotton, gold, copper, railroad, gas, &c., in which so many Americans are at this moment engaged, and in which so much of American capital is involved.[15]

The correspondent was amid the political chaos in the aftermath of the Federal War (1859-1863). In contrast to the huge variety of topics he usually addressed – of major significance to American readers – he decided to devote the entire article to describe the situation of the country. That very same year, the Venezuelan President General José Antonio Páez left the country and went into exile; he would live in New York City until his death in 1873.

But political frights in Venezuela were not confined only to domestic matters. During the Venezuelan Crisis of 1895 over the dispute with the United Kingdom about the territories of Essequivo and Guayana Esequiva, Venezuela requested U.S. assistance. By warning the British that they must submit the territorial dispute to arbitration, the United States broadened the interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine and inaugurated a new assertion of American responsibility in the hemisphere. Moreover, the determined U.S. economic expansion in the late

[13] A short-lived republic (1819-1831), devised and proclaimed by Simón Bolívar, which included present-day territories of Venezuela, Colombia and Ecuador.

[14] Judith Ewell, *Venezuela and the United States: From Monroe's Hemisphere to Petroleum's Empire* (Athens/London: The University of Georgia Press, 1996), 7.

[15] "From Venezuela: No Government yet in Caracas – Chaos Reigns Supreme…," *The New York Times*, July 31, 1863, 2.

nineteenth century, which was accompanied by particular concerns about national security, led Washington to pay more attention to the Caribbean Sea, its islands, and its major coastal nations. By this time, even before the completion of the strategically significant Panama Canal, U.S. leaders had recognized "Venezuela's potential as the linchpin of the Caribbean's southern rim."[16]

News about Venezuela, however, would not be abundant until the 1920s, when information about the country's new wealth literally flooded American newspapers. It would occur as unexpectedly as a gusher.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS IN A NUTSHELL: A SHORT HISTORY OF THE VENEZUELAN OIL INDUSTRY

THE EARLY YEARS: FRAGMENTATION AND FIRST CONCESSIONS

In 1928, with great fanfare, *The New York Times* published an article on the latest oil industry news from Venezuela. Its subtitles were very eloquent: "Standard of New Jersey links with Creole Syndicate in big development program; 6,250,000 acres involved; Standard will have control, providing $8,000,000 working capital – country now second in output."[17] Venezuela, already rated as the second greatest oil country in the world, had become the scene of a new contest for petroleum resources through an agreement, announced the day before, by which the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey and the Creole Syndicate merged their properties. It was not the only newspaper at the time in bringing the latest information about the oil industry in Venezuela. In the past, however, such a journalistic boom would have been unthinkable.

In the modern era, the oil industry began in 1859, when the first producing well was drilled in Pennsylvania. In 1882 the world consumed 35,000,000 barrels; of those, 30,000,000 came from

[16] Ewell, *Venezuela and the United States*, 2.

[17] "New Quest for Oil in Venezuela Field," *The New York Times*, March 2, 1928, 44.

Pennsylvania, and Standard Oil controlled 90% of that state's output.[18] That very same year, Standard Oil had combined its disparate companies spread throughout the United States, transforming its original form (corporation) into an innovative legal form: trust or corporate trust. The idea of competitors joining forces "was so new at the time as to be revolutionary – its opponents called it 'idealistic' – but by negotiation, persuasion, and the careful use of limited capital, Rockefeller and his associates built steadily toward the goals they had set: stability, economy, and wide distribution of a dependable product."[19] It was actually the growth of the oil industry in the United States that made Venezuela aware of its potential. But the development process of the oil industry in the latter (and of the oil business per se) would prove to be both meandering and surprising.

The relation between oil, state and nation has been very sui generis in Venezuela; anyone who wants to understand both the past and the present of the oil industry in this country (and even a hypothetical future) must tackle said relation. Since the early twentieth century, the state became the center of political and economic power. Transformed into a *petrostate*, "the Venezuelan state came to hold the monopoly not only of political violence but of the nation's natural wealth."[20] In this way, as had occurred with the Spanish crown during the colonial era, "the Venezuelan state has been constituted as a unifying force by producing fantasies of collective integration into centralized political institutions."[21] One of the keys to understanding such a particular triad between oil, state and nation, can be found in the legal framework, particularly the definition of ownership of subsoil. Colonial Spanish mining law placed ownership of all underground metals in the hand of the crown. A legal improvement came later, in 1783,

[18] Edwin Lieuwen, *Petroleum in Venezuela. A History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1954), 4.

[19] "A Look at the Corporation," *The Lamp. 75th Anniversary of Jersey Standard*. New York: Standard Oil Company (New Jersey), 1957, 11. The Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

[20] Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State. Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela* (Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 4.

[21] Ibid.

when Carlos III decreed the *Ordenanza de Minería*, which included nonmetallic materials as well. In this sense, Venezuela inherited this legal (and mental) framework. It is not by chance that the Federalist Constitution of 1864 gave the State administrative power over the mine. The first oil lease would be granted two years later following said principle.[22]

It seems, however, there was an earlier concession. According to a report published in the British journal *The Petroleum Times*, in 1927, the first petroleum contract of Venezuela had been applied by an American interest in April, 1863.[23] Unluckily, it didn't yield any positive result. In any case, the first concession to be exploited commercially was granted in the State of Táchira (in the Venezuelan Andes) to Manuel Antonio Pulido in 1878. In order to exploit this fifty-year lease, Pulido and five associates formed the *Compañía Petrolera del Táchira*. One of the partners, Pedro Rafael Rincones, even "traveled to Pennsylvania in 1879 to study the oil industry, and the following year returned with a drilling rig."[24]

BRAIN IS BETTER THAN BRAWN!: GOMEZ, THE BOOM ERA, AND THE ANGLO-AMERICAN RIVALRY

The end of the nineteenth century did not bring dramatic changes. The oil business in Venezuela seemed to develop very slowly, as two important principles of Venezuelan policy were consolidated: subsoil deposits were made the property of the nation (not the surface owner), and the granting of oil leases was made an exclusive power of the president.[25] The twentieth century, however, would bring significant, rapid changes. The recently invented internal combustion engine (developed in 1858) finally gave rise to a tremendous demand for refined products. Standard Oil Trust, in turn, underwent an important reorganization in 1911, when the

[22] The lease was granted to Manuel Olavarría in 1866 for twenty years. He received oil right in Maturín State, eastern Venezuela (presently Sucre and Monagas states). His lease didn't yield any positive result. The same year, a second concession was granted in Trujillo State (western), unfortunately with the same result. Both leases eventually lapsed. See Lieuwen, *Petroleum in Venezuela*, 5-6.

[23] Edgar Pew, "The Future of the Venezuelan Oil Industry," *The Petroleum Times* (July 23, 1927): 187.

[24] Lieuwen, *Petroleum in Venezuela*, 6.

[25] Ibid, 7.

U.S. Supreme Court ruled against it. Declared as a "monopoly," the Standard group was broken up into 33 companies; from them, Jersey Standard (Standard Oil of New Jersey) and Socony (Standard Oil of New York) would eventually emerge as major companies. Amid this situation, Royal Dutch Oil Company (founded in 1890, and merged in 1907 with Shell Transport and Trading Company of England) took the initiative and invaded Standard's foreign markets.[26]

By 1907, *Compañía Petrolera del Táchira* was the only petroleum company active in Venezuela. General Cipriano Castro, also from Táchira State, and who had seized power in 1899, continued the presidential practice – and tradition – of assigning concession arbitrarily.[27] Castro granted six concessions to his personal friends. The first of them, awarded in 1907 to Andrés J. Vigas, granted rights in a huge area of two million hectares, located in Colón District of Zulia. Eventually, the lease was sold to a Shell subsidiary.[28] Taking into account the difficulties associated with oil production, these individual leases were usually transferred to foreign corporations, particularly British through Shell's subsidiaries.

Despite being too liberal with concessions, Castro didn't make the country very attractive for foreign companies. Domestic revolts and international monetary problems discouraged investment. From December 1902 to February 1903, due to Castro's refusal to pay foreign debts, Venezuelan ports were blockaded by British and German vessels. Given the seriousness of the situation, and the German hidden agenda to invade and take control of significant Venezuelan ports, U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt had to take action. During his annual message to Congress, and for the first time in the history of the United States, he announced "naval maneuvers on a large scale" to be held under immediate command of the Admiral of the

[26] Ibid, 8.

[27] He appended a resolution to the new mining law of January 23, 1904. The resolution not only regulated exploitation of *hidrocarburos*, but also maintained the principle that the president was empowered to grant and administer concessions without consent of Congress (ibid, 9).

[28] Specifically to Colón Development Company.

Navy George Dewey. "Coincidentally or not, those maneuvers were to be conducted in the same theater as the Anglo-German blockade."[29]

Such unattractive conditions (for any foreign investment), however, began to change when Juan Vicente Gómez seized power in December 1908.[30] Under Gómez' slogan, "national rehabilitation," the country was pacified by using military force, and saw its finances reorganized. Obviously, in order to carry out such "rehabilitation," Gómez urgently needed revenues. To this end, he officially invited foreign investors to come in to develop the nation's resources, which ended up being very attractive to petroleum investors, particularly after Porfirio Diaz' fall in 1911 (who had been a guarantee of stability in Mexico). Gómez certainly continued Castro's liberal policy; however, he went further. "I foster the presence of Americans in our country," he said, "because wherever they are money flows; because they are hard workers and enterprising, and they have never interfered in our matters, and there is no reason to be afraid of them."[31] This difference between both administrations would somehow set the course of events to come.

Until 1913, neither Royal Dutch Shell nor Standard of New Jersey had direct interests in the country. However, after World War I (during the Gómez era), Venezuela would witness one of the most intense battles ever fought, between British and American interests, for the oil control

[29] Edmund Morris, "A Matter of Extreme Urgency. Theodore Roosevelt, Wilhelm II, and the Venezuelan Crisis of 1902," *Naval War College Review* 55, no.2 (2002): 76. The Venezuelan crisis of 1902, according to Morris, is not an unfamiliar episode in U.S. history. "It has all the ingredients that attract scholars: drama, contradictions, mysteriously destroyed evidence, and the fictionalizing tendencies of human memory." Once having left the White House, T. Roosevelt asserted that, between November and December of 1902, "the United States was on the verge of war with Germany" because of the Venezuelan affair (ibid, 74).

[30] For a more specific relation on domestic political affairs in Venezuela during the first half of the twentieth century, see chapter 7 of this dissertation, specifically the subchapter "A Story of Hiatus."

[31] William Sullivan, "Situación económica y política durante el periodo de Juan Vicente Gómez," quoted in Lorenzo González, "Nelson A. Rockefeller y la Modernidad Venezolana: Intercambios, Empresas y Lugares a Mediados del Siglo XX," in *Petróleo Nuestro y Ajeno. La Ilusión de Modernidad*, ed. Juan José Martin Frechilla y Yolanda Texera Arnal, 172-211 (Caracas: Universidad Central de Venezuela, Consejo de Desarrollo Científico y Humanístico, 2005), 174.

of any country. Between 1910 and 1912, the Philadelphia-based company General Asphalt was granted, directly or indirectly, huge concessions both in eastern and western Venezuela.[32] However, by the end of 1912, General Asphalt realized that its financial resources were not equal to the magnitude of the task. After failing to obtain financial help in the United States, the company turned to Royal Dutch Shell, which purchased control of Caribbean Petroleum (a General Asphalt subsidiary) in 1913. General Asphalt was a company with small capitalization. It had been, however, the only foreign company exploiting oil during Castro's era. By the end of the decade, the company controlled 12,000 square miles of lands in Venezuela (31,079 Km^2). In fact, these lands had proved to be strategically – and historically – important. In April 1914, through Caribbean Petroleum, Royal Dutch Shell discovered *Mene Grande* (near Maracaibo Lake), which turned out to be the first significant oilfield of Venezuela. Upon the completion of the *Zumaque 1* oil well, on July 31, Shell had started the era of real commercial production in Venezuela. A loading terminal was built later, and in 1917 Caribbean Petroleum made the first shipment of oil out of Venezuela.[33]

By this time, all companies operating in the Maracaibo Basin had been absorbed by Royal Dutch Shell. Moreover, the panorama of the entire country was not so different. At the end of World War I, British or British-Dutch companies held nearly all Venezuelan oil concessions. But Washington was not in panic, and Standard Oil Company of New Jersey, major inheritor of the

[32] Rafael Max Valladares, attorney for General Asphalt, was granted a petroleum concession covering the Benitez District of Sucre State (eastern Venezuela). He would transfer later this concession to Bermudez Company, a subsidiary of General Asphalt (Recopilación de Leyes y Decretos de Venezuela, XXXIII: 380-381; Gaceta Oficial, July 18, 1910, quoted in Lieuwen, *Petroleum in Venezuela*, 6). In 1912 Valladares managed to obtain in his name a huge concession previously given to Venezuelan Oilfield Exploration Company (a newly organized English firm). This 270,000-square-kilometer lease had been granted John Allen Tregelles, founder and representative of the Venezuelan Oilfield Exploration Company, "who was given the right to explore for petroleum in twelve of Venezuela's twenty states and in one of her two territories" (Lieuwen, *Petroleum in Venezuela,* 12). Valladares would transfer it later to the Caribbean Petroleum Company, another General Asphalt subsidiary. It was precisely through this concession that Caribbean Petroleum brought in the first well in the Maracaibo Basin

[33] Lieuwen, *Petroleum in Venezuela*, 14.

Standard Oil trust, was indifferent about Venezuela; its chief concern was the market.[34] The British Empire, on the other hand, was strongly vigilant of its oilmen business' welfare. It seemed that the U.S. destiny in Venezuela was already sealed. It looked like British interests had gained definite control of Venezuelan oil.

One of the most significant effects of World War I was the intercompany oil fight between nations. Now, competition for oil involved more than just companies; oil began to be a geopolitical concern. Prior to the Great War, the United States had sufficient domestic supplies, and American oil companies had interests only in Mexico and Rumania. However, with the end of the war, the United States realized how strategically important oil was. The fear of a shortage made president Woodrow Wilson take a more aggressive position.[35] It was also the time when a modern petroleum law started being defined in Venezuela. Both the draft legislation of 1918[36] and the 1920 law per se (actually the first petroleum law, passed by the Venezuelan Congress on June 30) defined very well the terms of oil exploration and exploitation in Venezuela.[37] More beneficial to the Venezuelan State, the law brought criticism, particularly from American oil companies.[38] Even the United States Minister to Venezuela, Preston McGoodwin, had a personal interview with General Gómez in Maracay. A new piece of legislation was passed by Congress on June 13, 1922; it would become the Venezuelan basic oil law.[39]

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[34] Ibid, 18.

[35] Ibid, 19.

[36] Devised by Development Minister Gumersindo Torres.

[37] Now, titles (length of time of concessions), exploration areas, exploitation parcels, taxes, royalties, and even sanctions were established in a more objective manner.

[38] Venezuelan government had seen the Anglo-American rivalry as an opportunity, by means of this law, to improve Venezuelan bargaining position before foreign interests. But the pressure was so high that the law had to be modified in 1921; suggestions from American companies were incorporated. Nevertheless pressure continued, and now with official support. Actually, oilmen were backed all the time by American diplomacy.

[39] In this way, the concession had now been reduced to 100 km^2 or 10,000 hectares (from 15,000 hectares); a three-year exploration permit was granted, and for exploitation, contractor had to select alternate rectangular parcels of 5 km^2 or 500 hectares (formerly 2Km^2) on half the concession's area, so

Until the early 1920s, foreign investments in Venezuelan oil were still small. This situation, however, was about to change. On December 14, 1922, *Barroso 2*, an oil well located in Cabimas (Zulia State), started spewing a 200-foot oil column into the air. It gushed 99,000 barrels per day, and continued flowing for nine days. The event made newspapers headlines worldwide, and brought Venezuela onto the map of worldwide oil producers. Three months later, *The New York Times* reported an even larger blowout in the same sector. "An oil well producing 120,000 barrels a day, conceded to be the most productive in the world, was brought in recently at La Rosa, in Maracaibo, Venezuela."[40]

Again, like the *Zumaque 1* oil well and Caribbean Petroleum's investments in the Maracaibo basin, *Barroso 2* was – indirectly – on a Royal Dutch Shell concession. Located on the east shore of Lake Maracaibo, La Rosa field had had its first producing well completed in 1916 by the Venezuelan Oil Concession (also known as V.O.C., and operated by the Caribbean Petroleum Company).[41] After *Barroso 2*, American investors would never see Venezuela as they did in the past. The history of oil in Venezuela was about to change, coincidently with the well-known "boom era" in the world's petroleum industry.

In 1924, "Lago Petroleum Corporation became the first American company to export oil from Venezuela."[42] Registered in Delaware, it had been established in 1923, and had some concessions in Lake Maracaibo. Other American companies operated in western Venezuela during this period. By the end of the 1920s, 107 foreign companies were registered in

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the remaining half had to be returned to the Venezuelan government to become part of the national reserves. Exploitation contracts were for forty years, instead of thirty (as it was before). As for the taxes, concessionaires had to pay one-tenth bolivar per hectares for exploration, a two-bolivar surface exploitation tax, and a royalty of 10 per cent. Finally, as in the past, only the president – or his appointed minister – was authorized to grant concessions. Ibid, 24-28.

[40] "Biggest Oil Well Yet," *The New York Times*, March 18, 1923, 13.

[41] Edgar Pew, "The Future of the Venezuelan Oil Industry," *The Petroleum Times* (July 23, 1927): 190.

[42] Lieuwen, *Petroleum in Venezuela*, 42.

Venezuela, mostly Americans. Nevertheless, just a few – the biggest – managed to export. The three largest companies at the time were Royal Dutch Shell, Gulf Oil Corporation of Pennsylvania, and Standard Oil Company of Indiana (the latter, one of the corporations which emerged after the 1911 breakup of Rockefeller's Standard Oil Trust). But such relation of forces would not last for a long time. On March 2, 1928, *The New York Times* announced an agreement between the Standard Oil of New Jersey and the Creole Syndicate, by which they merged their properties in Venezuela, aggregating 6,250,000 acres, "as the preliminary move in an intensive development program."[43] Thus, a new company, known as Creole Petroleum Corporation, was created to take over the combined properties. Standard Oil of New Jersey, which had provided $8,000,000 cash working capital, would hold a controlling interest in the joint project and would transfer to the new company all its acreage in the country.[44] Essentially, by means of this agreement, the Standard Oil of New Jersey acquired control of the Creole Syndicate and transferred to it all of the concessions, properties, equipment, land, and buildings owned or controlled by the Standard in Venezuela, either directly or indirectly through its subsidiaries, the Standard Oil Company of Venezuela and the American-British Oil Company.[45]

Standard Oil of New Jersey had arrived in Venezuela in 1919; it led to the creation of Standard Oil of Venezuela, which began its activities in 1921. The Creole Syndicate, in turn, had been established by Americans investors in 1920 (registered in Delaware, like Lago Petroleum). The agreement between both companies was regarded as "the most important" that had taken place in the industry since the main foreign companies operating in Mexico "rebelled against the petroleum laws of that country and began transferring their operations to Venezuela and Colombia."[46] The rise of Venezuela in the world oil picture had been such in 1927 "that it supplanted Mexico as the third largest oil producing country" and pushed Russia out of second

[43] "New Quest for Oil in Venezuela Field," *The New York Times*, March 2, 1928, 44.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid. The petroleum nationalization in México, decreed by General Lázaro Cardenas on March 18, 1938, had implied the expropriation of all foreign oil companies (including facilities), as well as the oil reserves.

place in 1928, "taking rank next to the United States"[47] (*figure 4.5*). By this time, Venezuelan oil potential was already of particular interest to the United States; after all, more than half of the yield went to that country.

A larger consolidation of Creole was yet to come. In 1931 Creole Petroleum Corporation decided to unite operations through negotiations with Venezuelan Atlantic Refining Company, Sinclair-controlled Cordillera Petroleum Corporation, Lago Petroleum Corporation of the Standard Oil Company of Indiana, Mexican Seaboard Oil Company and Compañía Española de Petróleos. One year later, Creole would buy Pan American Petroleum's assets abroad, including Lago Petroleum (the latter had been acquired by Pan American Petroleum & Transport Company in 1925).[48] This way, by 1934, the supremacy so long held by Royal Dutch Shell interests in Venezuela was snatched away by the Standard of New Jersey. Through its subsidiaries in Venezuela, Standard had gone from 51,222,288 barrels in 1933 (43% of total output) to produce 65,511,799 (47.5%) in 1934.[49] The next year its production reached 49.55%, and by 1936 Standard managed to overpass the limit of 50%: it climbed to 51.2%.[50] As for the fields, the once heroic production of La Rosa in the 1920s had been dwarfed by Lagunillas field, also in Zulia State. During 1935 it produced 81,540,000 barrels (55% of total Venezuelan output), while La Rosa managed only 21,424,000 (14.4%).[51] The prolific capacity of Lagunillas attracted many investors; Creole, Shell and Mene Grande created a motley, complex – and sometimes cramped – landscape of wells, pipes, tanks, dwellings and facilities (*figure 4.6*). In addition to this, Standard Oil of Venezuela,

[47] Ibid.

[48] "Combine Oil Leases in Venezuela Area," *The New York Times*, May 5, 1931, 40. See also Wayne C. Taylor and John Lindeman (with the collaboration of Victor Lopez R.), *The Creole Petroleum Corporation in Venezuela*, fourth case study in an NPA Series on United States Business Performance Abroad, 1955,88.

[49] "Venezuela's Petroleum Industry. A Brief Statistical Survey of 1934." *The Petroleum Times* (Feb. 2, 1935): 164.

[50] "Venezuelan Developments during the Quarter. Jersey Standard the Leading Producer," *The Petroleum Times* (May 23, 1936): 668. See also "Venezuela's Petroleum Output," *The New York Times*, Apr. 14, 1935, F7.

[51] Ibid, 669.

which had undergone seven years of fruitless exploration since its establishment, finally brought in the discovery of a new field in 1928. Known as Quiriquire field, and located in Monagas State, it proved to be a significant opening of eastern Venezuela (geographically opposed to the Maracaibo Basin).[52]

FROM THE GREAT DEPRESSION TO THE KOREAN WAR: A NEW LAW AND *CREOLE* ON THE RISE

Despite the fact that world depression of the 1930s hit the petroleum industry, Venezuelan production was almost as great as it had been during the 1920s boom era. Creole was not the only American corporation to continue investing during these years. "In spite of the present depression," said a note published in *The New York Times*, "in the oil industry the big petroleum companies operating around Maracaibo, Venezuela, are looking far ahead and laying plans so that as soon as conditions improve the stage will be all set for another big stride in the commercial development of the country."[53] World War II broke out in Europe in 1939; the attack on Pearl Harbor (on December 7, 1941), in turn, led to the United States' entry into the conflict. Like in any modern war, it brought a great increase in oil demand, as well as a dramatic redirection of goods, resources, materials, and particularly a reorganization of the industrial production.[54]

It was a time when oil companies introduced Venezuelans to the benefits of their oil camps, company towns attached to production fields, which provided better living conditions (compared to the local context). These enclaves would eventually exert a strong influence in the

[52] See the camp description that Anne Rainey provided in 1939 (subchapter "Venezuelan Geography as a *Longue Durée* Condition").

[53] "Oil Trade Broadens Work in Venezuela," *The New York Times*, Sept. 28, 1930, E4.

[54] Although the war's effects on Venezuelan were indirect, oil production underwent temporary changes. Venezuela certainly increased shipments to the United States. Nevertheless, both production and exportation dropped 10% and 17%, respectively, in 1940. Just in 1941 Venezuelan oil industry started showing signs of recovery (see Lieuwen, *Petroleum in Venezuela*, 86-87).

Venezuelan urban context.[55] It was also a time characterized by the migration of the oil industry headquarters from Maracaibo (or from their respective locations) to Caracas. The reasons were very simple. First of all, the capital city was climatically much more agreeable than the hot petroleum regions.[56] Secondly, Caracas had an ideal central location (in the central-north region), which allowed headquarters to better coordinate better both their eastern and western fields operations. Finally, by locating their offices in Caracas, corporations enjoyed the benefits of its urban facilities, and were conveniently close to the central government.

Also important was the conclusive definition of the Venezuelan legal framework regarding oil affairs. As soon as General Isaías Medina Angarita took office as President of Venezuela in 1941, he showed his intention of revising the petroleum legislation in order to increase the nation's profits. Previously, the Congress had passed a new law in 1938. However, it was never complied with. Foreign oilmen, who regarded it as extremely rigid and unfavorable to their interests, preferred to continue working under the previous rules. They simply ignored the law, on the grounds that they were already following the rules of the game: those advantageous conditions of Gomez' concessions. Now, in order to avoid such inoperativeness, Medina tried a different strategy. Actually, he managed to negotiate with oilmen, and the Congress successfully passed the law in 1943. This new law certainly brought some improvements: the State increased its participation in the profits of the industry, and domestic oil-refining facilities were promoted. It also broadened the technical and administrative power of the government, but most importantly, the 1943 law provided a unified legislation. By cleaning up the rules, and allowing the participation of the counterpart, Medina had sent clear signs of security to the investors – and there is nothing more engaging to investors than clear rules and security.

Three years later, however, there was a second significant moment in the definition of Venezuelan oil's legal framework. On December 31, 1945, the Revolutionary Junta (which had

[55] The proliferation of American-like suburban neighborhoods, as well as their respective facilities, was one of the most conspicuous evidences of this influence. For a deeper discussion on this topic, see chapter 5 of this dissertation.

[56] Maracaibo average temperature is 35°C (95°F), while Caracas' is 20°C (68°F).

recently seized power) decreed an extraordinary tax on company profits.[57] This unexpected decision almost created a diplomatic incident.[58] Three years later, the Venezuelan Congress passed a new Tax Law. The objective was very simple: in no case would oil companies be able to earn annual profits greater than those received by the Venezuelan State. Known in the oil industry's argot as "50-50" (fifty-fifty percent), such a legal disposition on additional taxes[59] would be followed by other oil-exporting countries.[60]

After the war, Venezuelan oil production increased steeply. The 1933 daily average had been 326,038 barrels; one year later it had increased to 377,192.[61] An integrated picture of the world's oil activities, published by the Jersey Standard's magazine, *The Lamp*, allowed the appreciation of the magnitude of Venezuelan oil exportation by 1938 (*figure 4.7*).[62] On this map, three huge sweeping lines ending in arrows indicated the Venezuelan flow of oil (to North America, Europe and Africa). Prewar figures, however, looked insignificant when contrasted

[57] Despite the fact that government revenues had increased under the 1943 law, its proportional share in the oil industry's profits decreased as market prices rose. With this extraordinary tax Creole alone had to pay $18,679,291 (See "Government Taxes and Incomes," *Standard Oil Company [New Jersey]. Annual Report for 1945,* New York: Standard Oil Co., 1945, 26).

[58] For a very detailed account of the incident, see Margarita López Maya, *EE.UU. en Venezuela: 1945-1948 (Revelaciones de los Archivos Estadounidenses)*, Caracas: Universidad Central de Venezuela, Consejo de Desarrollo Científico y Humanístico, 1996.

[59] "Ley de Impuesto sobre la Renta," *Gaceta Oficial de la República de Venezuela*, No. 216, Nov. 12, 1948. See Chapter 10 in this Law (Capítulo X: del Impuesto Complementario [on Complementary Tax]), 4.

[60] According to Franklin Tugwell, this simple formula spread to other nations. "Iran adopted in 1949, Saudi Arabia in 1950, Kuwait in 1951, and Bahrain and Iraq in 1952" (*The Politics of Oil in Venezuela* [Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1975], 45). See also Lieuwen, *Petroleum in Venezuela*, 142. As Margarita López Maya states, instead of an unexpected tax imposition (like in 1945), the "50-50" formula was actually a secret agreement between Venezuelan Minister Juan Pablo Pérez Alfonzo and Arthur Proudfit, President of Creole Petroleum Corporation. Neither the U.S. Department of State nor the other American oil corporations in Venezuela knew about such arrangement, until it was officially released.

[61] "Venezuela's Petroleum Industry. A Brief Statistical Survey of 1934." *The Petroleum Times*: 164.

[62] *The Lamp,* Apr. 1946, 14-15. Because all oil activities were violently distorted by the war, production, refining and consumption were based on the figures for 1938. Oil reserves, however, were based on the figures for January 1, 1945.

with postwar production. Venezuela produced 1,191,478 barrels per day during 1947, and 1,704,643 in 1951.[63] It was the World's leading oil exporter and the second largest producer. In thirty years, from 1921 (four years after the first shipment of oil out of Venezuela) to 1951, Venezuelan oil production's percent increase was simply exorbitant: 62,000%. It had passed from 1 million to 622 million barrels per year (*figure 4.5*).[64] By the end of the decade, the average production had reached the impressive level of 2,755,400 barrels per day.[65]

Spurred by the Korean War, the shutdown in Iran[66] and Western re-armament demands, drilling activity in Venezuela in 1951 was almost double that of the previous year. A total of 1,216 wells were drilled in that year, while 673 had been drilled in 1950. Company plans assured that Venezuela safely held "its position as the world's second (to the United States) nation in petroleum production and number one oil exporter."[67] Of the barrels of crude a day produced in 1951, more than 91% was accounted for by Venezuela's "big three": Creole Petroleum Corporation, Shell Caribbean Petroleum Company (Royal Dutch Shell Group), and Mene Grande Oil Company (a Gulf Oil subsidiary). Said proportion, actually, was not new; a similar distribution had been maintained during the 1940s (*figure 4.8*). But the "giant of Venezuelan oil industry" undoubtedly was Creole. It had a capital investment budget of $111,600,000 for 1952, nearly half of which was intended to step up crude flow. Creole planned to spend almost $20,000,000 on exploration that year to find new crude sources.[68]

[63] "Venezuelan Oil News," *Venezuela Up-to-date*, Mayo 1952, 7.

[64] Based on data from the U.S. Bureau of Mines, *World Oil*, cited in Lieuwen, *Petroleum in Venezuela*, Appendix, 121.

[65] Figures for 1959. "Venezuelan Oil News," *Venezuela Up-to-date*, Jan. 1960.

[66] In 1951 the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company was involved in a legal dispute, between the United Kingdom and Iran, because of the Iranian Oil Nationalization Act of that year.

[67] "Record Oil Output set for Venezuela," *The New York Times*, March 19, 1952, 47.

[68] Ibid. Shell had a $105,000,000 capital investment program, while Mene Grande $70,000,000.

As the Standard Oil of New Jersey's *Annual Report for 1946* stated, the company's profits were in debt to Creole. Standard's output of affiliates operating abroad averaged 662,000 barrels daily, 15.7% more than in 1945; the increase had resulted "almost entirely from a rise in crude oil output by Creole Petroleum Corporation."[69] An impressive map published by that *Report*, showing the production, refining, and marketing areas of Standard affiliates, permitted the appreciation of the huge impact of Creole on the Western Hemisphere (*figure 4.9*). The corporation's rank in the international context was even better than Venezuelan oil's positioning: Creole was the world's No.1 oil producer (a status that would hold until July 1951, when the Arabian American Oil Company, also known as Aramco, supplanted it).[70]

WELCOME HOME MR. MCGOODWIN!: AN INTERVIEW WITH THE U.S. MINISTER

From the beginning, the development of the oil industry in Venezuela has been characterized by the direct control of the State. The Venezuelan oil laws – in a certain way, a reflection of said monopoly – proved to be not just a formal mechanism to frame the oil activity and deal with foreign corporations, but also an attractive promise for investments. Regardless how subjective the award of field concessions was during the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth, the Venezuelan legal framework on oil affairs was definitely more attractive than the Mexican model. It marked a huge difference in terms of foreign investments, exploration, production, and exportation between both countries, and in a certain way it explains the quick development of the Venezuelan oil industry. In this sense, the legal framework was probably more than just a simple political reflection (reflection both as a manifestation and a meditation); it has been very likely a cross-cultural contractual mechanism.

In any case, perhaps the most remarkable aspect in this one-century relation was the fast, sustained positioning of the American oil corporations in Venezuela. By 1919, American destiny appeared to be sealed in Venezuela (as a second-rater), while British or British-related

[69] *Standard Oil Company (New Jersey). Annual Report for 1946,* New York: Standard Oil Co., 1946, 7.

[70] See "International Partnership," *Time (the weekly magazine)* 58, no. 18, Oct. 29, 1951, 37.

companies seemed to have secured their concessions until at least 1965. However, in a time when concessions were awarded at governmental "discretion," and the fight for them was simply savage, U.S. companies managed to snatch the supremacy out of the British's hands. Jersey Standard's good eye for business, the smart use of the historical circumstances, and the behind-the-scene influence of U.S. diplomacy undoubtedly played a significant role in that change. Nevertheless, as a note published in *The New York Times* suggested, there were probably other reasons for such remarkable positioning.

On May 14, 1915, the U.S. Minister Plenipotentiary (and specifically Minister to Venezuela), Preston McGoodwin, arrived in New York from La Guaira.[71] Accompanied by his wife and 8-year-old son, McGoodwin was spending a short vacation in his country. On his arrival at the Port of New York City, McGoodwin spoke very optimistically about the opportunities for American trade with Venezuela:

> The United States is handling more than $29,000,000 annually of imports and exports now. All the Venezuelan row products, coffee, cocoa, and hides are shipped to this country. All the manufactured goods and finished products she uses are brought from this country, and Venezuela is absolutely dependent on the United States.[72]

Formerly, Venezuela had given about 60% of her trade to the United States, and since 1914 the figure had increased considerably. Approximately 97% had been controlled by Americans. Before World War I there were thirteen lines of steamers trading to Venezuelan ports; "now the American Red D Line is the only one, except for the irregular service of the French *Campagnie Transatlantique*," said McGoodwin.[73]

[71] Preston Buford McGoodwin was the U.S. Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to Venezuela, from October 1913 to October 1921, during Woodrow Wilson's presidency.

[72] "Cannot Get Arms in South America," *The New York Times*, May 14, 1915, 19.

[73] Ibid.

The South American trade "can be much further developed by American merchants than it is now." According to the Minister, two representatives of the National City Bank of New York were at that time in Caracas studying trade conditions. Their arrival in South America marked "a new era in our trade." Previously, Americans had gone "down there" and tried to compete with the Germans and other European nations, which in turn, had already made a good study on the grounds of the needs of South American people. American had been bested in the competition. Now, however, "we are beginning to study what they need, and that means that within a few years we will have more than our share of their business," asserted the Minister.[74]

More importantly, McGoodwin's statement gave an insight into the Gómez era, which allows better understanding of the relation between local political power, geopolitics and culture:

> Juan Vicente Gómez, the newly elected President of Venezuela, is outspoken in his friendship for this country. The natives also have completely lost their distrust of Americans which they inherited from Castro administration. They are adopting American business methods, and I believe in a short time the modern American ways of doing business will be established all over South America.[75]

Regardless the aggressive British policy, such a holistic positioning was impossible to defeat. Before the Anglo-American rivalry for the Venezuelan oil started, U.S. interests were already working, silently, below the surface. Moreover, cultural links between both nations seemed to be established, or at least in process of consolidation. Geographic proximity, in turn, had provided the ideal conditions for such a bilateral relationship. Certainly, destinies were sealed. Beneath the surface of the historical events, the cards were already laid out, but not in favor of the British. American interests had won the game. However, bilateral relations between Venezuela and the United States proved to be deeper and broader than just a mere commercial exchange or petroleum exploitation. In any case, oil would always be exerting its influence behind the scenes; it was already part of the Venezuelan culture.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid.

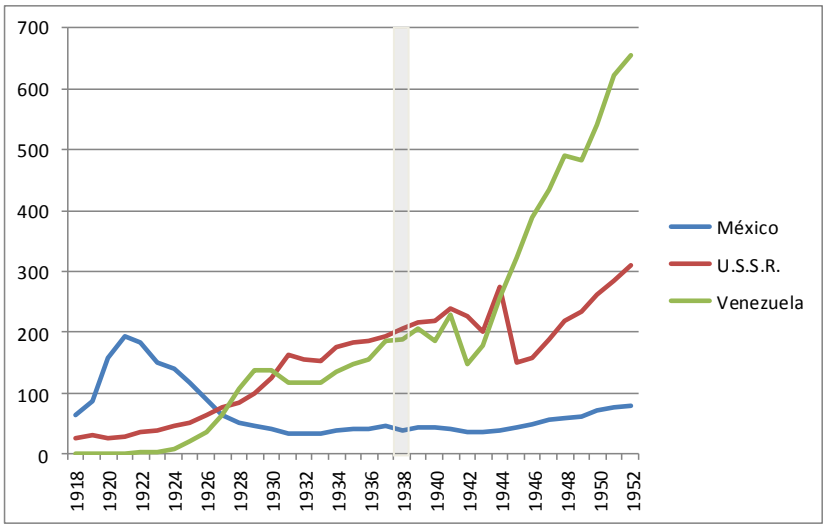

FIGURE 4.5

Oil production per year (millions of barrels) for México, U.S.S.R. and Venezuela, between 1918 and 1952. The year of the Mexican petroleum nationalization (1938) is indicated by a vertical, grey line. Also noticeable is the double crossed line which occurred in 1927, as well as the sustained, upward tendency in Venezuela's production from 1942 on (see Table 1 in Appendix 2). Source: graph elaborated by the author, based on data from the U.S. Bureau of Mines, *World Oil*, cited in Edwin Lieuwen, *Petroleum in Venezuela. A History*, Appendix, 121.

FIGURE 4.6

General view of Lagunillas field (c. 1945-1955), looking north. From top to bottom: Creole Petroleum Corporation, Royal Dutch Shell and Mene Grande Oil Company (Gulf Oil Company) shore installations. Between the latter two, with its short municipal pier, is the village of Lagunillas. Wells of land belonged to Shell, those in a narrow strip offshore to Mene Grande, and those farther out in Lake Maracaibo to Creole. Source: photo by courtesy of Creole Petroleum Corporation. Paul Patrick Rogers Collection (Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin).

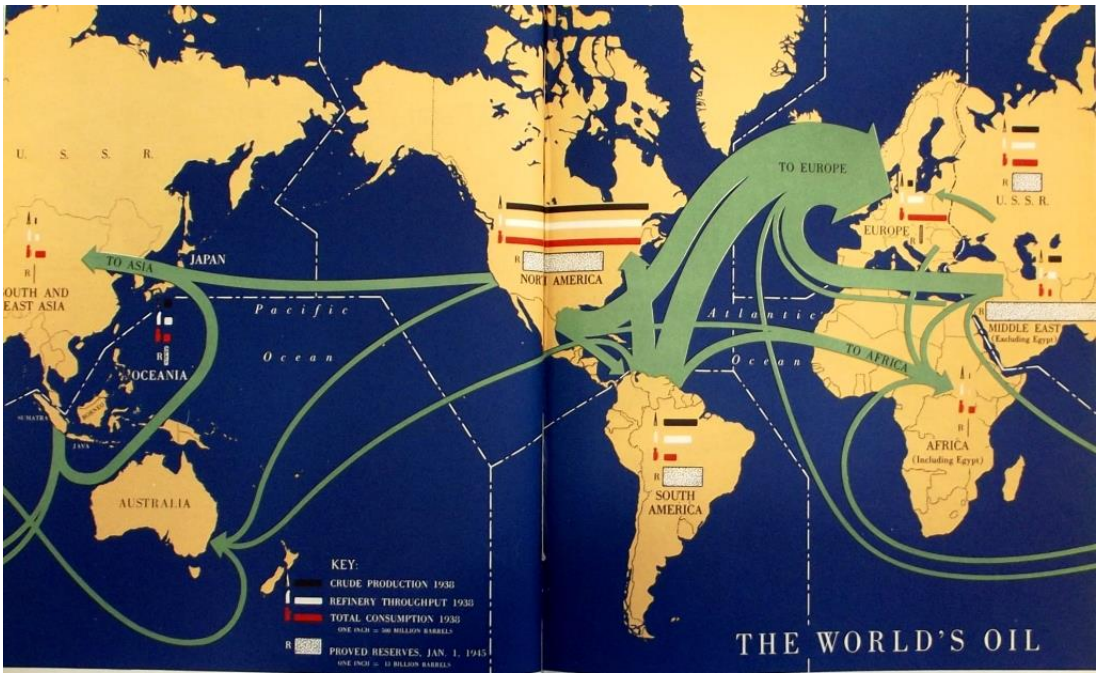

FIGURE 4.7

Integrated map of world's oil activities, indicating production (black), refining (white), consumption (red) and transportation (green arrows), by 1938. Proved reserves (grey) are for 1945. The scale for production is indicated in the "key" (at the left bottom): one inch equals 500 million barrels for production, refining and consumption; one inch equals 13 million barrels for proved reserves. Source: *The Lamp* (Apr. 1946), 14-15. The Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

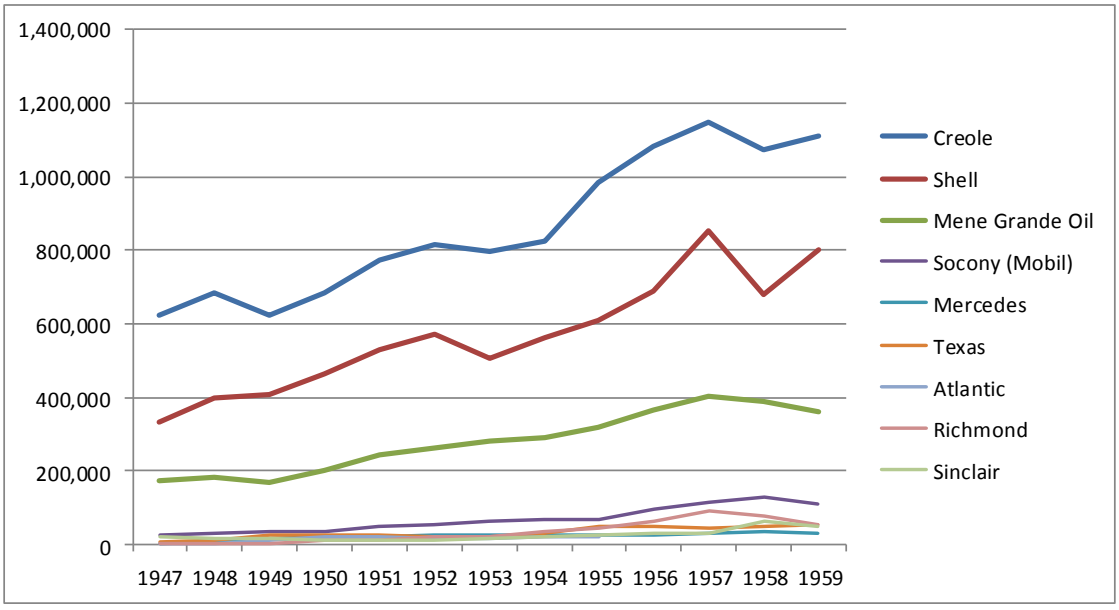

FIGURE 4.8

Daily average of Venezuelan oil production in barrels by year. The three largest corporations during the 1940s and 1950s were Creole Petroleum Corporation, Royal Dutch Shell and Mene Grande Oil Company. Creole kept a sustained hegemony (see Table 2 in Appendix 2). Source: graph elaborated by the author, based on data from *Venezuela Up-to-date* (May 1952, 7; Dec. 1953, 5; May 1955, 6; March 1956, 6; Aug. 1956, 6; March 1959, 6; Jan. 1960).

FIGURE 4.9
"Production, Refining, and Marketing Areas of Standard Oil Company (New Jersey) Affiliates," indicating areas where affiliates market petroleum and its products (buff); production areas (well icon); refining (cracking unit icon), and major supplies areas (columns represent net indigenous supply of crude and products [local consumption is shown in yellow-green; balance to export is shown in red arrows; width of arrows indicates relative volume of movements to various markets]). Oil consumption of Standard production in U.S., during 1946, was 650,000 barrels per day, while in Venezuela was of 604,000. Source: *Standard Oil Company (New Jersey). Annual Report for 1946,* New York: Standard Oil Co., 1946, 16-17.

IN TOUCH WITH THE NORTH

April 14, 1957. On the occasion of the New York World Fair, a foreign exhibition with a very sui generis title takes place at New York Coliseum: "A Century of Progress in Five Years." Organized in an open, bright space, with rationalist aesthetic lines, this two-week exhibit "covered an area of 1,800 square feet for the display of Venezuelan natural and manufactured products, with numerous mural photographs."[76] But what was the agenda behind that exhibition? What kind of relationship did the United States of America have with Venezuela (or vice-versa)? What exactly

[76] *Venezuela Up-to-date* (Jun. 1957), 9.

did “a century of progress in five years” mean? And above all, what consequences did that fast “progress” have?

Politically framed by the dictatorship of General Pérez Jiménez in the local context (1953-1958), and by the international tension that characterized the Cold War, this period was also distinguished by multiple commercial exchanges between Venezuela and the United States of America, especially based on the oil industry. By 1951 Venezuela was the first oil exporter in the world, while Creole Petroleum Corporation was the number one oil producer. During that decade more than thirteen foreign oil companies worked in Venezuela. Apart from the oil, a large scale mining of iron ore also began in the early 1950s, through concessions to two American steel companies.[77] In exchange, Venezuela bought from the United States a large quantity and diversity of products: machinery; autos and trucks; food stuffs; textiles; chemicals; dairy products; wood and paper, and minerals, for a total amount that usually exceeded half a million dollars per year. The American Chamber of Commerce of Venezuela, founded in 1950 by subsidiaries of U.S. firms and Venezuelan companies linked to U.S. trade, regarded the country as “our billion-dollar cash customer.”[78] Venezuela had bought US$532 million of U.S. products in 1954, and had remitted to the U.S. some US$500,000,000 in payment for services, “all without benefit of U.S. loans, grants or other aids.”[79] Moreover, by 1955 some 35,000 Americans from 46 states lived and worked in Venezuela.[80] It was “the largest expatriate U.S. community in the world at the time.”[81] Moreover, in no area of the world would U.S. entrepreneurs and their

[77] Bethlehem Steel and the United States Steel Corporation.

[78] “Venezuela’s Purchase in U.S. Set New Record,” *Venezuela Up-to-date* (March 1955), 6. On the Venezuelan American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham), see Judith Ewell, *Venezuela and the United States: from Monroe’s Hemisphere to Petroleum’s Empire* (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1996), 177.

[79] Ibid. In 1949 Venezuela had been the largest Latin American customer of U.S. products, and the fourth largest of U.S. exports markets (see *Venezuela Up-to-date* [March 1950], cover).

[80] *Venezuela Up-to-date* (March 1955), 7.

[81] Ewell, *Venezuela and the United States: from Monroe’s Hemisphere to Petroleum’s Empire,* 182.

government advisors have "such complete freedom of action."[82] All these figures give an idea of how comprehensive and deep the level of this exchange was. It is not surprising that many cultural aspects of Venezuelan life unavoidably changed as a consequence of this relationship, and because of the enormous sources of oil income.

THE PATRON'S SUBSIDIARY COMPANIES: STANDARD OIL, V.B.E.C. AND NELSON ROCKEFELLER

In August 1942 the Avila Hotel was inaugurated in Caracas. Completed in 1941, and designed by Wallace Harrison, this 78-room hotel filled a significant gap in lodging and tourism infrastructure, not just in Caracas but also in Venezuela. Despite all the money coming in from the oil industry, Venezuela's capital lacked a modern hotel. The only relatively large construction that provided accommodations in Caracas at the time was the Majestic Hotel, a massive, eclectic building designed by Spanish-born Venezuelan architect Manuel Mujica Millán in 1930. With its balusters, circular pediments, iron balconies, and its characteristic domed circular tower, the Majestic was closer to the 19th century than the contemporary rationalism.

The key figure behind the Avila Hotel, and from whom Harrison had received the commission, was Nelson Aldrich Rockefeller (1908-1979) (*figure 4.10*). The lack of tourism facilities in Venezuela was aggravated by the rigid demands that foreign investors usually imposed: the construction of casinos as a precondition to build any hotel.[83] During a visit to Caracas in March 1939, Rockefeller met Venezuelan President, General Eleazar López Contreras,[84] who expressed his concerns on this matter. Finally, Rockefeller decided to tackle the task.

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[82] Darcy Ribeiro, *The Americas and Civilization* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1971 [originally published in Portuguese, 1969]).

[83] See Lorenzo González, "Modernity for import and export: the United States' influence on the Architecture and Urbanism of Caracas," *Colloqui* (Spring, 1996b), 67.

[84] In office from 1935 to 1941.

FIGURE 4.10
Nelson Rockefeller, "from a Center to a citadel": the Museum of Modern Art. Source: *Time* 33, no. 21 (May 22, 1939),

Son of John Davison Rockefeller Jr., and grandson of the Standard Oil founder, he was undoubtedly a multifaceted personage: businessman, philanthropist, politician, and patron of the arts.[85] However, perhaps his most influential career was strongly linked with the modernization process of Latin America. Philanthropy, business and U.S. international policy would be inextricably interwoven. He "evidenced a genuine concern for the people of Latin America, but he also understood the broader implications of 'development' for United States foreign policy."[86]

On the recommendation of Nelson Rockefeller, and in view of a fascist penetration in some Latin American countries during the war, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt established in 1941 the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (CIAA). Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy (whose main principle consisted in the non-intervention in the domestic affairs of Latin America) was, nevertheless, very passive for the active character of Rockefeller. Accordingly, as soon as he undertook the coordination of the CIAA, he brought into it his selected cadre of advisers.[87] Moreover, when the Office was reorganized and renamed in

[85] He had joined the Board of Directors of the Rockefeller Center at an early age (in 1931), serving as its President on two occasions (1938-1945 and 1948-1951), and Chairman (1945-1953 and 1956-1958). At the Museum of Modern Art of New York (MoMA, established in 1929), he undertook several positions: trustee of the MoMA since 1932, its Treasurer (1935-1939), and President for two periods (1939-1941 and 1946-1953). Rockefeller also pursued a political career, which eventually would lead him to the Governorship of New York for more than three terms (1959-1973), and the Vice Presidency of the United States (1974-1977).

[86] Kenneth D. Durr, *A Company with a Mission: Rodman Rockefeller and the International Basic Economy Corporation, 1947-1985* (Rockville, Maryland: Montrose Press, 2006), 8.

[87] Nelson Rockefeller was actually the first coordinator of the CIAA.

1945 as Office of Inter-American Affairs (OIAA), the responsibility of its Direction went to Wallace Harrison until 1946.[88]

His perspective on Latin American, however, was even broader. It is not by chance that Rockefeller was President of the Creole Petroleum Corporation, from 1935 to 1940. In spring of 1937, after having secured his grip on Rockefeller Center, he embarked on a two-month South American tour, which included Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Peru and Panama. He embraced his Latin American experience "with an ardor starling even to those who were well accustomed to his enthusiasms."[89] Once back in New York (after having cut his trip short because of his grandfather's demise), he addressed the annual Standard conference before some three hundred executives. On that occasion he emphasized the notion of social responsibility of corporations; after all, the only justification for ownership "is to serve the broad interest of the people," he said. Corporations must use their ownership "of assets to reflect the best interests of the people. If we don't, they will take away our ownership."[90]

It seemed that his speech had a major impact on the audience, particularly on Arthur Proudfit, who eventually become Creole's president in 1945 (*figure 4.11*). Changes did not wait for long. In Rockefeller's wake, Proudfit implemented some adjustments that definitely improved Creole's image.[91] Since most of the company executives did not speak Spanish, Berlitz instructors were sent to Venezuela to teach them the language (Rockefeller himself was fluent in Spanish). Creole also provided the squatter towns with medical assistance, as well as education to illiterate local oil workers and their family. Jointly with the Venezuelan government, Creole provided those towns with water and sewers too.

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[88] See Harrison & Abramovitz' Roster Questionnaire, 1947, 1949 and 1953, The American Institute of Architects Archive, *The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects*, s.v. "Harrison & Abramovitz (firm)," (ahd4002388).

[89] Cary Reich, *The Life of Nelson A. Rockefeller. Worlds to Conquer 1908-1958.* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 168.

[90] Ibid, 169.

[91] Henry Linam was another top official behind Creole's transformation (ibid).

This genuine interest in Latin America was manifested in the Avila Hotel. For its plan, Harrison displayed two long, oblique wings of rooms, articulated by the access hall (central wing), a scheme plan that recalls Le Corbusier's Tsentrosoyus or even Alvar Aalto's Paimio Sanatorium. More sui generis and engaging, however, was its hybrid architectural style. By way of metaphor of "dual-nationality,"[92] or even a symbol of good will and bilateral relations, the hotel depicted a combination of rational volumes with local, traditional references. Its main façade integrated stucco walls and batteries of bull's eyes (perhaps a streamline reminiscence) with wooden balconies. The three-story central wing was surmounted by a long balcony, covered with a tile roof; banister, brackets and columns were all made of wood. The first floor, in contrast, was transparent. Large windows from floor to ceiling, subtly fixed with a thin frame, were displayed announcing the entrance; an inner courtyard was discerned in the background (*figure 4.12*).[93] On the right side was the north wing of room, a three–story block that described a 120-degree angle respect to the central wing, and reflected a much more rational language than the latter. On the left side, in turn, the south wing of rooms ended in four-story tower-like volume. Here, a vertical battery of three bull's eyes, the same number of square, wooden balconies, and three small square windows, disposed horizontally, managed to balance the whole composition of the principal façade (*figure 4.13*). To anchor even more all the parts involved in such arrangement, and also as a climate requirement (and perhaps as a sign of exoticism as well), Harrison employed an undulating, Niemeyer-esque marquee in the entrance (*figure 4.14*).[94] The lobby, in turn, was also a good example of integration. After having crossed a diaphanous surface of glass, guests found the best example

[92] González, "Modernity for import and export: the United States' influence on the Architecture and Urbanism of Caracas," *Colloqui*, 69.

[93] A fourth floor was added in the 1950s. In the original design (as built in 1942), the roofed balcony capped the central wing. This way, the projecting prismatic volume on the left (see *figure 4.13*) protruded as a kind of tower.

[94] This was not the only similarity to Brazilian architecture. The roofed balcony in the central wing recalls also the Grande Hotel in Belo Horizonte (Minas Gerais), by Oscar Niemeyer, completed in 1944, and even the Park Hotel São Clemente in Nova Friburgo (Rio de Janeiro), by Lucio Costa, completed the same year.

of modern transparency and a sober reinterpretation of local history. In here, the black-and-white checkerboard terrazzo floor of the lobby and its circular columns were bathed in tropical light (*figure 4.15*).

More than just a flat arrangement, the main façade of the Avila Hotel was a three-dimensional composition that accomplished what Harrison (and Rockefeller) intended. A special commission that had visited Venezuela in August 1939 (just one month before the war's outbreak in Europe) to study the viability of the project, and possible locations, had actually recommended the Spanish Colonial as "the safest type of architecture for the hotel." Balconies, tile roofs, and "a few other features of this type would do the trick."[95] Moreover, Max Abramovitz, Harrison's associate in this project, and who had visited Caracas in March 1940 to gather information about labor, availability of building materials and local conditions, ended up advocating a proposal "typical of the country."[96]

One of the members of the 1939 commission was Robert Bottome, a Darmouth College graduate (like Rockefeller), who eventually would become the coordinator of inter-American affairs in Venezuela during the war (one year later, William Coles, another Darmouth graduate, would arrive in Caracas to promote the hotel). The commission's report "stressed the convenience of a major participation in the design, construction and operation of the new hotel because of the alleged lack of financial and human resources, comparable projects, and building materials in Venezuela."[97]

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[95] *Report Concerning the Construction and Operating of a Hotel in Caracas*, Venezuela, Sept. 19th, 1939, Rockefeller Family Archives, III2C, Business Interests, 51, quoted in Lorenzo González, "Modernity for import and export: the United States' influence on the Architecture and Urbanism of Caracas," *Colloqui* (Spring, 1996b): 68.

[96] Robert Bottome to Nelson Rockefeller, March 2nd, 1940, Rockefeller Family Archives, III2C, Business Interests, quoted in González, "Modernity for import and export," 68.

[97] González, "Modernity for import and export," 67. According to González, these circumstances, along with Rockefeller's personal preferences, led to Wallace Harrison's participation in the project.

The building was finally placed in San Bernardino, a new suburb that followed the upper and middle-class migration to the east (unlike the Majestic, located in the old downtown). Regarding the hotel's building process and management, the project actually ran under American standards of financing. For the hotel's US$ 1,012,000 budget,[98] Rockefeller "put up a third of the capital and gained equal commitments from the oil companies and a Venezuelan consortium."[99] The building was the first modern hotel in Venezuela, not just because of its morphological resolution, but also for its location and its innovative management. As time went by, it proved to be a wise investment. In fact, the hotel required an extension just two years after its inauguration.[100] Clifford Wendehack, an American architect who was in the country at the time, would be commissioned for the project. His proposal included, apart from an extension of the ballroom and a new private dining-room, the addition of 37 new rooms, part of which would be located in a fourth level of the North wing. By 1945 the extension had been completed. However, one year later the ballroom underwent a new remodeling; this occasion the New York firm Badgeley and Bradbury was awarded the commission.[101]

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[98] Harrison & Abramovitz' Roster Questionnaire, 1947, 1949 and 1953, The American Institute of Architects Archive, *The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects*, s.v. "Harrison & Abramovitz (firm)," (ahd4002388).

[99] Durr, *A Company with a Mission,* 8. Since the building was finished during World War II, profits failed to materialize quickly. So, the project eventually needed a $ 400,000 from the Export & Import Bank, as well as a $ 312, 381.62 personal loan from John D. Rockefeller Jr. (see González, "Modernity for import and export ," 68).

[100] In this regard, see Lorenzo González, "Nelson A. Rockefeller y la Modernidad Venezolana: Intercambios, Empresas y Lugares a Mediados del Siglo XX," in *Petróleo Nuestro y Ajeno. La Ilusión de Modernidad*, ed. Juan José Martin Frechilla y Yolanda Texera Arnal, 190-194 (Caracas: Universidad Central de Venezuela, Consejo de Desarrollo Científico y Humanístico), 2005. According to González, the extension was required despite the decrease of visitors as a consequence of the war, and the intense competition with the Majestic Hotel. The strong presence of U.S. investments in Venezuela at the time was one of the most important reasons behind it. The project would be finally reformulated by Harrison, and executed by both architect Carlos Ordoñez, of Standard Oil, and Jim Mogensen, builder in charge of the Hotel's works in reinforced concrete, jointly with the firm Hegeman-Harris.

[101] Both Dale Badgeley and Charles A. Bradbury were guests in the Avila Hotel, probably supervising the construction of the Shell office building, also located in San Bernardino neighborhood. This building will be analyzed later both in chapters 5 and 10 of this dissertation.

As William Coles reported to Rockefeller, the Avila Hotel, "perhaps more than any other local institution other than the oil companies," was identified with "American enterprise and American methods."[102] But hotels and tourism were not Nelson Rockefeller's primary focus; his interests went further. After the war, he organized the American International Association for Economic Development (AIAED).[103] Established in 1946, the AIAED focused on improving the quality of life in Latin American countries, bringing them closer to modern practices. Working together with the Brazilian and Venezuelan governments, the AIAED "ran farm training programs, established community centers, waged nutritional education campaigns, and taught home economics courses."[104] Its funds came from American private grants, Venezuelan oil companies (Creole Petroleum Corporation, and Caribbean Petroleum Company [of Royal Dutch Shell Group]) and local governments. However, since the AIAED had conflict of interests (as a philanthropic venture, it was difficult or even illegal to be involved in for-profit activities), he established in January 1947 the International Basic Economy Corporation (IBEC) "to promote the economic development of various parts of the world, to increase the production and availability of goods, things and services useful to the lives or livelihood of their peoples, and thus to better their standards of living."[105]

In a sort of trial-and-error process, the IBEC underwent also a transformation, or rather, a subdivision. The Venezuelan oil companies wanted not just quick results, but also a direct investment: "they would finance only a separate Venezuelan subsidiary," different than the IBEC's operations in Brazil.[106] Moreover, the Venezuelan president at the time, Romulo

[102] William Coles to Nelson Rockefeller, August 3rd, 1943, Rockefeller Family Archives, III2C, Business Interests, 109, quoted in Lorenzo González, "Modernity for import and export," 69.

[103] The usual acronym for the American International Association for Economic Development is AIA. However, for the purposes of this dissertation, and in order to avoid mistaking it for the American Institute of Architects (AIA), "AIAED" will be used instead.

[104] Durr, *A Company with a Mission,* 12.

[105] Ibid, 13.

[106] Ibid, 19.

Betancourt, had asked Rockefeller's aid in January 1947, coincidentally with the creation of the IBEC. Food was scarce and prices were high in Venezuela; the country imported 40 per cent of its food. This conjuncture led Rockefeller to organize the Venezuelan Basic Economy Corporation (VBEC), a subsidiary of the IBEC.[107] William Coles, once the Avila Hotel's promoter, would be eventually in charge of this brand-new corporation. The pact between the VBEC and the government was announced in June 21st, after five months of negotiations. Rockefeller himself traveled to Venezuela to finalize the deal, accompanied with his young son, Rodman, who was just 15 at the time (but who eventually would become President and Chief Executive of the IBEC during the 1970s and 1980s).

A fisheries company, a milk reconstituting concern, and a food warehousing and distribution unit would be "the first projects to strengthen and broaden the economy of Venezuela." The VBEC might retain control of each subsidiary company for ten years; during that period it would introduce "modern techniques and equipment, operating the subsidiary companies with American experts and Venezuelans as far as possible."[108] The agreement between Betancourt and the VBEC also included a broad program of training. Venezuelans would be trained in agriculture, education and public health though the AIAED, as a nonprofit corporation.

A SUCCESSFUL PROTOTYPE: C.A.D.A. SHOPPING CENTER

One of the IBEC's most remarkable commercial successes in Venezuela, and the most conspicuous in terms of corporate image, was C.A.D.A. (CADA), a food warehouse enterprise. Acronym for *Compañía Anónina Distribuidora de Alimentos* (Food Wholesaler Company), CADA would eventually become "the largest private commercial company in Venezuela."[109] As a supermarket, CADA perfectly combined the IBEC and VBEC's activities. On its shelves,

[107] In this regard, see "A Better Day for Venezuela," *The Lamp*, New York: Standard Oil Company (New Jersey), Jan. 1948, 2-7. The Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

[108] "Venezuela to Get Food-making Help," *The New York Times*, June 25, 1947, 27.

[109] González, "Modernity for import and export ," 74.

Venezuelan people could find fish, grains, eggs and milk (VBEC's products), and even imported items from the United States. For Thanksgiving, CADA "promised that shoppers could find turkeys, Ocean Spray cranberry sauce, Bordon's mincemeat, Broiled 'n Butter mushrooms, and Libby pumpkin pie filling, among other delicacies."[110] These American-style supermarkets provided not just a huge variety of food, but also a new type of purchase per se, with which Venezuelans were not familiar. Before CADA, there were just traditional grocery stores attended by their owners. Now, purchasers could acquire goods by themselves (self-service), directly from the shelves, where a variety of brands and a large amount of standardized products (mass production) were waiting. CADA combined the scale of a wholesaler with a self-service practice of a large supermarket; hence, its name. "Over a 25-year period, CADA succeeded in changing the retail marketing habits of Venezuelans."[111]

This enterprise, however, was not initially successful. The first of Rockefeller's experiments on this matter was the MINIMAX store in Caracas, in May 1949. Because of its small scale and particularly its management (a franchise, unwilling to abandon traditional purchase practices), this early attempt failed. A second venture, but now under the direct control of IBEC, was much more successful. It was TODOS (standing for "everybody"), opened in Maracaibo, Zulia (the oil-state producer par excellence), in late 1949. The third experience (and the second one to flourish) was the CADA Shopping Center, located in Caracas (*figure 4.16*). The building was opened in November 1954, and drew attention from the beginning. It was one of *Architectural Forum'*s choices in the comprehensive report "U.S. Building Abroad." The review couldn't be more flattering: the "first shopping center in booming suburban Caracas (…) with America-style supermarket, eight smaller shops, (and) offices."[112] It was placed on a triangular-like block, measuring 85,000 sq. ft., and bounded by streets on the three sides. Rational in its exterior composition, this two-story building had a very ingenious interior organization. The use of steel

[110] Judith Ewell, *Venezuela and the United States: From Monroe's Hemisphere to Petroleum's Empire* (Athens/London: The University of Georgia Press, 1996), 188.

[111] González, "Modernity for import and export ," 74.

[112] "U.S. Building Abroad. Commerce: New Markets," *Architectural Forum*, Jan. 1955, 113.

trusses (hidden in a wide entablature or fascia line), covering a 115-feet long span, made it possible to display a huge roof area. Supermarket, stores, and offices, in this sense, were placed under the same ceiling. Actually, despite the limitations of the lot size, this "all-under-one-roof shopping center" provided all necessary facilities, as well as pleasant vistas.[113] A spacious, double-height corridor (a mall opened in both ends, which allowed abundant natural light to enter) worked both as a connecting and a gathering place (*figure 4.17*).

Its 115' x 245' plan was rationally organized in two halves, placing the supermarket on the southeastern part, and the stores on the northwest (*figure 4.18*). Besides the steel trusses, CADA's building materials included insulated steel panels both in exterior walls (welded to steel frame) and in its wide fascia line (horizontally grooved), stone, and glass. Terrazzo floors of shops, supermarket, and shopping malls were a checkerboard of black and white with flecks of orange-red chips.[114] In the ceiling, as an echo of the floor, a pattern of plastic-egg-crate lighting fixtures was displayed, along with ventilation diffusers and acoustical plaster. Two broad ramps led up to the supermarket, a double-height, exquisitely transparent space. A spacious stairwell opening, between the mall and the supermarket, permitted an engaging view into basement (a third level, where customers could find household equipment and furnishings) (*figure 4.19*). Two sculptural stairways led to the offices, above the stores. A landscape treatment, which included terraces, pool, and planting, helped create a pleasant atmosphere, in keeping with the surroundings. A broad parking area for 130 automobiles around the building (something coherent not just with its suburban location, but particularly with the oil industry) was "interspersed with small planted and night-lighted islands of flowers and trees."[115] Technical advantages of the building, in terms of weather control, were commendable. CADA Shopping Center was altogether mechanically ventilated, while ground-floor shops had provision for air-conditioning units.

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[113] "Shopping Center for International Basic Economy Corporation," *Progressive Architecture*, Oct. 1955, 114.

[114] Ibid, 116.

[115] Ibid, 114.

The architect of both CADA Shopping Center in Caracas and TODOS in Maracaibo was Don Hatch (1907-1977), who would later design the America Embassy in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in 1959. Hatch held a bachelor of Architecture degree from University of Kansas, 1930, with post-graduate work at Columbia University. He had been a draftsman in Glen H. Thomas' office (Wichita, Kansas, 1925-1930); after graduating he worked at Tilton & Githens, Architects (New York City, 1930-1932), and then at Hood & Fouilhoux (New York City, 1932-1934).[116] From 1935 to 1948 he ran his own office in New York City, "Don Hatch, Architect." During this period he designed the Office Building project for the National Gypsum Company (Buffalo, New York, completed 1942), an edifice whose academic façade echoed John Haviland's Franklin Institute, and whose interior composition was paradoxically very clean and rational, close to the International Style's principles.[117]

Hatch arrived in Venezuela in 1948 at the request of the VBEC, as chief architect for its construction program, which involved at that time about 20 projects, among them refrigerated warehouses, ice plants, supermarkets, and retail stores. One year later he took over completion of the program on his own, and opened an office in Caracas: *Oficina Don Hatch.* It was a two-part-two-country office setup; the other half was Hare & Hatch, a firm established in New York City jointly with Michael Hare (who would eventually design both the U.S. Embassy Office Building and Residence in Tegucigalpa, as Michael Hare & Associates).[118] As Hatch asserted, this dual firm was formed "to provide an organization capable of bringing the requisite professional technical skill to bear on building problems in Venezuela and to have the necessary staff available in New York or Caracas, as need arose."[119] The firm actually proved to be very prolific

[116] See *American Architects Directory,* published under the sponsorship of American Institute of Architects (New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1962), 295, "Hatch, Don(ald E.)."

[117] See "Office Building for the National Gypsum Company," *Architectural Forum*, Oct. 1942, 62-69.

[118] See *American Architects Directory,* published under the sponsorship of American Institute of Architects (New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1956), 227, "Hare, Michael Meredith."

[119] "The Architect and his Community. Oficina Don Hatch: Caracas, Venezuela," *Progressive Architecture*, March 1954, 100.

in terms of production and in a variety of programs. By 1954 *Oficina Don Hatch* had completed the Balneario Hotel in Puerto Cabello (also known as *Hotel Cumboto*, on the coastline west of Caracas), and a series of works in Caracas: a Chrysler-Plymouth showroom; a battery of shops in Caracas (by way of ground floor for a future seven-story office building),[120] and a house in Valle Arriba neighborhood (known as Macoroma House).[121] The firm also designed the entirely new residential community of La Urbina (a 1,200-acre tract, the last remaining free area of Caracas for development), and planned a yacht club on the shore east of the port of La Guaira.[122] The second half of the decade was also very productive. In 1955 the firm completed the NCR Building (National Cash Register) in Caracas, and two years later the Tire and Footwear Plant, in Guacara (Carabobo State).[123]

The firm ran until 1959.[124] That year two important works were completed: the Mobil-Oil Office Building, and the American Embassy.[125] Both were located in *La Floresta* neighborhood, Caracas, one adjacent to the other. The nine-story Mobil building concentrated "the company's 450 employees under one single roof, instead of nine different buildings as before."[126] Its blue-green earthquake-proof structure of reinforced concrete rose on a 3-acre plot; it was 200 ft. long by 56 ft. wide, "with approximately 107,000 square feet of office space, served by four automatic

[120] Ibid, 100-109.

[121] See Instituto de Estudios Regionales y Urbanos. *Preinventario del Patrimonio de Bienes Inmuebles del Municipio Baruta*, Caracas: IERU, Universidad Simón Bolívar, 2003. Record # 71, "Quinta Macoroma." The house was designed in 1951 for the Venezuelan entrepreneur José Manuel Sánchez.

[122] See "The Architect and his Community," *Progressive Architecture*, 1954, 107.

[123] For this building, Hatch devised an active weather control: both east and west façades had zigzag walls, by way of *brise-soleils*, with perforated concrete blocks. See "Tire and Footwear Plant," *Progressive Architecture*, July 1957, 150-153.

[124] In 1961 Hatch organized "Hatch, White, Hermann & Steinau," a firm based in San Francisco, California.

[125] See *American Architects Directory,* published under the sponsorship of American Institute of Architects (New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1962), 295, "Hatch, Don(ald E.)."

[126] "Mobil Headquarters," *Venezuela Up-to-date*, Nov. 1959, 14.

elevators."[127] Finally, to be coherent with the program, Hatch provided the building with 120-car parking space. The proportion of its fenestration system and the strategy of exposing the structure were characteristics that the Mobil shared with the NCR Building (*figure 4.20*). The U.S. Embassy, in turn, came to replace the old Embassy in San Bernardino. With its new building, the Embassy consolidated almost all its programs under the same roof. This new structure, "with its neat lines accented by giant ornamental screens in front and back, was designed with an eye to beauty and function."[128] After 16 months in construction, the building was completed in 1959, at a cost of 2,200,000 bolivars (US$ 666,000) (*figure 4.21*).

Hatch's works, particularly CADA Shopping Center, certainly denoted his concern for modern technology, architectural image, and local context. But CADA also connoted the omnipresence of the oil industry, and specially Nelson Rockefeller and the Creole Petroleum Corporation. It also marked a significant change in the Venezuelan culture. The relationship between Venezuelans and goods, as well as their food purchase practices, would never be the same. CADA was a comprehensive watershed for local architecture, engineering, urban planning, food industry and merchandizing. As part of a whole project, CADA gathered many resources, interests, and plans. It was the end of many lines of production and investments, and at the same time the beginning of consumers' wishes and decisions. Even Venezuelan taste changed after CADA.

This dramatic and deep transformation had actually started in the 1940s with the Hotel Avila experience. Its unique style, and particularly its location and its innovative building process management had marked another watershed. In a long perspective, however, the process had started gradually (and unstoppably) in the early twentieth century with some diplomatic and commercial exchanges, but particularly in the 1920s, when a series of corporate decisions by Standard Oil of New Jersey managed to snatch the oil supremacy from Royal Dutch Shell in Venezuela. These circumstances, along with the progressive tailoring of the Venezuelan oil law

[127] Ibid.

[128] "U.S. Embassy in New Building," *Venezuela Up-to-date*, Jan. 1960, 8.

(favorable for the foreign companies), and the decisions of other oil-producing countries (in the opposite direction), marked the course of the subsequent events.

The whole picture, by way of chess pieces moving all around the board, was framed by a *longue durée* structure: a geographical context that has encompassed climate, topography, and physical proximity beyond frontiers.

Still, this story is not finished yet; on the contrary, it's about to start. The specific location of the Avila Hotel (in a new neighborhood, out of downtown), and the strong tie that CADA Shopping Center had with its urban context, denoted another dimension of the modernization process in Venezuela (incidentally, also related to the oil industry): the unavoidable presence of the automobile in the Venezuelan culture.

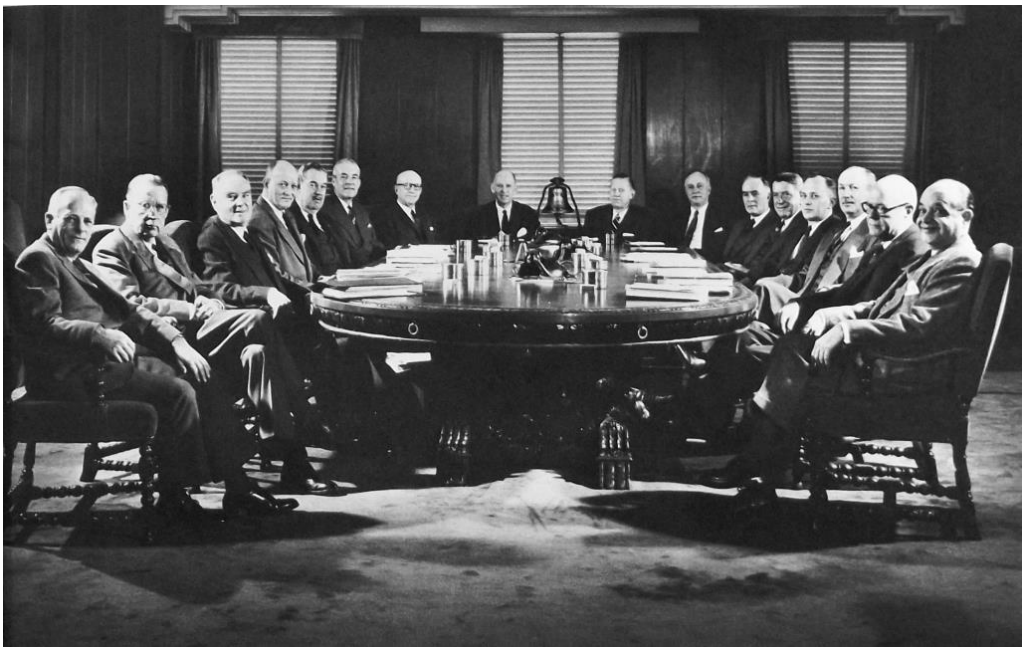

FIGURE 4.11
Jersey Standard's Board of Directors, 1957. They met "every Thursday morning at eleven in an oak-paneled room on the twenty-ninth floor of the 30 Rockefeller Plaza," in the heart of midtown Manhattan. At the time, Arthur Proudfit (second from right to left, with eyeglasses) had been president of Creole Petroleum Corp. (1945-1954); he would be chosen for a second term (1959). Proudfit was a key figure in the transformation of Creole's image in Venezuela. Source: "The Search for Cooperation," *The Lamp. 75th Anniversary of Jersey Standard* (1957), 70-71; *The Jersey Standard Story* (1957), 13.

FIGURE 4.12
Wallace Harrison, Avila Hotel, Caracas, 1942. The first modern hotel in Venezuela. Partial view of the main façade, showing a long wooden balcony and a tile roof (displayed along the central wing), and a horizontal sequence of bull's eyes (the fourth floor was added in the 1950s). On the right, notice the starting point of one of the wings; on the left, behind the bush, it is the end of the second wing. Source: photo by Jorge Villota P., 2013.

FIGURE 4.13
W. Harrison, Avila Hotel, Caracas, 1942. Partial view of the main façade, showing a vertical battery of square wooden balconies and bull's eyes, and the horizontal display of a long balcony covered by a tile roof. Originally, the central wing just had three levels (surmounted by the roofed balcony); consequently, the projecting volume on the left protruded as a kind of tower. The first floor of the central wing was characterized by its transparency. Source: photo by Jorge Villota P., 2013.

FIGURE 4.14
W. Harrison, Avila Hotel, Caracas, 1942. View of the entrance. Notice the wooden balconies, the undulating marquee, and the transparency of the first floor. Source: photo by Jorge Villota P., 2013.

FIGURE 4.15
W. Harrison, Avila Hotel, Caracas, 1942. View of the lobby: terrazzo floor (checkerboard of black and white with flecks), circular columns, and glass from floor to ceiling. Source: photo by Jorge Villota P., 2013.

FIGURE 4.16
Don Hatch, CADA Shopping Center, the first mall opened in Caracas, and the second successful project promoted by the IBEC and the VBEC in Venezuela. Completed Nov. 1954 Source: *Architectural Forum* (Jan. 1955), 113.

FIGURE 4.17
Don Hatch, CADA Shopping Center, Las Mercedes, Caracas, 1954. Part of the double-height mall (northeastern entrance, view from the top of the ramp that led to the supermarket). In the background, El Avila Mountain. Source: *Progressive Architecture* (Oct. 1955), 116.

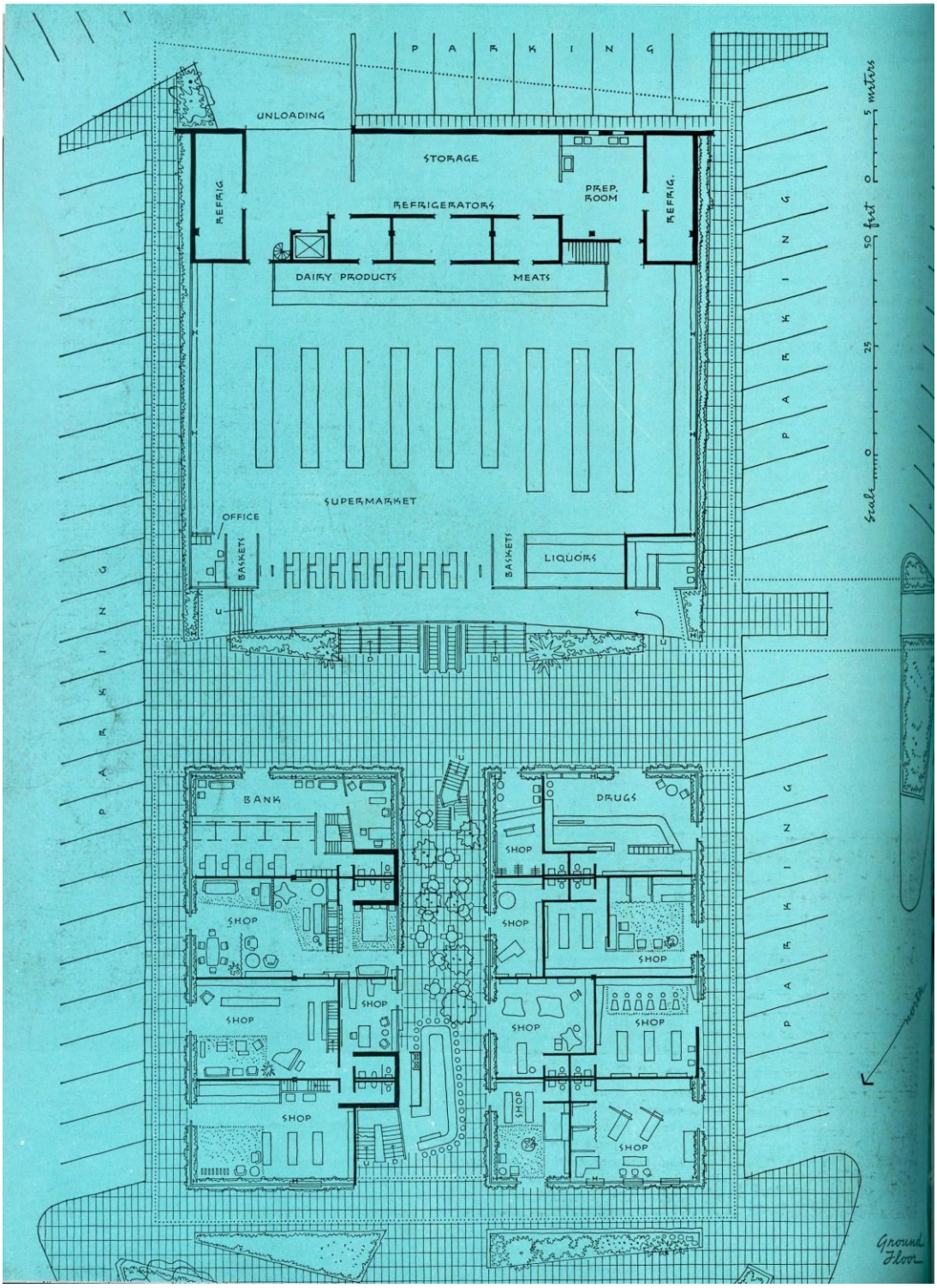

FIGURE 4.18

Don Hatch, CADA Shopping Center, plan. All-under-one-roof center: supermarket, shops and offices. Note the spacious mall in the middle, the interior landscaping, and part of the parking area. Besides its open composition, the entire building was mechanically ventilated. Source: *Progressive Architecture* (March 1954), 108.

FIGURE 4.19
Don Hatch, CADA Shopping Center, view of the supermarket from the mall. Interior landscape, openness, spatial continuity, and richness of both composition and circulation; an architectural experience very close to Rowe and Slutsky's phenomenological transparency. Source: *Progressive Architecture* (Oct. 1955), 117.

FIGURE 4.20
Don Hatch, Mobil-Oil Office Building, Caracas, Venezuela, completed 1959. Source: *Venezuela Up-to-date* (Nov. 1959), 14.

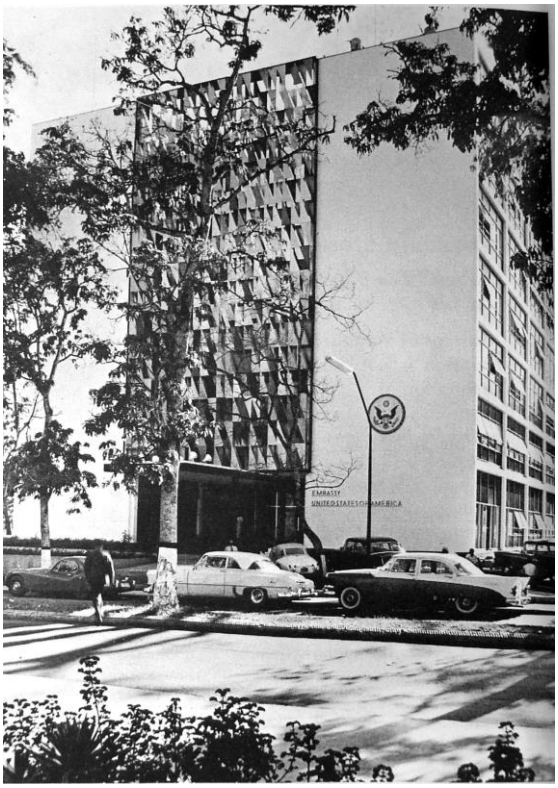

FIGURE 4.21
Don Hatch, U.S. Embassy in Caracas (La Floresta), Venezuela, completed 1959. Source: *Venezuela Up-to-date* (Jan. 1960), 8.

Chapter 5

A Paradise and a Lab: Oil Industry, Automobile and Modern Architecture

FIGURE 5.1
"For the city… Pontiac, the most beautiful on wheels" Source: *El Universal* (March 16, 1952), 3.

Venezuela has the lowest retail gasoline prices of any country in the world, according to surveys recently made by the United States Department of the Interior. Prices range from 11.3 cents to 14.7 cents per gallon. All tax free to the motorist.

"A Motorist's Paradise,"
Venezuelan Up-to-Date, Jan. 1950

"For the city, Pontiac, the most beautiful on wheels...!" An advertisement published in *El Universal*, a major Venezuelan newspaper, announced with great fanfare the 1952 model of a well-known General Motors brand. Like many others of its kind, this automobile ad contextualized the product in a specific environment. In this case, an elegant, streamlined car appeared associated with an urban environment. The image in the background, representing a series of photographs held with a paperclip, depicted a new neighborhood with a wide avenue planted with trees, and located close to a series of smooth mountains (likely either San Bernardino or Las Mercedes). The casual arrangement of such "photos" suggested that more similar images were available; probably other new neighborhoods or developments, either real or idealized. Accompanying the identification of the dealer, at the bottom of the advertisement, appeared a small illustration of its building (as *streamlined* as the automobile). Done in high-contrast and with simple strokes, the illustration showed a clear architectural icon: highly identifiable and easy to remember. The advertisement also provided complementary information. Clients could find both a gas station and a spare parts department, all at the dealership building. Finally, a subtle reminder could be read in small letters: an invitation to tune in to Radio Caracas, every Saturday 7:30-8:00 pm, and listen to the "Pontiac program" (*figure 5.1*).

Throughout the 1950s, Caracas would undergo a dramatic urban expansion toward the East and Southeast. One of the first projects carried out during the real estate boom was Las Mercedes, a low-density neighborhood that followed the American suburban type, and whose residents were mostly Americans. In fact, behind Venezuelan modernization, and fostering such proliferation of *urbanizaciones,* was the omnipresent oil industry. It was not by coincidence that Caracas' new neighborhoods shared many of the most relevant characteristics of the oil

company towns, where criteria of modern representation and organization were applied. Also, by locating their respective office buildings in specific neighborhoods, American oil corporations strategically displayed their power on the city, and defined urban zones of influence.

In such modernization process, where city limits expanded virtually every day and mobility was an unavoidable urban "function," automobiles were essential. However, more than just a need, automobiles became a Venezuelan obsession; an integral part of the local *mentalité*. A Venezuelan culture of the automobile would be born and consolidate rapidly. Newspaper readers found daily publicity bombardment on American automobile brands. *El Universal*, a major Venezuelan newspaper, featured seven times more automobile advertisements than both *The New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times*.

Many automobile advertisements were accompanied by an architectural illustration of the respective dealer's building. Modern architecture, from Streamline Moderne to Rationalism, appeared clearly represented in small drawings, all of them highly identifiable and easy to remember. Such association with modern architecture, by way of a parallel level of language (through a sort of iconographic code), was also seen in advertisements for different kinds of goods. In this sense, Sears Roebuck of Venezuela, and the advertising campaign launched by S.C. Johnson in Venezuela (in which Frank Lloyd Wright's Johnson Wax Headquarters in Racine was the ever-present illustration), constituted the most conspicuous examples.

If the oil industry exerted an omnipresent influence in Venezuela during the 1950s, the media played a fundamental role in shaping the modern *mentalité* of its citizens (particularly print media, without disregarding other means, such as radio). Automobiles and modern architecture definitely turned out to be icons of such idiosyncratic shaping process.

AN ENCLAVE FOR EXCHANGES: LAS MERCEDES (AND OTHER NEIGHBORHOODS)

The location chosen for Caracas' CADA Shopping Center was Las Mercedes, a low-density suburban neighborhood that followed the city's eastward expansion. Las Mercedes had been

planned and developed in 1947 by *Venezolana de Inversiones C.A.*, V.I.C.A. (Venezuelan Investment Company); it was one of the first housing developments in Caracas. Its location, regarding the whole urban sprawl of Caracas at the time, represented an unavoidable transit enclave between new developments east of downtown (San Bernardino, La Florida, Santa Monica, Los Chaguaramos, Bello Monte and Colinas de Bello Monte) and further southeast residential developments, such as Prados del Este and La Trinidad. Morphologically, Las Mercedes was conceived as a grid organized along the *Avenida Principal* or main avenue, which ran northwest-southeast (*figures 5.2* and *5.3*). General density was very low, despite the fact it included not just single family housing, but multifamily as well. Developers chose the so-called "Basque style" for most of the houses. Some variations of rationalism, however, could be found as well (*figure 5.4*). Its residents were mostly American citizens linked with the oil industry, either executives or employees and their families. Moreover, designed as an American neighborhood, Las Mercedes had those characteristic urban facilities found in U.S. suburbs, such as a shopping center (CADA), an educational center, and a hotel.[1] Its main housing typology, basically constituted by structures stepped back from the street, and surrounded by gardens, was also a sign of American influence.

CADA Shopping Center was placed on the northwest end of the main avenue. Right in front, was situated the *Centro Venezolano Americano* or C.V.A. (Venezuelan-American Center), established in 1941 to "promote wartime good neighborliness."[2] It would become the cultural core of the binational community. There, Venezuelan people could take English courses. But the C.V.A. also taught the "attitude that English was a necessary skill for those who wanted to be modern and get ahead."[3] Having a good command of English "became a mark of sophistication and culture." It was not by chance that tourism advertisements, promoting travel to the United States, and

[1] See Instituto de Estudios Regionales y Urbanos. *Preinventario del Patrimonio de Bienes Inmuebles del Municipio Baruta*, Caracas: IERU, Universidad Simón Bolívar, 2003. Record # 2, "Urbanización Las Mercedes."

[2] Judith Ewell, *Venezuela and the United States: From Monroe's Hemisphere to Petroleum's Empire*, (Athens/London: The University of Georgia Press, 1996), 181.

[3] Ibid.

even ads for hotels in New York City, were very common in Venezuelan newspapers (*figure 5.5*). Paris had definitely been replaced as a destiny for travel and shopping.

Occupying the corner of the block, forming a virtual triangle between CADA and the C.V.A., was a Shell gas station. Designed by Venezuelan architect Carlos Gramcko, and completed in 1959, this facility was coherent with the new culture of the automobile.[4] Its unique design, which combined regular forms with an irregular play of roofs, as well as a battery of reinforced concrete shells and contrasting materials (including steel and stone), established a dialogue with CADA. Both buildings stood out not just from their immediate context, but from the whole neighborhood; they were landmarks in the entire city. Not far from them, were a Catholic church and two Christian schools, established respectively in 1948, 1953 and 1954.[5] On the opposite end of the main avenue (southeast) was the Tamanaco Hotel, another landmark in Caracas. Placed on the top of a hill, the building culminated the whole perspective of the *Avenida Principal*. It had been designed by Holabird, Root & Burgee, a well-known U.S. architectural firm based in Chicago.[6] Nevertheless, the Tamanaco was not alone. Close to the hotel, at the foot of the hill, there was a Creole gas station, and the *Residencias La Hacienda*, a set of five six-story buildings, designed by Venezuelan architect Diego Carbonell as an apartment

[4] See Instituto de Estudios Regionales y Urbanos. *Preinventario del Patrimonio de Bienes Inmuebles del Municipio Baruta*, Caracas: IERU, Universidad Simón Bolívar, 2003. Record # 16, "Antigua Super Estación de Servicio Las Mercedes."

[5] They were *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe* Church, Mater Salvatoris and Santo Tomás de Villanueva, schools of girls and boys, respectively. The latter and the church were built on lots donated by V.I.C.A. in 1948.

[6] The Tamanaco Hotel will be analyzed in chapter 8 of this dissertation, under "El Nuevo Ideal Nacional (New National Deal)."

hotel for oil companies,[7] in order to ease the demand for accommodations provided by the Tamanaco Hotel.[8]

Las Mercedes was not the only development to be built during the late 1940s and the early 1950s. Caracas became "justly famous" for those residential sections that had sprung up from "land occupied not so long ago by coffee and sugar cane plantations."[9] Starting in the early twentieth century with El Paraíso, a southwestern neighborhood characterized by its freestanding houses (and in some cases by the utilization of U.S. technology in their construction), Caracas had showed a slow process of growth during the first decades of the twentieth century.[10] A huge change would come, however, after World War II with the increasing of oil production. The proliferation of *urbanizaciones* and their rapid development started radically changing the skyline of the Venezuelan capital. La Paz, a new development located south of downtown Caracas, advertised lots for sale in 1952.[11] However, the urban expansion would definitely head east. From downtown Caracas to the eastern end of the valley, the list of developments would be large, while their names would be particularly creative: San Bernardino (1940s); Los Caobos; La Florida; Los Chaguaramos; Bello Monte (1940s); Colinas de Bello Monte; El Bosque; El Rosal; La Castellana; Altamira (Luis Roche, 1943-1945); La Floresta

[7] Carbonell graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1945. See MIT Alumni Association, MIT Class of 1945, http://1945.alumclass.mit.edu/s/1314/clubs-classes-interior.aspx?sid=1314&gid=199&pgid=2258 (accessed on July 21, 2013). See also Guido Bermúdez, *Diccionario del Arquitectura* (Caracas: Edición Venezolana, 1993), 138. Carbonell will be revisited in the chapter 6 of this dissertation.

[8] See Instituto de Estudios Regionales y Urbanos, *Preinventario del Patrimonio de Bienes Inmuebles del Municipio Baruta*, Caracas: IERU, Universidad Simón Bolívar, 2003. Record # 34, "Residencias La Hacienda." The complex was built in 1957; it had 120 apartments and 22 stores in the first floor.

[9] "Caracas Features Changing from Month to Month," *Venezuela Up-to-date*, Jan. 1953, 15.

[10] The Caracas Country Club, a neighborhood (and its club per se) designed by Olmsted Brothers during the 1920s, would be part of this slow-motion urban expansion.

[11] See *El Universal*, March 2, 1952, 6.

(1952), and Los Palos Grandes.[12] Finally, at the eastern end of Caracas valley, more than seven miles (12 km) from downtown, in the last remaining free area of Caracas for development, Don Hatch designed a 1,200-acre residential community, known as La Urbina (*figure 5.6*).[13]

All these new neighborhoods were "veritable displays of every conceivable style of architecture," in which homes seemed "to emerge from flower beds in an enormous park," designed for comfort and beauty." It is not by chance that *caraqueños* are regarded as "past masters in the art of gracious living."[14] After half a century, El Paraíso looked "unfashionable when compared with the majesty of Altamira, the elegance of Las Mercedes or the loveliness of El Bosque, with its charming apartment buildings."[15]

Nevertheless, Caracas' expansion toward the East also embraced a ramification in the Southeast. Under the slogan "a city in the countryside and a countryside within the city," the *urbanización* Prados del Este launched its marketing campaign in 1956. Relying on the high quality graphic of *Integral,* a Venezuelan architectural magazine, Prados del Este's advertisements brought a very bucolic experience to potential buyers.[16] "A model of development," surrounded by a "beautiful mountain environment, blessed by an ideal climate and densely wooded," Prados del Este was undoubtedly "a privileged place by nature."[17] Conveniently located within Caracas Metropolitan Zone, but at the same time far from

[12] Most of these names were landscape (or natural) synecdoche, such as Los Caobos (the mahoganies); La Florida (the flowery); Los Chaguaramos (the imperial palms); Bello Monte (beautiful mountain); Colinas de Bello Monte (hills of beautiful mountain); El Bosque (the forest); El Rosal (the rose garden); La Floresta (the verdant grove), and Los Palos Grandes (the big sticks).

[13] "The Architect and his Community: Oficina Don Hatch, Caracas, Venezuela," *Progressive Architecture*, March 1954, 100.

[14] "Caracas Features Changing from Month to Month," *Venezuela Up-to-date*, 15.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Venezuelan specialized architectural periodicals will be analyzed in the chapter 6 of this dissertation, specifically in the subchapter "The Local Harvest."

[17] See "Prados del Este. Una urbanización modelo," (advertisement), *Integral* 5, 1956.

downtown, it had the best of both worlds: the advantages of the urban life and the countryside's delights. Advertising messages, such as "with no down payment and 60 installments," "don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today," and "the best gift for your children,"[18] clearly expressed the nature of the investment: an opportunity that could endure the test of time. "Date of contract signature: today!," said one of the advertisements, accompanied with a photo of "one of the most beautiful lots still available" and a fusion of simple colors and abstract-figurative forms, probably a subliminal combination of the countryside and the modern technology (*figure 5.7*).

As for its urban morphology, architect José Antonio Ron Pedrique, its designer, planned a picturesque, organic urban pattern with freestanding houses. Prados del Este's development company had been established in 1952. However, its original urban developer – and owner – had been Antonio Bertorelli, who had commissioned architects Jorge Romero Gutiérrez and Dirk Bornhorst to carry out a preliminary study in 1948.[19] That very same year, but 52 miles away, Bertorelli had started another large-scale development, somehow with similar characteristics, which would eventually unite Ron Pedrique and Romero Gutiérrez during the next decade: Higuerote Beach Resort.[20]

There were certainly no limits to the development of new *urbanizaciones*. The hills to the south were "virtually carved to make way for new suburbs, and even the foothills of Avila Mountain were invaded."[21] As an official organ of the time stated, "people of Caracas had given their city a gay and lively character," and probably because of "a blue sky and a bright sun (they) do not

[18] See "Prados del Este. El mejor regalo para sus hijos" (advertisement), *Integral* 3, 1956; "Prados del Este. No dejes para mañana lo que puedas hacer hoy" (advertisement), *Integral* 4, 1956.

[19] Interviews granted by Víctor Ron Pedrique (Caracas, 2003) and Sergio Bertorelli (Higuerote Beach Resort, 2010).

[20] On this matter, see subchapter "Supernaturalism," pertaining to chapter 9 of this Dissertation. See also chapter 6, specifically the subchapter "A Subtle Influence: Periodical Publications and Higuerote Beach Resort."

[21] "Caracas Features Changing from Month to Month," *Venezuela Up-to-date*, Jan. 1953, 15.

make for a gloomy disposition."[22] "They are a witty and fun loving people," it asserted, "averse to taking life seriously, but also hard working, as witness the very transformation of Caracas, a Herculean task by itself."[23]

FIGURE 5.2
Metropolitan Area of Caracas, published in 1957 and updated in 1966. Note the colonial grid (left), and the urban expansion to the East. Source: De Sola Ricardo (1967).

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid, 15-16.

FIGURE 5.3

Las Mercedes (center): detail of the previous figure, showing the urban pattern, as well as buildings and facilities' locations: 1) CADA Shopping Center; 2) Venezuelan-American Center, 3) Shell gas station, 4) Creole gas station, 5) Recidencias La Hacienda, and 6) Tamanaco Hotel. The original image was edited for the purposes of this dissertation. Source: De Sola Ricardo (1967).

FIGURE 5.5

"You can fly to almost any part of the world via Pan American (…). New York: now you can depart any day at the hour of your convenience (…). Miami: convenient flights to all U.S. cities." Source: *El Universal* (March 12, 1952), 8.

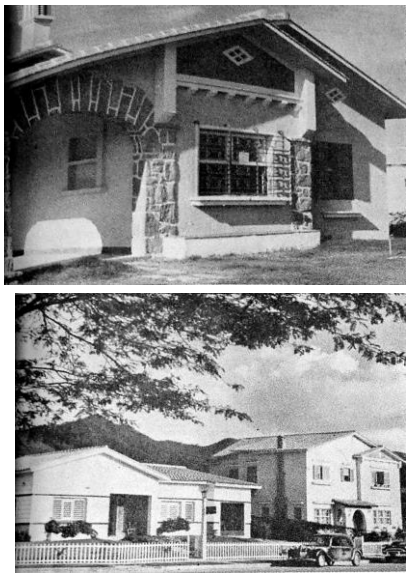

FIGURE 5.4

Different architectural types in Las Mercedes, particularly the so-called "Basque style" (left top and bottom). Some forms of rationalism could also be found in the neighborhood (above). Source: *Venezuela Up-to-date* (Jan. 1953), 15.

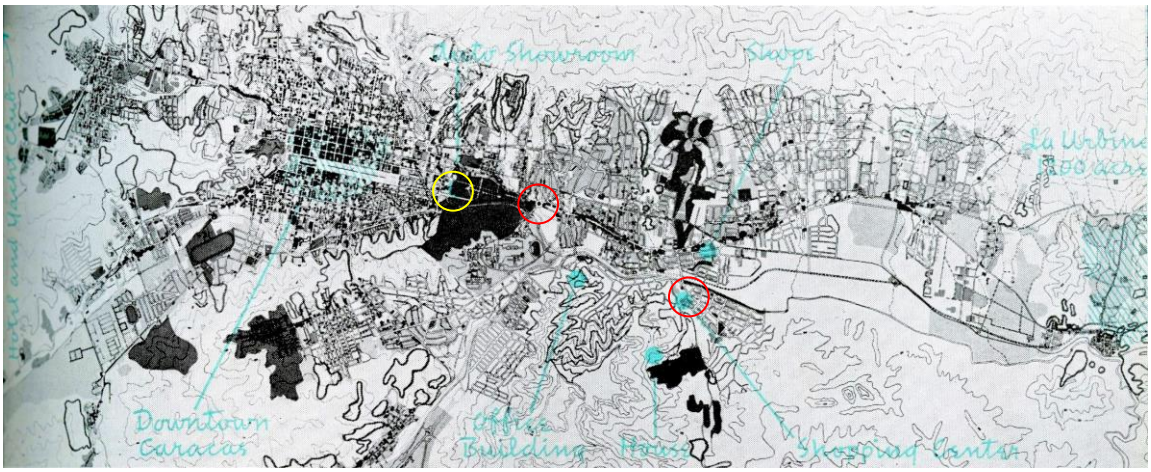

FIGURE 5.6
Buildings and projects by Oficina Don Hatch in Caracas. From left to right, top: Auto Showroom and Shops. Bottom: Downtown Caracas, Office Building, House, Shopping Center (CADA), La Urbina (1,200 acres). The original illustration was edited specially for the purposes of this dissertation: Auto Showroom and CADA's locations have been re-marked with red circles to better visualization (left and right respectively). The yellow circle indicates the Auto Showroom's location as published in the magazine (the actual place was one mile [1.6 Km] east). Source: *Progressive Architecture*, March 1954, 101.

FIGURE 5.7
José Antonio Ron Pedrique, architect. José Antonio Bertorelli, original urban developer; Jorge Romero Gutiérrez and Dirk Bornhorst, preliminary studies (1948); Prados del Este housing development, Caracas, 1952. Source: *Integral* 4 (1956).

JUST LIKE AN OIL CAMP

There is no doubt that a neighborhood like Las Mercedes emerged thanks to the oil industry's development in Venezuela. Only a country – in the Venezuelan case, the State – with huge oil profits could afford such level of investment. As a matter of fact, this is the only way to explain the rapid process of modernization and urbanization in Venezuela after World War II, and particularly in Caracas.

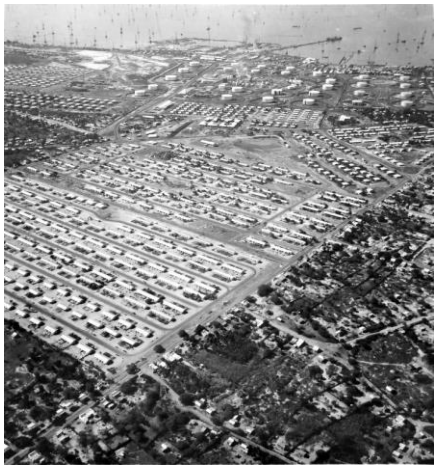

FIGURE 5.8
La Salina oil field, near La Rosa, city of Cabimas. Foreground: company town of Creole Petroleum Corp. (previously pertaining to Lago Petroleum Corp.). Background: La Salina port and Maracaibo Lake. Source: photo by courtesy of Creole Petroleum Corporation. Paul Patrick Rogers Collection (Benson Latin American Collection, The University of Texas at Austin).

However, the most remarkable aspect of this urbanization process was not the effect itself, but the characteristics of these housing developments. In this sense, more than just a consequence, Caracas' new neighborhoods shared, somehow, many of the most relevant characteristics of the company towns. The self-sufficient nature of the company towns, and their character as ideal enclaves (cloisters), in which work, housing, and leisure coexist (based on functional principles), and where urban facilities satisfy material – and spiritual – needs, constituted a whole package that influenced the design of modern oil camps. In the past, "boom towns" were home, trade center and playground for the oilmen." Mud streets, a "universal mark of the oil boom town of yesterday," as well as the clumsy wooden derrick, had been left behind.[24] Since the early twentieth century, modern oil camps have been synonym of organization, efficiency, healthy conditions, and education, as Anne Rainay Langley described in the 1930s in *National Geographic*. Within the camp, workers had "a commissary containing imported canned goods from the United States," a purified water system, a power plant that provided electricity and running water, and the latest movies, which arrived "by plane

[24] "Oil Camps Yesterday," *The Lamp*, New York: Standard Oil Company (New Jersey), Jan. 1947, 10-11. The Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

twice each week."[25] This was certainly a know-how loaded genetically in all oil American companies' subsidiaries in Venezuela. One of these cases was La Salina oil field, near La Rosa (where *Barroso 2* started blowing in 1922) (*figure 5.8*).

On some occasions the set of principles applied to oil camps could be observed in urban planning. "The growing American community demanded the familiar products that they had known at home or in the oil camp commissaries." Their preferences "fueled a revolution in retailing and consumer tastes among the growing Venezuelan middle class."[26] Las Mercedes was one of the most conspicuous examples of such oil-urbanization process. In fact, the notion of *oil districts* "helps to visualize the different zones of the city, in which oil industries developed their interests and all their particular dynamics, as oil camps."[27] Also associated with criteria of modern representation and organization, and with a modern way of life in general terms, such a metaphor also helps explain the irruption of social and urban processes of segregation in Caracas at the time.[28]

In this sense, the first oil district would have been La Candelaria, a district that, in a broad sense, embraced part of downtown Caracas and a small area toward the east, but also the Avila Hotel to the North (actually San Bernardino) and Los Caobos Park to the south. It is not by coincidence that Creole Petroleum Corporation moved its offices to this sector in 1944. But more importantly, Royal Dutch Shell constructed its own office building in 1946, designed by Badgeley

[25] See chapter 4 of this dissertation, specifically subchapter "Venezuelan Geography as a Longue Durée Condition."

[26] Judith Ewell, *Venezuela and the United States: from Monroe's Hemisphere to Petroleum's Empire* (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1996), 175.

[27] Henry Vicente, "La Arquitectura Urbana de las Corporaciones Petroleras: conformación de 'Distritos Petroleros' en Caracas durante las décadas de 1940 y 1950," *Espacio Abierto* 12, 3 (July-Sept. 2003): 395.

[28] Ibid, 396.

& Bradbury.[29] The building, based on a Beaux Art scheme, was placed at the north end of the Vollmer Avenue, from where it was possible to obtain an excellent sight of Caracas (*figure 5.9*). Paradoxically, the Shell Office Building did not consider sufficient parking area; it was just limited to a narrow portion around the building, "something unforgiveable for a U.S. architect and an oil-industry client."[30]

However, the definition of oil districts was not just about corporate buildings. "A swarm of small and intermediate companies, those that explored but didn't produce, those devoted to engineering consultancy, that provided aero photography services, the small representative offices of equipment, valves and injectors, with their respective parent companies in Maracaibo and branches in Caracas, were displayed in the first floors of the buildings."[31]

A second district came along with the completion of the new office building of Creole Petroleum Corporation during the 1950s.[32] The location was south of the River Guaire, which runs along the Caracas Valley. This is where Las Mercedes was located, and where the second Shell office building, designed by architect Diego Carbonell, would be placed in 1959.[33] Finally, a third district, located in direction to the East, would embrace the U.S. Embassy Building (designed by Don Hatch), and the Petroleum Center, designed by Angelo De Sapio in 1959, and whose project

[29] For a more elaborate description of the different offices of Creole Petroleum Corporation in Caracas, see "A Good Neighbor! the *Edificio* Creole" in chapter 10 of this dissertation. As for the firm Badgeley & Bradbury, see "Just Socializing: Explaining Douglass through his Connections," also in chapter 10.

[30] "La Arquitectura de San Bernardino," by R. Valery (in *San Bernardino: una urbanización al Pie del Ávila* [Caracas: Fondo Editorial Fundarte]), quoted by Henry Vicente, "La Arquitectura Urbana de las Corporaciones Petroleras," *Espacio Abierto*, 400.

[31] "La Candelaria Petrolera," *El Universal*, March 22, 1998, 4-1, quoted by Henry Vicente, "La Arquitectura Urbana de las Corporaciones Petroleras," *Espacio Abierto*, 395. As Judith Ewell mentioned, U.S. retail firms "changed Venezuela's economic landscape" (*Venezuela and the United States: from Monroe's Hemisphere to Petroleum's Empire*, 175.

[32] For an exhaustive analysis of this building, see chapter 10 of this dissertation: "Architecture of the Energy: what you didn't know about it."

[33] Vicente, "La Arquitectura Urbana de las Corporaciones Petroleras," 407.

included the respective office buildings of the Venezuelan Atlantic Refining Company, the Mene Grande Oil Company, and the Texas.[34] Of those, only the Atlantic could be completed, in 1959 (*figure 5.10*).

The Venezuelan capital's expansion was remarkable. From 1936 to 1958, Caracas' population increased 500%.[35] As an official organ stated "the growth of Caracas has been so rapid, that public services could not catch up with new demands. Automobile traffic through the narrow streets of the old city is painfully slow (…) New thoroughfares had to be opened regardless of cost."[36]

[34] Ibid, 408. According to Henry Vicente, De Sapio (1916-2002) had had prolific professional activity, which included the Ellison House (Caracas, 1954), the Turtle Creek Boulevard (a housing complex in Dallas, Texas, 1964), and the Airport of Manila, Philippines (1974).

[35] Lorenzo González, "Modernity and the City: Caracas 1935-1958," PhD Dissertation, Cornell University, 1996a, chapter 6, 2.

[36] "Caracas Features Changing from Month to Month," *Venezuela Up-to-date*, Jan. 1953, 15.

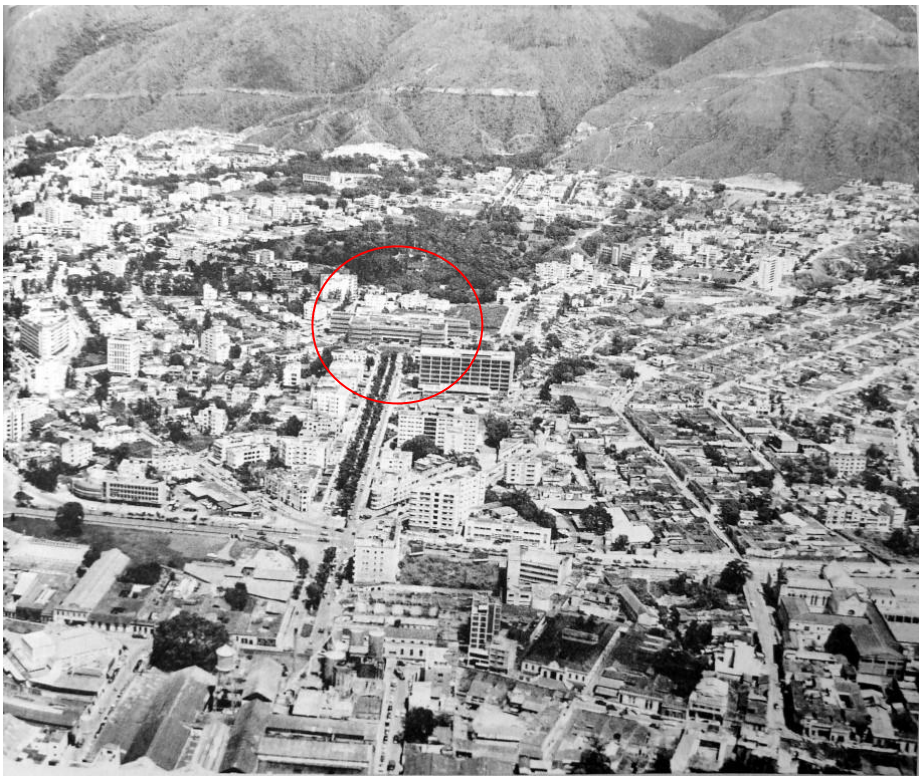

FIGURE 5.9
Badgeley & Bradbury, Shell Headquarters in San Bernardino (marked with a red circle), Caracas, 1946. Source: *Venezuela Up-to-date* (Sept. 1957), cover.

FIGURE 5.10
Angelo De Sapio, Atlantic Building, Caracas, 1959. Photo by Jorge Villota P.

A SHORT PREAMBLE: CONCERNS, PLANS AND STRATEGIES

Automobiles and traffic concerns in Venezuela did not appear overnight; both came along with the oil industry. The first automobiles had arrived in the country between 1904 and 1907, and the East Road or *Carretera del Este* had been opened in 1912.[37] Even an Automobile Club had been founded in 1925 which, among its members, counted on Venezuelan architect Rafael Seijas Cook (owner of the first Alfa Romeo in Venezuela).[38] Worries about the insufficiency of the Venezuelan traffic system, as the number of cars was increasing, led to three significant episodes in history of urban planning in Venezuela. The first one came in 1939 with the Rotival Plan, devised by French developer Maurice Rotival. Also known as the Monumental Plan, it was a Beaux-Arts project for downtown Caracas, of which the most significant element was a wide, long avenue, running east-west, and whose implementation implied the demolition of many traditional blocks. Although the Rotival Plan was not completed as originally devised, it meant (by way of an urban surgery) the subsequent dramatic transformation of the colonial urban layout.[39]

The second episode was the National Plan of Highways or *Plan Nacional de Vialidad*, which regarded the Venezuelan territory as a whole system to be connected through roads, airports and ports. By means of this Plan, devised in 1947, two important decisions were made: the enlargement of the road system, which would grow from 5,000 km (3,100 miles) in 1940 to more than 26,000 (16,155 miles) in 1960, and the selection of the automobile as the principal

[37] Do not confuse the East Road and the East Highway (opened in 1953).

[38] See Lorenzo González, "Autopía en Caracas: Historias de la Ciudad Motorizada," in *Vías de Comunicación y Geohistoria en Sudamérica*, ed. Claudio A. Briceño Monzón and José Alberto Olivar (Mérida: Consejo de Publicaciones, Universidad de Los Andes), 346.

[39] For an accurate description of the Rotival Plan, see chapter 7 of this dissertation, subchapter "Another round against France: the Simón Bolívar Center."

transportation system.[40] It was not by chance that Caracas' electric streetcar (which started working in 1908) disappeared in 1947, and the Caracas-La Guiara railroad system stopped working in 1952.

The third episode, also taking place after World War II, came with the Arterial Plan devised by Robert Moses, and the Master Regulating Plan of Caracas or *Plano Regulador* (again with the support of Maurice Rotival) for a population that had dramatically increased in number from 250,000 in 1940 to 400,000 in 1947. An "ally of the Rockefeller Family,"[41] and at the time already a well-known planner and master builder (in the United States and particularly in New York State), Moses arrived in Caracas in April 1948. His report emphasized "the importance of creating a hierarchical street system to relieve traffic congestion, as well as the need for an expressway connection between Caracas (located about 900 meters above sea-level) and La Guaira (the site of the capital's seaport, main airfield, and Caribbean beaches)."[42] The first Rotival proposal of 1939 and Moses' Arterial Plan expressed the "noticeable shift in planning approaches from 'techno-cosmopolitanism to 'middling modernism'."[43] Moses recommended management techniques and financial sources to support his proposal. His agenda was certainly similar to that in New York: "to promote the automobile by creating more room in the city and better conditions – which included support from the beneficiaries of that agenda: the oil and car companies – to build the expensive infrastructure that was required."[44] It was not by chance that U.S. investments "in the form of assembly plants like those opened by General Motors and

[40] González, "Autopía en Caracas," 349.

[41] Robert Caro, *The Power Breaker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), 1070, quoted by Lorenzo González, "Modernity for import and export: the United States' influence on the Architecture and Urbanism of Caracas," *Colloqui* (Spring, 1996b): 70.

[42] Lorenzo González, "Modernity for import and export: the United States' influence on the Architecture and Urbanism of Caracas," *Colloqui* (Spring, 1996b): 71.

[43] Paul Rabinow, *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1989), 12-13, quoted by González, "Modernity for import and export," 71.

[44] González, "Modernity for import and export," 71.

Chrysler, grew at a faster rate than investments in petroleum."[45] The automobile would eventually penetrate architecture in Venezuela, both in the physical environment and the print media.

SEDUCTION AND MORE SEDUCTION!: BOMBARDMENT OF AUTOMOBILES

Every day, apart from publicity of new neighborhoods, readers of *El Universal* could also find advertisements offering courses in Technical Drafting for Architecture, Topography, and Engineering. Also, for those in search of either a new job or better working conditions, *El Universal* published announcements soliciting office workers for oil industries. Sears Roebuck of Venezuela also had a conspicuous presence through its persistent publicity. Tourism advertisements emphasizing travel routes to the Unites States, especially to New York City, were very common too. The latest news on the Korean War and all the information concerning the Cold War constituted a permanent presence, by way of an unavoidable backdrop. Nevertheless, publicity on automobiles commanded, to a great extent, the information displayed in this newspaper in early 1950s.[46]

On Sunday March 16, 1952, with no big stories to tell, *El Universal* published its usual edition. Weekend readers could choose either international or local news; from the Cold War to the Latin American realm. Among its first-page headlines, readers could find "The United States cannot isolate itself from its neighboring, friendly countries, said Truman;" "U.N. Commission will visit East Germany;" "Quartering of Cuban Defense Forces to end;" "Prince Leopold of Belgium drops by Caracas;" "Artillery Maneuvers in El Valle." On page 8 – as on any other page – things seemed to be equally normal: an advertisement for "Los Lagos subdivision," a new

[45] Judith Ewell, *Venezuela and the United States: from Monroe's Hemisphere to Petroleum's Empire* (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1996), 174.

[46] *El Universal* is a major Venezuelan newspaper, headquartered in Caracas, and founded in 1909. The review of this newspaper covered issues from January to March 1952. A more specific review was made from March 1st to 16th. By way of a control group, the research was extended to the June issues. Again, as a control group, the review was expanded to the March issues of *Los Angeles Times*. The proportion continued to be the same: seven to one. The information was recorded through 358 photographs.

development under construction, shared the page with a note on the "Official Reception at Belgian Embassy." Among numerous classifieds that almost filled the page, an engaging automobile advertisement appeared announcing the exhibition of a new model. A big finger, sternly pointing at the reader, exclaimed "And you… Have you seen the new Ford 1952?" (*figure 5.11*). In a clear iconographic reference to James Montgomery Flagg's famous Uncle Sam recruitment poster, the advertisement played a three-fold role: motivation by responsibility, pleasure, and critical observation (by others). In another advertisement, published on March 1, 1952, a mass of people appeared in a dense urban context, surrounding a new automobile that was passing by. Clearly the vehicle attracted their attention. Respect, admiration and curiosity are expressed in their faces and body gestures, in their smiles. Some gentlemen even took off their hats. "New, bright, impressive, and powerful," the car in question emphasized the female presence (whereas the male silhouette was obscured almost completely behind the windshield). "See the new Chevrolet 1952!," said its title (*figure 5.12*). Like this advertisement, many others flooded *El Universal* during the early 1950s. The quantity was simply huge. It was practically an everyday "barrage." In one week alone, from March 1st to 8th, 1952, twenty two advertisements were published. The list of slogans and messages involved in such a publicity bombardment was as interminable as convincing: "I have discovered a car designed for people;" "Today in exhibition! Dodge 1952;" "We invite all Caracas' motorists, and the general public, to admire the new models of the Ford 1952;" "Here it is!, the most outstanding automobile of its type;" "Already on sale!, the unique 1952 automobile totally new, the New Ford 52;" "The highest exponent of the automobile technology, the New Ford model 1952;" "The Auto that will revolutionize the industry!, here is the new Ford of 52… the highest spirited one in its type;" "Come to admire the newest, most daring, most classy and most perfect automobiles of 1952!, see them today in Central Motors;" "Here is the most challenging automobile of this year… and the years to come!, the New Mercury 1952;" "The most dramatic innovation of the fine motoring history. Lincoln 52," and "choose today your Ford 1952. Ford models to satisfy all tastes."[47] All of them emphasized and appealed to different senses, such as admiration, challenge, novelty, innovation, technology, accessibility, and opportunity. Anyone could get any

[47] See *El Universal,* respectively March 2, 18; March 3, 12; March 5, 3; ibid., 6; March 6, 5; March 5, 17; March 6, 6; March 8, 6; ibid., 8; ibid., 18. All of them published in 1952.

car; after all, as an advertisement for Ford announced by displaying a list of choices, "there were models to satisfy all tastes!" (*figure 5.13*).[48]

Even more striking, however, is the volume of automobile publicity issued in Venezuela versus that in the United States. The result of such cross-cultural comparison is as astonishing as paradoxical. There were – by far – many more automobile advertisements published in *El Universal* than in *The New York Times.* This striking gap was approximately in a proportion of seven to one. Venezuelan people were saturated daily by the continuous barrage of automobile advertising, expressed in icons and engaging slogans. Apart from Citroën, Fiat and Hillman, three European manufacturers, the vast majority of automobile publicity came from U.S. automakers. Many American brands and manufacturers, such as Dodge, DeSoto, Plymouth and Jeep, by Chrysler; Chevrolet, Buick, Pontiac, Cadillac and Oldsmobile, by General Motors; Mercury and Lincoln, by Ford; Henry J., by Kaiser-Frazer; Hudson Hornet, by Hudson Motor Car Company, as well as Studebaker, flooded *El Universal*'s pages. Through a very engaging message, one of Citroën's advertisements stated: "the cheapest spare parts for the world's finest automobiles (…) A Citroën costs less, is more productive, works better and it's a fine vehicle for rude jobs."[49] Yet such marketing efforts by European automakers were frankly in vain. More than 90% of the automobile publicity in *El Universal* was that of U.S. manufacturers and marques.

Like characters in a play, cars had specific scenes in the advertisements. A new compact Henry J., by Kaiser-Frazer, appeared being unloaded by a crane. Its arrival at port (probably La Guaira) was a clear indication of its origin: it was not a locally-assembled vehicle; it was a totally imported one (*figure 5.14*). But port facilities were not the only theatrical sceneries for car advertisements. With its "unlimited power," the Dodge Power Wagon was "the most efficient multipurpose truck." Such a versatile vehicle, which was "able to go" where others could not, appeared doing its job efficiently in an oil field. In the same scenario, now more accentuated with oil wells and oil field facilities, probably close to Maracaibo Lake, an unmistakable Jeep –

[48] *El Universal* (March 10, 1952), 7.

[49] "Citroën, the cheapest spare parts," *El Universal*, March 7, 1952, 7.

another Chrysler – appeared handling easily the topographic difficulties and doing the job (*figures 5.15* and *5.16*). In a totally different scene, a Mack truck appeared towing a heavy bulldozer in an urban context, probably heading a demolition section, as part of the widening of streets program in Caracas downtown (*figure 5.17*).

These were just a few examples of what readers could find in newspapers. But Venezuelans also had at their disposal the direct display of automobiles. In 1952, a Studebaker, Packard, Morris and M.G. dealer was very proud to announce its showroom's opening, "now in the East." Offering more comfort and better service, the "magnificent building" had been "specially designed" by New York architect Roger Halle. The building, which also had "the most modern service station of Venezuela," was located on Bello Monte Avenue, next to the recently opened Sears Roebuck store. Apart from Morris and M.G. (two British companies), the building had in exhibition two American automobile manufacturers: Studebaker of Indiana, and Packard of Michigan. Large windows with a slender structural frame, and a sort of wide entablature to display the companies' logos, were the most significant characteristics of the building. However, even more remarkable was the inverted pitched roof in its lateral façade (facing the Sears Roebuck store's parking area), which gave this auto showroom a unique aspect (*figures 5.18* and *5.19*).[50]

Also impressive, for both its transparency and simplicity, was the Chrysler-Plymouth Showroom that Don Hatch designed in Caracas. Like in CADA Shopping Center, Hatch used a single, large roof to cover different subprograms. The building had an exhibition space for three to five cars, a parts sales department, and a separate display for radios and television. Outside, it had a parking area for 15 cars (*figure 5.20*). As for the structure, Hatch planned a frame in reinforced concrete, with twelve free-standing columns, spaced 32 feet (9.75 meters) from each other. The 8-inch-thick roof slab had two-way reinforced concrete ribs and 5-feet-wide beams contained within the slab depth. Cantilevers in two of its corners were larger than 20 feet. Ceiling and soffits overhangs, in turn, were made up of 4-feet squares of alternating vermiculite plaster and

[50] "Now in the East" (advertisement), *El Universal,* March 8, 1952. See also *Architectural Forum*, Jan., 1955, 113.

plastic eggcrates with fluorescent lamps above.[51] Similarities with CADA could be found also in the use of contrasting materials. Hatch combined exposed concrete in columns and a plaster-plastic grid in the ceiling, with stone in the auto parts department (*figure 5.21*). Plaza Venezuela, its place of location (halfway between Caracas downtown and Las Mercedes), would become "one of the busiest traffic junctions in the city, surrounded by office buildings" (cf. *figure 6.16*).[52]

Even more remarkable for its morphological composition was Angloven, a Vauxhall-Lucas-Jaguar showroom designed by José Miguel Galia and Martín Vegas (*figures 5.22* and *5.23*).[53] Completed in 1954, this two-story building consisted of a sort of transparent, flattened cylinder (area of exhibition) interlocked with a pierced-wall tower (service elevator). In terms of organization it recalled Frank Lloyd Wright's Showroom for Porsche and BMW cars in New York (cf. *figure 2.29*). However, its resemblance to the Ballroom in Long Beach, California, by Antonin Raymond and L.L. Rado, was even more noticeable (cf. *figure 6.11*).[54] Like that beach facility, Angloven's reinforced-concrete structure consisted of concentric inclined stilts, in both levels, and a central support; finally an ample dome, by way of continuation of the inclined stilts, surmounted the exhibition area. The building actually worked as a huge shop window that took advantage of its particular location: one of the corners of Bello Monte (a new commercial-residential neighborhood), near Roger Halle's Automobile Showroom, Sears Roebuck Store, the University City, and particularly the Creole Building by Lathrop Douglass.

Obviously, such a bombardment of advertisements and engaging showrooms could only bring a lot of cars into the street, and eventually cause traffic problems. An announcement offering a "parking lot, for rent or sale," indicates, not just the pressure to solve the parking problem, but

[51] *Progressive Architecture,* March 1954, 103.

[52] Lorenzo González, "Modernity for import and export: the United States' influence on the Architecture and Urbanism of Caracas," *Colloqui* (Spring, 1996b): 74. The Auto showroom would be eventually demolished and replaced in 1969 with the *Edificio* Phelps Condominium Office Building, designed by José Puig and C. Dale Badgeley (as a consultant).

[53] Martín Vegas' links with the U.S. university system will be analyzed later, in chapter 6.

[54] The Ballroom in Long Beach (1955-60) will be analyzed later, in chapter 6.

the eventual pressure of the real estate market.[55] This kind of announcement was very common; moreover, the problem began being so significant that the Municipal Public Works Division developed a program to solve the growing traffic problem in Caracas. A comprehensive street and highway expansion program, in conformity with the Master Regulating Plan of Caracas, was worked out for the city "to cost 141,000,000 bolivars (US$ 42,000,000)."[56]

In any case, cars in the print media did not cause traffic jams; after all, there was enough room in newspapers and magazines to "circulate" more and more automobile advertisements. There was even room to circulate (or rather, to "locate") another kind of symbol, one as representative as automobiles: architecture. Recognizable and easy to remember, corporate buildings would be the best allies of the automobile in terms of advertising. Their influence, however, would be felt even further.

MODERN ARCHITECTURE AND NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENTS

If it is true that automobiles commanded to a great extent the information displayed in *El Universal* during the 1950s, it's also true that architecture was very common as well. Sometimes its presence involved architectural scenes, more or less generic. An Oldsmobile advertisement, which promoted a "Rocket" engine, depicted a very singular set: a Venezuelan couple (recognizable by their traditional clothes) was going down stairs, away from a modern building, toward their automobile. In such a mixture of local tradition, technology and modern environment, architecture worked not only as an essential part of the whole frame, but also as an indispensable element that provided the whole image with meaning. In this case, the free-standing columns, the dynamic movement of the curvilinear roof, and the play of light and shadows seemed to be more energetic than the Oldsmobile's streamlined aesthetics (*figure 5.24*). Most of the time, however, advertisements were closely related to automobile dealers as a subliminal image. General Motors, through its Cadillac brand, displayed a striking advertisement showing different places in the world, with their respective architectural icons.

[55] *El Universal* (March 8, 1952), 8.

[56] "Program ready to solve Caracas traffic problems," *Venezuela Up-to-date* (March 1952), 11.

Its slogan was "dictating rules around the world. Cadillac, the most aristocratic of the automobiles." Under the slogan "dictating new rules to the modern automobile industry," a Chrysler ad included an architectonic image at the bottom, probably representing the dealer: an Art Deco building, sharing a streamlined design with the typography (*figures 5.25* and *5.26)*.[57] In another advertisement, A. Planchart & Co. Sucr. C.A., a Chevrolet dealer, depicted the images of two different offices in Caracas (one of them with a streamlined design) (*figures 5.27* and *5.28*).[58] Nevertheless, perhaps the most striking of all was the icon displayed in an advertisement of Cars (a General Motors dealer): an impressive perspective showing a pure International Style building (*figures 5.29* and *5.30*).[59]

Architecture, as we have seen through car advertisements, had a strong presence in *El Universal*. Nevertheless, besides the automobile industry, announcements also included architectural iconography as a representative image of corporations, brands, retailers, and stores in general terms. Publicity of new developments and subdivisions, and even promotion of architecture *per se* (either buildings projected [to be built] or those new for sale [already built]), was very common too.

The relationship between automobile, urban development, and retailing culture was eloquent. It is interesting to mention the significance that Sears Roebuck had in Venezuela. Two new stores' openings in March 3rd and 6th (in Caracas and Maracaibo), and a high display of publicity, demonstrated its strong presence. Moreover, there was not any doubt that this chain of department stores wanted to make a big impact on the Venezuelan market through its architectural representation. Although very rationalist in their designs, each Sears department store in Venezuela had a particularity. A simple iconographical examination of the images published shows the importance of the architectonic representation, and the unavoidable

[57] See *El Universal* (March 9, 1952), 3.

[58] See *El Universal* (March 6, 1952), 3.

[59] See *El Universal* (March 9, 1952), 9. The building was designed by Pedro Dupuy under control of General Motors Overseas Operations (Detroit).

presence of the automobiles (*figure 5.31*).[60] Another company with significant presence in Caracas was Pan American Airways; the opening of its new building in downtown on March 3rd (adjacent, by the way, to one of the Sears's stores), was promoted with its corresponding architectural image.[61]

Finally, one of the most conspicuous examples – and at the same time paradoxically subliminal – was the advertising campaign launched by S.C. Johnson in Venezuela. Under catchy messages, such as "let your children play in the parlor," "you don't need new furniture… what you need is Pride!," and "do what I did, and your nightmare of dirty floors will end," Johnson Wax usually displayed iconographically appealing advertisements in newspaper. Nevertheless, what was remarkable in its campaign was the ever-present drawing of the Johnson Wax Headquarters in Racine, Wisconsin, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1936. The caption said: "Offices and laboratories of Johnson Wax. In this famous tower, science and technical research determined the formula of the world's best wax polish."[62] Regarded as one of the most recognizable modern American buildings, the image of the Headquarters appeared always at the bottom of the advertisements, in high contrast, as a kind of signature (*figure 5.32*).

There is no doubt that the oil industry exerted a deep influence, directly or indirectly, on the Venezuelan culture. Such impact can be traced both in the material reality and the ideal imagery. The city (in this case, particularly Caracas) became a field where U.S. corporations displayed their power and influence. But the city (or at least some neighborhoods) also turned into a place for exchanges between both cultures. By way of ideal enclaves, these places reproduced the U.S. patterns of the oil camps. These enclaves, in turn, depended on the automobile, which ended up being integral part of the Venezuelan culture. After all, urban planning, oil industry investments, automobile industry, food industry, retailing, and

[60] See *El Universal* (March 2, 1952), 28; (March 5, 1952), 28; (March 7, 1952), 28; "Sears in San Martin. Today's Opening will increase purchases of national products" (March 3, 1952), 32; "Yesterday the new Sears Roebuck of Venezuela store opened. General Robert E. Wood attended the event" (March 4, 1952), 9; "Big Sears store Roebuck opened in Maracaibo" (March 8, 1952), 27.

[61] "Opened new building of Pan American Airways" *El Universal* (March 4, 1952), 9.

[62] See *El Universal* (March 6, 1952), 18; (March 13, 1952), 7; (March 19, 1952), 18.

architectural representation were totally interconnected in a whole project (understanding through this, not a personal plan, but a coherent, cohesive group of ideas). In this regard, print media played a very significant role; moreover, it was an irreplaceable part of such project. Also, bilateral exchanges were not just limited to trading operations. Venezuela became an attractor of American architects, while more and more Venezuelans graduated from U.S. university programs.

FIGURE 5.11
"And You… Have you seen the 1952 Ford?" Source: *El Universal* (March 16, 1952), 7.

FIGURE 5.12
"See the new Chevrolet 1952. New! Bright! Impressive! Powerful!" Source: *El Universal* (March 1, 1952), 5.

FIGURE 5.13
"Choose your 1952 Ford today. Ford models to satisfy all tastes." Source: *El Universal* (March 10, 1952), 7.

FIGURE 5.14
"Finally! The new Henry J. 1952 arrived in Caracas." Source: *El Universal* (March 18, 1952), 3.

FIGURE 5.16
"The universal Jeep, comes and gets it done!" Source: *El Universal* (March 14, 1952), cover.

FIGURE 5.15
"Unlimited power! Dodge Power Wagon (…) The most efficient multipurpose truck," doing the job in an oil field. Source: *El Universal* (March 19, 1952), 16.

FIGURE 5.17
"Mack trucks, famous for their power. Be modern with Mack, symbol of power around the World." Source: *El Universal* (March 18, 1952), 5.

Figure 5.18
Roger Halle, architect, Automobile Showroom for Studebaker, Packard, and Morris, Caracas, 1952. Source: *Architectural Forum* (Jan., 1955), 113.

Figure 5.19
"Now in the East, to give you more comfort and better service (…) See the magnificent building, specially designed," Studebaker, Packard, and Morris dealer, Bello Monte (next to Sears Roebuck), Caracas, 1952. Roger Halle, architect. Source: *El Universal* (March 8, 1952).

Figure 5.20
Don Hatch, Chrysler-Plymouth Showroom, Caracas, 1954. Plan: regular arrangement with some dynamic accents. Source: *Progressive Architecture* (March 1954), 103.

Figure 5.21
Don Hatch, Chrysler-Plymouth Showroom, Caracas, 1954. Interior view: transparency, contrasting materials, daring reinforced-concrete structure, and different programs under one single roof. Source: *Progressive Architecture* (March 1954), 103.

Figure 5.22
José Miguel Galia and Martín Vegas, Angloven, Caracas, 1954. Part of the exhibition area, the entrance marquee, and the service elevator (pierced brick wall on the right). Source: photo by Jorge Villota P., 2009.

Figure 5.23
J.M. Galia and M. Vegas, Angloven, Caracas, 1954. Notice the set of inclined reinforced-concrete stilts and some of the small, circular skylights on the dome. Source: photo by Jorge Villota P., 2009.

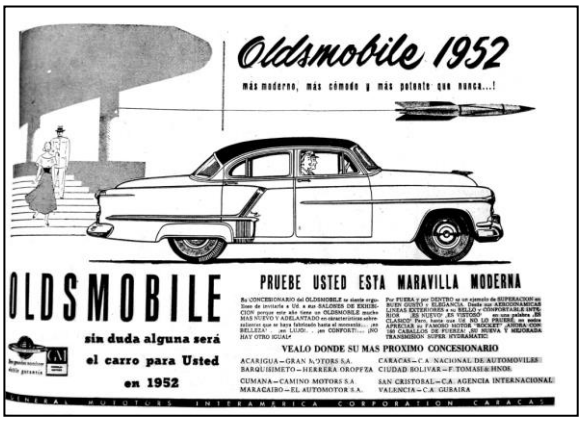

FIGURE 5.24
"Oldsmobile 1952. More modern, more comfortable and more powerful than ever (...) A sample of improvement, good taste and elegance." Source: *El Universal* (March 18, 1952), 23.

FIGURE 5.25
"Dictating new rules to the modern automobile industry. Chrysler 1952." Source: *El Universal* (March 9, 1952), 3.

FIGURE 5.26
Detail of the Figure 33, featuring the architectural representation of "El Automovil Universal." Source: *El Universal* (March 9, 1952), 3.

FIGURE 5.27
"See in our Exhibition Room the New Chevrolet 1952." Source: *El Universal* (March 6, 1952), 3.

FIGURE 5.29
"Incomparable luxury; accessible price. Buick." Source: *El Universal* (March 9, 1952), 9.

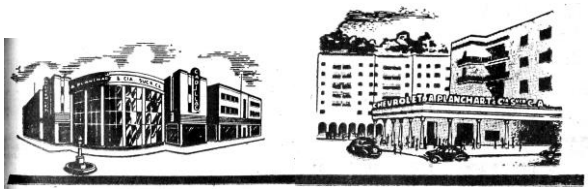

FIGURE 5.28
Details of Figure 5.27, featuring architectural images of the dealership. Source: *El Universal* (March 6, 1952), 3.

FIGURE 5.30
"Buick, con 'Dynaflow' transmission," detail of Figure 5.29 featuring the architectural representation of the Chevrolet dealership. Source: *El Universal* (March 9, 1952), 9.

Figure 5.31
Sears Roebuck of Venezuela, inauguration of its two new stores, in San Martin Avenue (Caracas) and Maracaibo, respectively. Notice the emphasis on the architectural representation of both stores. Source: *El Universal* (March 2, 1952), 29.

Figure 5.32
Johnson product advertisements for Liquid Wax Polish, Pride, and Glo-coat. Notice the drawing representing the Johnson Wax Headquarters in Racine, Wisconsin, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1936. Caption says: "Offices and laboratories of Johnson Wax. In this famous tower, science and technical research determined the formula of the world's best wax polish." Source: *El Universal* (March 6, 1952)18; (March 13, 1952), 7; (March 19, 1952), 18.

Chapter 6

Publications and Professional Formation

FIGURE 6.1
Covers of *Integral*, designed by Carlos González Bogen. Composition of photos by Jorge Villota P. Sources: *Integral* 1-12, 16 (Sept. 1955-Dec. 1959).

Now, people in Venezuela have just started understanding the profession.

Ernesto Fuenmayor Nava,
IX Pan-American Congress of Architects, 1955.

The designation of Caracas as the venue for
The Ninth Pan-American Congress of Architects,
implies a special responsibility to foster in this country
the discussion and dissemination of architectural problems.

Editorial, *Integral* 1, Sept. 1955.

They study at Harvard, MIT, and the Universidad Central de Venezuela…
(and) display more enthusiasm for baseball than soccer.

Judith Ewell,
Venezuela and the United States, 1996.

During the 1950s, young Venezuelan artists were closely involved with architecture via abstraction. Contrasting colors; geometric compositions in delicate balance; organic forms; abstract expressions; effects of transparency and movement, and sometimes slight winks to figurative art, were the most conspicuous characteristics of their works. They were deeply concerned with the expression of time, and particularly space in two-dimensional paintings. With such interest in mind, this generation of artists continuously sought the integration of art and architecture by means of multifaceted abstract expressions. Carlos González Bogen y Omar Carreño were part of this young group. Yet besides being artists, they both were also artistic directors of *Integral,* a new Venezuelan magazine (launched in 1955) devoted to architecture, urbanism, civil engineering, plastic arts, cinema, and folklore. Bogen and Carreño were responsible as well for the graphic design of each advertisement in the magazine. Moreover, by featuring their respective paintings on its covers, *Integral* turned out to be a sort of multifaceted artistic collection that ran uninterruptedly during the second half of the 1950s (*figure 6.1*).

The influence Venezuelan abstraction had received was as diverse as its expressions. Moreover, it mostly had come from Europe: Wassily Kandinsky, Antoine Pevsner, Naum Gabo, Piet Mondrian and Max Bill, among others. However, the ruling role Europe and particularly Paris had once played, had relocated to New York City after World War II. Abstract Expressionism, an American art movement started in the early 1940s, as well as significant initiatives (which included the Museum of Modern Art), had made New York a new artistic epicenter; an international meeting point. In this sense, *Integral* played in Venezuela a similar role as New York in the United States and abroad: gathering different points of view around *abstraction*, as well as reproducing and widely disseminating its artistic principles across society at large.

Yet *Integral* was not the only architectural magazine in Venezuela. As a matter of fact, the 1950s marked the birth of several local magazines in architecture, such as *Cruz del Sur* (1952), *A* (1954)*, Espacio y Forma* (1958), and *Revista S.V.A.* (1959). Not all of them had the same editorial line as *Integral*, however they all had a significant responsibility both in spreading technical knowledge and shaping Venezuelan taste, and even its *mentalité,* according to the canons of modernity (in a similar way as U.S. specialized periodicals had done with the American professional associations and the general public in the late nineteenth century, and continued to do so through the mid-20th century).

This editorial boom coincided with the increasing recognition of Venezuela as an international meeting point in architectural terms, and particularly the development of a very active, holistic professional exchange between Venezuela and the United States. The country turned out to be even a cultural tourism destination for its modern architecture (as sketches by Texan architect Karl Kamrath bore witness). A very complex network of events and relations (including magazines, professionals, and academic programs) would be built up. One of the most significant events of the time was the 9th Pan American Congress of Architects, held in Caracas in 1955. It was an opportunity to gather professionals from all over the Americas, including Lathrop Douglass, representing the American Institute of Architects, and Jorge Romero Gutiérrez, one of the coordinators of the Congress, among others. The latter, already a well-known architect at the time, was deeply involved in one of the projects presented on that

occasion: Higuerote Beach Resort, a vacation real-estate development near Caracas. This project exemplifies the significant influence that American periodicals exerted on architectural firms in Venezuela at the time.[1]

As part of this effervescent binational relationship, many Venezuelans either studied at U.S. universities or acquired professional experience in the United States (such as Carlos Guinand, Moisés Benacerraf, Gustavo Wallis, Alejandro Pietri, Tomás José Sanabria, Martín Vegas, Diego Carbonell and Julián Ferris), while a significant number of American architects (such as Don Hatch, Roger Halle, Emile Vestuti and Hartwell Morehouse Webb) developed their professional careers in Venezuela, either through private or official commissions. Others, neither Venezuelans nor Americans, had established their professional practice in Venezuela. A remarkable example of this was a young German architect, a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley: Dirk Bornhorst. He, along with Jorge Romero Gutiérrez and Pedro Neuberger (another immigrant, in this case from Europe, via South America) established *Arquitectura y Urbanismo*, the firm which would eventually design the Helicoid of Caracas.

THE LOCAL HARVEST: VENEZUELAN PERIODICAL PUBLICATIONS

Unlike the United States, Venezuelan production of specialized periodical publications in Architecture was not abundant. Moreover, it was only during the 1950s – and not in the nineteenth century – when they definitely appeared. An early publication, *El Cojo Ilustrado* (Spanish for either "the lame one erudite" or "the lame one illustrated"), had satisfied the general public's thirst for knowledge around the turn of the century. Every two weeks, from 1892 to 1915, *El Cojo Ilustrado* had brought general literary information, including poetry, prose narrative, biographies, art, music scores, scientific works, and particularly a significant number of photogravures and photographs accompanied by comments. It attempted to both acclimatize modernism within the local context and disseminate Venezuelan culture internationally. It also kept Venezuelans informed on the latest news and trends in Europe, particularly those in France

[1] A discussion about the 9th Pan American Congress of Architects, and a detailed account of Higuerote Beach Resort is presented in chapter 10.

(despite the fact that its first issue included an American novel, by Frank Barrett, translated as "Su Cara Mitad").

As for the engravings, *El Cojo Ilustrado* was very concerned about the themes and the quality of its illustrations. The main objective of its editors was "to introduce and establish in Venezuela the photogravure industry, which is of great worth in Europe and the United States."[2] In fact, *El Cojo Ilustrado* was much more richly illustrated, in terms of quantity and quality, than contemporary issues of *Harper's Magazine*'s in the United States. The magazine's editors had a special predilection for images representing eminent persons, customs, and national buildings.[3] Illustrations of Venezuelan monumental buildings appeared on some occasions, along with comments. But *El Cojo Ilustrado* was not a specialized professional magazine.

The first efforts to create (and eventually consolidate) a new tradition in specialized periodicals came from oil corporations. In 1939, the Creole Petroleum Corporation launched *El Farol*, a monthly magazine that would be published for thirty six years. Thirteen years later, Shell Caribbean Petroleum Company began publishing a quarterly magazine known as *Revista Shell*, which would last for ten years, until 1962. Characterized by the quality of their design, and by covering a broad list of topics, these corporate magazines played a significant role in spreading Venezuelan culture. A higher specialization, however, was yet to come. Also in 1939 the *Revista Municipal del Distrito Federal* (Municipal Magazine of the Federal District) was launched. This short-lived publication (just one issue) contained a complete report on the Monumental Plan of Caracas, devised by developer Maurice Rotival, and designed by architect Jacques Lambert. The Monumental Plan consisted of an urban renovation of Caracas' downtown based on Beaux-Arts principles. It would be the swan song of the French aesthetic values in Venezuela.[4] After World

[2] *El Cojo Ilustrado* 1, Jan. 1, 1892, 2.

[3] Ibid.

[4] The Monumental Plan will be analyzed in depth in chapter 7 of this dissertation, specifically in the subchapter "Another round against France: the Simón Bolívar Center."

War II, the European influence on Venezuela, in the urban and architectural arena, would be replaced by the United States' increasing leading role.[5]

The 1950s would see not only the appearance of new periodical publications, but also their gradual process of specialization. The first one was *Cruz del Sur* (Spanish for "Southern Cross"), a monthly left-wing magazine that lasted ten years, from 1952 to 1962. It was devoted to social science, philosophy, art, and science. However, it gradually increased its interest in architecture. A twelve-page supplement, entitled *Cruz del Sur, Arquitectura e Ingenieria*, began to be included during its first year. A series of reports on recent projects and completed buildings in Venezuela, urban planning, technical articles, as well as news and advertisements constituted the supplement. It counted on the contribution of significant architectural offices in Caracas, such as Vegas & Galia, Salvador & Fernández, Carbonel & Sanabria, Jorge Romero Gutiérrez, Vegas & Ferris, and Gustavo Wallis. After *Cruz del Sur*, several periodicals were launched, including *A* (1954-57, four issues, published by *Sociedad Editora A*), *Espacio y Forma* (1958-1990, 23 issues, published by *Universidad Central de Venezuela*), and *Revista S.V.A.* (1959-1963, published by *Sociedad Venezolana de Arquitectos*).[6] Nevertheless, because of the high quality of its design, production and contents, its projection (both national and international), its staff and contributors, and its holistic approach (in which Architecture is not another topic among several, but the topic that gathered many viewpoints), it was the magazine *Integral* that left a deeper mark both on the local architectural profession and Venezuelan society.

Integral was a bimonthly magazine devoted to Architecture, Urbanism, Engineering, Plastic Arts, Cinema and Folklore. Its strongest fields, however, were undoubtedly Architecture and Urbanism. Under the influence of Carlos González Bogen and Omar Carreño, Artistic Directors of the magazine, *Integral* showed also a determined interest in Plastic Arts. The magazine not only

[5] In this regard, see chapter 7 of this dissertation, specifically subchapters "The crown jewel: the University City," and "Here, there and everywhere: low-rent housing, tourism and more."

[6] A short reference to these publications, as well as to other Latin American periodicals, can be found in Ramón Gutiérrez and Jorge Rigau, ed. *Revistas de Arquitectura de América Latina, 1900-2000* (San Juan de Puerto Rico: La Nueva Escuela de Arquitectura, Universidad Politécnica de Puerto Rico, 2001).

published sections about modern art on a regular basis; it was per se a highly designed publication. Each issue demonstrated concern for its graphic design. Designed by Bogen and Carreño, all its covers were excellent examples of abstract and kinetic art (*figure 6.2*). Through its 16 issues, from 1955 to 1959, *Integral* exerted enormous influence both in the architectural practice and the professional reflection in Venezuela. It was also a "window" that exhibited the fast technical and aesthetical transformation of Venezuelan architecture during the 1950s.

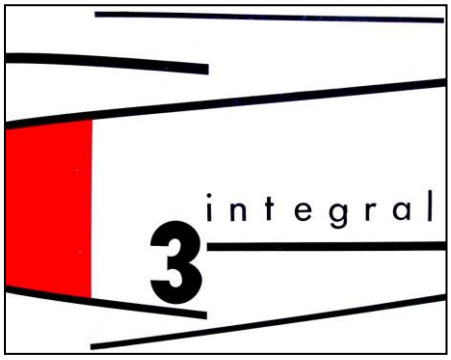

FIGURE 6.2
Cover of *Integral*, designed by Carlos González Bogen. Source: *Integral* 3 (1956).

The recent development of the country; the increasing presence of architecture in Venezuela and Latin America; the designation of Caracas as the venue for the IX Pan-American Congress of Architects, and the urgent need for a publication to fulfill both an informative and a formative role in Venezuelan society were, according to the first issue's editorial, the motives behind the launch of *Integral*. Its objectives, in consequence, were instructive, technical, ideological, and critical: to disseminate works realized by Venezuelan architects and enrich their theoretical and technical formation; to discuss and contribute to solving the big problems that Venezuelan architects were facing; to stimulate the incorporation of national elements into Venezuelan architecture; to stimulate the study, research and practice of new fields within architectural activity; to create a public awareness of both the professional practice of architecture and its principles; to defend the professional interests of architects and fight for the professional ethics' principles; to discuss the theoretical and practical problems of the architectural education; to inform about the works, experiences and problems of international architecture and foster the discussion of new trends in other countries, through its international contributors; to discuss the big questions related to Plastic Arts, and finally, to divulge and discuss the process related to other arts and industrial process, when related to architecture.[7]

[7] See *Integral* 1, Sept. 1955.

Integral's publisher was *Arquitectura y Urbanismo C.A.*, and relied on the sponsorship of the *Sociedad Venezolana de Arquitectos* and the *Centro Profesional del Este.* Its editorial committee was constituted by Jorge Romero Gutiérrez (President); Guido Bermúdez and Santiago Goiri (representatives of the Venezuelan Society of Architects); Diego Carbonell and Ernesto Fuenmayor (representatives of the *Centro Profesional del Este*). The executive staff, in turn, included Fruto Vivas (Technical Director); Carlos González Bogen and Omar Carreño (Artistic Directors); Violeta Roffe (Coordination), and *Arquitectura y Urbanismo C.A.* (Administration).[8]

Integral also had international projection. The list of its worldwide contributors was large: Alvar Aalto, André Bloc, Roberto Burle Marx, Felix Candela, Karl Brunner, Paul Lester Wiener, Rino Levi, Tomás Maldonado, Jaime L. Marqués, Hans Mauer, R.V. Gindertael, Oscar Niemeyer, Richard J. Neutra, Alfred Roth, Maurice Rotival, Pierre Vago, Juan José Yáñez, and Ernst Zietschmann. Each copy, on sale abroad, had a cost of US$4, while the one-year subscription was US$20.

These magazines were ideologically heterogeneous. However, there was another significant periodical during the 1950s, whose political alignment was both well-defined and exclusive. All the achievements of the government, as it is logical to assume in a totalitarian regime, had many means of diffusion. One of these means, perhaps the most efficient abroad, was undoubtedly *Venezuela Up-to-date,* a bulletin published by the Venezuelan Embassy in Washington D.C. This periodical reported monthly the government's achievements in several fields: architecture, art, infrastructure, industry (particularly the oil industry), technology, as well as diplomatic and commercial relations (especially with the United States). Somehow these fields defined clearly both an idea of Modernity and an idea of nation, linked integrally to each other by means of the New National Ideal.

[8] Ibid. For a deeper approach on Ernesto Fuenmayor and Fruto Vivas' works, see chapter 8 of this dissertation, specifically the subchapter "Supernaturalism." On Guido Bermúdez' work, see chapter 7, specifically the subchapter "Here, there and everywhere: low-rent housing, tourism and more."

Venezuela Up-to-date lasted 48 years, form 1949 to 1997. Regardless of the ideological alignment of the government of the time, it was one of the best official diffusion channels abroad. Also, like any periodical, it underwent a process of improvement through the years. Moreover, despite the fact that its approach was comprehensive, *Venezuela Up-to-date* showed an increasing architectural commitment during the 1950s. In fact, the bulletin ended up being one of the most important means of diffusion of modern architecture beyond the Venezuelan frontiers.

However, the proliferation of magazines and official publications was not an isolated process. In fact it coincided with the recognition of Venezuela as a potential center of modern architecture where multiple interests were about to converge. The professional practice and the academic formation would play a significant role.

VENEZUELA, 1950s: THE ARCHITECTURAL MEETING POINT

On January 3, 1993, *The New York Times'* obituary section announced Roger Halle's passing. According to his death notice, Halle had received a degree in Architecture from Princeton University, and had worked under Edward D. Stone and Wallace Harrison in the late 1940s. A major part of his career had been devoted to developing ways to reduce the cost of construction, and he had held patents in 17 countries for his work.[9] As an architect, he did not have a high profile; however he had been involved in strategically important commissions. He had helped produce the design for the United Nations Secretariat building, and had then started his own firm in New York City and Caracas.[10] Working at the Guinand & Benacerraf office, in 1950 Halle had designed the Montserrat Apartment Building, a seven-story block of luxurious

[9] "Roger Halle, 74, Dies; Aided Design for U.N.," *New York Times*, Jan. 3, 1993, section 1, 30. Halle also "helped in the preservation of the Halle Ravine and other nature preserves in Pound Ridge, N.Y., and was a founding trustee of the Lower Hudson chapter of the Nature Conservancy."

[10] Halle's office was located at 227 Park Avenue, New York. He was an AIA member from 1949 to 1964. See *American Architects Directory,* published under the sponsorship of American Institute of Architects (New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1956), 221.

one-room apartments, skillfully planned, in Altamira Plaza, Caracas. Each unit provided a well-articulated spatial complex. Its board-like facade alternated voids and tile grill portions in a singular way (*figure 6.3*).[11]

FIGURE 6.3
Roger Halle and Emile Vestuti, of Guinand & Benacerraf, Montserrat Apartment Building, Caracas, 1950. Source: *Venezuela Up-to-date* (Sept. 1954), 11.

The Guinand & Benacerraf office had been established in Caracas, in the late 1940s. Carlos Guinand Baldó graduated as an architect from Central University of Venezuela in 1948; he was part of the first cohort of the UCV School of Architecture. However, Guinand had previously studied at Harvard University. Moisés Benacerraf, in turn, had received his degree in Architecture from Yale University in 1947.[12] The office would be one of the first to foster the ideas of modern architecture in Venezuela. Apart from many significant architectural

[11] See Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *Latin American Architecture since 1945* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1955), 157.

[12] See Guido Bermúdez, *Diccionario del Arquitectura* (Caracas: Edición Venezolana, 1993), 111 and 296.

commissions, the firm also collaborated in the planning of three important projects by Josep Lluís Sert in Venezuela: Puerto Ordaz and Ciudad Piar, in Bolívar State, two mining towns for Orinoco Mining Co., and La Pomona neighborhood (jointly with the *Taller de Arquitectura del Banco Obrero,* TABO). Guinand & Benacerraf relied on a significant professional team as well. In fact, Halle was not alone in the Montserrat Apartment Building's design. He shared responsibility with a young architect, Emile Mario Vestuti (1927-1998), who also graduated from Yale, in 1949, and who had been hired by his former fellow student Benacerraf. Before graduating, Vestuti had worked at the Edward D. Stone office in New York, between 1946 and 1948, and at Coolidge & Granberry in New Haven, from 1947 to 1949. Once in Venezuela, he complemented his professional work in the firm with an academic activity at the Central University of Venezuela's School of Architecture and Urbanism, between 1958 and 1960.[13] Vestuti would eventually become an AIA member in 1967 (Baltimore Chapter), and finally professor at Simón Bolívar University's School of Architecture in the 1980s.[14]

However, the Montserrat was not what could be regarded as a standard building in 1950s Venezuela. As H.R. Hitchcock asserted, apartments were "still something of a novelty in Caracas," and despite specific cases, such as the Montserrat, most of those built up to then were "commonplace in design and tawdry in execution."[15] It was not by chance that Don Hatch, who had arrived in Venezuela in the late 1940s like Vestuti, made some observations on the local professional practice:

> Until 1948-49, the sort of professional architectural service that is familiar in the United States was almost unknown in Venezuela, the nearest thing to it being engineer-contractor offices that were the main source of building design. There were also a few

[13] See Azier Calvo Albizu, *Venezuela y el problema de su Identidad Arquitectónica* (Caracas: Universidad Central de Venezuela, Consejo de Desarrollo Científico y Humanístico, 2007), 462-463.

[14] At Simón Bolívar University, Vestuti validated his Architecture Degree in 1981. He received tenure in 1990, and then became Associate professor in 1991. See Simón Bolívar University, Academic Council, "Resolution 80-11;" Excecutive Council, "Resolution 81-01," "Resolution 90-4" and "Resolution 91-14."

[15] Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *Latin American Architecture since 1945*, 157.

> Beaux-Arts-trained architects, who worked mainly for the government. At about the time that *Oficina Don Hatch* was established, several young U.S.-educated Venezuelan and a number of Europeans also opened architectural offices there. Today, there are probably 20 to 30 architectural firms in the country.[16]

Shortly after Vestuti and Hatch had come to Venezuela, another American architect arrived in Caracas, almost one generation older, this time to run an official business; his name was Hartwell Morehouse Webb. A graduate of Columbia University, Webb had been part of Rockefeller's Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs during the 1940s, assigned initially to Brazil (where he had built hospitals in Belen and Rio de Janeiro), then to La Paz, Bolivia, in 1945, and finally to Guatemala, between 1946 and 1947.[17] Then he joined the Department of State's Office of Foreign Buildings Operations, receiving the commission for the US Ambassador's Residence in Lima, Perú, and the American Embassy in Bogotá, Colombia, where he stayed from 1949 to 1952.[18] Finally, he traveled to Caracas to supervise the construction of the US Embassy building, located in San Bernardino.[19]

But not all the firms based in Venezuela were "bilaterally" constituted. Among those 20 or 30 offices that Hatch mentioned, there was a particularly multifaceted one: *Arquitectura y Urbanismo*. Established by Jorge Romero Gutiérrez, the firm counted on the collaboration of Pedro Neuberger (coming from Europe, with academic formation and professional experience in South America), and Dirk Bornhorst, also coming from Europe, and graduated from the University of California at Berkeley.

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[16] "The Architect and his Community. Oficina Don Hatch: Caracas, Venezuela," *Progressive Architecture*, March 1954, 101.

[17] Julio Cárdenas R. and Carlos Sáenz de la Calzada, *Diccionario Biográfico de Venezuela* (Madrid: Mezquita Garrido y Compañía, 1953 [first edition]), 1,232.

[18] According to the *American Architects Directory* (1956, 589), Webb joined the FBO in 1944.

[19] This building, previous to the one designed by D. Hatch in La Floresta, was placed on Avila Av., San Bernardino (see Julio Cárdenas R. and Carlos Sáenz de la Calzada, *Diccionario Biográfico de Venezuela,* 1,232).

Beyond the professional practice of American architects, Venezuela also aroused interest as a cultural tourism destination, in this case, as a modern city. In 1959, Karl Fred Kamrath, a prominent Houston architect and a University of Texas alumnus, made an extensive tour of South America, which included Ecuador, Guatemala and Venezuela. Well-known during the 1950s, Kamrath had organized his own firm in 1937 with Fred MacKie Jr. (MacKie & Kamrath). By 1956 Kamrath already had to his credit a long list of buildings, including commercial, religious, health, public, military, and particularly educational projects.[20] He had held academic positions too, as a visiting critic at the University of Illinois (1949), the University of Texas (1950 and 1955), Texas A&M (1951), the University of Oregon (1952), and the University of Arkansas (1954).[21]

It was not the first time Kamrath made a foreign trip. By 1952 he had visited Germany, Holland, Switzerland, France, and England. He had been to Mexico as well. On the occasion of his South American tour, both *A.I.A. Journal* (Dec. 1959) and *Texas Architect* (Jan. 1960) published three of his drawings along with some comments. "Armed with a broad point pen and a heavy white paper sketch pad," said the note, "he used the ancient art of architectural sketching to capture some vivid impressions."[22] His sketches of Ecuador and Guatemala depicted an adobe kiln and a thatched hut, respectively. In the Venezuelan sketches, on the other hand, Kamrath showed very different scenes. One of them, the Meeting House in Simón Rodríguez Development (a

[20] Previously, from 1934 to 1936, he had worked at Pereira & Pereira, a firm organized in 1931 by Hal Pereira and William Pereira. See *American Architects Directory,* published under the sponsorship of American Institute of Architects (New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1956), 287, 428; *American Architects Directory* (1962), 364; *American Architects Directory* (1970), 471. Karl Kamrath (1911-1988) was admitted into the AIA in 1939, and became FAIA in 1955. He was president of the Houston AIA chapter in 1960, and was also elected to the University of Texas Longhorn Hall of Fame in 1978.

[21] See *American Architects Directory* (1962), 364. See also Alexander Architectural Archive, University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin. Texas Archival Resources on Line, Karl Kamrath: an Inventory of his Collection, 1918-2004, http://www.lib.utexas.edu/taro/utaaa/00065/aaa-00065.html (Accessed 7/6/2013). He would also serve as Chairman of the Frank Lloyd Wright Memorial Committee, from 1960 to 1962.

[22] "South of the Border," drawing by Karl Kamrath. *Texas Architect*, Jan. 1960, 10.

workers apartment complex) showed a double vault enhanced with contrasting colors (*figure 6.4*). The scene depicted in his second sketch was even more striking: a cylindrical modern building and a cable car support tower rising amid an exuberant landscape, while a couple of cabins moved along the cables. In the lower left-hand corner, a logogram could be seen, as well as the building's name: Hotel Humboldt (*figure 6.5*). Such modern, industrial forms and objects in movement contrasted with the traditional forms and the static way through which he had depicted Quito and Santa María de Jesús in Guatemala. In the futuristic silhouette of the Humboldt Hotel, Kamrath probably found echoes of Wright's Price Tower or even the Johnson Wax Research Tower. Such a sui generis scene (a Wrightian building arising in the middle of a tropical jungle at 9,000 feet) was likely extremely engaging to Kamrath.

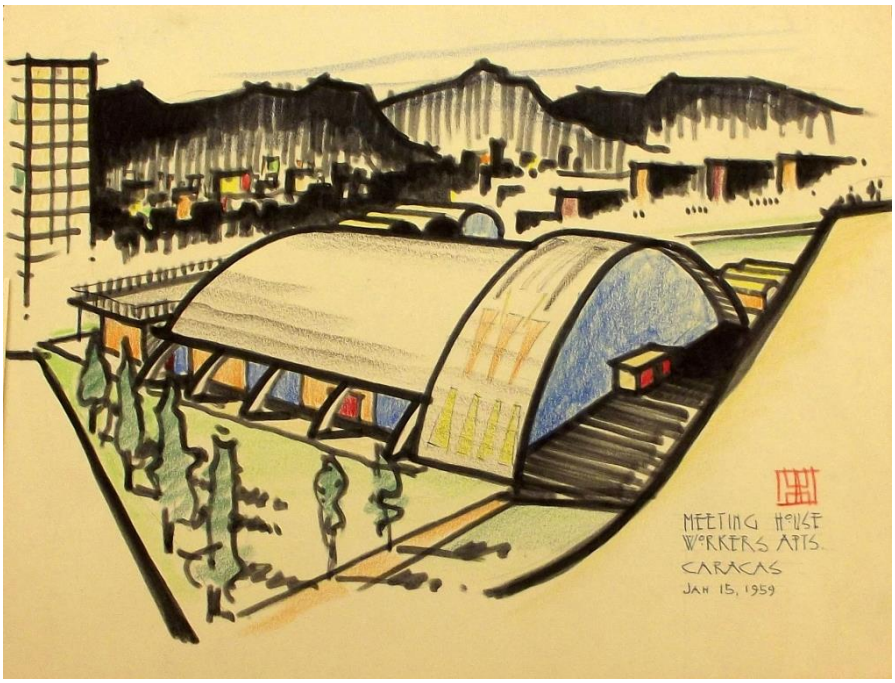

FIGURE 6.4
Carlos R. Villanueva, Meeting House, Workers Apartments (Simón Rodríguez Development), Caracas, 1956-57. Drawing by Karl Kamrath during his tour of South America in 1959. Source: Alexander Architectural Archive, The University of Texas at Austin.

FIGURE 6.5
Tomás J. Sanabria, Humboldt Hotel, Caracas, completed 1956, and cable car system. Drawing by Karl Kamrath during his tour of South America in 1959. Source: Alexander Architectural Archive, The University of Texas at Austin. A black-and-white reproduction of the sketch was also published in *A.I.A. Journal* (Dec. 1959), 53, and *Texas Architect* (Jan. 1960), 10.

THE UNITED STATES, 1950s: ANOTHER MEETING POINT

As remarkable as the presence of American architects in Venezuela was the academic formation of Venezuelans in the United States. Traditionally linked to Civil Engineering, the title of Architect in Venezuela had been issued by the School of Engineering (Central University of Venezuela) since 1881, until 1941, when the School of Architecture was founded. In this regard, the new four-year program in Architecture inaugurated in 1944.[23] Likewise, the Venezuelan Society of Architecture or *Sociedad Venezolana de Arquitectura* (S.V.A.) was established in 1945; among its founders were Luis Eduardo Chataign, Cipriano Domínguez, Enrique García Maldonado and Carlos Raúl Villanueva, all with French influence (either for academic formation or through family tradition).[24]

After World War II, however, the situation began changing gradually, and by the 1950s, the U.S. influence on the university formation (as academic attractor) was undeniable.[25] Actually, the case of Moisés Benacerraf in Yale was not the only one. After having graduated as Civil Engineer from the Central University of Venezuela (1921), Gustavo Wallis worked at Albert Kahn's office

[23] In this regard, see Juan José Martín Frechilla, *De Vientos a Tempestades. Universidad y Política a Propósito de la Renovación Académica en la Escuela de Arquitectura* (Caracas: Facultad de Arquitectura y Urbanismo, Universidad Central de Venezuela, 2007), chapter 2.

[24] See Ana Margarita Blanco et al., "La Sociedad Venezolana de Arquitectos," *Entre Rayas* (65 Años de la Creación de la S.V.A.) 84, Aug. 2010, 22. The other S.V.A. founders were Rafael Bergamín, Heriberto González Méndez and Roberto Henríquez.

[25] The general number of Venezuelans enrolled in academic programs in the United States (including all the disciplines, not just architecture) considerably rose during the 1950s. In 1942, there were one hundred twenty four Venezuelan citizens studying in US colleges and universities. This number increased to nine hundred forty one in 1955, and finally to one thousand one hundred twenty seven in 1959. Moreover, Venezuela had been one of the first Latin American countries to allocate scholarship funds for research in foreign lands (as early as 1909), particularly in the United States. See Teresa Brawner Bevis and Christopher J. Lucas, *International Students in American Colleges and Universities* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 63, 116, 144 and 151.

from 1923 to 1926.[26] Sixteen years later, in 1942, Wallis would design Piedra Azul House, located in Caracas, the finest example of Wrightesque architecture in Venezuela. The use of stone and stucco, and the display of cantilevered balconies showed a strong influence of Fallingwater (completed three years before). Another case was Alejandro Pietri, who would gain prestige for the organic character of his structures, was a student of Bruce Goff; before graduating from Central University of Venezuela in 1955, Pietri had studied three years at The University of Oklahoma.[27] However, perhaps the most influential of all of them was Tomás José Sanabria, who graduated from Harvard University's GSD in 1947, and whose diploma had been signed by no less a person than Walter Gropius. When Sanabria returned to Venezuela he befriended two MIT graduates, Diego Carbonell (designer of *Residencias La Hacienda*)[28] and Juan Andrés Vegas.[29] The latter, in turn, collaborated on several works with Julián Ferris, who had received a bachelor in Architecture from Syracuse University, 1947.[30] One of those works was the Laguna Beach Club, a recreational housing project located in Vargas State (near Caracas), and completed in 1955. The building, which fulfilled the main Corbusian principles (volume lifted from the ground and a terrace that recalled the *Unité d'Habitation*), featured a façade treatment with pierced concrete blocks. The combination of light-shadow and transparency-

[26] See Orlando Marín, "Los Estudios de Arquitectura en la Academia de Bellas Artes de Caracas (1887-1917), Informe 1, Doctorado en Arquitectura, Facultad de Arquitectura y Urbanismo, Universidad Central de Venezuela, July 2013.

[27] See Bermúdez, *Diccionario del Arquitectura,* 433, and Orlando Marín, "La Nación Representada: la arquitectura de los pabellones de Venezuela en las exposiciones internacionales durante el siglo XIX," Dissertation, Master Degree in History of Architecture and Urbanism (Caracas, Universidad Central de Venezuela, 2006), 217.

[28] See chapter 5 of this dissertation, subchapter "An enclave for exchanges."

[29] J.A. Vegas would eventually win the National Award of Architecture *(Premio Nacional de Arquitectura*) in 1994.

[30] Ferris was a member of the National Commission of Urbanism (*Comisión Nacional de Urbanismo*) and Dean of the School of Architecture and Urbanism at the Central University of Venezuela (Facultad de Arquitectura y Urbanismo, UCV), 1958-59. He was President of the Jury for the *VI Bienal de São Paulo*, Brazil, 1961. *Premio Nacional de Arquitectura,* 1965, and Honorary Doctorate from Syracuse University, 1978. See Julián Ferris, "La Arquitectura es la Expresión Plástica de lo que Ocurre en el Mundo," *Punto* 7, May 1962.

opacity created a remarkable visual effect (*figure 6.6*). Carbonell, in turn, reflected a Niemeyer-esque influence in Las Fundaciones Building, located in Caracas, and completed in 1956. This eight-story office slab, totally air-conditioned, had an exhibition area and stores, all distributed in a base volume (first floor and mezzanine) which was roofed by a six-centimeter-thick undulating shell (*figure 6.7*).

However, the watershed office building in Venezuela had come two years earlier; on this occasion an IIT graduate would be behind it. In February 1955, *Venezuela Up-to-date* (the official organ of Venezuela in the United States) published a note on a new skyscraper in Caracas; a "novel glass building added to the Caracas skyline." It was the Polar Tower (*figure 6.8*). Among the scores of new structures completed every month, the Polar building stood out for its novelty in the field of modern architecture.[31] The purity of its composition and sheerness of its facades were coherent with the ingenuity of its structural system. Its steel frame had been covered on all four sides with aluminum plates and glass panes "to insure access of sunlight to the utmost." A unique feature consisted of the three-story base volume, separated from the tower per se (supported, in turn, by two parallel blocks of reinforced concrete). Consequently, it left a large terrace atop the third floor, all around and under the remaining fifteen floors of the building. Its program was not traditional (or at least, the combination of many functions was uncommon): on the terrace there was located a restaurant for 500 people and a dance floor; a theater with 1,300 seats was located on the main floor, as well as an auditorium for 280 persons, and a television broadcasting station. Under the building there were two underground parking lots for 100 cars each.[32]

Polar Tower faced Plaza Venezuela, very close to Don Hatch's Chrysler-Plymouth Showroom (actually, almost side by side). It was the first building in Venezuela to use the curtain-wall system; a modern tradition that the Seagram Building and the Lever House had inaugurated in New York City. It had been designed by José Miguel Galia and Martín Vegas, the same firm

[31] "Novel Glass Building Added to Caracas Skyline," *Venezuela Up-to-date*, Feb. 1955, 16.

[32] Ibid.

responsible for Angloven. Galia, an Argentine architect (graduated at the University of Montevideo, Uruguay, 1944), had arrived in Caracas in 1948. Vegas, in turn, had studied from the Illinois Institute of Technology, and graduated in 1949. They joined together in 1951.[33] Besides its technological innovation, the Polar Tower brought a dramatic transformation to Caracas' skyline (*figure 6.9*).

There is no doubt that Venezuela was a meeting point during the 1950s. But, more than just an architectural destiny, it was a place where multiple interests converged. On March 4, 1952, *El Universal* published a couple of articles on the respective openings in Caracas of Sears Roebuck's new store on San Martin Avenue, and the Pan American World Airways' new building on Urdaneta Avenue. Curiously, both articles shared the same page. The inaugurations had happened the day before, and had counted respectively on the presence of General Robert E. Wood, President of Sears Worldwide, as well as Colonel J. Murdock, President of Sears Venezuela, and Humphrey Toomey, aviation pioneer and manager of Pan American World Airways' Latin American Division, who had come especially for the event.[34] Both news stories included photomontages showing, besides those personages, the architectural image of their respective buildings. Four days later General Wood inaugurated another Sears store, this time in Maracaibo, Zulia State.[35] One day later *El Universal* informed its readers about the arrival in Caracas of the Head of Caterpillar's Worldwide Publicity Department, who was carrying out a tour of inspection in several Caribbean countries.[36] In spite of the significance of such events, they were not unusual in the 1950's Venezuela; their frequency was actually very remarkable. The strategic importance of these visits and the complex network of relations are put into

[33] Galia (1919-2009) received the *Premio Nacional de Arquitectura* in 1973, while Vegas (1926-2012) won it in 1998. Juan Andrés Vegas was Martín's brother.

[34] See "Se Inauguró Ayer la Nueva Tienda de la 'Sears Roebuck de Venezuela.' Asistió al Acto el General Robert E. Wood," *El Universal*, March 4, 1952, 9, and "Se Inauguró el Nuevo Edificio de la P.A.A." *El Universal*, March 4, 1952, 9.

[35] See "Gran Establecimiento de la Sears Roebuck Inaugurado en Maracaibo," *El Universal*, March 8, 1952, 27.

[36] "Llega Jefe de Publicidad de la Caterpillar," *El Universal*, March 9, 1952, 32.

perspective when even publishers come into the picture. In March 1958, *Venezuela Up-to-date* issued a note on a group of U.S. newspapers editors and publishers that visited Venezuela during one week, sponsored by Creole Petroleum Corporation.[37] Bilateral relations between Venezuela and the United States, when concerning architecture and representativeness, proved to be particularly deep; their tentacles were numerous.

Coinciding with an increasing international recognition, Venezuela saw an editorial boom during the 1950s. Periodicals in architecture played a significant role vis-à-vis the local professional practice. They reported not just the latest projects and technological achievements; they proved to be inspirational during the design process. They also managed to gather and interconnect interests of different natures, creating a complex professional network. *Integral* even had an international distribution. Similarly, U.S. magazines proved to have a huge penetration in local offices of architecture. Meanwhile, *Venezuela Up-to-date,* the official organ of diffusion in the United States, showed an increasing architectural commitment throughout the decade.

A very active professional exchange between both countries started at the time. Venezuela became attractive not just for international investments, but to U.S. architects as well. Some of them came on official business; others, for personal decisions or private commissions. Likewise, many Venezuelans earned architectural degrees at U.S. universities. Everyone, American and locals, played a significant role in modernizing the country and transforming its culture.

Yet the modernization process in Venezuela turned out to have an even broader scale. The oil revenues, the bilateral relations between both countries, and the right-wing political regime in Venezuela at the time led to a huge official building program, which attempted to transform both the landscape and the Venezuelan *mentalité* per se. Devised by President Marcos Pérez Jiménez during the cold war, the program gathered public works of different nature as well as

[37] *Venezuela Up-to-date*, March 1958, 11. The visitors were David Kruidenier, Executive V.P. of *Des Moines Register Tribune*; E.K. Gaylor of *Oklahoma City Times* and *Oklahoman*; J.N. Heiskill of *Arkansas Gazette*; Mr. Robert Brown of *Editor and Publisher magazine*; J. Knight of *Charlotte Observer*, and Richard Jones of *Tulsa Tribune*.

public-private investments. Its architectural commitment, in this sense, was remarkable. It would be eventually known as the New National Ideal.

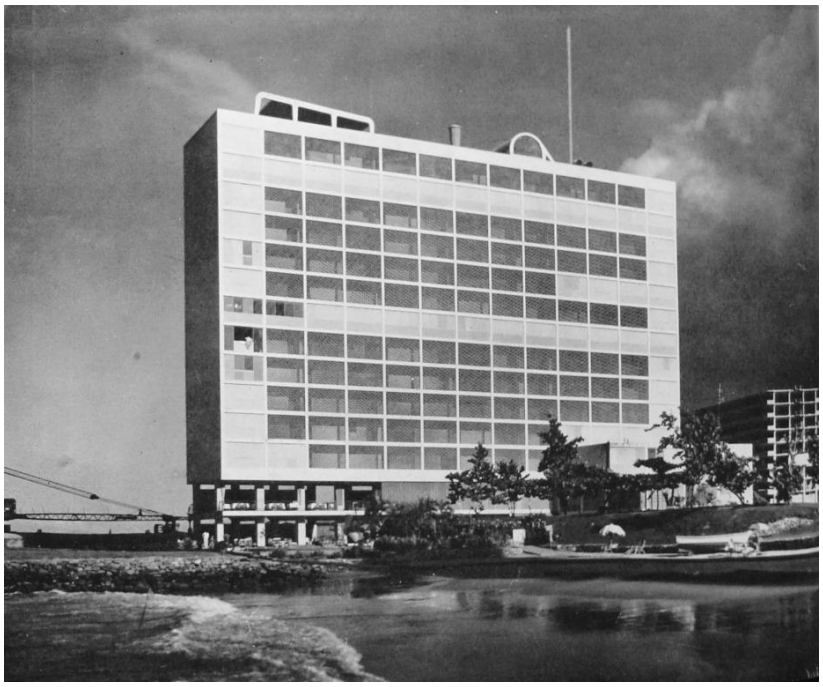

FIGURE 6.6
Juan Andres Vegas, Julian Ferris and Carlos Dupuy, Laguna Beach Club, Vargas State (near Caracas), 1955. Source: *Integral* 1, Sept. 1955.

FIGURE 6.7
Diego Carbonell, Las Fundaciones Building, Caracas, *ca.* 1956. Source: *Integral* 4, 1956.

FIGURE 6.8
José Miguel Galia and Martín Vegas, Polar Tower, Caracas, 1954. Notice the luminous sign of Don Hatch's Chrysler-Plymouth Showroom (on the right). Source: *Venezuela Up-to-date*, Feb. 1955.

FIGURE 6.9
José Miguel Galia and Martín Vegas, Polar Tower (still under construction) in Plaza Venezuela, Caracas. View from the East Highway (recently inaugurated), *ca.* 1953-54. Notice also the Chrysler-Plymouth Showroom by Don Hatch (red circle). Source: *Venezuela bajo el Nuevo Ideal Nacional* (Caracas, 1954).

Chapter 7

The Day that Venezuela “seized” the U.S.: Geopolitical Exchanges and National Policies

FIGURE 7.1
Rededication of the Liberator’s Statue in New York City, April 19, 1951. Source: *Venezuela Up-to-date* (May 1951), 6.

For the occasion, girls from U.S. colleges
and New York came as special guests.
Waltzes and rhumbas were equally popular
and all the girls were enthusiastic pupils
of South American dance steps.

Venezuela Up-to-date,
on the official visit of Venezuelan cadets to NYC, 1951

I've been reading recently a lot about the "integration of the arts."

Mies van der Rohe,
interview published in *Punto*, 1965.

April 19th, 1951: The sun broke through a darkened sky, while a group of Venezuelan cadets, led by the impressive figure of Simón Bolívar, The Liberator, are preparing to seize the city of New York! Strangely, such an uncommon event is being observed and recorded by the watchful eye of cameras and reporters. The Voice of America is also present. An astonished throng carefully watches the course of this historic episode. The contextual circumstances are even more bizarre. Waving flags of the United States and Venezuela, and several martial bands performing colorful fanfares, instead of an invasion, seem to frame a very pleasant celebration; a friendly "seizure" (*figure 7.1*).

This was the commemoration of the 141st anniversary of Venezuelan Independence, held in New York City. For the occasion, both governments rededicated an equestrian statue of Simón Bolívar, which had stood for 30 years on a small hill called the Knoll, in Central Park. Originally dedicated by President Warren G. Harding in 1921, the statue had been one of the earliest works of American sculptor Sally James Farnham, who had begun to work on it in 1901.

The master of ceremonies of the event was Robert Moses, Park Commissioner of New York, who first introduced Francis Joseph Spellman, Cardinal Archbishop of New York, and then L. E. Gómez Ruiz, Venezuelan Foreign Minister, responsible for the presentation of the statue. The ceremony was attended by hundreds of important dignitaries, and according to the official accounts, by a

general audience of 15,000, which filled 59th Street and overflowed into the park. The event was broadcast to Latin America by the U.S. State Department's "Voice of America," and later rebroadcast to the U.S. by domestic stations. The statue unveiling, in turn, had been accomplished by electronic controls operated by President of the Government Junta, Germán Suárez Flamerich, from Miraflores Palace in Caracas. Immediately later, his voice was heard through the amplifiers "as clearly as if he were present;"[1] then, a special message from President Truman at the White House was read to the audience.

More than one year later, on December 2, 1952, another member of the Government Junta, Colonel Marcos Pérez Jiménez, ignoring the results of a constitutional election, took over the Venezuelan presidency. Shortly thereafter, Dwight Eisenhower became (democratically) the 34th President of the United States. Ties between both nations, however, would continue to strengthen as American oil companies considerably expanded their activities in the country. The Cold War context, together with the strategic geographical location of Venezuela, its natural energy-oriented resources, and its particular political conjuncture, implied an ideological alignment between Venezuela and the United States of America. The bilateral relationship was so intense and close that even a national-regional connection, between Venezuela and Texas, was developed during that time.

In 1953 Pérez Jiménez launched a government doctrine that would guide (and justify) all the official works during the next five years. Deeply inspired by both idealism and technological pragmatism, the New National Ideal or *Nuevo Ideal Nacional* (as it was known) led to rapid modernization of the country. Its objectives were both the progressive transformation of the physical environment and the comprehensive improvement of the Venezuelan people. The large list of public and private works carried out during this period, and guided by such doctrine, included, among others, the Caracas-La Guaira Highway; the Urdaneta avenue; the East Highway; the Covered Plaza and the *Aula Magna* (among others), at the University City, designed by architect Carlos Raúl Villanueva; the 32-story-twin towers of Simón Bolívar Center;

[1] A detailed account of the event was featured in *Venezuela Up-to-date*, May 1951, 1, 6.

the Tamanaco Hotel; the Humboldt Hotel on El Avila Mountain, and the cable car system; the Vacation City Los Caracas, in addition to hospitals, educational buildings, military installations, and especially the National Plan of Housing. Finally, as might be expected, the military nature of the New National also embraced both electrical power and basic industries, such as steel.

However, apart from the broad scope of bilateral relations and political programs, architectural production achieved unprecedented levels. Villanueva's explorations in the University City must be regarded as phenomenological and holistic. He managed to integrate architecture, art, landscape treatment, and local climate (including natural light and environmental comfort) into a whole spatial experience. The plastic use of reinforced concrete and his combination of modern elements and traditional vocabulary (including pierced screen walls, louvers, glazed ceramic tiles, overhangs and *brise soleils*), difficult to categorize, seemed to go beyond both the organic architecture and the experiments in Regionalism, very common at the time.

Such a rapid, deep process of modernization, as held by the New National Ideal, also implied a transformation of how people saw themselves. The construction of Venezuelan modern myths was about to begin.

A "GOOD NEIGHBOR" IN THE COLD WAR: PÉREZ JIMÉNEZ AND EISENHOWER

The visit of the Venezuelan cadet corps – 314 strong with 22 officers – to New York City (or their "week's invasion of good-will")[2] was not a unique occasion. Exchanges between Venezuela and the United States, also including military development training, were taken on a regular basis by Venezuelan officers on American soil. Like those young cadets and officers that "seized" New York in 1951, Marcos Pérez Jiménez also had visited the United States in 1946, on a mission of the then Minister of War and Navy. The one who would be President of Venezuela seven years later, was at the time Army Chief of Staff. This was a very dynamic period, in international terms, which represented a rapid economic expansion for Venezuela. The Second World War had had a

[2] "Cadets 'Seize' New York and Made Many Friends," *Venezuela Up-to-date*, May 1951, 17.

deep impact on Venezuela's domestic economy – and even politics. The Cold War's international conditions "fueled the rising demand for Venezuelan oil: the rebuilding of Europe, the U.S. arms build-up, the spread of U.S. multinational corporations overseas, the Korean War, the attempted nationalization of Iranian oil, and especially the Suez crisis."[3] In a period of ten years, from 1947 to 1957, Venezuelan domestic oil production expanded. Moreover, foreign oil companies – particularly American – "felt secure in Venezuela and reciprocated. During this period they expanded their activities considerably."[4]

Framed by the Cold War conditions, the strategic geographical location of Venezuela, its natural energy-oriented resources, and its domestic political conjuncture at the time, an ideological alignment was implied between Venezuela and the United States of America (*figure 7.2*). In 1954, the then Venezuelan President, Colonel Pérez Jiménez, was awarded by U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower, the Legion of Merit, Degree of Chief Commander. That was the highest military decoration that the United States conferred on foreign personages. The ceremony took place on November 12, at the U.S. Embassy in Caracas (*figure 7.3*). American Ambassador Fletcher Warren made the presentation on behalf of President Eisenhower:

"The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress July 20, 1942, has awarded the Legion of Merit, Degree of Chief Commander, to His Excellency, Colonel Marcos Pérez Jiménez President of the Republic of Venezuela for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services:"

> His Excellency, Colonel Marcos Pérez Jiménez, as President of the Republic of Venezuela, and previously, has demonstrated a spirit of friendship and cooperation with the United States. The sound economic, financial and foreign investment policies advocated and pursued by his administration have contributed greatly to the economic well-being of

[3] Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State. Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 180.

[4] Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State. Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 182.

> his country and to the rapid development of its tremendous resources. These policies, judiciously combined with far-reaching public works program, have remarkably improved its education, sanitation, transportation, housing and other important basic facilities. All of these developments have advanced the general welfare of the Venezuelan people. His indefatigable energy and his singleness of purpose have greatly strengthened the ability of the Venezuelan Armed Forces to participate in the collective defense of the Western Hemisphere.[5]

Geopolitics and domestic politics – in both countries – were so integrated that the U.S. Post Office Department issued 4 and 8-cent Simón Bolívar "Champion of Liberty" stamps, which were first placed on sale in Washington, D.C., on July 24, 1958, coinciding with the anniversary of the birth of *El Libertador* (*figure 7.4*).[6]

Apart from all the exchanges that characterized the bilateral relationship between Venezuela and the United States during the 1950s, there was another type of exchange, a very sui generis one, which involved not two countries, but a country and a specific state. Texas and Venezuela shared not only a geographical proximity (almost vicinity), but the same kind of industry, and even (as some officials said) the same character.

REGIONAL-NATIONAL CONNECTIONS: TEXAS-VENEZUELA

In June of 1951, the Venezuelan Ambassador, Dr. Antonio Araujo, made a five-day visit to Texas at the invitation of Governor Allan Shivers, and the Texas Mid-Continental Oil and Gas Association. He stayed in Dallas, Tyler, Snyder, Abilene, Palacios, and particularly in Austin, where he inspected the installations of the University of Texas and the Texas Railroad Commission. Dr. Araujo was accompanied by the Minister Counselor for Petroleum Affairs at the Embassy, Dr. Jose Martorano Battisti; Counselor Miguel Angel Burelli Rivas; Lieutenant Colonel Luis A. Calderon, Military Attaché, and Lieutenant Colonel J.M. Castro Leon, Venezuelan

[5] "President of Venezuela Honored by United States," *Venezuela Up-to-date*, Dec. 1954, 3.

[6] See "Bolívar Honored in U.S. Stamp," *Venezuela Up-to-date*, Aug. 1958, 10.

representative to the Inter-American Defense Board.[7] Apart from the University of Texas at Austin, the itinerary also included "the inspection of gas distribution systems, salt water disposal plants, oil fields and refineries, and aluminum manufacturing plants."[8]

The Venezuelan commission returned "extremely pleased at the many courtesies received from their host and the friendly welcome of the Texas people."[9] Governor and Mrs. Shivers had given a dinner in honor of the Venezuelan Ambassador and his entourage at the recently opened Commodore Perry Hotel in Austin. Dr. Araujo was presented with a plaque bearing the Governor's signature on a map of Texas with the state's seal and the Venezuelan's coat of arms as well (*figure 7.5*).[10] He, in turn, gave the Governor a flag of Venezuela "as a token of the friendly relations existing between Venezuela and Texas."[11] The President of the Good Neighbor Commission of Texas, oil magnate Neville G. Penrose, presented Dr. Araujo with a gold lapel button, "making him an Honorary Member of the Commission."[12] The Venezuelan Ambassador was made an honorary member of the Abilene Petroleum Club. Finally, the President of Texas Mid-Continent Oil and Gas Association, Jake L. Hamon, presented each member of the Venezuelan commission with "the famous Texas 5-gallon hat."

[7] *Venezuela Up-to-date,* July 1951, 26.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid. The Good Neighbor Commission of Texas was established by Governor Coke R. Stevenson in 1943. The purpose of this six-person commission was "to handle, solve and improve social, cultural, and economic relations and problems among Mexican American living in Texas." It also aimed to ease relations between Texas and other Latin American countries (Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Texas Archival Resources on Line, "A Guide to the Good Neighbor Commission Records, 1949-1950," http://www.lib.utexas.edu/taro/utcah/01660/cah-01660.html [Accessed July 7, 2013]).

Dr. Araujo was the first ambassador to visit Austin since the British Ambassador, Lord Halifax, in April 1942. Received by Governor Coke R. Stevenson, Lord Halifax had paid an official visit to maintain morale of British pilots training in Texas and to dedicate a new cemetery to those servicemen who had fallen.[13]

Almost one year after Dr. Araujo's visit, on May 9, Governor Shivers proclaimed "Venezuelan Day" in Texas. The occasion had been a good will visit to Caracas by fifty-four Texan businessmen, industrialists and professionals, all members of the Fort Worth Boat Club. They and their wives had sailed from New Orleans to La Guaira aboard the Alcoa Clipper, "carrying a special greeting from Governor Shivers to the Governor of the Federal District, Lt. Col. (R) Guillermo Pacanins, together with a flag of the Lone Star State."[14] The Venezuelan flag "waved from every public building in Fort Worth and in the largest cities of the State."[15]

This Good Will Mission's members were received in La Guaira by the port's Prefect and two councilmen. Once in Caracas, they paid a visit to Mr. Fletcher Warren, the U.S. Ambassador, in his new official residence located on a splendid hill overlooking the capital city, in La Florida neighborhood (*figure 7.6*).[16] "For us Texans," said Mr. John Scott (a lawyer who had made the invitations at Mr. Shivers' suggestion), "Venezuela is a country very much like Texas." They have much "the same petroleum economy, some sections of Venezuela look like Texas, and even the

[13] Lord Halifax had come specifically to visit the Royal Air Force training facility at Terrell, Texas. The facility was officially known as the Number One British Flying Training School. See Tom Killebrew, *The Royal Air Force in Texas: Training British Pilots in Terrell during World War II* (Denton, Texas: University of North Texas Press, 2003), "Introduction," 2. During his visit in Austin, Lord Halifax visited the University of Texas.

[14] *Venezuela Up-to-date,* June 1952, 10.

[15] Ibid.

[16] For the location of the U.S. Ambassador's Residence see *Guía-Plano de Calles, Inmuebles y Comercios de Caracas*. Caracas, Compañía Anónima Sistemas ARS / CIT Compañía anónima, 1960, 36.

character of the people is similar."[17] We want "more Texans to know Venezuela," he asserted. And this would certainly happen.

In January, 1955, several members of the East Texas Chamber of Trade Tour visited Caracas. The tour was not strictly a business trip, "but rather part of the organization's effort to acquaint the members with the lands and opportunities to the south, as well as to stress the importance of inter-American trade."[18] The group was impressed with Venezuela's progress, and particularly "with the public works program, agricultural projects, industrial development, and the favorable field for a free enterprise system."[19] It was not the first time, however, that such groups visited Caracas. It had been, actually, the third tour sponsored by the Chamber to visit Venezuela since 1952.

The frequency of such visits was not by accident. During the 1950s, there were thirteen Venezuelan consulates altogether in the United States, distributed in ten states and one unincorporated territory: Alabama, California, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Texas and the Panama Canal Zone. Of all of these, only two states had more than one consulate office: California and Texas. Besides its consulate offices in Galveston and Houston, Venezuela had also consulates *ad hororem* in San Antonio (Mr. William Negley) and Galveston (Mr. Filberto Galván).[20]

Very likely, Mr. Scott was right. Texans and Venezuelans probably shared some similar landscapes, and even the character of their people. However, apart from those aspects, there were two structural reasons to explain such closeness. The first one, as expected, was the oil

[17] Ibid.

[18] "Texans Visit Caracas Again," *Venezuela Up-to-date,* Feb. 1955, 6.

[19] Ibid.

[20] See, for instance, *Venezuela Up-to-date,* Nov. 1952. Today, just eight cities in the United States have Venezuelan consulate offices: Boston, Chicago, Houston, New Orleans, New York, San Francisco, San Juan and Washington.

economy. The second one, in turn, was very simple: the geographical proximity between Venezuela and Texas. Both factors – not only one or the other – made possible this level of exchange. In 1957, on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Jersey Standard, *The Lamp* published a special issue on the corporation's achievements since 1882. During those 75 years, probably "the most eventful period in the history of mankind,"[21] Standard had reached a major position worldwide. Among the information provided by such retrospective, there were two eloquent maps describing the Jersey Standard's activities in both the Eastern and the Western hemispheres. As for the latter, Standard counted on large domestic affiliates, particularly Humble Oil and Refining Co. from Texas, and on Creole Petroleum Corporation in the southern part of the hemisphere, through which Standard searched for, produced, refined and sold crude and oil products (*figure 7.7*). The map showed the strong concentration of refining and production in the Texas-Louisiana area, which included the refineries of Baytown and Baton Rouge respectively, and also in Venezuela, with the refineries of Amuay and Caripito, operating under Creole Petroleum Corporation.

The growth of the oil economy had created conditions for an economic expansion and a fast urbanization in Venezuela. The sketches by Houston architect Karl Kamrath in 1959 were excellent examples of this. Within Pérez Jiménez's policy, oil money would be transformed into physical accomplishments. Moreover, national identity, progress and modernization, popular culture, traditions, and tangible accomplishment would be synthesized in what he called the New National Ideal.

[21] "On a Corporate Birthday," *The Lamp. 75th Anniversary of Jersey Standard*, New York: Standard Oil Company (New Jersey), 1957, 1. The Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

FIGURE 7.2
"Good neighbors. President Marcos Pérez Jiménez of Venezuela says good-bye to President Eisenhower, after a 30 minute visit with the U.S. Chief Executive, during the Panamá meeting of American presidents last July. In the second row are (left to right) Venezuelan Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. José Loreto Arismendi; U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Henry F. Holland; and U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles." Photo by Edmundo Pérez. Source: *Venezuela Up-to-date* (Sept.-Oct. 1956), 3.

FIGURE 7.3
U.S. Ambassador Fletcher Warren pins the emblem Legion of Merit, Degree of Chief Commander, on President Pérez Jiménez, 1954. Source: *Venezuela Up-to-date* (Dec. 1954), 3.

FIGURE 7.4
Bolivar honored in U.S. stamp. Source: *Venezuela Up-to-date* (Aug. 1958), 10.

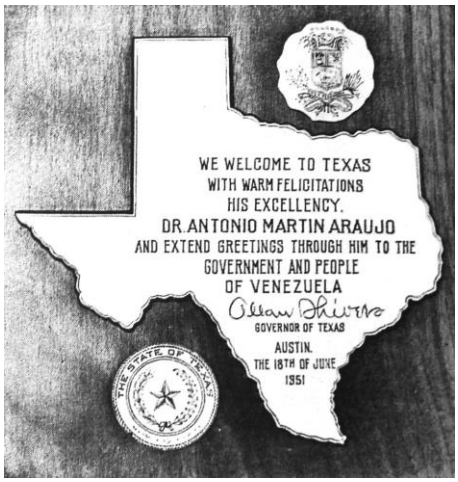

FIGURE 7.5
Silver plaque presented to Venezuela Ambassador, Antonio Araujo, by Texas Governor Allan Shivers. Source: *Venezuela Up-to-date* (July 1951), 26.

FIGURE 7.6
New Residence of the U.S. Ambassador in La Frorida neighborhood, Caracas, where Mr. and Mrs. Fletcher Warren received the Good Will Mission from Fort Worth, Texas, in June 1952. Mr. Warren had moved to this building that very same month. Source: *Venezuela Up-to-date* (July-Aug. 1952), 21.

FIGURE 7.7
Principal operating interests of Jersey Standard in the Western Hemisphere. Note the strong concentration of refining and production in the Texas-Louisiana area, with the refineries of Baytown and Baton Rouge respectively, and also in Venezuela, with the refineries of Amuay and Caripito operating under Creole Petroleum Corporation. A second concentration in American territory was located in the Northeast region (including Bayway in New Jersey). The ocean tankers operated under U.S., Canadian and Panamanian flags: Standard Shipping Co. had the largest fleet (U.S. flag); six tankers (under the Panamanian flag) were associated with Creole (those in red color were strictly associated with the refineries). The symbol of "well" indicates oil production. Source: *The Lamp. 75th Anniversary of Jersey Standard* (1957), 68. The Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

EL NUEVO IDEAL NACIONAL (THE NEW NATIONAL IDEAL)

A STORY OF HIATUS

From June 30 to November 24, 1948, Pérez Jiménez had been temporarily in charge of the Department of Defense (*Ministerio de la Defensa*). From November 24, 1948, to November 15, 1950, he had been Secretary of Defense and member of the Military Junta of the United States of Venezuela. In November 15, 1950, he had been appointed Secretary of Defense and member of the Government Board. As an official publication asserted, Pérez Jiménez had remained in duty until December 2, 1952, "when he was designated Provisional President of the United States of Venezuela, as well as Secretary of Defense. In April 19, 1953, before the Congress, he was sworn in as President of the Republic of Venezuela for the constitutional period, 1953-1958."[22] Such a "designation" and his later presidential investiture, however, deserve closer scrutiny.

The twentieth-century Venezuelan political sequence had been marked by numerous disruptions. The story commenced in 1899, with the Liberal Restorer Revolution or *Revolución Liberal Restauradora*, a five-month military campaign organized in Táchira State, which ended in the seizure of Caracas (coup d'état) in October of that year. Cipriano Castro, the revolution leader, remained in power as a dictator until 1908, when Juan Vicente Gómez, his lieutenant and personal friend, seized power from him.[23] Gómez would rule Venezuela for the next twenty-seven years, either directly or indirectly (though puppet presidents or defenders of his dictatorship). He was president on three occasions (1908-1913; 1922-1929, and 1931-1935). During his third period Gómez also occupied the vice-presidency. He continued as a military strongman during the respective presidential periods of Gil Fortoul (1913-1914), Victorino

[22] *Venezuela bajo el Nuevo Ideal Nacional. Realizaciones durante el Gobierno del Coronel Marcos Pérez Jiménez* (Caracas: Servicio Informativo Venezolano/Imprenta Nacional, 1954), 9. All subsequent quotations of this book are my translation.

[23] According to Preston McGoodwin, Venezuela had had a record of fifty-two revolutions, forty-seven of which had been successful (see "Cannot Get Arms in South America," *The New York Times*, May 14, 1915, 19).

Márquez Bustillos (1914-1922) and Juan Bautista Pérez (1929-1931). After his death, in 1935, General Eleazar López Contreras – Gómez' protégé – assumed the presidency. Despite being military, López Contreras opened a short period of relative freedom. He was succeeded by General Isaías Medina Angarita in 1941, who attempted to follow his predecessor's democratic steps. However, he wouldn't stay in office for long. Another coup d'état, known as the October Revolution or *Revolución de Octubre*, in 1945 interrupted such a political transition. The insurrection had been led by both a military group and *Acción Democrática* (Democratic Action, AD), a political party established in 1941, which eventually would play a significant role in the Venezuelan political scene.

The AD leader, Rómulo Betancourt, stayed in office as an interim president until 1948, when he was succeeded by Rómulo Gallegos, the first democratically elected president in Venezuela. Gallegos, who had won the election with more than 80% of the vote (the highest percentage of all time in Venezuela), would remain in office for only nine months; another coup d'état, on November 24, 1948, interrupted the democratic continuity.[24] The insurrection's leaders were Colonel Carlos Delgado Chalbaud (President Gallegos' Minister of Defense, and also one of the leaders of the 1945 Revolution), Colonel Marcos Pérez Jiménez and Lieutenant Colonel Felipe Llovera Páez. Delgado Chalbaud headed a Military Junta until his assassination – under unclear circumstances – in November, 1950. Then, Germán Suárez Flamerich, a well-known lawyer and Dean of the School of Law at the Central University of Venezuela (until 1947), was called to serve as the President of the Junta. Constitutional Assembly elections, which had been organized since early 1952, were held on November 30, with an unexpected defeat for the Junta. The results were immediately blocked from being published, and the government proclaimed Pérez Jiménez as Provisional President on December 2nd.[25] Finally, on April 19, 1953, he assumed the Presidency.

[24] A well-known writer, Rómulo Gallegos is usually regarded as the most relevant twentieth-century novelist of Venezuela, and one of its most important men of letters of all time.

[25] The actual winner of that election was Jóvito Villalba.

ENOUGH TALK, LET'S GET DOWN TO WORK

Pérez Jiménez's first speech, delivered on December 2nd, was basically a justification of the two previous coups d'état (1945 and 1948), in which the Armed Forces had participated – not to mention that it was the third coup in being validated:

> While it is true that the Republic's most significant factor is the normal performance of its constitutional life, it is also true the pursuance of the *national welfare* is above that. This will provide Venezuela with the nobility it deserves (…) Therefore, the Government has the right to expect, as recognition of its work (which is the economic, political, social, moral, and spiritual education), that November 30's voters speak out for those who have given the Fatherland prestige, instead of disrepute; nobility, instead of decadence; prosperity, but not poverty.[26]

It was clear that in Pérez Jiménez's ideology, the national welfare was more important than the normal performance of the constitutional life; the government's works were there, to support him. "Having concluded the last stage of the Provisional Government," he said, "the Government Junta of the United States of Venezuela considered convenient to resign power before the Armed Forces' representatives." As a consequence of such act, "the Armed Forces, by means of its authorized representatives, have decided that I assume the Provisional Presidency of the Republic."[27]

His allocution was pervaded by keywords such as *nacionalidad* (nationality), *bien nacional* (national welfare), *República* (Republic), *Patria* (Fatherland), *patriotismo* (patriotism), *vida constitucional* (constitutional life), *institución castrense* (military institution), and *Gobierno* (Government). He urged Venezuelans to retake the lofty, sublime conditions the Fatherland originally had. According to him, it was necessary to transform Venezuela into a nation capable

[26] Marcos Pérez Jiménez, *Venezuela bajo el Nuevo Ideal Nacional*, Caracas: Imprenta Nacional, 1952, 13-14.

[27] Ibid, 14.

of standing out among the Latin American countries. Its glorious past, its favorable geographic location, its natural resources, and its people's capacity were its guarantees.

In his inauguration speech as Constitutional President, on April 19, 1953, he used for the first time the term *Nuevo Ideal Nacional*. His first discourse undoubtedly had paved the path for this new address. Some of his earlier nationalistic expressions appeared again. However, on this occasion Pérez Jiménez seemed more concerned with other aspects, such as efficiency and pragmatism. Framed by both idealism and pragmatism, he launched his thoughts on the New National Ideal (NNI).

The objectives of the NNI were both the progressive transformation of the physical environment and the integral improvement of the Venezuelan people. Such objectives implied, first of all, the rational command of the territory and its modification by means of engineering, architecture and urban planning. The integral improvement of its inhabitants, in turn, involved the material, moral and the intellectual realms. Pérez Jiménez also proposed blending the public and the private sectors. In order to carry out such a national project, the country counted on – or would count on – its national history (source of traditions and moral values), a large amount of natural resources, and an enviable geographical position. This Ideal also stimulated foreign investment, immigration and domestic consumption, in order to expand and catalyze the national production.[28] This project, which basically implied both a modernization process and a determined entry into Modernity, was justified by a clear premise: there was a lack of ideals to integrate national passion, social conviction and collective effort at the service of the fatherland.

[28] Ver Pérez Jiménez, *Venezuela bajo el Nuevo Ideal Nacional,* 16-19. As *Time* magazine mentioned, foreign immigration in Venezuela, "the world's second heaviest (after Canada) in proportion to population," was bringing new skills and faces to Venezuela. "From 1947 to 1952, the country took in 373,000 newcomers – Italian stonemasons, barbers and restaurant keepers, Austrian pastry cooks and opticians, French butchers and dressmakers, Portuguese bus drivers and Spanish carpenters." According to the magazine, Italy had agreed to send "2,000 more immigrants each month for the next five years" ("Skipper of the Dreamboat," *Time [the Weekly Magazine]* 65, no. 9, Feb. 28, 1955, 24).

His next speech, delivered during the Week of the Fatherland's celebrations – an official event that will be discussed later in this chapter – followed the principal topics of the second one: the main objectives of the NNI. His fourth address, however, would be steeped in government achievements. On the occasion of the Armed Forces Circle Building's opening, on December 2, 1953, Pérez Jiménez gave a detailed account of the official works during one year. The Armed Forces Circle or *Círculo de las Fuerzas Armadas* (or just *Círculo Militar*) was a paradoxically austere, but luxurious set of buildings designed by Venezuelan architect Luis Malaussena, whose eclectic taste continuously oscillated from academic architecture to modern style (*figure 7.8*). The military complex had even attracted the attention of *Time* magazine, which devoted a large article to Pérez Jiménez' administration under a suggestive title: "Skipper of the Dreamboat." The accurate description of *Time* gave an insight into the regime's kind of architecture:

> Nothing in Venezuela – or out of it, for that matter – quite matches the palatial *Circulo de las Fuerzas Armadas*, the social club for military officers and top government officials. It has a hotel (television in every room), restaurant, bar, cocktail lounge, nightclub, two swimming pools, stable, gymnasium, fencing court, bowling alleys, library and theater. Some notably sumptuous touches: marble floors, blue Polaroid windows, Gobelin tapestries, Sevres vases, Tiffany clocks, a glass-walled conservatory housing a living, blooming chunk of the Venezuelan jungle.[29]

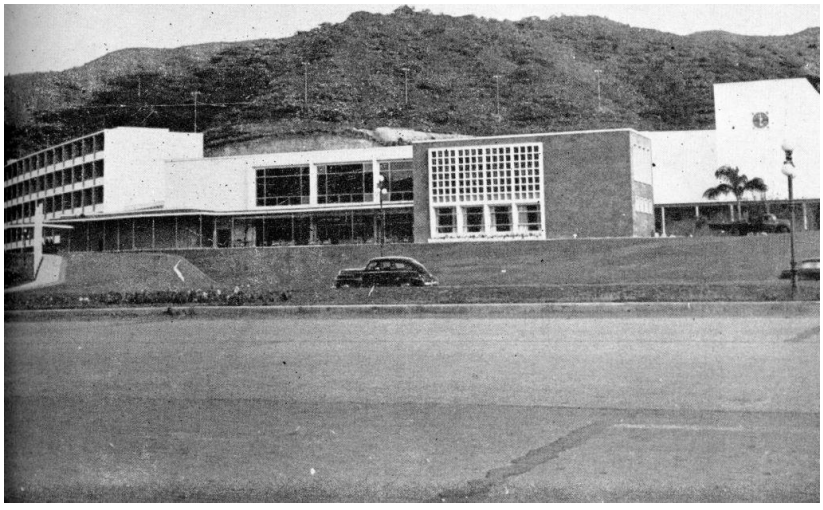

FIGURE 7.8
Luis Malaussena, Armed Forces Circle Building (Círculo Militar), completed 1953. Paradoxically austere, but luxurious. Source: *Venezuela bajo el Nuevo Ideal Nacional* (Caracas, 1954).

[29] "Skipper of the Dreamboat," *Time,* 29.

In contrast with such luxury, Pérez Jiménez started his speech in a very pragmatic way: "Venezuelans, with this opening comes to an end the series of inaugurations that, since November 24, have been taking place throughout the Venezuelan territory (…) Nothing more appropriate, consequently, than this place and this environment to speak about the accomplishment of my government, during its first year."[30] After having emphasized the positive aspects of the Armed Forces Circle, he enumerated and shortly described the regime's infrastructural works. "Caracas-La Guaira Highway is, after the Panama Canal, the largest engineering work and the first of its kind in the whole Latin America," he said. And he was not wrong, Caracas-La Guaira Highway definitely modified the communication between the capital and the Republic's first port, with the consequent advantage of "oil expenditure reduction and saving in time." The capital's extraordinary growing process, in turn, as well as the original precarious conditions of its traffic, had demanded the execution of urban thoroughfares; all on a "rational plan basis." In this regard, the now-completed system of large avenues, apart from matching Caracas' growth, managed to "harmonize with the modern Venezuelan Highway System which connects Caracas both to the country and to the rest of the world." Those were the reasons, according to him, behind the recently inaugurated avenues: the Urdaneta, in downtown; the Guzmán Blanco, in southwest Caracas, and the East Highway or *Autopista del Este*, between the old center and the new suburbs of East Caracas valley.[31] Then, after having listed the infrastructure works, Pérez Jiménez emphasized his achievements in the architectural realm, starting with the University City (Central University of Venezuela), and continuing with housing and tourism:

> In the University City were completed the Aula Magna, the Rector's Office Building (Rectorado), the Library, the Concert Hall, the Telecommunications Museum, as well as the Covered Plaza or *Plaza Cubierta*, this in view of both the coming Tenth Inter-American Conference and the University City's building plan. The new housing complexes for both working and middle class (…) are works that, like the Tamanaco Hotel – where the private investment was a significant addition – and the University

[30] Pérez Jiménez, *Venezuela bajo el Nuevo Ideal Nacional*, 23.

[31] Ibid, 23-24.

> City, solve the housing problem and respond to the need of facilities. They are also an important contribution to the beautification of Caracas and to its transformation into an honorable capital (in keeping with a booming nation) and into one of the most important Latin American cities.[32]

Despite such an emphasis on the capital city, the government works actually embraced the whole country as a system. The infrastructural and architectural production throughout the Venezuelan territory was also impressive. Hospitals and educational buildings (which included sixty-two schools for 26,000 students), as well as military installations, were part of such production. These accomplishments were also followed by the nationalization of Caracas' telephone company, the growth of the merchant fleet, the opening of new aerial and maritime routes to the Americas and Europe, the construction of both sections of the Pan-American Highway's and the Paraguaná Port, the widening and asphalting of existent roadway, and particularly the canalization of the Orinoco River.

His New Year's speech, delivered on December 31st, added even more results to the previous list. Under the section "Works to be completed," Pérez Jiménez mentioned the North and South buildings and both towers of the Simón Bolívar Center; the Vacation City Los Caracas or *Ciudad Vacacional de Los Caracas*; the widening of several avenues in Caracas, and the strengthening of Aeropostal Venezuelan airline (which would be provided with modern planes). As for "Works to be continued," he mentioned the University City; the National Plan of Housing or *Plan Nacional de Vivienda*; the Urban Improvement Plans or *Planes de Mejoramiento Urbano*, and the National Plan of Educational Buildings or *Plan Nacional de Edificaciones Escolares*. Finally, as "Extraordinary Plans," he included the National Railroad Plan or *Plan Nacional de Ferrocarriles*; the creation of the iron ore industry; the organization of tourism regions in Merida and Nueva Esparta states, and the "complete integration of the central coastal region to the Metropolitan Area, by means of a cable car system on El Avila Mountain, and a tunnel going through it, ending at the sea. This way the Government prepares the path that, "with the protection of God," he said, "we are going to walk during 1954. Pérez Jiménez, on behalf of the nation, concluded his

[32] Ibid.

speech reaffirming his "respectful, moral and collaborative disposition vis-à-vis its allies," and wished "their governments and people the very best."[33]

Caracas-La Guaira Highway, regarded by *Venezuela-Up-to-date* as "the most impressive engineering project ever undertaken in Venezuela," started at sea level and climbed gently for a distance of 11 miles, to reach Caracas, 3,000 feet up in the sierra. Also called "spectacular and daring," as well as a "superhighway," this eleven-mile road was built in four years, at the rate of $6.5-million per mile; its official opening was in December 1953. Its two tunnels and three bridges helped cut travel time from one hour (using the old highway) to 15 minutes (*figure 7.9*).[34] Now, Caracas stood practically around the corner from Maiquetía Airport.[35]

El Avila's five-mile cable car, one of the Extraordinary Plans, carried passengers from Caracas to the mountaintop, and then to the Caribbean seacoast on the other side, in about twenty minutes. The adjoining station at the half-way point of the ride, where people could see the Valley of Caracas on one side and the sea on the other, was a recreation area complete with skating rink (*figure 7.10*).[36] A short distance beyond the station was the ultra-modern-round Humboldt Hotel, designed by architect Tomás José Sanabria, and completed in 1956. *Autopista del Este* or East Highway, in turn, was an urban thoroughfare that connected both east and west ends of Caracas. As a matter of fact, it was an efficient exit from the city toward the East, where significant, new residential, commercial and industrial neighborhoods were growing. Its route, which followed almost constantly the Guaire River's course, was flanked by *Sabana Grande* and *Bello Monte*'s massive buildings to the north, and by *Las Mercedes*, *El Rosal*, and *Colinas de Bello Monte*'s beautiful prairies to the south. Beyond its significance as a major highway, it was also an aesthetical experience. As a splendid "park-way," it was part of the modern beautification of Caracas. Its first stretch, with six kilometers long, was inaugurated on December 3, 1953 (*figures*

[33] Ibid, 32.

[34] Ibid.

[35] "New Superhighway Brings Caracas to the Seashore," *Venezuela Up-to-date*, Jan. 1954, 12.

[36] "Our front cover," *Venezuela Up-to-date*, Dec. 1957, 2.

7.11 and *7.12*). The second one, which reached the town of Petare (on Caracas' eastern side), was completed in March 1954.[37]

Another significant infrastructure work, as Pérez Jiménez mentioned in his speech of December 1953, was Urdaneta Avenue. It linked Sucre Avenue, located close to the coastal area, with Andrés Bello Avenue, in which east residential neighborhoods commenced, going through downtown. This two-kilometer-long-and-26-meter-wide avenue (1.2 miles and 85.3 feet, respectively) was equipped with all modern installations. It was one of the most significant works carried out by the National Government through the Federal District authority. Both administrations were proud of their achievements. More than 250 buildings were demolished,[38] but particularly, it was regarded as "the fastest built work of recent years and one of which have done the most to transform the Venezuelan capital's appearance."[39] This six-lane avenue was completed in just 120 days (*figure 7.13*).

THE CROWN JEWEL: THE UNIVERSITY CITY OF CARACAS

However, if it is true that the Government was very proud of its infrastructure achievements, it was even prouder of its architectural accomplishments. Peréz Jiménez did not hide his joy; the University City was one of his most significant attainments. Architect Carlos Raúl Villanueva had started conceiving the complex in 1944, but it was definitely fostered by the NNI since 1952. Early stages of the project showed Villanueva's ties with the École des Beaux-Arts.[40] Moreover, he had participated in a commission that visited the University City in Bogotá, Colombia (in

[37] See *Venezuela bajo el Nuevo Ideal Nacional*.

[38] On this topic see Lorenzo González, "Los Grandes Espacios de la Modernidad Caraqueña: el Corredor de la Avenida Urdaneta," en *Edificar* 2, 4/5. Centro de Estudios Históricos de Arquitectura Alfonso Vanegas/Universidad de Los Andes, Facultad de Arquitectura y Arte (1999): 8-19.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Villanueva had earned his Architecture degree at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, 1928. That year he traveled to New York, where he worked for one year at Guilbert & Betelle, an architectural office specializing in educational buildings. See Juan José Pérez Rancel, *Carlos Raúl Villanueva,* Biblioteca Biográfica Venezolana (Caracas: Editora El Nacional, 2009), 24.

1944), whose academically traditional composition definitely left a mark on Villanueva.[41] For the first stage, Villanueva proposed a symmetric, monumental composition: basically a great axis whose starting and ending points were, respectively, the University Hospital and the Olympic Stadium. An advertisement published in *Architectural Record* in 1947 showed this initial phase (*figure 7.14*). Villanueva gave special emphasis to the University Hospital, the first building in the complex to be completed (1945), for which he had received technical support from Dr. Thomas Ponton and engineer Edgar Martin, both from the United States. The building exhibited a Streamline Moderne influence in its general arrangement and forms (*figure 7.15*). George A. Fuller, and Merritt, Chapman & Scott Assoc., from New York, were the contractors in charge.[42]

Jointly with the Hospital, the construction of the whole Medical Center of the University City was begun in 1945: the Experimental Medicine Institute (*Instituto de Medicina Experimental*); the Anatomical Institute (*Instituto Anatómico*), as well as the Institutes of Hygiene and Anatomical Pathology (*Instituto de Higiene and Instituto de Anatomía Patológica*).[43] Other important buildings and facilities, such as the Olympic and the Baseball Stadiums (1949-50), as well as the Engineering Building (1950), were completed during the first phase of the project.

During the second phase, from 1952 to 1955, the University City underwent a very significant change in its master plan. Villanueva replaced its prewar, Beaux-Arts scheme with a more contemporary composition. Now, instead of a rigid, monumental order, buildings kept an

[41] University City of Bogotá had been designed by German architect Leopold Rother, from 1937 to 1940.

[42] It is interesting to notice that, in the *Architectural Record's* advertisement (Oct. 1947), the authorship of the University Hospital was given to Eggers & Higgins, a New York firm organized in 1937. In this sense, it is important to mention that university buildings and hospitals were among its most important works: the Physics Building at University of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1953; the American Red Cross Headquarters, Brooklyn, NY, 1955, and the Standard Vacuum Oil Co. Headquarters – with W. Harrison – in New York City. In the AIA Directory they don't report the "*Instituto* at the University City" (see *American Architects Directory,* published under the sponsorship of American Institute of Architects [New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1962], 190).

[43] See Pérez Rancel, *Carlos Raúl Villanueva*, 70-71. Also, for an accurate description of Villanueva's woks see Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, *Carlos Raúl Villanueva y la Arquitectura de Venezuela* (Caracas: Instituto del Patrimonio Cultural), 1999.

asymmetric, balanced relationship one to each other. There was no doubt that the outcome of the Second World War had played a significant role in Villanueva's decision. The Bauhaus' more dynamic compositions had made a long journey from Europe to Venezuela, via the United States, reflecting the new international power relationships that had emerged after the war (*figures 7.16* and *7.17*).[44]

It was during this time when Villanueva displayed on campus one of his most significant explorations: the integration of the arts. According to him, such integration consisted of the organic, unique relationship between the architectural space and the work of art. A constellation of renowned international and local plastic artists was invited to elaborate and display their works on the whole campus, on an ad hoc basis; they included Fernand Léger (French painter and sculptor), Jan Arp (German-French sculptor), Antoine Pevsner (Russian sculptor), Balthazar Lobo (Spanish sculptor), Victor Vasarely (Hungarian-French painter and sculptor) and Alexander Calder (American sculptor), as well as young Venezuelan muralists, such as Armando Barrios, Pascual Navarro, Mateo Manaure, Alejandro Otero and Oswaldo Vigas (*figure 7.18*). Such integration also included the plastic use of reinforced concrete, creating specific sculptural buildings, closer to human scale, in contrast to more rational tower blocks. The Engineering Library and the Clock Tower were examples of this (*figures 7.19* and *7.20*).

However, the integration of the arts was even more emphatic in the Central Ensemble or *Conjunto Central,* an area of the University City that constituted not only the juncture between the 1940s sector and the new one, but particularly the heart of the complex and the centerpiece of Villanueva's phenomenological and climatic experimentations. The Central Ensemble included the Rector's Office Building or *Rectorado*, the main auditorium or *Aula Magna*, the Main Library (the complex's tallest building), and the Covered Plaza or *Plaza Cubierta*. The latter, a sort of open hypostyle hall, was a remarkable reinterpretation of a traditional urban square. Under a single roof, this multipurpose space connected all the Central Ensemble's buildings through a

[44] An aerial view of the University City showed the *Edificio* Creole, by architect Lathrop Douglass, and the General Motors dealer building, both adjacent to campus. This demonstrated the value of the University City as attractor of strategic investment.

free-flowing circulation. *Plaza Cubierta* could work as an open, well-ventilated space for students either to chat or read; it could also be a large exhibition area, or even a noteworthy foyer during shows or graduation ceremonies held in the Aula Magna (*figures 7.21* and *7.22*).

Villanueva's intention was expressed in a flowing circulation plan; instead of a traditional spatial representation through boundaries and volumes, he proposed a plan based on people's circulation and viewpoints though their walk (*figure 7.23*). Here, the departure from the International Style and Bauhaus rationalism was very clear. Moreover, the architectural manipulation of sunlight (by means of pierced walls), and the uncommon combination of building materials (such as reinforced concrete, plaster, wood, metal, and colored ceramic tiles) made the Central Ensemble an extraordinary, phenomenological experience. The perforated walls sometimes did not meet the roof; they worked like real screens, sieving the natural light (*figure 7.24*). Curved forms, color, and the ever-changing sunlight created a fantastic atmosphere, which recalled the gold leaf effects of Gustav Klimt's painting; the exterior, in turn, could be regarded as a colored, tropical reinterpretation of the "learned game, correct and magnificent, of forms assembled in the light" (*figure 7.25*). But the visual impact was just part of the whole spatial experience. Villanueva, who had been very concerned with the environmental comfort of his residential projects, now explored natural ventilation (along with natural lighting) on a huge architectural scale.

Among the Central Ensemble's buildings, there was a specific piece that received special attention: the *Aula Magna*, a 2,600-seat auditorium; the core of the University City (as is usually said). This symmetrical, wedge-like building was organically interlocked with the Covered Plaza. By way of an urban metaphor, the *Aula Magna* presented its façade to the plaza: its semicircular, projecting mezzanine, its curved eave, and its two dynamic ramps. Structurally, the building displayed a battery of twelve inverted L-shaped reinforced concrete ribs (see *figure 7.17*). This skeleton was finally stabilized by a huge concrete "staple" (*figures 7.26* and *7.27*). Such structural set supported an exterior shell and a hanging ceiling. The inner space, in this sense, was even more remarkable. In here, function, form, technology and art were integrated in a holistic aesthetic experience. Villanueva asked for the expert collaboration of Robert B.

Newman, a U.S. acoustical engineer of "exceptional phonic subtlety."[45] He also invited his friend Alexander Calder, an American sculptor well known for his *mobiles* and monumental public works. Closely involved with the acoustic value of his proposal, Calder created a sort of aerial stratum made of organic-form pieces, which he called "Flying Saucers" (officially known as "Clouds") (*figures 7.28* and *7.29*). If not the best, the *Aula Magna* was undoubtedly one of the most remarkable auditoria in Latin America.

The "core of the University City" was built in just one year; another reason for the Government to be proud. Also impressive was the construction of a breezeway system of covered walks, between 1950 and 1959, to connect the main buildings and different schools throughout campus. In 1955, during the building process, their designers published an article in *Integral* magazine. As asserted in their report, Otahola & Benedetti, Engineers, utilized a mixture of reinforced and pre-stressed concrete, using the Morandi system. They designed several types; one of the most common, used to link the different Faculties' buildings with maximum of transparency, was the corrugated-roof breezeway, covering more than six meters (19 feet) of cantilever and spanning 16 meters (52.5 feet) between the supporting ribs (*figures 7.30, 7.31* and *7.32*).[46]

Finally, the design and completion of the School of Architecture Building, from 1954 to 1957, marked the third stage of the University City. With the only exception of the Central Ensemble, this building was perhaps the best synthesis of Villanueva's architectural explorations on campus. In its east and west facades, artist Alejandro Otero displayed an abstract composition made of polychromatic ceramic tiles; its north façade, in turn, by means of a *brise-soleil* beehive, showed a complex contrast of light and shadow (*figure 7.33*). The play of different levels in the first floor, particularly in the Architectural Library (ennobled by an Alexander Calder's mobile), the dynamic movement of the studio classrooms' roof, and the generous width of its corridors in

[45] Moholy-Nagy, *Carlos Raúl Villanueva y la Arquitectura de Venezuela*, 114.

[46] See "Ensayos sobre Estructuras," *Integral 1*, Sept. 1955.

each level (which favored the meeting of students out of the classroom) constituted a real visual education.

For the University City, its selection as the venue of the Tenth Inter-American Conference in March 1954 represented major international recognition.[47] Alberto Lleras Camargo, the first secretary general of the Organization of American States (1948-1954), said about the University City: "Everything here is reinforced concrete. Not embarrassing concrete, but proud, naked concrete, transformed into the noble building material of our age." Once inside the Aula Magna, he was impressed both by its cantilever structure and its aesthetic-functional resources: "The balcony seems to be floating on air. The air, which circulates gracefully everywhere, keeps those cellular-like sound reflectors floating."[48]

ANOTHER ROUND AGAINST FRANCE: THE SIMÓN BOLÍVAR CENTER'S TOWERS

The 200 hectares (500 acres) of the University City left a huge concentrated mark on Caracas' urban sprawl. However, less than two miles away, another urban intervention, with a totally different nature, had been leaving a deep mark as well. The Simón Bolívar Center's Towers, located in downtown, constituted the spine's head of the Caracas new urban system. Its two 32-story twin buildings stood out from the context, and received the flow from Bolívar Avenue. A double underground thoroughfare absorbed the traffic movement, clearing the surface streets. Like the University City, this project had its roots in the 1940s. It was part of the Monumental Plan of Caracas or *Plan Monumental de Caracas,* or just *Plan Rotival*, named after his developer, French urban entrepreneur Maurice Rotival. It had been conceived in 1939 based on Beaux-Arts principles, and its technical design had been under the responsibility of French urban planner Jacques Lambert. The Monumental Plan basically consisted of a large avenue, flanked by official five-story blocks, which ended in the new Capitol Building, and Bolivar's Cenotaph, a sort of

[47] *Venezuela bajo el Nuevo Ideal Nacional*, 33-37.

[48] *Venezuela bajo el Nuevo Ideal Nacional*, 121.

Middle-American pyramid located on a hill named *El Calvario*.[49] Its symmetric form and monumental character would be changed shortly. Financial difficulties brought on by the outbreak of the Second World War led to a gradual transformation of the original plan. In 1941 its scheme was used for a new low-rent housing complex, located in a sector called *El Silencio*, partly where Rotival and Lambert had proposed the Capitol Building. The project, eventually known as the *reurbanization* of *El Silencio,* had been designed by Villanueva, who had befriended Rotival in his early years at the École des Beaux-Arts. More dramatic changes in the original plan of 1939 were yet to come.

Again, as had happened to the University City, the Monumental Plan of Caracas was transformed after World War II. Now, for the end of the avenue, Venezuelan architect Cipriano Domínguez, who devised in 1949 a set of twin towers and an "aerial plaza," under which a double-lane highway passed with no obstacles, was called upon (*figure 7.34*). The North and the South towers saw their respective structural skeletons completed during the first year of Pérez Jiménez's government. The elevated plaza's lower section was also inaugurated (*figure 7.35*). Pérez Jiménez was an enthusiastic "promoter" of the Center; he actually owned stock in the company.[50]

By way of an urban surgery, Bolívar Avenue's construction had implied the demolition of about 400 buildings. Such a complex work also considered commercial and parking areas in its program, as well as a bus terminal, all underground.[51] It had even attracted attention of *Time* magazine, which made some financial remarks: the Simón Bolívar Center's Towers had been

[49] A very accurate description of this project was published in *Revista Municipal del Distrito Federal* 1 (1) Caracas, Gobierno del Distrito Federal, Nov. 1939.

[50] On this matter, see Judith Ewell, "The extradition of Marcos Perez Jimenez, 1959-63: Practical Precedent for Enforcement of Administrative Honesty?" *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol.9, No.2 (Nov., 1977): 300.

[51] A detailed account of Rotival Plan and its process of transformation can be found in Marta Vallmitjana et al. *El Plan Rotival. La Caracas que no fue* (Caracas: Ediciones Instituto de Urbanismo, Facultad de Arquitectura y Urbanismo, Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1991).

"inspired by Rockefeller Center – but so far has cost at least three times as much as the Manhattan development, put up mostly in the depressed '30s for $125 million."[52] Another sector of the project, known as *La Hoyada* (halfway between the Dominguez' twin towers and the beginning of Bolívar Avenue), was also object of several proposals. One of the most remarkable was the project by Richard Neutra, also during the 1950s, which consisted in the separation of the automobile system from the pedestrian, and the intensification of uses. The general composition, asymmetric and balanced, and commanded by a tall office slab, was a clear demonstration of a new set of aesthetic principles coming from the United States.[53]

THE SWAN SONG: THE HEROES PROMENADE

It seemed that the École des Beaux-Arts' time had come to an end. And it was so. Nevertheless, a Venezuelan architect with French formation, eager to fulfill the expectation of a traditional institution, would attempt a last effort. In July 1957, during festivities connected with National Week, President Pérez Jiménez dedicated a memorial on Avenue of the Heroes (*Avenida Los Próceres*). Known as the Heroes Promenade or *Paseo Los Próceres*, it had been designed by Luis Malaussena to symbolize the birth of the Venezuelan nation "through groups of monuments and sculptures in marble, bronze and stone."[54] In its northern section, facing a sunken pool 328 feet long, Malaussena placed an obelisk and an equestrian statue representing the Venezuelan people. On the opposite end rose two 98-foot high marble columns (monoliths) with engraved scenes of "the four great battles that decided the course of the war in the South American republics (…), and the name of outstanding men that participated in the struggle."[55] This 12-acre

[52] "Skipper of the Dreamboat," *Time (the Weekly Magazine)* 65, no. 9, Feb. 28, 1955, 26.

[53] The next attempt came from architect Jose Antonio Ron Pedrique (Simón Bolívar Center's Director from 1960 to 1961). His proposal, asymmetrical and balanced like that of Neutra, considered a more complex program. See Silvia Hernández de Lasala, "Violaciones Sucesivas. Notas sobre la arquitectura de la Avenida Bolívar de Caracas, después del Plan Monumental de Caracas de 1939," in Marta Vallmitjana et al. *El Plan Rotival. La Caracas que no fue*, 157-182.

[54] "National Week Celebrated with Feeling and Gayety," *Venezuela Up-to-date*, Sept. 1957, 6.

[55] Ibid.

promenade, 1.5 miles long (1.85 km), has been constructed at the southwestern end of the Nationality System or *Sistema de la Nacionalidad*, a series of promenades (named Symbols, Precursors, and Heroes per se) that connected the University City to the Training Center for the Armed Forces.

Unlike the Armed Forces Circle, in which Malaussena managed to combine rigid geometries with some freely arranged passages, the Heroes Promenade followed the Beaux-Arts principles to the letter (*figure 7.36*). With pride, *Venezuela-Up-to-date* described *Los Próceres* as "fashioned after the formal gardens and promenades of the 19th century in Europe." The memorial struck "a pleasant contrast with the ultra-modernistic aspect of Caracas architecture," and provided "a restful interlude from the hubbub of the city life."[56] Undoubtedly, in order to represent the military institution, a monumental, symmetric arrangement was necessary. However, when compared to the University City (and even to the Simón Bolívar Center's Towers), the Heroes Promenade was a total paradox.

It was the last hurrah of French Beaux-Arts in the 1950s. A photograph that *Venezuela-Up-to-date* had published three months before was very eloquent. It showed the luxurious display of "fourteen illuminated fountains, eight reflecting pools and 134 hanging plant urns" on *Los Próceres*. Nevertheless, as a sort of metaphor of an inevitable future to come, the *Edificio* Creole closed the perspective in the background. Even bigger and more impressive than the obelisk and the equestrian statue, the Creole seemed to threaten the French aesthetic principles, like a black cloud on the horizon (*figure 7.37*).

HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE: LOW-RENT HOUSING, TOURISM AND MORE

Yet such huge investment in urban works also brought with it other kind of projects, which had relation neither to public space nor to those sorts of nineteenth-century beautifications. The NNI actually encompassed a broad range of programs. As can be seen from his speeches, Pérez Jiménez paid special attention to housing, and particularly to low-rent housing projects. Among

[56] "Memorial Adds to Beauty of Caracas," *Venezuela Up-to-date*, Dec. 1957.

the earliest works was *Ciudad Tablitas*, a group of 212 apartments, completed in only 45 days. One of the most important achievements in terms of popular housing, the project implied the removal of slums, to be replaced by modern apartment blocks. *Ciudad Tablitas*' architecture was as simple as unpretentious. Low-rent housing projects, however, were not always that way. In 1953 *Venezuela Up-to-date* published a report on a residential slab to be located in *El Valle* district, whose engaging composition recalled Le Corbusier's *Unite d'habitation*. Known later as Housing Unit Cerro Grande or *Unidad de Habitación Cerro Grande*, the project had been designed by architect Guido Bermúdez, and eventually would be constructed by the Worker's Bank (Banco Obrero) (*figure 7.38*). The block was made up of duplex apartments alternately spaced with one floor apartments so that a corridor was needed only for every three floors.[57] Pedestrian circulation (elevated) was separate from the vehicular (ground floor). It was lifted on *pilotis*, so the building per se could be used as a carport. The fourth floor had no walls, since it served as a large recreation gallery (*figure 7.39*). The roof level, in turn, featured a series of vaults. The building also had both cross ventilation and an ideal solar orientation. Despite the use of such programmatic strategies and morphological vocabulary, the building process of Cerro Grande was regarded as "simple and economic." It contained 144 apartments, providing a density of 300 people per hectare.[58]

However, the most important low-rent housing work by far was the December 2 Community or *Comunidad 2 de Diciembre*, named after Pérez Jiménez's proclamation as Provisional President in 1952. The *Integral* issue no.7, which was totally devoted to the housing problem in Venezuela and the planning of working-class housing, dedicated a significant room to this project. A panoramic view of *Cañada de la Iglesia*, one of the six neighborhoods where the December 2 Community would be eventually constructed, indicated both the scale and the impact of the project (*figure 7.40*). Designed by Carlos Raúl Villanueva, José Manuel Mijares, José Hoffman and Carlos Brando, the *2 de Diciembre* was "the most important work built by the Worker's Bank." As part of the Plan for Slum Eradication, its first stage comprised the East Sector,

[57] "Large Bond Issue Launched for housing Project," *Venezuela Up-to-date*, March 1953, 13.

[58] See "Unidad de Habitación Cerro Grande," *Integral 7*, June 1957.

completed in 1955; the second stage, the Center Sector, completed in 1956, while the third sector was planned to be finished in 1957. The community was organized into three major neighborhoods, coinciding with the stages. Each neighborhood was provided with a civic center, and one communal center for the whole complex. The total number of apartments was 9,108, with capacity for 55,000 inhabitants[59] (*figure 7.41*).

Diametrically opposed in terms of programs and interests, but holistically coherent to the NNI policy, the government also paid special attention to the tourism industry. After Rockefeller's early venture in the Avila Hotel, the most important tourism investment was the Tamanaco Hotel, located in *Las Mercedes* neighborhood. It was designed by Holabird & Root & Burgee, an architectural firm of Chicago established in 1948 (by the descendants of both William Holabird and John W. Root). Recognizing its significance, the January 1955 issue of *Architectural Forum* included the Tamanaco in a report about "new markets," among other top hotels, such as Welton Becket's Havana Hilton, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill's Istanbul Hilton, Edward D. Stone's Savoy Plaza in Beirut, and the Tequendama Hotel in Bogotá, also by Holabird & Root & Burgee (*figure 7.42*). The project relied on the local participation of architect Gustavo Guinand. The building contractor was *Oficina Técnica Gutiérrez*, an office established in 1942 and based in Caracas, with a branch located in New York City.[60] As Pérez Jiménez mentioned in his fourth speech, the Tamanaco Hotel was a work in which private capital joined the public sector. It turned out that, more than just a public investment, he had a financial interest in the hotel – as he did in the Simón Bolívar Center.

As stated in *Architectural Forum*, the Intercontinental Hotel Corporation (a subsidiary of Pan American World Airways) had taken over management of four new South American hotels. Among them, the largest were the $ 7.5 million Tamanaco and the $ 8.7 million Tequendama, both with 400 rooms.[61] Opened in December of 1953, the hotel had been designed to attend to

[59] See "Comunidad '2 de Diciembre'," *Integral 7*, June 1957.

[60] See "Oficina Técnica Gutiérrez & Co., S.A." (advertisement), *Revista del Colegio de Ingenieros de Venezuela* 226 (May 1958).

[61] "U.S. Building Abroad. Commerce: New Markets," *Architectural Forum*, Jan. 1955, 111.

the demand of lodging for oil industry executives and high hierarchy managers – as had other new buildings nearby.[62]

The Los Caracas Vacation City also captured the attention of the public. Students, workers, public employees, and members of the Armed Forces could use and enjoy Los Caracas's facilities. The first issue of *Integral* featured an extensive report on one of these: Mirador El Vigía (*figure 7.43*). Strategically located on a 30-meter high promontory commanding the surrounding territory, it had been designed by architect Miguel Salvador Díaz, with collaboration of Manuel A. Fernández E. as engineer. As an integral part of its design, the building had murals painted by González Bogen (the same graphic designer of *Integral* magazine).[63]

Any explanation of the NNI would be incomplete without any reference to the Week of the Fatherland, or National Week (Semana de la Patria) (*figure 7.44*). Besides its pragmatic and progressive nature, the NNI also had a spiritual dimension. History, religion and popular culture were important components as well. "National history was treated as a cult of the heroes of the independence wars, Catholicism as the worship of a pantheon of saints identified with specific national regions, and popular culture as official folklore."[64] In this sense, the main means for the affirmation of national history was the Week of the Fatherland, "a week of parades and ceremonies the stated aim of which was to revalorize the concept of the fatherland (patria), to honor the heroes of the independence, and to celebrate the values of the nation (...) to create the image of a unified collectivity embarked on a civilizational process."[65]

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[62] See Instituto de Estudios Regionales y Urbanos, *Preinventario del patrimonio de bienes inmuebles del municipio Baruta* (Caracas: IERU, Universidad Simón Bolívar, 2003). Record # 012, Hotel Tamanaco Inter-Continental.

[63] See "Mirador El Vigía. Ciudad Vacacional Los Caracas," *Integral 1*, Sept. 1955. *Mirador El Vigía* was built for the Ministerio de Obras Públicas (M.O.P.) by CAICA Constructora.

[64] Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State. Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 169.

[65] Ibid.

Finally, the military nature of the NNI included – as might be expected – electrical power and basic industries too, such as steel. "Pérez Jiménez also opened Venezuela's doors to foreign investors on the nonoil economy at a time when U.S. manufacturing corporations were expanding their direct investments abroad."[66] The cover of the February 1954 issue of *Venezuela Up-to-date* showed the moment in which the first shipload of iron ore from Cerro Bolívar left for the United States. It was on January 9, 1954 (*figure 7.45*). After his speech, President Pérez Jiménez "pressed the button that set in motion the machinery to load the ore into the Swedish S.S. Tosca. Following the ceremony, he toured the port installations and then flew down to Cerro Bolívar, to see for himself how the ore extracting operations work."[67]

Such an impressive photograph was not by accident. Pérez Jiménez had instructed consulates to promote Venezuela's image. The influence of the NNI would be felt beyond its apparent frontiers.

BETWEEN THE LINES: SOME REMARKS ON THE NEW NATIONAL IDEAL

One of the most significant characteristics of the NNI was undoubtedly the vast variety of areas in which the Venezuelan state took part. Such multifariousness actually recalls the diversity of its roots. As Venezuelan author Fernando Coronil asserted, the NNI's sources can be found in Venezuelan history, its religion, and its popular culture.[68] The personality cult (of Pérez Jiménez in this case) was a conspicuous feature of the NNI linked to Venezuelan history. This aspect, however, was not new; the cult of Simón Bolívar, a distinctive cultural practice in Venezuela, had been emulated by several presidents in the past (Guzmán Blanco, during the second half of the nineteenth century, was perhaps one of the most remarkable examples). The politization of religion, specifically Catholicism (the promotion of the Virgin Mary during the Week of the Fatherland, for instance), and paradoxically the stimulation of the popular cult of Maria Lionza

[66] Ibid, 183.

[67] See *Venezuela Up-to-date,* Feb. 1954.

[68] Coronil, *The Magical State*, 169.

(indigenous goddess of love, nature and harmony [see *figure 7.12*]) were some of the political appropriations the regime performed using the NNI as a unifying framework.

The state as a manager, tutor and exegete of the subsoil richness was the second aspect that drew attention. The particular relationship between State and oil in Venezuela, in terms of ownership, control and exploration (somehow inherited form Spain, and radically different than U.S. legal framework), played a significant role in the NNI.[69] The gap between people and wealth, which has been filled by the State since colonial times, found in the NNI a very "convenient" guide. Actually, if economic policies had continued to be the same after Juan Vicente Gómez (as some authors has asserted),[70] the NNI represented a clear difference with respect to previous administrations. It was necessary in order to give purpose to the military regime and to define the bonds between citizen and State. In this regard, it is also important to show the way Pérez Jiménez saw himself in relation to the NNI and the nation. In an interview given to *Time* magazine in 1955, he clearly established such tutor-like relations: "I make every effort to give Venezuelans the kind of government best adapted to them. People may call it a dictatorial regime, (but) my country is not ready for the kind of democracy that brings abuses of liberty. We are still in our infant years and we still need halters."[71] Such position brought with it the repressive control of a police state. Even *Time* recognized this: for this "job," Pérez Jiménez "chose an engaging, worldly and cold-blooded police expert named Pedro Estrada. As chief of the *Seguridad Nacional*, Estrada built up a crack plainclothes force with eyes and ears in every café, office and oil camp. Estrada's henchmen jailed thousands."[72]

[69] On the relationship established between State and oil, see chapter 4 of this dissertation, specifically subchapter "Venezuelan oil story in a nutshell."

[70] On this topic, see Ocarina Castillo D'Imperio, *Los años del Bulldozer: Ideología y Política 1948-1958* (Caracas: Fondo Editorial Tropykos, 1990).

[71] "Skipper of the Dreamboat," *Time*, 29.

[72] Ibid, 28.

The third conspicuous aspect had to do with the NNI's pragmatic character. Most important to the military regime was its physical accomplishments.[73] The government placed geographic, urban and architectural transformations in the foreground, while assigning people the role of simple spectators. Pérez Jiménez put emphasis on the transformation of oil money into visible public works; not *any* public works, but those that represented visible signs of modernity. Despite what could be inferred from his speeches, he avoided both political rhetoric and ideological discussions. Moreover, as some authors have stated, the NNI was not a real government program.[74] In this sense, Venezuela during the 1950s should be regarded as "a case of a process without a plan or program."[75] As if faced with a "distasteful assignment," Pérez Jiménez pieced together a doctrine and called it New National Ideal.[76] As happens in any military regime, he did not follow any elaborate or guiding ideology.[77] Material achievements would have been, in this sense, the real principles of the NNI. What is more, unlike his predecessors, who were concerned with improving the legal framework on oil concessions, Pérez Jiménez was not interested at all in modifying it; he just used it to the benefit of the State.

In terms of bilateral relations, the NNI provided the perfect frame for American investments, not because of any specific ideological or programmatic principle, but due to the personal policy of Pérez Jiménez. Both Caracas and Washington offered incentives to U.S. investors. Pérez Jiménez, in this sense, "allowed free convertibility of currency, unrestricted repatriation of profits, low tax rates, little regulation, and duty-free entry of the materials and equipment

[73] On this topic, see Agustín Blanco Muñoz, *Habló el General* (Caracas: Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1983).

[74] On this topic, see José Ramón Avendaño Lugo, *El Militarismo en Venezuela: la Dictadura de Pérez Jiménez* (Caracas: Ediciones Centauro, 1982).

[75] Orlando Araujo, *La Situación Industrial de Venezuela* (Caracas: Ediciones de la Biblioteca, Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1969), 15, quoted by Coronil, *The Magical State,* 176.

[76] Coronil, *The Magical State*, 173.

[77] Enrique Baloyra, "Oil Policies and Budgets in Venezuela, 1938-1968," *Latin American Research Review* 9 (1974): 32.

necessary for industrialization."[78] The NNI did not explicitly promote foreign investment; neither did it mention any specific foreign ally nor any specific country favored with special trading conditions. On the contrary, it emphasized nationalistic issues related to identity and uniqueness. Nevertheless, it was the official façade that justified any personal decision of Pérez Jiménez (or the regime), and guaranteed future investments.

It is obvious that one of the regime's objectives was the eradication of "irrational political sentiments" of people;[79] particularly those of *Acción Democrática*. In this regard, the government managed to control people by modifying their physical environment. In fact, one of the most remarkable aspects linked to the NNI was the way the regime succeeded in governing people. As the head of a repressive state, Pérez Jiménez certainly relied on the National Security (*Seguridad Nacional*), a feared secret police. However, what many historians have passed over is precisely the other side of the coin: the government sought to control the nation by means of seduction, instead of imposition. By doing that, the regime's physical achievements were on display. Metaphorically, the Venezuelan territory (particularly Caracas) worked as a sort of showcase; a very rich one, by the way. As some authors have pointed out, even industry and infrastructure were "mere reflection of the public spending policy;"[80] they fitted "into the regime's fetishistic vision of modernity as a collection of gran material achievements."[81] It is no accident that the official investment ratio during Pérez Jiménez' administration was higher than before and after: 30% in 1954 (its highest point), versus 24.4% in 1951 (during the Government Junta), and 14.1% in 1961 (during the second presidency of Rómulo Betancourt, a democratic administration).[82]

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[78] Judith Ewell, *Venezuela and the United States: from Monroe's Hemisphere to Petroleum's Empire* (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1996), 176.

[79] Vallenilla Lanz, *Escrito de Memoria* (Caracas: Ediciones Garrido, 1967), 242, quoted by Coronil, *The Magical State*, 152. As a matter of fact, Pérez Jiménez could not eradicate such "political sentiments." As a cultural element, they still persist nowadays in Venezuela.

[80] Araujo, *La Situación Industrial de Venezuela,* 15, quoted by Coronil, *The Magical State,* 178.

[81] Coronil, *The Magical State*, 178.

[82] Enrique Baloyra, "Oil Policies and Budgets in Venezuela, 1938-1968," 37.

It was definitely a conspicuous exhibition of infrastructural and architectural accomplishments that sought to impress international visitors and Venezuelans equally. As *Time* magazine acutely described, in bustling Venezuelan cities, "businessmen make fortunes, while middle-class girl clerks and secretaries, emancipated from ancient constraints by modern salaries, drive their own convertibles or fly to Miami for vacations and shopping," while in the countryside, "the rope-soled sandal that only recently covered the bare foot is being rapidly replaced by the shoe."[83] But Caracas was definitely "the national show window." "The 4,000 millionaires who set two Cadillacs in every garage as their standard," the magazine said, "enjoy such diverse luxuries as art collections, a drive-in that serves chilled martins, sports-car racing and a nightclub where a cow does an act." But more importantly, here the construction drive had revealed "the Venezuelans' exciting talent for vivid modern architecture."[84] As *Time* asserted, U.S. and other foreign companies had contributed heavily to Caracas's great private building boom, but the government splurge of public works was "more than twice as big."[85]

Caracas saw itself transformed into an international tourist center and a conference site. And obviously, the print media was playing a significant role in promoting the official achievements vis-à-vis public opinion, both nationally and abroad. Newspapers, magazines, specialized periodicals, and official bulletins certainly reported and promoted such achievements. Yet they went even further; they fashioned a realm with its own existence. They created paper architecture, a paper city, and eventually an imagined paper nation (particularly through official propaganda and bulletins).

Paradoxically idealist and pragmatic; a kind of exegesis and a "convenient" bridge between natural wealth and people, lacking in ideology, seductive, and a promoter of visible signs of modernity, the New National Ideal was a sort of narrative construction with existence both in

[83] "Skipper of the Dreamboat," 25.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid, 26.

the physical sphere and the print media. It was also intrinsically linked to the Venezuelan obsession for naming (renaming or baptizing) things, and for inaugurating works (after having destroyed something before, both physically and politically, through an uninterrupted cycle of inauguration-destruction-inauguration). It was equally regarded as a sort of magical, inspiring guide that probably captivated (or "seized") even the imagination of more than one U.S. reader of *Time* magazine or *Venezuela Up-to-date.*

The idealist character of the NNI, however, was accompanied, and even preceded, by a sort of narrative construction of Venezuelan modern architecture. In 1952, *Revista Shell* published an article by C.R. Villanueva that would leave a deep mark both in the Venezuelan professional practice and the academic formation of future architecs. Interested in the legacy of colonial architecture in Venezuela, Villanueva identified elements that he regarded as functional. The constant idea that prevailed at colonial (and traditional) architecture, about the defense against the sun, the rain, and the blinding sunlight of the tropics, could be found, according to him, in the façades of colonial houses.[86] "In the different types of louvered windows and wooden screens, all of eastern inspiration, made with intelligence and good taste," he said, could be noticed "the wisdom of the norm" that satisfied both the heart and the spirit.[87] One of the drawings included in his article would eventually become one of Villanueva's most published and recognizable images (*figure 7.46*). It depicted the "plastic components utilized against the elements (sun and rain)," in other words, eaves, balconies, screens, wooden louvered windows, corridors, and courtyards. Somehow, these aspects appeared to be the origin and, consequently, the justification of Villanueva's conception in the Central Ensemble's buildings at the University City. Actually, perforated walls that worked like traditional wooden screens, dappling the natural light, and *brise soleil,* by way of wooden louvered windows, constituted most of the morphological repertoire that Villanueva utilized for functionalism's sake. However, the historical reality was different. Villanueva attempted to convinced readers that wooden

[86] Calos Raúl Villanueva, "El Sentido de Nuestra Arquitectura Colonial," *Revista Shell* (Caracas, Venezuela) 3 (June 1952): 22.

[87] Ibid. My translation.

screens and louvered windows were typical components of colonial architecture in Venezuela. Nevertheless, they were not so common (at least, not as common as Villanueva claimed); they definitely were not typological elements. While wooden shutters were in fact a typological ingredient of colonial architecture in Venezuela, screens and louvers seems to constitute exotic, nineteenth-century creations (probably with Orientalist influences). In this sense, his repertoire and American embassies' hybrid language had something in common: they both were narrative constructions that coexisted at the time.

In any case, beside that critical observation, architectural production during the 1950s was able to bypass any ideological or political diatribe. With many personal connections and capable of politely handling many different situations, Carlos Raúl Villanueva had managed to obtain both private and public commissions since the 1930s; the 1950s was not an exception. On one occasion, during the installation of Alexander Calder's "clouds" in the *Aula Magna*, Pérez Jiménez arrived without any prior warning. When he asked "what is that?," Villanueva answered "that's just functional." Pérez Jiménez nodded his head in agreement, and did not ask for more explanations.[88] Yet Villanueva was not the only one doing such a thing. Fruto Vivas, another Venezuelan architect of the time, asserted in a recent interview that he used his clients to his own benefit; as a means to achieve his objectives. Vivas' architecture had some aspects in common with Villanueva's exploration. However, in some works, it turned out to be dramatically different. Moreover, a whole generation of Venezuelan architects committed themselves to design an awe-inspiring, spectacular architecture. After all, as *Time* asserted, in Venezuela, "that famed, throbbing boom land of South America, the spectacle is commonplace."[89]

[88] Pérez Rancel, *Carlos Raúl Villanueva,* 76-77.

[89] "Skipper of the Dreamboat," 25.

FIGURE 7.9
"Aerial view of the superhighway" (Caracas-La Guaira Highway). Source: *Venezuela Up-to-date* (Jan. 1954), 12.

FIGURE 7.10
Caracas, as seen from the Cable Car Station atop El Avila Mountain, 7,000 feet above sea level. Photo by Hamilton Wright Org. Source: *Venezuela Up-to-date* (Dec. 1957), cover image.

FIGURE 7.11
East Highway (Autopista del Este), inauguration of first stretch, December 3, 1953. Source: *Venezuela bajo el Nuevo Ideal Nacional* (Caracas, 1954).

FIGURE 7.12
East Highway (Autopista del Este), exhibiting the sensual forms of Maria Lionza's statue (by Alejandro Colina, 1951), and El Avila Mountain in the background, *ca.* 1953. Source: *Venezuela bajo el Nuevo Ideal Nacional* (Caracas, 1954).

FIGURE 7.13
Urdaneta Avenue, built in just 120 days. Source: *Venezuela bajo el Nuevo Ideal Nacional* (Caracas, 1954).

FIGURE 7.15
C. R. Villanueva, architect, Eggers & Higgins, consultant architects, George A. Fuller — Merritt, Chapman & Scott Assoc., contractor, University Hospital, University City of Caracas, Venezuela. 1944-1945. Photo by Hamilton Wright Org. Source: *Venezuela Up-to-date* (Jan. 1955), 11.

FIGURE 7.14
C. R. Villanueva, architect, Eggers & Higgins, consultant architects, George A. Fuller — Merritt, Chapman & Scott Assoc., contractor, "*Instituto* at the University City of Caracas, Venezuela." Source: *Architectural Record* (Oct. 1947), 242.

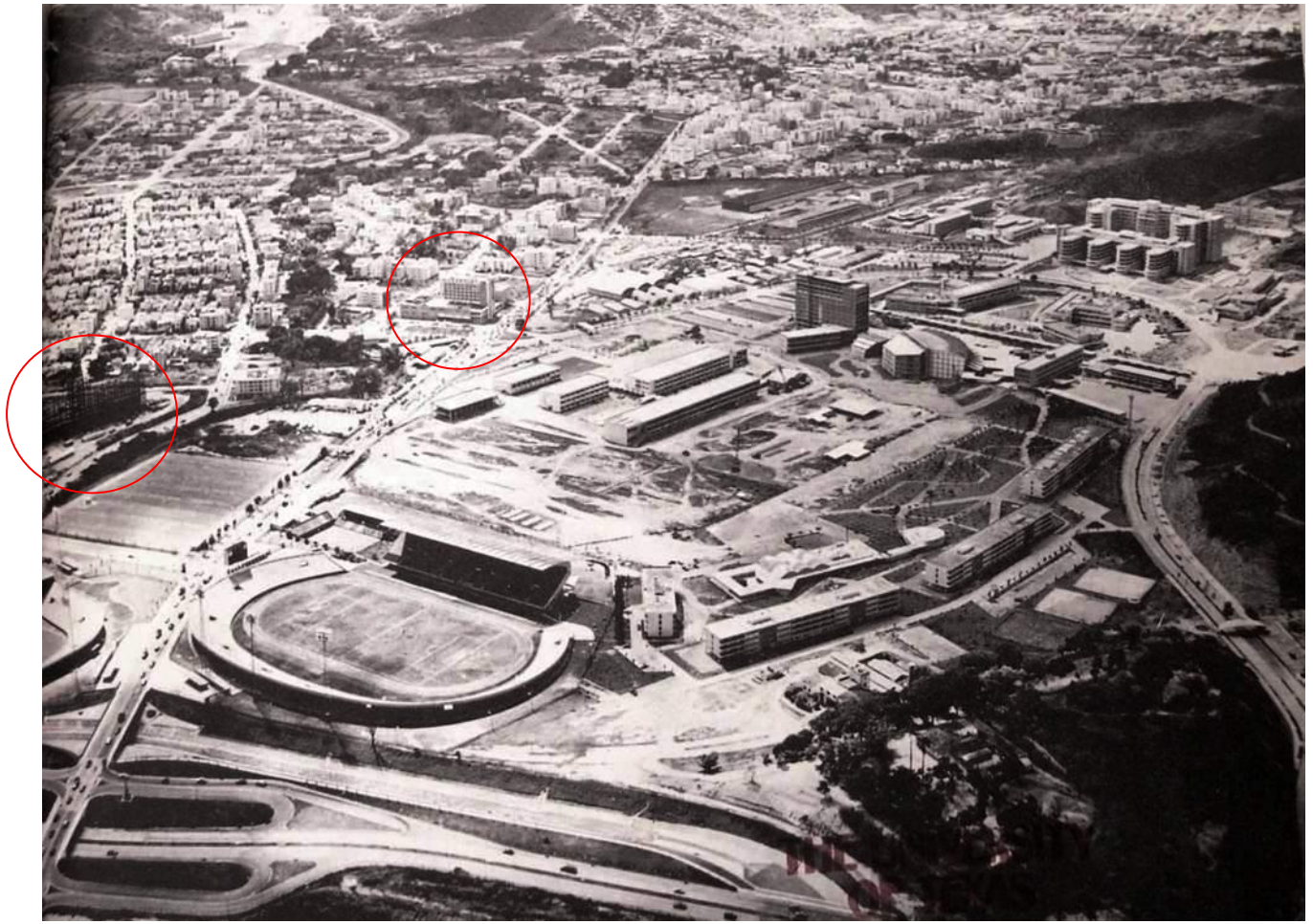


FIGURE 7.16

C. R. Villanueva, University City, Caracas, still under construction, *ca.* 1953. Background: University Hospital, Experimental Medicine and Anatomical Institutes. Middle ground: Central Ensemble (Library [tower block], *Aula Magna*, Covered Plaza and Rector's Office Building). Foreground: Olympic Stadium. Notice part of the breezeway system, between the medical sector and the Central Assemble. Also notice the *Edificio* Creole by L. Douglass, still under construction (left circle), and the General Motors dealer building (right circle). Source: *Venezuela Up-to-date* (March 1954), cover photo.

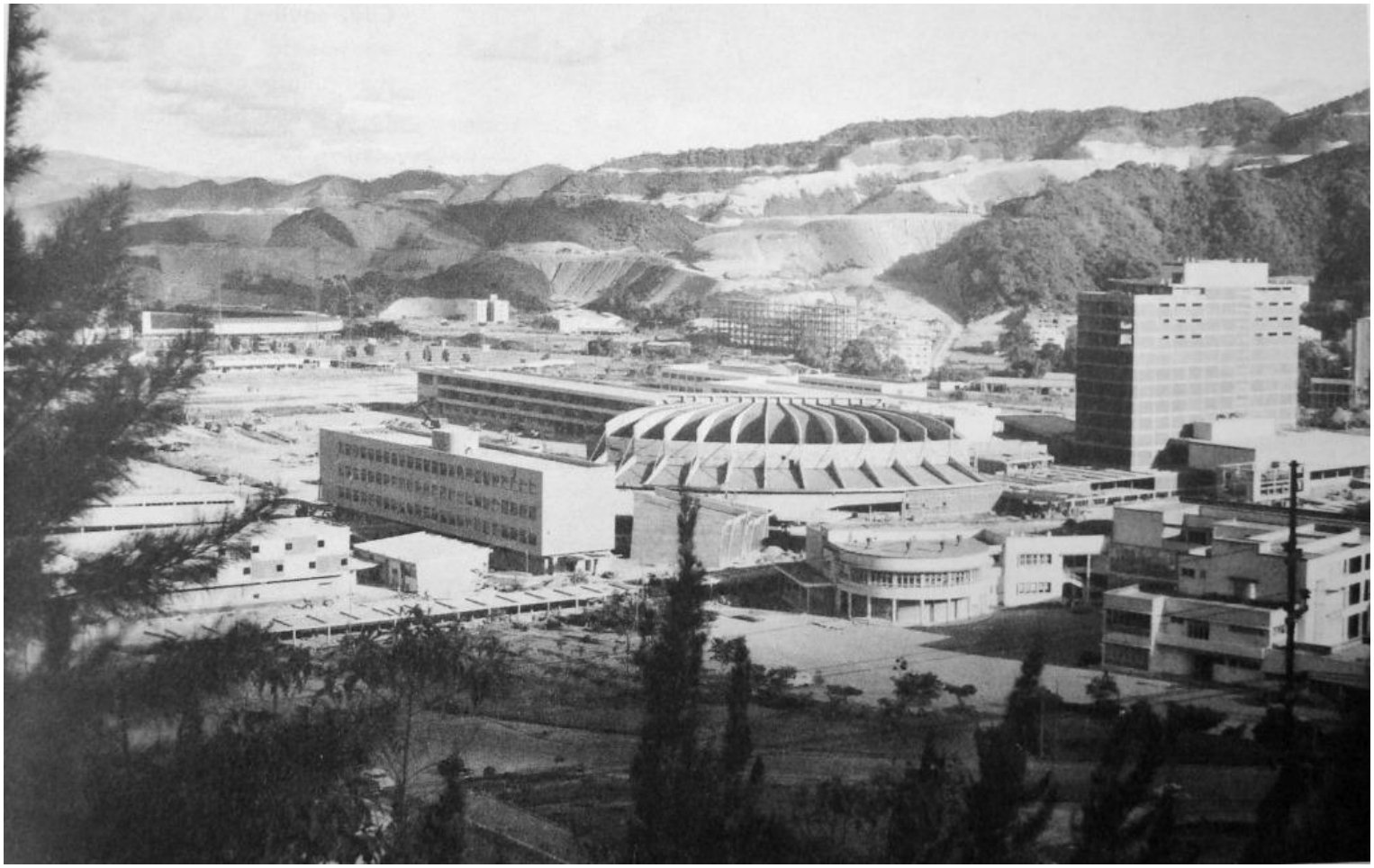


FIGURE 7.17
C. R. Villanueva, University City, Caracas, still under construction, *ca.* 1953. Foreground: part of the Anatomical Institutes, the Central Ensemble (Rector's Office Building, Covered Plaza, *Aula Magna,* and Library), and behind it, the Engineering Building. Part of the breezeway system is running between the medical sector and the Central Assemble. Background: the *Edificio* Creole's metal frame (its vertical circulation core was not yet erected), and behind it, the hills where a new development (Colinas de Bello Monte) would be placed. Source: *Venezuela Up-to-date* (Feb. 1954), 5.

FIGURE 7.18
C. R. Villanueva, University City. One of the flanks of the Rector Office Plaza, showing a mural by Armando Barrios, and behind it, the twisted Clock Tower. In the background, El Avila Mountain. Source: photo by Jorge Villota P., 2009.

FIGURE 7.19
C. R. Villanueva, University City. The Engineering Library, with mural by Alejandro Otero (view from one of the passages of the covered walk system). Notice in the background the Main Library (tall tower block). Source: photo by Jorge Villota P., 2009.

FIGURE 7.20
C. R. Villanueva, University City. Clock Tower, a twisted structure made of reinforced concrete. Source: photo by Jorge Villota P., 2009.

FIGURE 7.21
C. R. Villanueva, University City. View of the Covered Plaza from one of the Aula Magna's ramps. Source: *Integral 9* (1957-58).

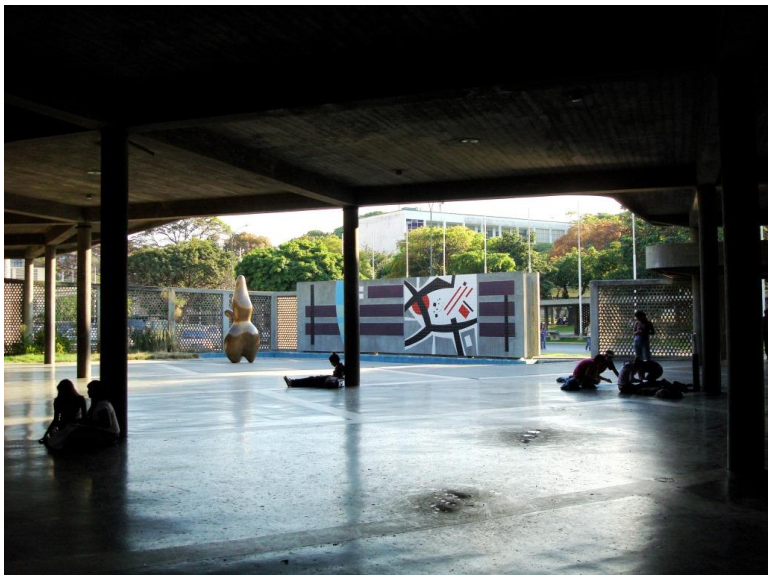
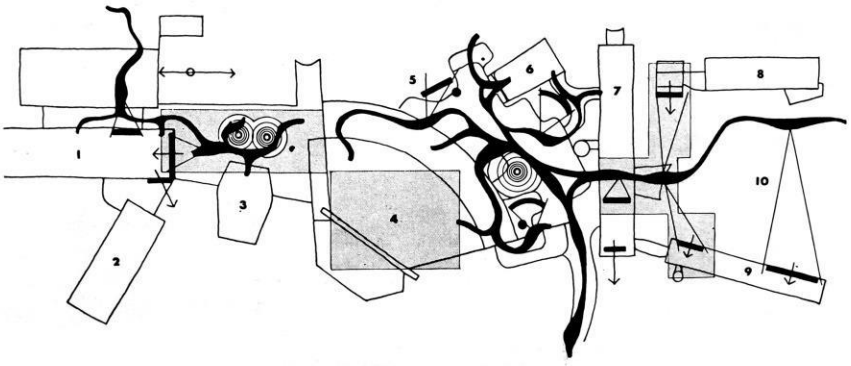


FIGURE 7.22
C. R. Villanueva, University City. View of the Covered Plaza: a multipurpose place for gathering. Contrast of light and shadow; heat and climate comfort. In the background (in the light): the "Cloud Shepherd" by Jean Arp, and a mural by Mateo Manaure. Source: Photo by Jorge Villota P., 2009.

FIGURE 7.23
C. R. Villanueva, University City, Central Ensemble. Flow circulation plan. Numbers: 1) Library; 2) Reading Hall; 3) Chambre Music Hall; 4) *Aula Magna*; 5) Covered Plaza; 6) Hall of Honor or *Paraninfo*; 7) Rector's Office Building; 8) Administration; 9) Museum, and 10) Rector Office Plaza. Source: *Integral 1* (Sept. 1955).



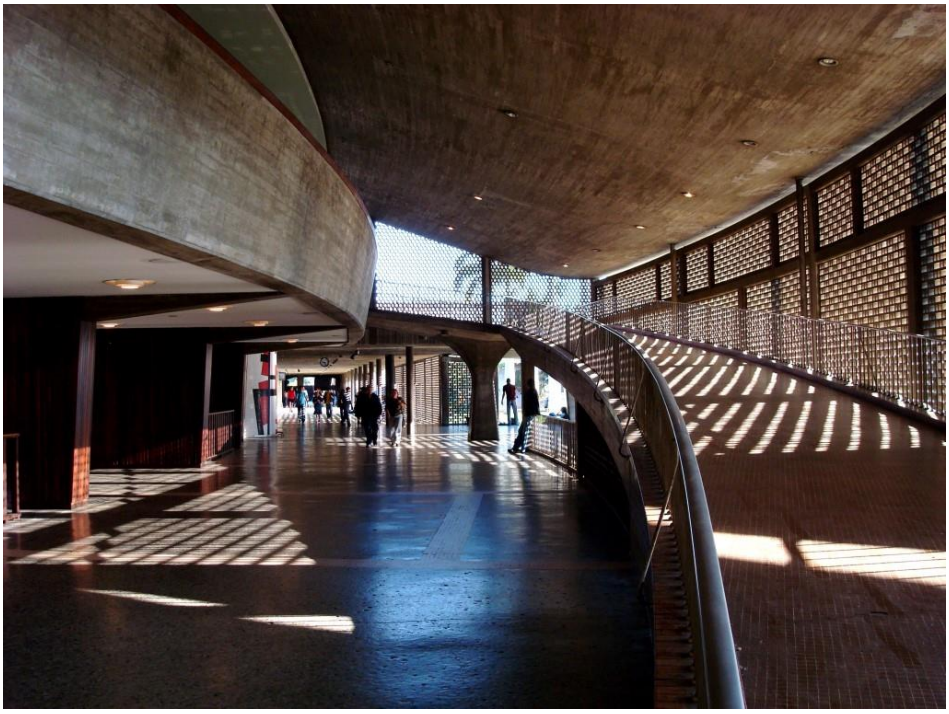


FIGURE 7.24

C. R. Villanueva, University City. Ramp from the Covered Plaza to the Aula Magna's mezzanine: different materials, curved forms, works of art, perforated walls that don't touch the roof, and continuously-changing light bathing the surfaces. Source: photo by Jorge Villota P., 2009.

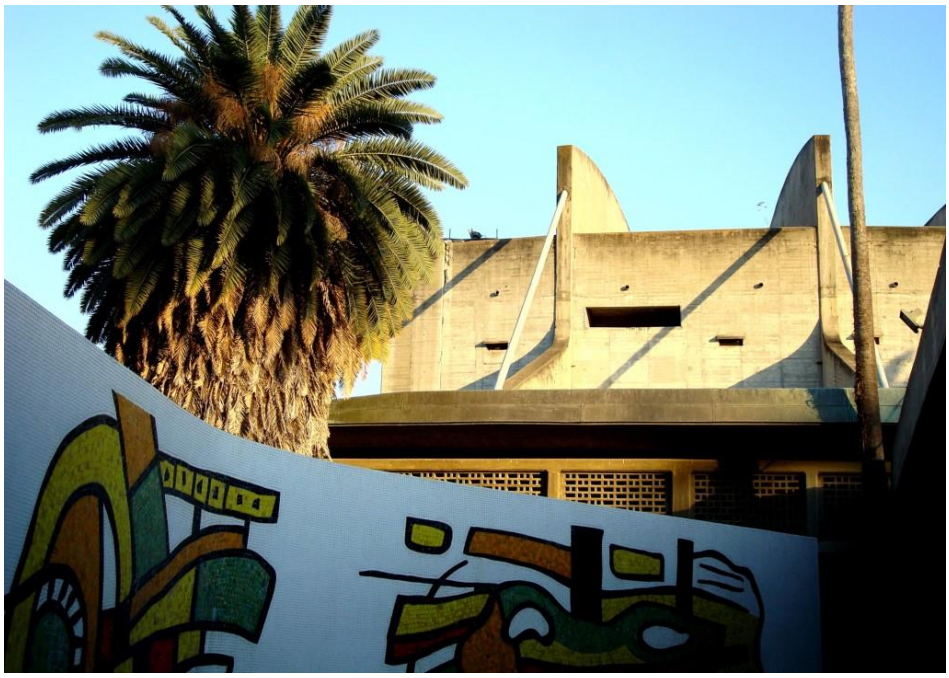


FIGURE 7.25

C. R. Villanueva, University City. *Aula Magna*'s structural ribs and a mural by Fernand Léger. Landscape treatment, sculptural reinforced concrete, wall perforations, works of art, and Caracas' sunlight: a unique combination. Source: photo by Jorge Villota P., 2009.

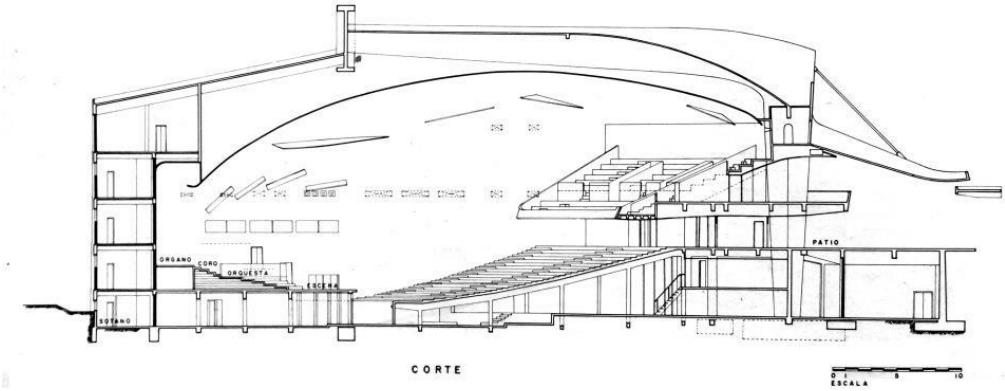


FIGURE 7.26
C. R. Villanueva, Aula Magna. Section. Notice the inverted L-shaped ribs, the staple-like portico (in section), the eave (supported by wire ropes), and the double roof. Source: *Integral 9* (1957-58).

FIGURE 7.27
C. R. Villanueva, *Aula Magna*, Covered Plaza, Hall of Honor, and Rector's Office Building. Source: *Integral* 8 (1957).

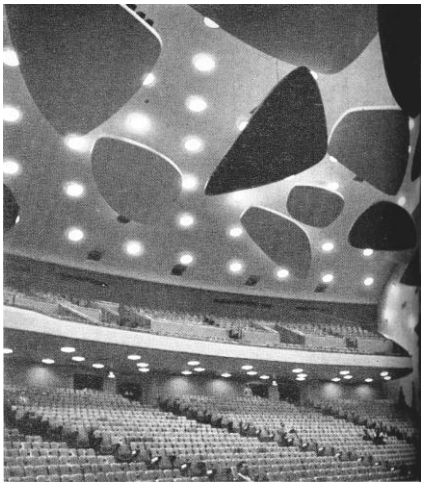


FIGURE 7.28
C. R. Villanueva, Aula Magna. Alexander Calder's "Clouds" and mezzanine. Source: *Architectural Forum* (March 1956), 110.

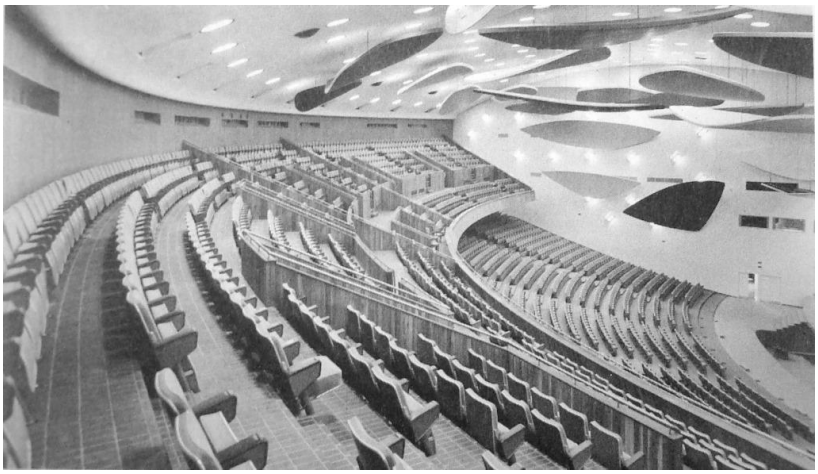


FIGURE 7.29
C. R. Villanueva, Aula Magna. Alexander Calder's "Clouds." View from the mezzanine. Source: *Venezuela Up-to-date* (Feb. 1954), 6.

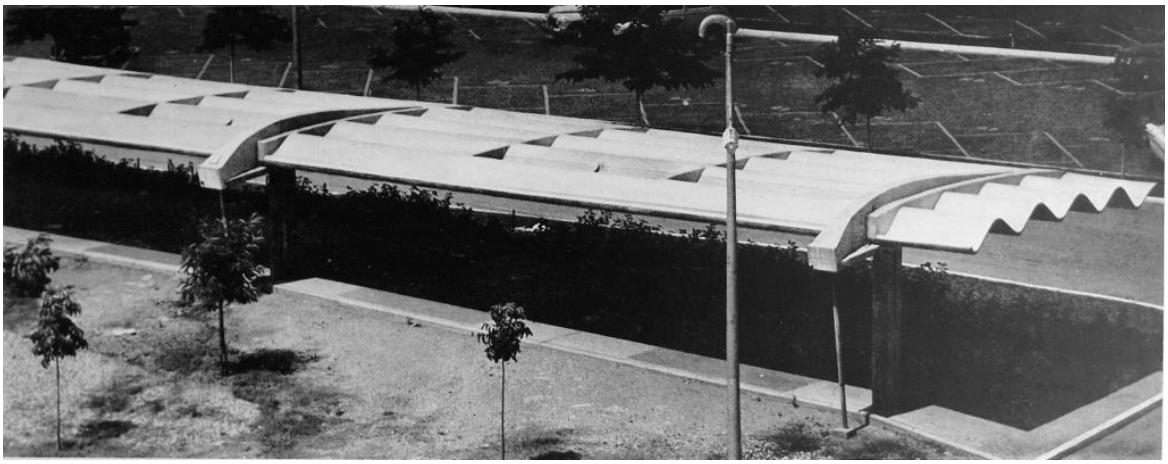
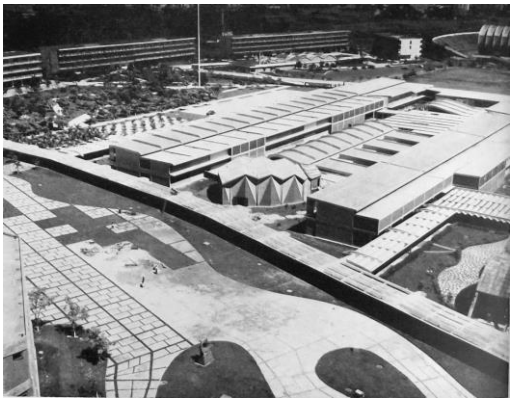


FIGURE 7.30
Otahola & Benedetti, Engineers, University City's breezeways. Source: *Integral 1* (Sept. 1955).



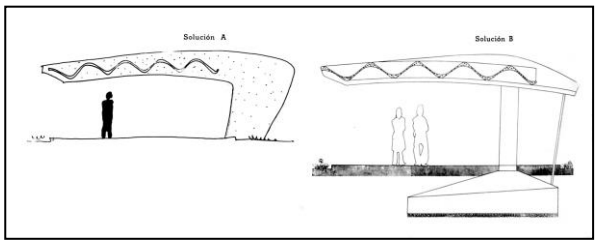


FIGURE 7.31
Otahola & Benedetti, Engineers, University City's breezeways (sections). Solution B, on the right, was finally chosen. Source: *Integral 1* (Sept. 1955).

FIGURE 7.32
View of the Humanities buildings from the Library. Notice the part of the breezeway system, and the curvilinear treatment of the pavement. Source: *Integral 6* (1956-57).

FIGURE 7.33
C. R. Villanueva, University City, School of Architecture Building, 1954-1957. Façade with *brise-soleils*; mural by Alejandro Otero. Source: photo by Jorge Villota P., 2009.

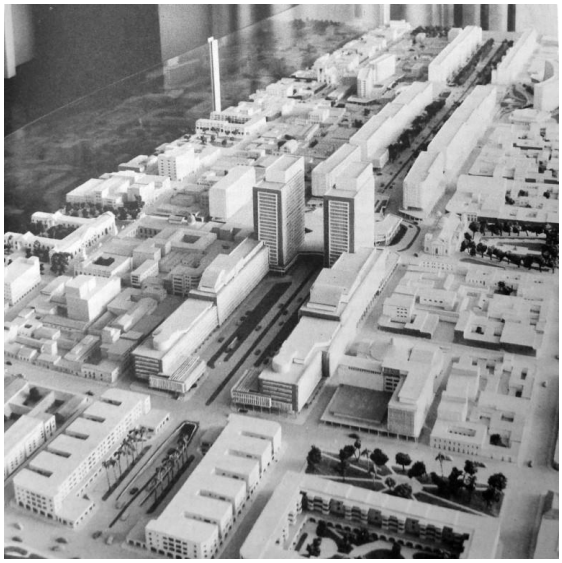


FIGURE 7.34
Cipriano Domínguez, Simón Bolívar Center, the elevated plaza, and Bolívar Avenue. Source: *Venezuela Up-to-date* (Dec. 1953), 11.

FIGURE 7.35
"For civic activities. A mass of people observe President Pérez Jiménez inaugurating the elevated plaza's lower section, over Bolívar Avenue, at Simón Bolívar Center." Source: *Venezuela Up-to-date* (Jan. 1954), 5.

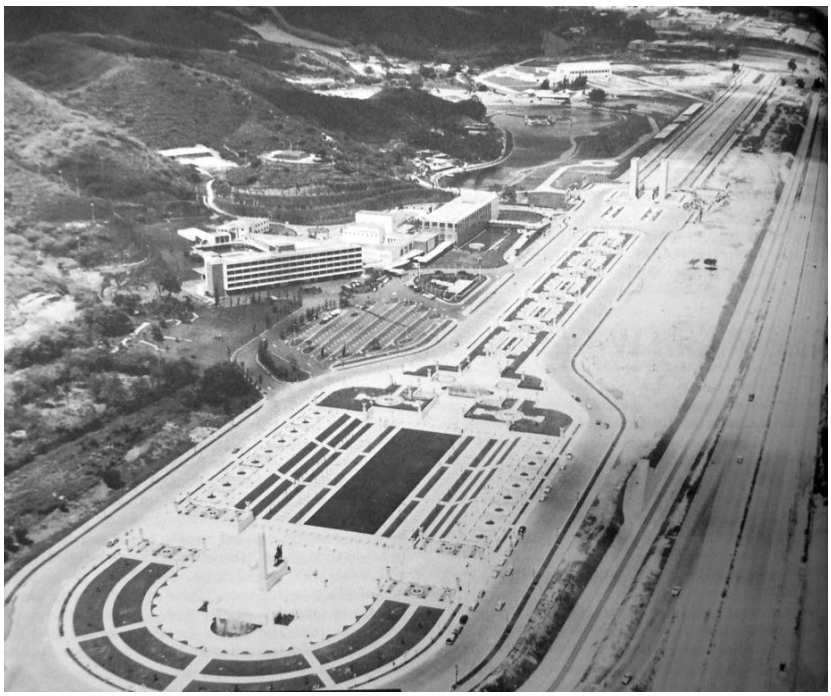


FIGURE 7.36
Luis Malaussena, Los Proceres Promenade (view to the south), Caracas, 1957. Notice the Armed Forces Circle (at one side of the avenue). Source: *Venezuela Up-to-date* (Dec. 1957).

FIGURE 7.37
Luis Malaussena, "Avenue of the Heroes," Caracas. View to the north; in the background: the *Edificio* Creole, by L. Douglass (red circle). Source: *Venezuela Up-to-date* (Dec. 1957).

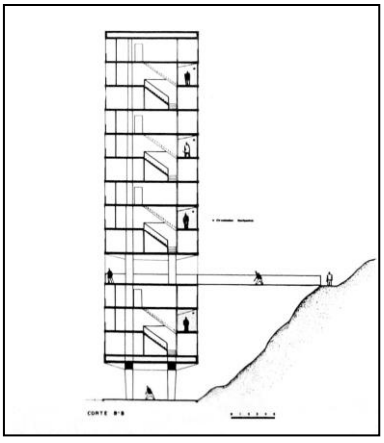


FIGURE 7.38
Guido Bermudez, Housing Unit of *Cerro Grande*, El Valle, Caracas. Section. Source: *Integral 7* (June 1957).

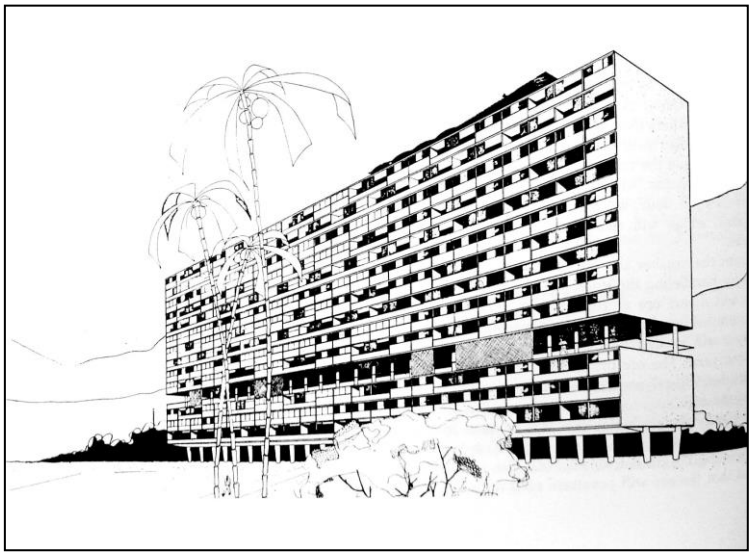


FIGURE 7.39
Guido Bermúdez, Housing Unit of *Cerro Grande*, El Valle, Caracas. Source: *Venezuela Up-to-date* (March 1953), 12.

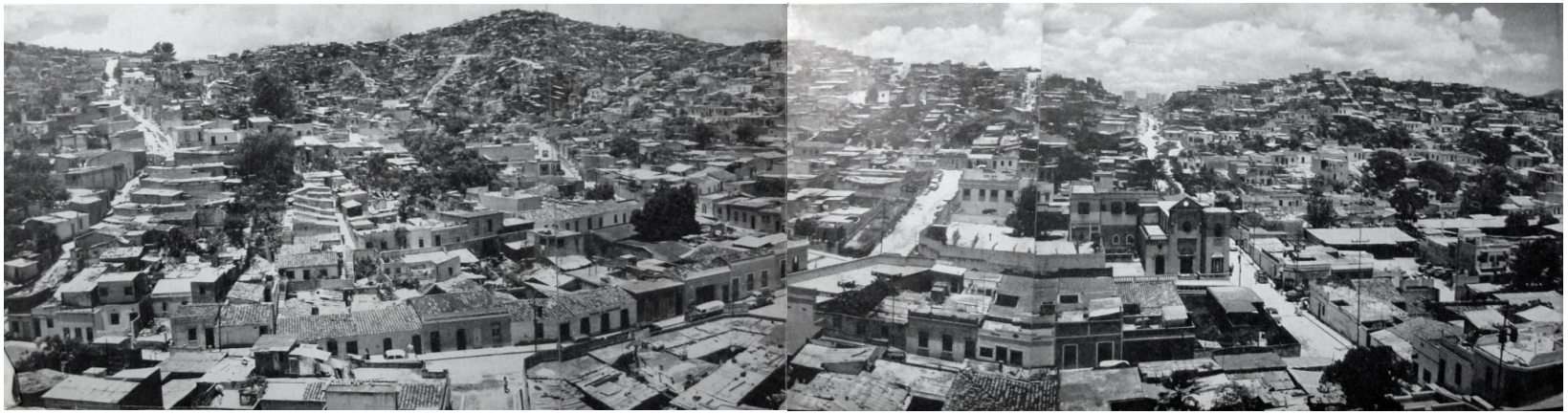


FIGURE 7.40
Panoramic view of *Cañada de la Iglesia*, before the construction of the community "December 2." Source: *Integral 7* (June 1957).

FIGURE 7.41
C.R. Villanueva, José Manuel Mijares, José Hoffman, Carlos Brando, community *2 de Diciembre*, the most important work built by the Worker's Bank. Source: *Integral 7* (June 1957).

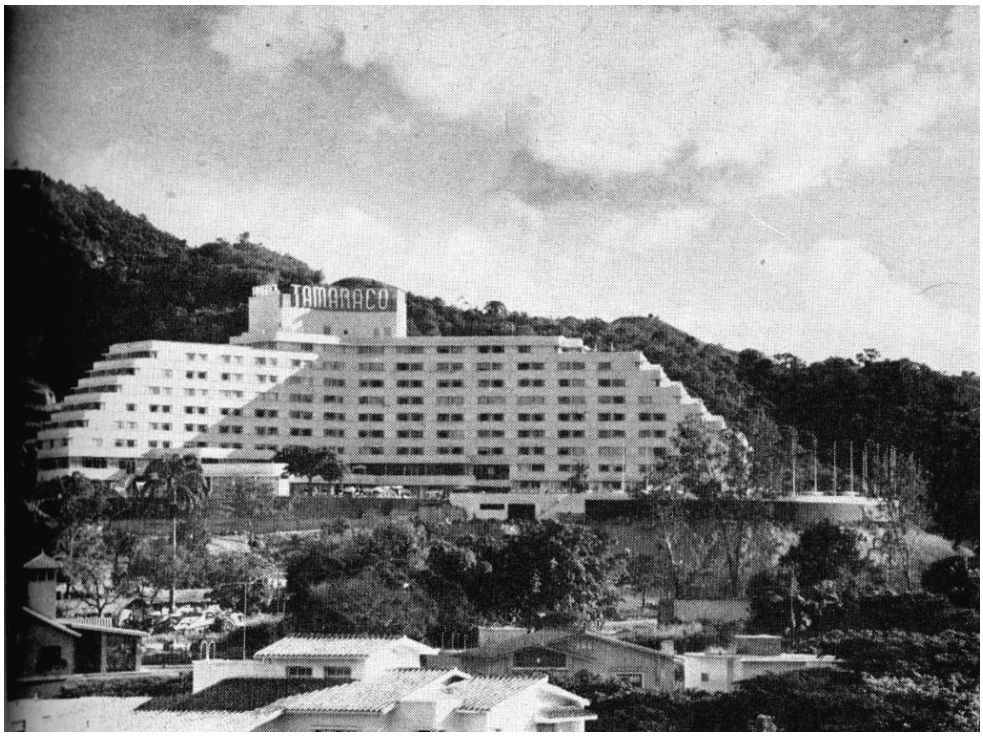


FIGURE 7.42
Holabird, Root & Burgee, architects, Gustavo Guinand, local consultant, Tamanaco Hotel, Caracas, 1953. Notice the contrast between the building's modern lines and the houses displayed in the context: change of scale, building types, and materials (it was not by accident that Caracas' nickname was "the red roof city," because of its traditional tile roofs). Source: *Architectural Forum* (January, 1955), 111.

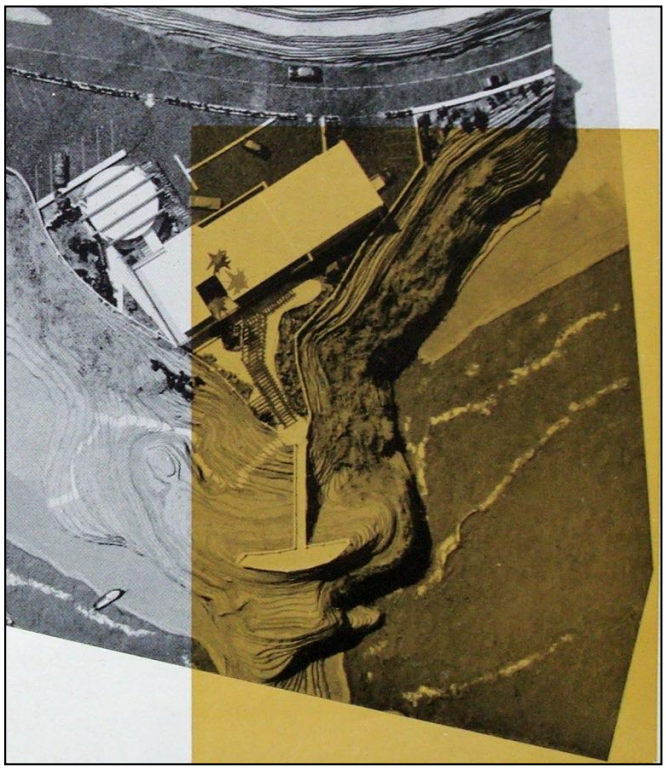


FIGURE 7.43
Miguel Salvador Diaz, architect, Lookout *El Vigia*, Vacational City Los Caracas. Photo layout by Carlos González Bogen Source: *Integral 1* (Sept. 1955).

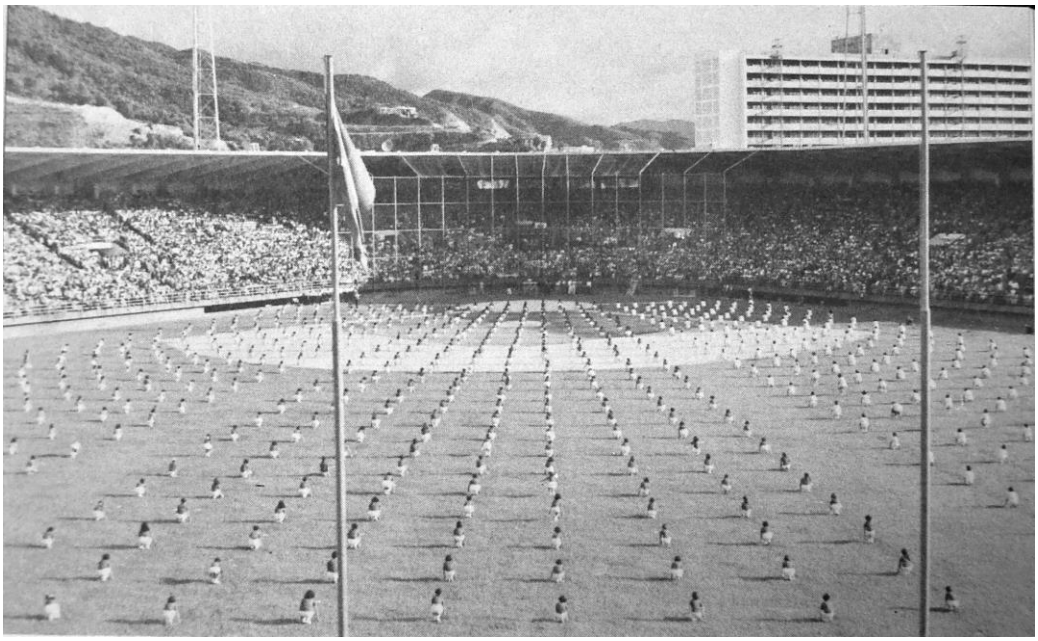


FIGURE 7.44
"Calisthenics demonstration at the baseball park of University City, by 1,600 girls 10 to 13 from Caracas public schools, during 'National Week'." Note the *Edificio* Creole in the background. Source: *Venezuela Up-to-date* (Sept. 1954), 13.

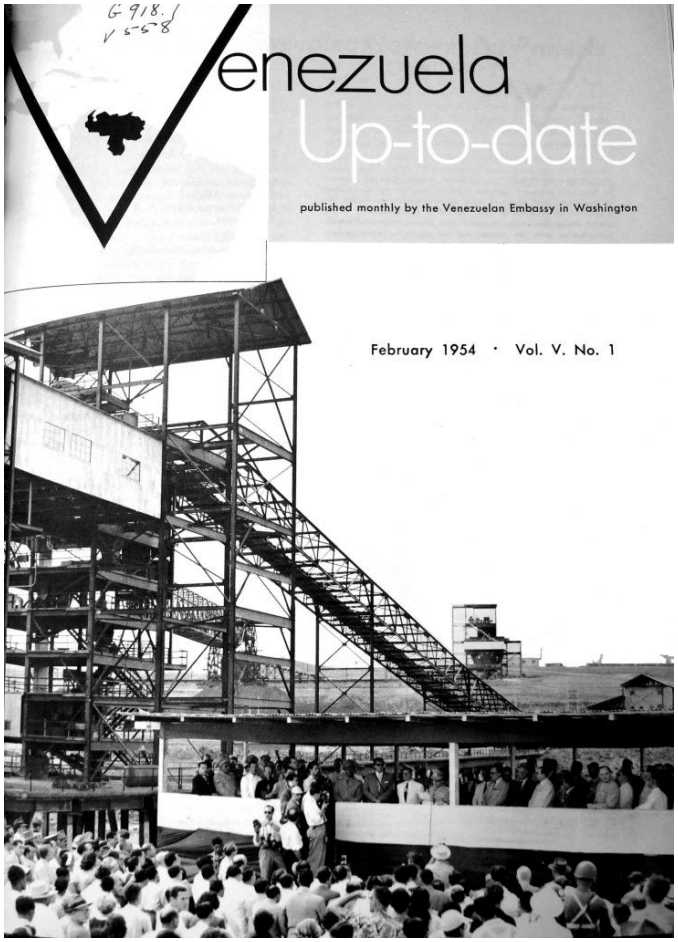


FIGURE 7.45
President Pérez Jiménez reading an address in Puerto Ordaz, on January 9, 1954, "the day the first shipload of iron ore from Cerro Bolívar left for the United States." Source: *Venezuela Up-to-date* (Feb. 1954), cover.

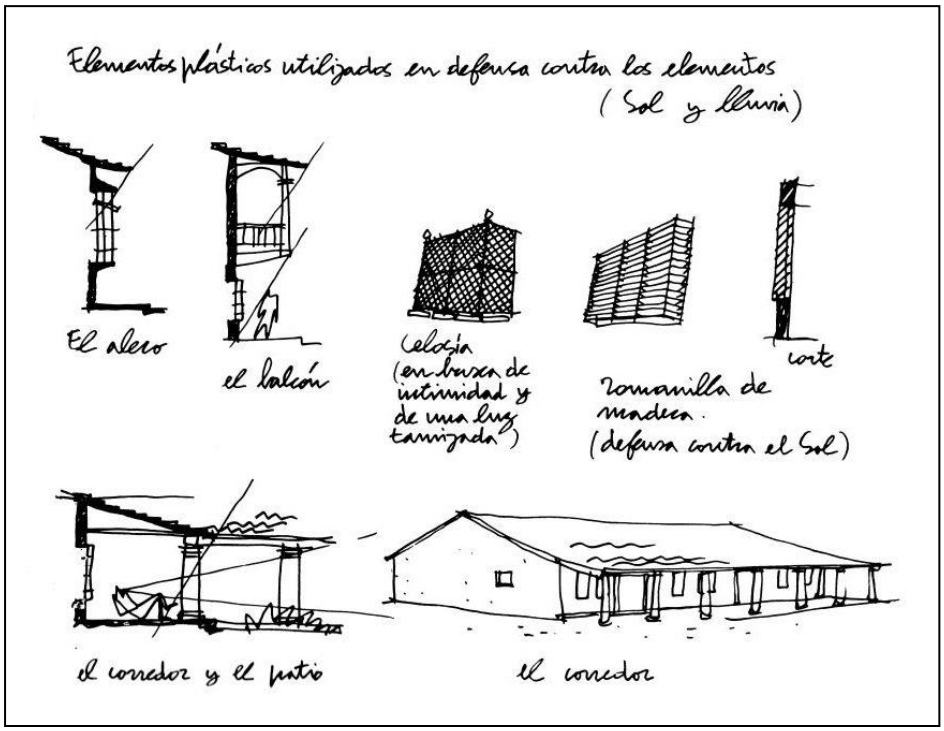


FIGURE 7.46
"Plastic components utilized against the elements (sun and rain):" eaves, balconies, screens, wooden louvered windows, corridors, and courtyards. Source: Villanueva (1952), 20.

Chapter 8

Construction of Modern Myths: Demonstrations of Boldness, Beauty, Progress and Identity

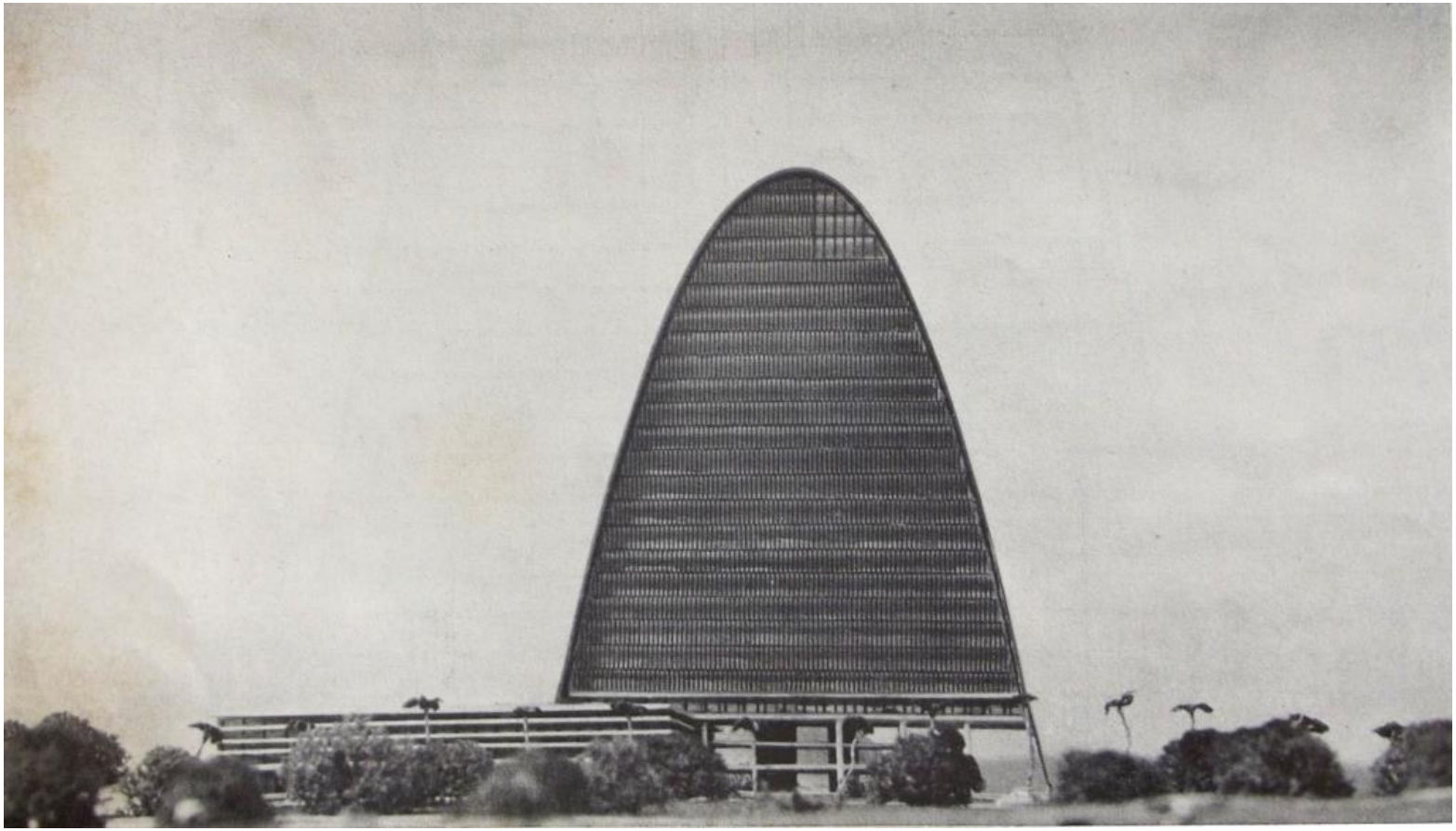


FIGURE 8.1
G. Bermúdez, P. Lluveres and C. Brando, architects; J.O. Cárdenas, engineer; R. Levi, consulting architect, and J. Johannson, consulting engineer. *La Parábola* Professional Center, Caracas, 1955. Source: *Integral* 3 (1956).

Venezuelans have sighted flying saucers too!
An oil worker reported seeing a large radial disc
over the Maracaibo airport recently.
Other reports of saucers have come to the attention
of government officials from various citizens.

"More flying saucers!"
Venezuela Up-to-date, March 1950, 5.

A pretty girl was the undoing of Armando González, 30,
"blind" beggar who panhandles in Caracas.
As the girl passed by, González lifted his dark
Eyeglasses and exclaimed: "What a beautiful girl!"
He couldn't explain the remark to police.

"A pretty girl restores sight to Caracas beggar"
Venezuela Up-to-date, March 1950, 18.

A colossal, sui generis monument emerges from the rainforest. A scene that appears to have come from a novel by Edgar Rice Burroughs shows a modernistic building whose façade paradoxically seems to emulate a primitive texture, by way of a huge bamboo screen. Perhaps it is a sort of gigantic, Piranesian cenotaph pertaining to a once-flourishing civilization, now partially claimed by the jungle. But unlike any lost city pyramid, blended into the forest, this fantastic structure dwarfs the exuberant foliage at its feet. Giant palm trees look Lilliputian vis-à-vis this geometric Leviathan. Its thin structure allows us to discern the horizon in the distance; such a vast landscape makes the whole scene even more fantastic. Here, by way of an archetypal image, civilizations, geographies and stories are merged into a single narrative construction. Both the building and its context are at the threshold between the real and the imaginary. Moreover, such an overwhelming building seems to embody the most terrifying aspects of nature and primitivism, paradoxically by means of technology. It prompts feelings of awe and terror. It is *supernatural* (*figure 8.1*).

This awe-inspiring, surrealist image, which recalls the American technological sublime (cf. *figure 1.1*), is in fact *La Parábola* Professional Center, a never-built edifice proposed for Caracas.

Designed in 1955 by Guido Bermúdez, Pedro Lluveres and Carlos Brando (architects), as well as Rino Levi (consulting architect), *La Parábola* is a good example of a whole generation of sui generis buildings, sometimes overwhelming, either utopian or real, that changed the face of the Venezuelan capital and its surroundings during the 1950s. Audacious cantilevers and heroic dispositions; bizarre combinations of building materials; sculptural, uncanny forms and overwhelming dimensions, and in general terms, buildings that either took advantage of the environment or used the topographical conditions in their own benefit, were the signs of this architecture, which seemed to depart from the Niemeyer-esque, *developmentalist* style of the time.

These architectural tours de force had existence not only in the physical environment, but also in the virtual realm of the print media. Newspapers, magazines, and specialized publications reported such projects, so as they had existence on "paper" regardless of their feasibility. Furthermore, the media assumed the task of constructing a national identity. In this sense, all that either went beyond the traditional boundaries or made Venezuelans different, was a subject of interest both to local and international readers. Either an unusual architectural project or an uncommon event (which could demonstrate Venezuelan uniqueness) attracted editors' attention. Accordingly, architectural tours de force were, somehow, equivalent to the 1950s' demonstrations of beauty. The coronation of Susana Duijm as Miss World in 1955 (the first Venezuelan to win the pageant) was one of the watersheds for Venezuelan identity. By way of a narrative construction, local newspapers and magazines started reproducing new beauty patterns in the Venezuelan public opinion and inculcating the alleged uniqueness of the Venezuelan beauty into the popular imagination. It was nothing less than the construction of a national identity through the print media as a holistic process.

As automobiles were inculcated into Venezuelan imagery, a sort of culture of "demonstrations" was inaugurated. Architecture and beauty pageants were just part of a holistic project, which either consciously or not, was fostered by both Venezuela and the United States. "A century of progress in five years," an exhibition that took place at the New York Coliseum in 1957, and "Highlights of Venezuela's burgeoning new architecture," an itinerant exhibition that started at

New York's World Affairs Center Exhibit Hall, were demonstrations of the rapid and effective achievements of Venezuela in civilizational and artistic affairs.

SUPERNATURALISM

Long traditions of both *baroque* architecture and structural explorations, which date back to the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,[1] and particularly a broad, dissimilar array of late-nineteenth-century and twentieth-century proposals, which include Henry Hobson Richardson, Louis Sullivan, Claude F. Bragdon, Frank Lloyd Wright, Alen B. Dow, and Eero Saarinen in the United States,[2] the European avant-garde, and more recently Pier Luigi Nervi in Italy, and Eduardo Torroja in Spain, influenced a heterogeneous group of Latin American architects whose works were characterized by their singularity, vis-à-vis the standardized, universal nature of the International Style. Among the most conspicuous names that stood out beginning in the 1940s (and during the 1950s and 1960s) are those of Oscar Niemeyer, Affonso Eduardo Reidy and João Vilanova Artigas in Brasil; Clorindo Testa in Argentina; Emilio Duhart in Chile; Ricardo Porro in Cuba, and Juan O'Gorman, Mario Pani and Félix Candela in México. Their works were certainly heterogeneous and represented their respective nationalities (or, at least, they were regarded as truthful expressions of culture). Nevertheless, they shared their uniqueness, and this was particularly significant in a time when transportation technology, hand in hand with the tourist industry, helped to consolidate, improve and relaunch the so-called exotic nature of Latin America. The free and sensual curve that Niemeyer allegedly found in the hills and rivers of the Brazilian geography, and in the "body of the favorite woman" (as he claimed), would gain a convenient room in the narrative construction of Latin American architecture. The once *baroque* man of the seventeenth century would now be part of a "young,

[1] The notion of the Baroque as an anticlassical tradition, by way of a constant throughout history, can be found in Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1977), and Eugeni D'Ors, *Lo Barroco* (Madrid: Aguilar, 1964). The structural explorations, in turn, can be regarded as a "constant" as well. In this sense, one of the most influential nineteenth-century theorists, which created the modern tradition of structural explorations, was Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc.

[2] Also including the landscape proposals of Andrew Jackson Downing and Frederick Law Olmsted.

extravagant and bold movement," as Brazilian essayist Guilherme de Almeida early asserted in the 1920s.[3] This sort of *produit exotique*, complex and paradoxical, in which history, tradition, cosmology, region, geography, natural exuberance and never-ending youth were mixed, was usually labeled with different names: Neo-Vernacular, Developmentalism, Regionalism, and Critical Regionalism, among others.

Venezuelan architects also embarked on such exploration. Nevertheless, some architectural pieces evidenced a substantial difference. The so-called *developmentalist* architecture was genetically attached to the Beautiful and the Picturesque, two of the eighteenth century's three aesthetic principles. Brasília, for instance, is monumental, but not supernatural; it is beautiful, and certainly covered a huge area, but it is not terrifying. The *supernatural* is essentially *sublime*; something that defies the laws of science; something to evoke intense emotions and inspire awe; something that is stimulated by the great, overwhelming, or deeply moving. It is an uncanny architectural event, triggered by either an unusual (and apparently incompatible) combination of things, or a deep paradox.[4] In this sense, Venezuelan exploration was closer to an overwhelming, utopian Étienne-Louis Boullée (for its nature, but not its size) than to Niemeyer.

Fascinated with the vastness of its landscape, and deeply committed to modern technology (in particular when movement, mobility, and accessibility are involved), the United States made a particular interpretation of the sublime. However, there is more in this interpretation than just awe-inspiring grandiloquence. As a matter of fact, the American sublime was always based on the paradoxical combination of technology and God-Nature. Accordingly, the supernatural also bears a magical principle, something that recalls the magical realism in art and literature.

---

[3] "Brasilianidad," in Aracy Amaral and Jose Carlos Serroni, *Arte y Arquitectura del Modernismo Brasileño (1917-1930),* translation by Marta Traba (Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1978), 152. Article originally published in *Era Nova,* Paraiba, Oct. 18, 1925.

[4] A discussion on the supernatural can be found in Meyer Howard Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism. Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: W.W. Norton, Inc., 1973).

There was, in this sense, a whole generation of striking pieces of architecture displayed in Caracas's urban sprawl during the 1950s. These works, by way of *supernatural* objects, delineated a new skyline in the city. Impressive, sometimes because of their sui generis forms, sometimes because of their skills to command the geography, or just because of their scale, they began to transform the essence of Caracas and its surroundings. Sometimes emphasized by contextual conditions, they showed themselves as oneiric, surrealist images. On occasions, they were not only magical objects to be seen, but also sui generis viewpoints to gaze at the vastness of Caracas valley. Moreover, this urban transformation would be seen either in the real territory of the city or in the realm of the imaginary.

In 1954, or probably before, Vicente Emilio Martínez Rui, Governor of Aragua State (1953-1957) and a personal friend of Pérez Jiménez, contacted architect Ernesto Fuenmayor, one of the founders of the Faculty of Architecture at Central University of Venezuela (1953). The result of that contact was an extraordinary house located in El Playón, Ocumare de la Costa (Aragua State): the Atalaya House (*figure 8.2*). El Playón, a small hamlet by the sea, had undergone just a few changes during the twentieth century; all of them related to President Juan Vicente Gómez, who used to vacation there during the 1920s. On more than one occasion, even the young architect Carlos Raúl Villanueva was sent to execute some repairs in El Playón's houses; at that time there were just five houses and a three-story hotel. In the 1950s, however, the place started undergoing a real estate boom. It was in such conditions that Atalaya House appeared. To some degree it bore a resemblance to Lina Bo Bardi's Glass House in São Paulo (also known as Bardi Residence), started in 1949 and completed in 1954.[5] However, such similarity was just morphological.[6] A combination of contrasting materials (concrete, brick, wood and glass), transparency, and the use of cantilevers spoke of the real vocation of Atalaya. Also, apart from

[5] Bardi Residence had been published in *Habitat*, in 1953 (See Lauro Cavalcanti, "Architecture, Urbanism, and Good Neighbor Policy: Brazil and the United States," *Latin American Architecture 1929-1960. Contemporary reflections*, ed. Carlos Brillembourg [NewYork: The Monacelli Press, 2004]).

[6] In any case, the design process of Atalaya seems to have followed a surprising route. According to architect Jesús Tenreiro, who was undertaking an internship in Ernesto Fuenmayor's office at the time, the actual designer of Atalaya House was the draftsman "Fat" Rondón. Fuenmayor had given him just general indications of architectural composition and location.

what could be expected in this kind of residence (a swimming pool and huge garden area), the house integrated cutting-edge technology: intercoms in each room, and a heliport on one of its roofs. But more importantly, it showed a clear command of the geography. Located on the top of a hill, Atalaya managed to control three systems: the mountain, the vast sea, and the town. Moreover, by combining multiple contextual and architectural aspects, such as topography, orientation, light, physical approach, building form and structure, the house managed to create (intentionally or not) visual effects or illusions as people approached it: in the distance, the house seemed to fade under the sunlight, like an ancient ruin; closer, it adopted a "heroic" attitude: Atalaya appeared to jump from the cliff (*figure 8.3*).[7]

Even more impressive was the Perchal House (1954) in Playa Grande (Vargas State, near Caracas), by architect Fruto Vivas. He had received this commission from President Pérez Jiménez. In fact, the project had been conceived from the beginning as his personal beach house. Here, as in Atalaya, the combination of contrasting materials was conspicuous: reinforced concrete, steel, plaster, wood, roof tiles, and stone. The thinness of its structure seemed to push the technological possibilities to the limits: the delicate section of its stilts and slabs defied any feasibility. Also, the coexistence of a traditional repertoire with a definitely more progressive vocabulary gave Perchal a very unique expression (*figure 8.4*). Both its morphological composition and its spatial arrangement were likewise remarkably distinctive. Two volumes, typologically identifiable as "houses," with shed roofs that virtually reconstruct a big gable roof, seemed to float over a set of terraces. Partially independent from one another, both volumes defined a central space that enclosed the swimming pool, and from which could be seen a playful variety of architectural features: glass and louvered windows, columns and beams of different sections and forms, staircases, and different levels. This sort of courtyard solved the encounter of two different systems; it exposed the house's viscera (*figure 8.5*). However, more importantly, Perchal House showed a very particular relation with its context. Its

[7] For a detailed analysis of Atalaya House, see Jorge Villota Peña, "El Discurrir de la Memoria: la Arquitectura Litoral como Signo de Modernidad. De Ocumare de la Costa a El Playón," in *La Tradición de lo moderno. Venezuela en diez enfoques*, ed. Tomas Straka (Caracas: Fundación para la Cultura Urbana, 2006), 351-410.

"heroic" attitude was similar to Atalaya, but much more evident and decisive: a house jumping from a cliff. Here, the *Nietzschean* disposition of the building vis-à-vis the topography is clear; like a flamed arrow crossing the sky.[8] This surrealistic image was emphasized by the paradoxical iconography of the building: a traditional icon (symbolized by a gable roof and old-fashion building materials) provided with modern muscle (a dynamic, bold gesture, novel structural systems, new materials, and absolute control of the hill) (*figure 8.6*).[9]

Back in the capital city, one of the most flamboyant examples that probably attracted the attention of *Caraqueños* at the time, despite its small scale, was the Olary House (Quinta Olary). This structurally daring work seemed to defy gravity on purpose. Its presence aroused a bunch of morphological metaphors. It looked like a frozen object, caught while performing a jump; a giant engine with pistons and connecting rods, or even a hybrid being, half machine, half animal. Its stilts looked totally stretched, like tendons performing a muscular action. Stylistically it resembled the European avant-gardes; a sort of combination of De Stijl's composition, Futurism, Constructivism and even Expressionism. The arrangement of its volumes and the ornamentation of some parts of its facades echoed Kazimir Malevich's works. Built in 1953, the Olary House was the subject of several publications. *Venezuela Up-to-date* described it as a "unique type of house containing 13 rooms, designed by a Venezuelan architect (…) to make the best use of a narrow and sloping piece of land."[10] In fact, the house had been designed by engineer Vicente Barrera Salazar for Luisa and Orestes Monzeglio (an Italian immigrant and prosperous dealer).[11] Its composition showed two volumes: the first one, firmly anchored to the ground, had rooms and

[8] For a phenomenological interpretation of F. Nietzsche's work and its relation with kinetic objects, see Gaston Bachelard, *Air and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Movement* (Dallas: The Dallas Institute Publications), 2002. "Nietzsche and the Ascensional Psyche," 127-160.

[9] In Fruto Vivas' works, unlike other modern architects, there was not a direct relation between his projects and a specific ideology. As he asserted during an interview in 2010, he took advantage of his commissions (regardless of the political affiliation of his clients) to carry out his architectural and structural explorations.

[10] *Venezuela Up-to-date* (Sept. 1954), 9.

[11] See Instituto de Estudios Regionales y Urbanos. *Preinventario del Patrimonio de Bienes Inmuebles del Municipio Baruta*, record # 41, "Quinta Olary."

private areas, while the other, "flying" above the cliff, had the social areas. The huge windowed end of the cantilevered volume allowed a 180-degree view of Caracas Valley. The image published by *Venezuela Up-to-date* showed the dramatic contrast between the Olary House and a typological modern construction (at the foot of the hill); moreover, it also revealed the disparity between the house and a barely urbanized territory (a contextual condition that emphasized its off-center character) (*figure 8.7*). The photography was by Hamilton Wright Organization.[12] In the United States, the house was published in dissimilar magazines, such as *Architectural Forum* (March 1956, 58), and even *Popular Mechanics* (Oct. 1954, 13). The latter described it as a "Venezuelan home anchored to hillside (that) seems to float on air." "Plenty of sunshine and fresh air" were some of the advantages of this "strange-looking house perched on a hillside near Caracas."[13]

Another intriguing example was a house located in El Junko Country Club (Vargas State, near Caracas). By taking advantage of the topography, this house showed a "heroic" disposition similar to Olary. Designed by Julio César Volante,[14] it showed a combination of rationality and daring, as well as transparency and lightness. Simple and geometrically well defined, it was characterized by the extensive use of curtain wall and the play of independent structural systems. A sort of double-height courtyard articulated both volumes, while a single roof provided the whole composition with coherency. The private areas moved backward, while four pairs of reinforced concrete stilts projected the social area over the cliff (*figures 8.8* and *8.9*).

[12] The significance of Hamilton Wright Org. will deserve a subsequent comment in this paper. In *figure 8.7* it is also interesting to notice the replication of modern forms in the unknown house located at the foot of the hill. This aspect, concerning the morphological diffusion of the modernism through popular and traditional works, as we already know, is fundamental to Prof. Fernando Lara.

[13] "Venezuelan home anchored to hillside seems to float on air," *Popular Mechanics*, Oct. 1954, 113. The house was located in Caracas, specifically in a new neighborhood out of downtown: Colinas de Bello Monte. Probably, this is why *Popular Mechanic*s' note says "near Caracas."

[14] Volante, Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina, had earned a Master of Science from Columbia University, New York City. He had been professor of Composition at the University of Buenos Aires, and by the early 1960s he was Head of Studio at the School of Architecture and Urbanism, Central University of Venezuela (see "Habla un Arquitecto," *Punto* 17, Apr. 1964).

The general *parti* of the house, vis-à-vis its context, recalled both Perchal and Olary. Despite the fact that these houses were placed in Caracas or its surroundings, theirs respective contexts were different: Perchal House was located in front of the beach, Olary House in an urban context (a new neighborhood in Caracas), and El Junko's House in a mountainous area. They even had different characters. All of them, however, made the same decision. Topography and technology were key factors.

Nevertheless, the *supernatural* condition was not exclusive to residential architecture. The need for places for leisure had led to the building of clubs and recreational facilities in Caracas, or nearby. One of these facilities was the Táchira Club, which, regardless of the difficulties of its plot (a sloping narrow area in Caracas), managed to combine social, cultural, and sportive activities. The club was also proud to allow people of different socio-economic levels to gather in its venues. Designed by Fruto Vivas, the Táchira Club's original proposal was constituted by a sequence of terraces and organic buildings, in which different parts of the program were accommodated: Social (formal and informal), cultural, sportive, children's, and special services. From this original plan, only the building for informal social activities was completed (1956). Known as the *Rancho*, the building was located at the end of the urban lot, commanding a magnificent view of Caracas Valley (*figures 8.10* and *8.11*). It was basically a hyperbolic paraboloid that covered a series of free-curvilinear slabs and terraces (*figure 8.12*).[15] For the Rancho, Vivas relied on the collaboration of engineer Nicolás Colmenares.[16] The most important and representative building of the set, however, was the clubhouse, a concrete shell (never built) located near the main entrance of the set. It was planned to be the largest building of the

[15] *Integral* magazine, which featured a detailed report of the entire project in 1958, described the Rancho's structure this way: "Because of time efficiency, we decided to use metal for the structure in order to put it into service immediately. The structure was supported, and kept in balance, by a huge 33-meter-span arch, resting on two articulations. It was fixed by a 'curtain' of steel and glass, which protected the interior space from the east winds." The shell per se was made up of a steel truss covered on both sides by wood strips, like a "sandwich" (see "Club Táchira," *Integral* 10-11, 1958).

[16] Ibid. According to the article, engineer Eduardo Torroja Miret was responsible for the structural design of the club's shell (main building), a concrete structure to accommodate formal social activities, located close to the entrance (at the opposite side of the lot). This structure was never built, and it is usually mistaken for the *rancho*.

club. The shell, which relied on the technical support of the well-known Spanish engineer Eduardo Torroja Miret, would be supported by a huge arch of 60 meters, almost double that of the Rancho (*figure 8.13*).

One year later, between 1957 and 1958, Alejandro Pietri would design a very imaginative project that attracted attention of the American media: the Aquarium in East Park or *Parque del Este*.[17] Regarded as "Guggenheimesque" by *Progressive Architecture*, the project would stand as a "gigantic, multi-hued sculpture" in the park. By way of a huge tank, 20 ft. high, the aquarium's project had glass walls supported by pre-stressed concrete beams, forming a hyperboloid that grew from a base of 115 ft. to a top circumference of 132 ft. The tension ring that supported the tank at the top also acted as a passage-way (*figure 8.14*).[18] As Pietri had devised the project, visitors entered the tank via a gently curved ramp which took them over circular pools and up to the top of the tank. From here, visitors crossed a bridge to a central glass tower, inside which they walked down a spiral ramp beneath the level of the water in the tank outside (*figure 8.15*).[19] Then, from the bottom of the observation tower (20 ft. below the surface), visitors entered a sloped glass tunnel under the water that took them back to the air breathing world. Doubtless the aquarium was an impressive piece that synthesized architecture and landscape. Its huge dimensions and form were remarkable. In this sense, echoes of the V.C. Morris Gift Shop in San Francisco and David Wright House in Phoenix (1952) could be found in the Aquarium. As in these buildings, the ramp was certainly the organizational element of the

[17] In 1957 Brazilian landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx, and his team of collaborators, Fernando Tábora and John Stoddart had received the commission to design the landscape of 1960 International Exposition of Caracas (*Exposición Internacional de Caracas de 1960*), which would be located on the lot reserved to the future East Park or *Parque del Este* (whose official decree dated back to 1950). The master plan of the Exposition had been under the responsibility of architect Alejandro Pietri. After the fall of Pérez Jiménez regime in 1958, the Government Junta decided to abandon the project. Nevertheless, at the suggestion of Venezuelan architect Carlos Guinand, it was decide to develop a park (eventually known as *Parque del Este*). Among the building projects abandoned along with the International Exposition was Pietri's Aquarium. East Park was actually a reduced version of the original project devised by Pietri. It was finally opened in 1961.

[18] "Caracas to Have Guggenheimesque Aquarium," *Progressive Architecture*, Apr. 1961, 53.

[19] Ibid.

Aquarium. Moreover, its morphological composition and its dynamics directly recalled Wright's Guggenheim Museum of New York. However, the Aquarium went beyond; it was a captivating spectacle of colors. As Pietri devised the building, variously colored glass would be inset into the diamond shapes described by the pre-stressed concrete beams on the exterior of the tank, and the tank, in turn, would be illuminated at night for a spectacular effect. By day, the tinted glass would color the water in the tank, adding to the dramatic effect.[20]

Also in Caracas, but published more times than Pietri's project, was the Museum of Modern Art of Caracas (MMAC), an inverted pyramid designed by Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer (*figures 8.16* and *8.17*). Following the purism of ideal forms (almost a platonic solid), the pyramid worked as a container of environments with different natures. Even more remarkable was the choice of the site: at the top of a mountain, which exact location still remains debatable.[21] Its program included 3,400 square meters (36,597 square feet) of exhibition area, and an auditorium, all connected vertically by means of stairs and ramps. There was also provision for an Art School, with classrooms and library (away from the main building). The structural system consisted basically of a centralized support, while the slabs worked under traction, by way of huge wire ropes keeping the pyramid's faces together. The upper mezzanine (a free-curvilinear slab located in the upper level, below the terrace), in turn, was suspended in the air, hung by means of four pendant columns (from the roof), and fixed by four wire ropes (*figure 8.16*).[22] As remarkable as its structural system was the exploitation of the natural light, as well as its relation with the context. In Niemeyer's own words, this unique architectural piece was destined to become a symbol of modernity (*figure 8.18*):

> It's our intention that the Museum of Modern Art of Caracas becomes, for its simplicity and purity of form, a symbol of the modern movement in Venezuela. Hence, we avoided

[20] Ibid.

[21] Perhaps the most accurate location is presented by Prof. Carola Barrios, of Central University of Venezuela. See "El Museo de Arte de Niemeyer: su lugar en el paisaje moderno de Caracas," *Arquine*, 37 (Autumn, 2006), 79-81.

[22] An accurate description is provided by *Integral* 2, Nov. 1955.

> common solutions coming from financial, functional and topographic information. In this case, we think it would be fairer and more stimulating to find a new form, compact and monumental at the same time (instead of solutions with separated volumes), capable of providing the MAMC building with unique characteristics, as well as the creative nature of the contemporary art. The project, which adapts to topography by means of both a centralized support and its open spaces, has, as one of its most significant objectives, the search of sunlight. By the violent contrast between its "closed" exterior and its "almost-open-air" interior, the museum gives the visitors an intense emotional experience.[23]

In order to take advantage of natural light, Niemeyer planned a roof made of reinforced concrete panels (which avoided the direct glare), and an inner cover system of movable aluminum sheets which, supported by artificial light, made possible to obtain all the lighting effect desired. The MMAC would probably provoke an intense emotion, not just as a spatial experience, but as an awe-inspiring, surrealist piece of architecture placed on top of a hill. No less impressive, one of the Niemeyer's sketches showed the uncommon experience of the MMAC's terrace: a sort of large runway on which visitor could admire both works of art and El Avila Mountain at the background (*figure 8.19*).

Another sui generis project that could have changed the skyline of Caracas was *La Parábola* Professional Center. Again, ideal forms shaped the project: now, instead of a pyramid, a conic section worked as a container (*figure 8.20*). The program was also different. As functional as seductive, the building combined nineteen stories of offices, a shopping mall displayed in the base of the building, and a nightclub in the penthouse. A generous parking area for approximately 580 automobiles (distributed in two underground levels for office workers, and an exterior area for visitors), and a set of four elevators provided the project with efficient mobility. Made of reinforced concrete, the structure was calculated by engineer J.O. Cárdenas, and relied on the advising of Johannes Johannson. The architectural team of designers was made up of Guido Bermúdez, Pedro Lluveres, and Carlos Brando. Also, the Brazilian influence

[23] "M.A.M., Museo de Arte Moderno de Caracas," *Integra*l 2, Nov. 1955.

was present once more: well-known architect Rino Levi worked as a consultant.[24] Among the references on which designers based their proposal, there was actually a project Levi had devised along with Roberto Cerqueira César (associate architect): two parabola-like twin towers to be placed in São Paulo, Brazil, between two important streets, which in turn would be connected by means of an inner avenue transformed into shopping mall. Also significant was the second reference: the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, in St. Louis, Missouri, 1947, designed by Eero Saarinen & Associates. For this project (finally built between 1963 and 1965), Saarinen and his team proposed a giant, sculptural parabolic arch, which had an enormous urban impact (*figure* 8.21). Like the Jefferson Memorial, *La Parábola* was planned to exert a huge impact on its surroundings; moreover, it probably could have been an architectural reference in the entire city. As a matter of fact, the project met the requirements of a new zone in Caracas destined to be one of the most important commercial centers of the city. This strategic location, at the confluence of three important avenues (Victoria, Nueva Granada and El Cementerio), also included an even more impressive building: the Helicoid (*figure 8.22*). Like Niemeyer's Museum, *La Parábola* was never built.

Finally, and despite not being an architectural work, a case that should not be missed in the *supernatural* group is a vehicular tunnel project devised in 1957 to connect Caracas with La Guaira. The connection between the capital city and the coastal area had been a long-standing ambition. Bringing the ocean to Caracas had been "an aspiration of governments, both national and local, since the city itself."[25] Concerned with this strategic connection, the Venezuelan government had sponsored the construction of several road links, such as the old Caracas-La Guaira Highway (*figure 4.3*) and more recently the new Highway, opened in 1953 (*figure 7.9*). However, this would be the first time a private developer came up with an infrastructural connecting project. In 1948 Louis Roche and a group of investors proposed a tunnel linking Caracas (from Altamira neighborhood) with the Central Coast. The project had been retaken by

[24] See "Centro Profesional La Parábola," in *Integral* 3, 1956.

[25] Lorenzo González and Orlando Marín, "Caracas al Mar: el Acceso de Caracas al Litoral y el Proyecto de Túnel por Altamira (1948-1958), *Tiempo y Espacio* 51 (2009): 13. This article offers a very detailed account of the project.

Pérez Jiménez, and was now under official patronage.[26] An artist's sketch published in *Venezuela-Up-to-date* showed a cross-section of El Avila Mountain range and the vehicular tunnel that would pass through it with a four-lane highway. As showed in the sketch, the city of Caracas, 3,000 feet above sea level, was at right; on top of El Avila Mountain was the Humboldt Hotel, intermediate station for the five-mile-long cable car that ran from the capital to the seashore (*figure 8.23*).[27] Although the project was never built, because it was technically and financially impractical, the report did make it possible to think of its feasibility: ventilation would be supplied by 96 gigantic fans; in all, 274,000 cubic meters of air would be pumped into the tunnel every minute, and 290,000 cubic meters would be pumped out. Grade, in turn, would not exceed 2 ½ per cent. The facility was expected to accommodate 2,400 vehicles an hour. Bids for the construction of the project were even invited by the Ministry of Public Works, "with the provision that work is to begin next January and the project completed in 30 months."[28]

The unfeasibility of such project discouraged a comprehensive view of El Avila as a system with a mega scale capable of linking Caracas with the Venezuelan central coast. The connection between the capital and the sea had been a "situation" to solve since Caracas's foundation. What paradoxically constituted a problem, and at the same time a natural defensive barrier during the colonial period, was now regarded as a potential source of leisure for Caracas' citizens. The idea of creating a National Park contemplated a whole system of terminals and stations along the mountain (*figure 8.24*). The system also included the Humboldt Hotel. In this sense, the hotel and the Caracas-La Guaira station, located almost at the top of the mountain (2,100 m. above the sea level), constituted a set of interconnected buildings designed by Arch. Tomás Sanabria. This 14 story-tower, almost 60 meters tall, with anti-seismic structure, and circular plan (allowing a 360-degree view) represented an outstanding landmark in the territory, visible at a great distanc e. A series of vaults covered the social areas, while a 600-meter-long

[26] Ibid, 14.

[27] "Vehicular Tunnel will Pierce Avila Mountain," *Venezuela Up-to-date,* Oct. 1957, 11.

[28] Ibid.

cable car linkedthe Humboldt with the station. It was a total venture that defeated the topographical difficulties, both in terms of results and building process (*figure 8.25*).

TIME FOR DEMONSTRATIONS: BEAUTY CONTESTS, EXHIBITIONS, AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

These architectural tours de force definitely stood out from their respective typological contexts. They had, however, existence not just in the real physical environment, but also in the virtual realm of the print media. Newspapers, magazines as well as specialized publications echoed such projects, so as they had existence in "paper," regardless either its technical or financial feasibility. What is more, the media arrogated to itself the task of constructing a national identity. And in this respect, all what either pushed boundaries or made Venezuelans different (especially with respect to the U.S. standards) was a subject of interest both to local and international readers, and why not, even to Americans. Different Venezuelan essayists expressed their respective viewpoints about the modernization process the country was undergoing. Venezuelan newspapers (at least until 1952, before Pérez Jiménez seized power) worked as a political, ideological and philosophical arena for such discussions. The examination of Venezuelan intelligentsia (and consequently of public opinion) of both the modernization process and the role the United States was playing in Latin America defined a relationship on a love-hate basis. Venezuelans accepted the U.S. influence, but at the same time did not want to see their national identity fading. Hence, either an unusual architectural project or an uncommon event (which could demonstrate Venezuelan uniqueness) attracted editors' attention.

Architectural tours de force, in this regard, were somehow equivalent to the 1950s demonstrations of beauty. In November 1955, *Venezuela Up-to-date* reported an international event, with relative impact worldwide: a Venezuelan girl had won a worldwide beauty contest. In competition with twenty other beauties from America and Europe, Susana Duijm had won the title of Miss World in London (*figure 8.26*). In the last round, she had defeated the second and the first runners-up, Greece and the United States respectively. In this way, the Venezuelan

representative became the first Latin American winner in these international beauty contests.[29] Before being selected as Miss Venezuela, this "tall and slender brunette with a perfect figure, and of course, very, very pretty,"[30] had worked as a receptionist for Antonio Bertorelli, President of Higuerote Beach Resort Company.[31] As mentioned in the bulletin, a great popular welcome awaited Susana in Caracas on her return October 31.

The coronation of Susana Duijm as Miss World in 1955 was a watershed for Venezuelan identity. By way of a narrative construction, local newspapers and magazines started introducing new beauty patterns into the Venezuelan public realm and inculcating the alleged uniqueness of the Venezuelan beauty into the popular imagination. Before 1955, local newspapers mentioned almost nothing about female beauty. No relevant information about beauty, much less about beauty contests, was published; no news, no articles, and no essays. On the other hand, information and advertisements on beauty and fashion – either direct or indirectly related to each other – were much more common in the American print media. In fact, while in Latin America beauty pageants began in the twentieth century, the United States already had a long experience that dated from mid-nineteenth century. In the aftermath of Miss World 1955, the local media, once silent on this matter, would play an important role in spreading and reproducing the idealization of Venezuelan beauty. Moreover, even in the early 1950s, it seemed that there was an official interest in promoting beauty contests.[32] The firm local belief in and the increasing international reputation of Venezuelan women's exquisiteness had begun, as had a brand-new cultural tradition.

[29] *Venezuela Up-to-date* (Nov. 1955), 2.

[30] Ibid.

[31] See Albor Rodríguez, *Misses de Venezuela: Reinas que Cautivaron a un País. Crónicas, reportajes y testimonies del Concurso Miss Venezuela* (Caracas: Los Libros de El Nacional, 2005), 71.

[32] Beginning in September 1950, when Betty Colina was selected Queen of the International Trade Fair in Chicago, *Venezuela Up-to-date* started a long series of articles on beauty pageants involving Venezuelan representatives.

But this "tall and slender brunette with a perfect figure" (as *Venezuela Up-to-date* had asserted) was not a brunette in the strict sense of the word. With her light, tanned skin and her height (5 feet and 8.5 inches, very tall by Latin American standards) Duijm had a hybrid beauty; a sort of unique combination that synthesized (so to speak) both worlds. More than just a metaphor, this made sense in such historical conjuncture. It was not by chance that, as a child, she had studied at the School of Mene Grande Oil Company, in San Tomé (an oil industry-related town in eastern Venezuela).[33] In 1955, already a beauty queen, she allowed journalists to photograph her in the Tamanaco Hotel accompanied by a personal friend, Howard Lewis Rundquist, a U.S. citizen who worked in an oil camp in eastern Venezuela. Press speculation was not long in coming; the headline said "Flirtation, Love or Friendship."[34]

In a certain way, as automobiles were inculcated into Venezuelan imagery, it seemed that a sort of culture of "demonstrations" had been inaugurated. It was clear that the political control of the nation was partly based on seduction, not just by means of architecture and public works, but by means of a narrative construction on Venezuelan beauty, and in general terms, through the culture of spectacles and demonstrations.

In the late 1950s *Venezuela-Up-to-date* reported on an important exhibit. Entitled "A century of progress in five years," the exhibition had taken place in the New York Coliseum, from April 14 to 29 in 1957, on the occasion of the New York World Fair. Organized in an open, bright space, with rationalist aesthetic lines, "the exhibit covered an area of 1,800 square feet for the display of Venezuelan natural and manufactured products, with numerous mural photographs"[35] (*figure 8.27*). The image published had been provided by the Hamilton Wright Organization, which was

[33] Orlando Suarez, "Crónica. El Cuento de Susana Duijm," Panorama on-line (panorama.com.ve, accessed October 2, 2013); available from http://panorama.com.ve/portal/app/push/noticia77315.php

[34] *El Heraldo*, Nov.-Dec. 1955.

[35] *Venezuela Up-to-date* (Jun. 1957), 9.

a public relation firm devoted to make travelogs for domestic and foreign governments. These photos and films were usually distributed to motion pictures houses worldwide.[36]

Finally, perhaps one of the most gripping reports on Venezuela was published in the September 1957 issue of *Architectural Record*. Under the title of "Highlights of Venezuela's burgeoning new architecture," this report sampled the exhibit of "Venezuela's current and enormous building boom," on view from August 21 to September 15, at New York's World Affairs Center Exhibit Hall. This exposition, prepared by Cipriano Domínguez, Luis Ramírez, Paolo Gasparini, and Mateo Manaure, would be later presented for two months at the Pan American Union, in Washington, and then would tour U.S. Architectural Schools. It had been sponsored by the Venezuelan Society of Architects and the Creole Petroleum Corporation.[37]

An impressive set of photographs that embraced the latest achievements of Venezuelan architects was displayed. Apart from the University City, where Carlos Raúl Villanueva set out his ideas about the "synthesis of the arts," the report showed a multiplicity of works encompassing a wide array of morphological proposals, construction materials, building techniques, as well as responses to climatic and setting conditions. A striking low-angle shot of an office building designed by Carlos Guinand and Moises Benacerraf, for instance, displayed an impressive sun screen, perhaps with the intention of linking both abstraction and movement within a climatic awareness (*figure 8.28*). The systematic, neat use of reinforced concrete in the Cerro Grande Housing Unit by Guido Bermúdez, in turn, appeared to go beyond the Corbusian brutalism (*figure 8.29*).

In the School of Petroleum Engineering, Villanueva demonstrated both his concerns about adaptation to local conditions and a personal, morphological exploration (which could be seen in the combination of undulating, perforated walls with *brise-soleils*) (*figure 8.30*). Samples of

[36] National Anthropological Archives and Human Studies Film Archives. http://www.nmnh.si.edu/naa/guide/_w2.htm

[37] See *Architectural Record* (September, 1957), 201.

organic architecture by Alejandro Pietri, showing structural explorations and climate adaptations, could be seen in his Venezuelan pavilion for an international exposition in Santo Domingo (notice the horizontal *brise-soleils*) (*figure 8.31*), and the Mariperez Cable Terminal, in Caracas. Finally, as a natural sequence of a local Modernity that seemed to be concerned with local conditions, the exhibition showed a well-achieved synthesis of traditional techniques and materials: the Hotel Prado del Rio in Mérida, by Tomás José Sanabria, and the typological Hotel Alto Llano in Barinas, by Oscar Carpio and Guillermo A. Suarez, completely built in wood (*figures 8.32* and *8.33*).

It is likely that Americans who visited such exhibitions were interested in the diversity of architectural adaptations to local climate, as well as the variety of building techniques and styles. Some of the visitors were probably fascinated by the tropical adaptation of the International style; more than one, attracted by the use of pierced walls and screens, perhaps found resemblances to the U.S. embassy buildings worldwide (most of them published two years before in *Architectural Record* and *Architectural Forum*).

This concern for climate adaptions and environmental comfort was shared by an American architect who was about to write a significant "chapter" on corporate buildings in the United States and particularly abroad. His experience during the war had led him to develop design solutions for extreme climate conditions, as well as to devise building systems to deal with standard procedures and unskilled local labor. His name was Lathrop Smith Douglass. His academic formation was remarkable, while his multiple activities within The American Institute of Architect were frankly commendable. His complex and broad network of professional connections led him to significant corporate commissions, particularly with Standard Oil. But more importantly, he was a pioneer. Douglass managed to integrate comfort, efficiency, economy, flexibility and corporate representativeness into a single architectural philosophy, in a time when architects (and even periodical publications) were tied to eclectic styles still. He was able to merge cutting-edge technology with his explorations on architectural typology. His corporate buildings were complex "organisms," environmentally and cost-effectively adapted to specific climate conditions by combining HVAC with passive environmental control systems. His

architectural production in Venezuela, as efficient as exploratory, turned out to be the "seed" for futures venture in the United States.

FIGURE 8.2
Ernesto Fuenmayor, Atalaya House, Ocumare de la Costa, Venezuela, 1954-55. Unpublished image (moldy original photo, part of a set of fifteen taken when the house had just been completed in 1955 [courtesy by Jose Manuel Diaz Guevara, second nephew of the owner]). Source: photo by Rafael Uzcátegui, 1955.

FIGURE 8.3
Ernesto Fuenmayor, Atalaya House, Ocumare de la Costa, Venezuela, 1954-55. Unpublished image (moldy original photo [courtesy by J. M. Diaz Guevara]). Source: Photo by Rafael Uzcátegui, 1955. Image previously published in Villota, 2006.

FIGURE 8.4
Fruto Vivas, Perchal House, Playa Grande (Vargas State), Venezuela, 1954. Source: Photo by Victoriano de los Ríos, *ca.* 1954.

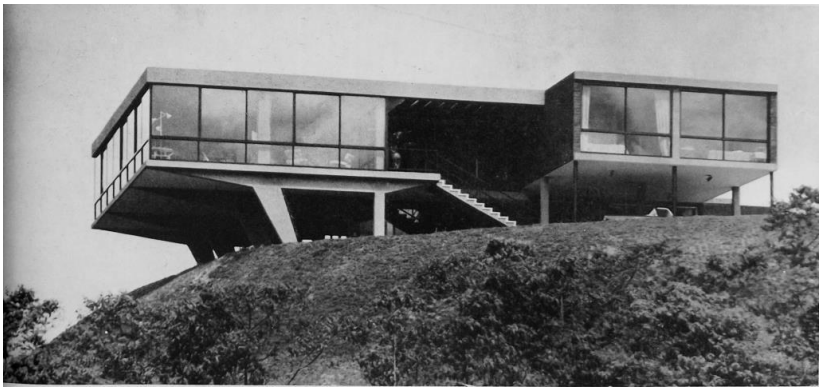
FIGURE 8.5
Fruto Vivas, Perchal House, Playa Grande (Vargas State), Venezuela, 1954. Interior view. Source: photo by Victoriano de los Ríos, *ca.* 1954.

FIGURE 8.6
F. Vivas, Perchal House, 1954. View from the beach. Source: photo by Victoriano de los Ríos, *ca.* 1954.

FIGURE 8.7
Vicente Barrera Salazar, engineer, Olary House, "unique type of house," Caracas, Venezuela. Photo by Hamilton Wright Org. Source: *Venezuela Up-to-date* (Sept. 1954), 9. Also published in *Architectural Forum* (March 1958), 58, and *Popular Mechanics* (Oct. 1954), 113.

FIGURE 8.8
Julio C. Volante, House in El Junko Country Club, El Junko (Vargas State), Venezuela, 1954. Source: *Punto* 17, Apr. 1964.

FIGURE 8.9
Julio C. Volante, House in El Junko Country Club, El Junko (Vargas State), Venezuela, 1954. Source: *Integral* 3, 1956.



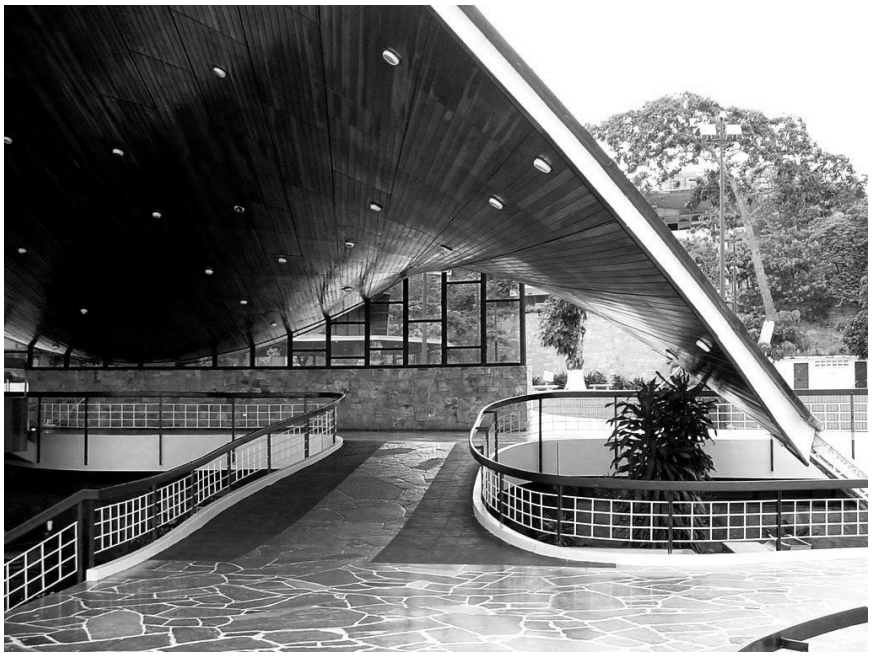


FIGURE 8.10
Fruto Vivas, Táchira Club, Caracas, the *Rancho*, completed 1957. Collaboration: Eng. Eduardo Torroja Miret (shell) and Eng. Nicolás Colmenares. Note part of the steel arch (descending truss on the right); the wood lining in the shell; the fixing "curtain" of steel and glass (background), and the curvilinear slabs (covered in stone) with metallic handrails. Source: photo by Jorge Villota P., 2002.

FIGURE 8.11
Fruto Vivas, Táchira Club, Caracas, completed 1957. View of Caracas from the *Rancho*.
Source: *Integral* 10-11, Apr. 1958.

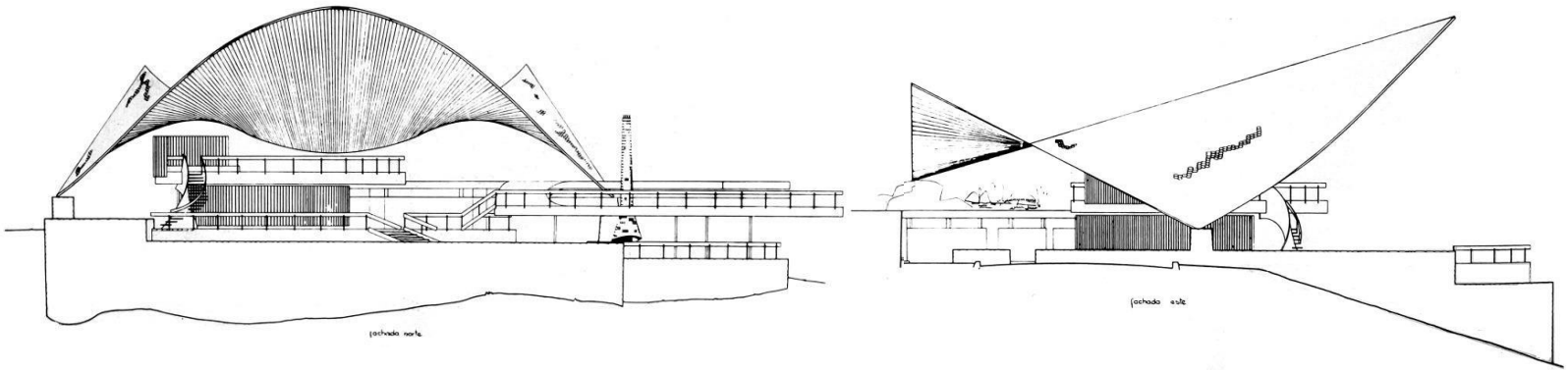


FIGURE 8.12
Fruto Vivas, Táchira Club, Caracas, the *Rancho*, completed 1957. North and East facade. Source: *Integral* 10-11 (1958).

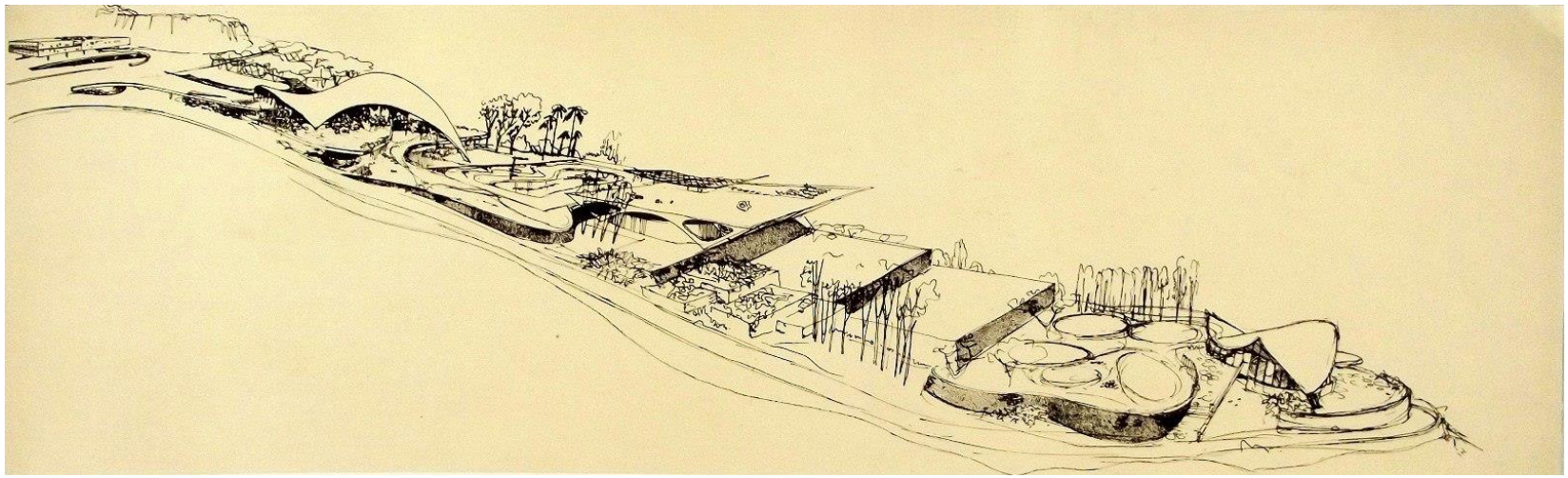


FIGURE 8.13
Fruto Vivas, Táchira Club, Caracas, 1957. Note the club's shell or main building (close to the entrance, on the left), the sportive area (including the bowling alley's projecting roof, in the middle), and the *Rancho* on the right end. Source: *Integral* 10-11 (1958).

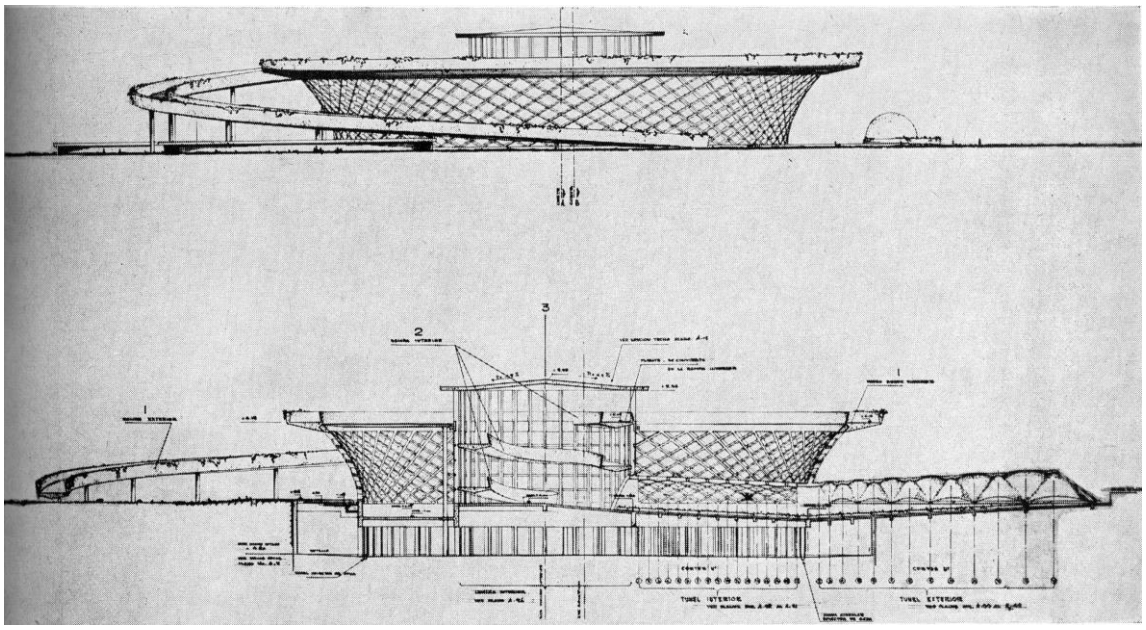


FIGURE 8.14
A "Guggenheimesque" building: Alejandro Pietri, Aquarium at East Park, façade (above) and section. Project, *ca.* 1960. Source: *Progressive Architecture* (Apr. 1961), 53.

FIGURE 8.15
A "Guggenheimesque" building: Alejandro Pietri, Aquarium at East Park, façade (above) and section. Project, *ca.* 1960. Source: *Progressive Architecture* (Apr. 1961), 53.

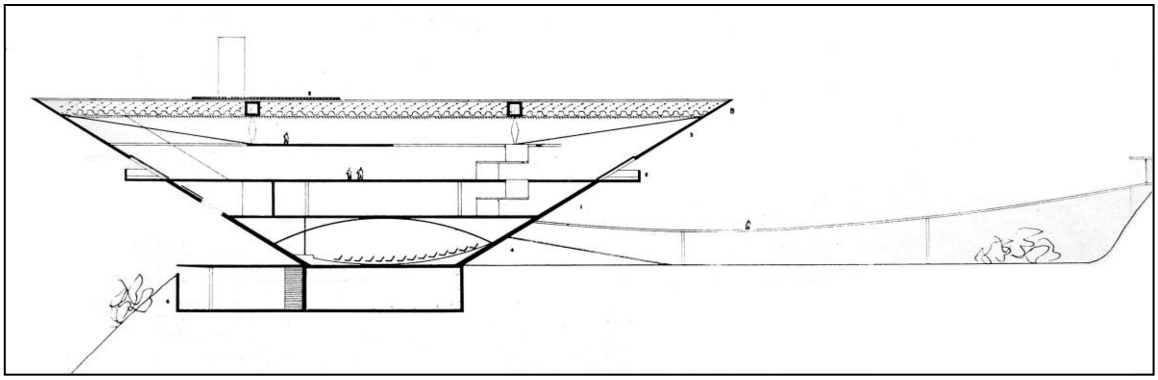


FIGURE 8.16
Oscar Niemeyer, Museum of Modern Art of Caracas (MMAC), Venezuela, 1955. Project section. Source: *Integral* 2 (Nov. 1955).

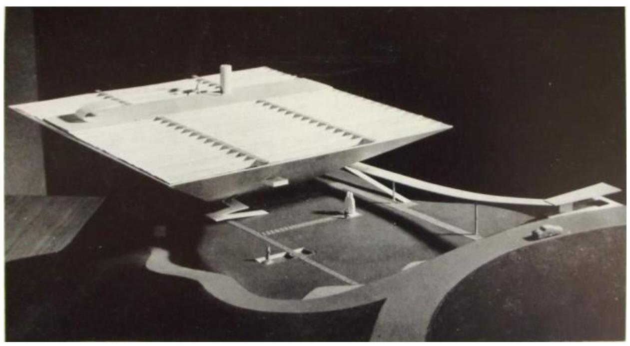
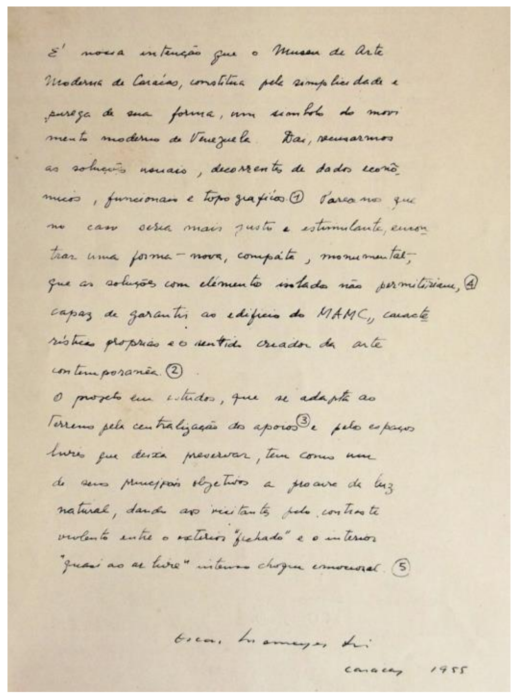


FIGURE 8.17
O. Niemeyer, MMAC, Caracas, 1955. Project. Source: *Integral* 2 (Nov. 1955).



É nossa intenção que o Museu de Arte
Moderna de Caracas, constitua pela simplicidade e
pureza de sua forma, um símbolo do movi
mento moderno da Venezuela. Daí, recusarmos
as soluções usuais, decorrentes de dados econô
micos, funcionais e topográficos ① Pareceu-nos que
no caso seria mais justo e estimulante, encon
trar uma forma nova, compacta, monumental,
que as soluções com elemento isolado não permitiriam, ④
capaz de garantir ao edifício do MAMC, caracte
rísticas próprias e o sentido criador da arte
contemporânea ②.
O projeto em estudos, que se adapta ao
terreno pela centralização dos apoios ③ e pelos espaços
livres que deixa preservar, tem como um
de seus principais objetivos a procura da luz
natural, dando aos visitantes pelo contraste
violento entre o exterior "fechado" e o interior
"quase ao ar livre" intenso choque emocional. ⑤

Oscar Niemeyer
Caracas 1955

FIGURE 8.18
O. Niemeyer, MMAC, Caracas, 1955. *Parti*'s justification and project description, in his own hand. Source: *Integral* 2 (Nov. 1955).

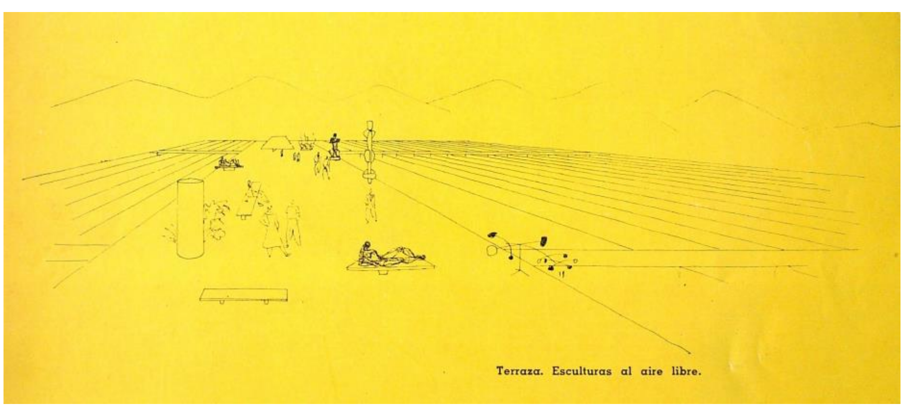


FIGURE 8.19
O. Niemeyer, MMAC, Caracas, 1955. View of the terrace and its open-air sculpture exhibition. Source: *Integral* 2 (Nov. 1955).

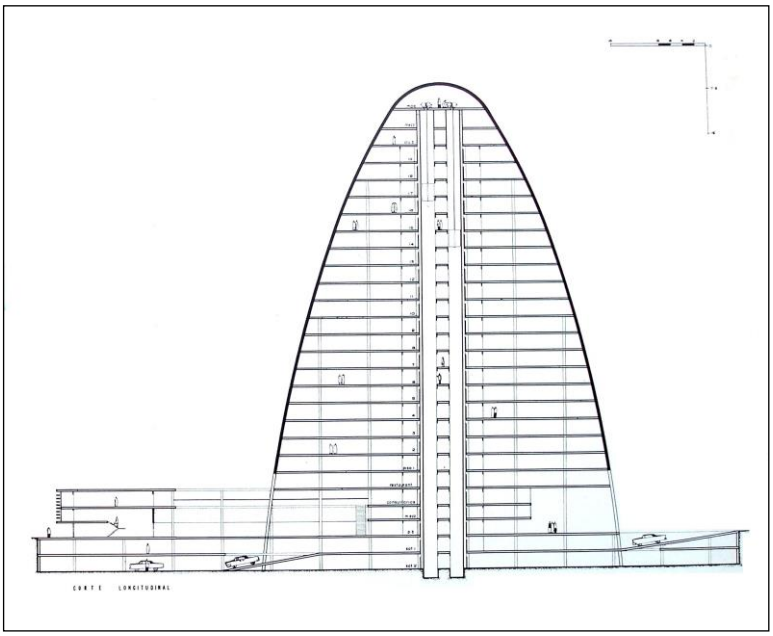


FIGURE 8.20
Guido Bermúdez, Pedro Lluveres and Carlos Brando, architects; J.O. Cárdenas, engineer; Rino Levi, consulting architect, and Johannes Johannson, consulting engineer. *La Parábola* Professional Center, Caracas, 1955. Source: *Integral* 3 (1956).

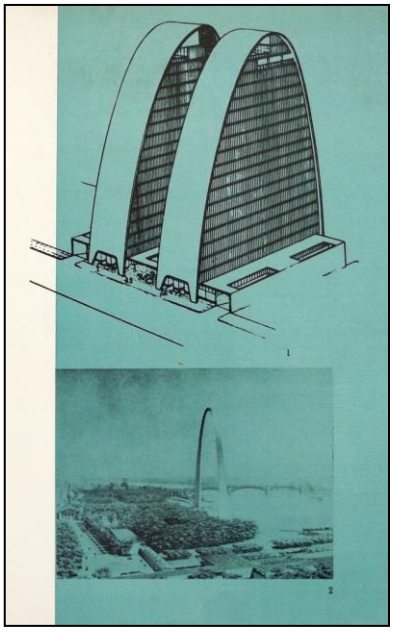


FIGURE 8.21
1) Rino Levi, architect, and Roberto Cerqueira César, associate architect, twin towers in São Paulo, Brazil. Project, *ca.* 1955; 2) Eero Saarinen & Associates, Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, St. Louis, Missouri, 1947. Source: *Integral* 3 (1956).

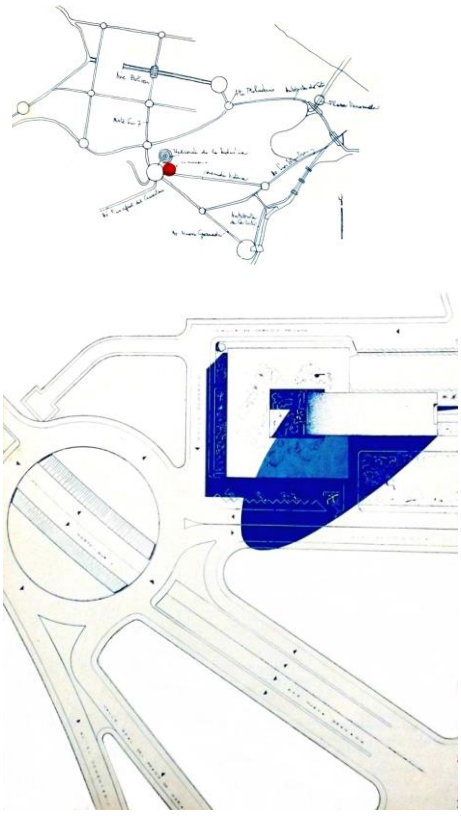


FIGURE 8.22
G. Bermúdez, P. Lluveres and C. Brando, architects; J.O. Cárdenas, engineer; R. Levi, consulting architect, and J. Johannson, consulting engineer. *La Parábola* Professional Center, Caracas, 1955. Upper image (general location): *La Parábola* (red spot) and the Helicoid (blue spot). Lower image: volume composition and traffic circle proposed. Source: *Integral* 3 (Jan. 1956).

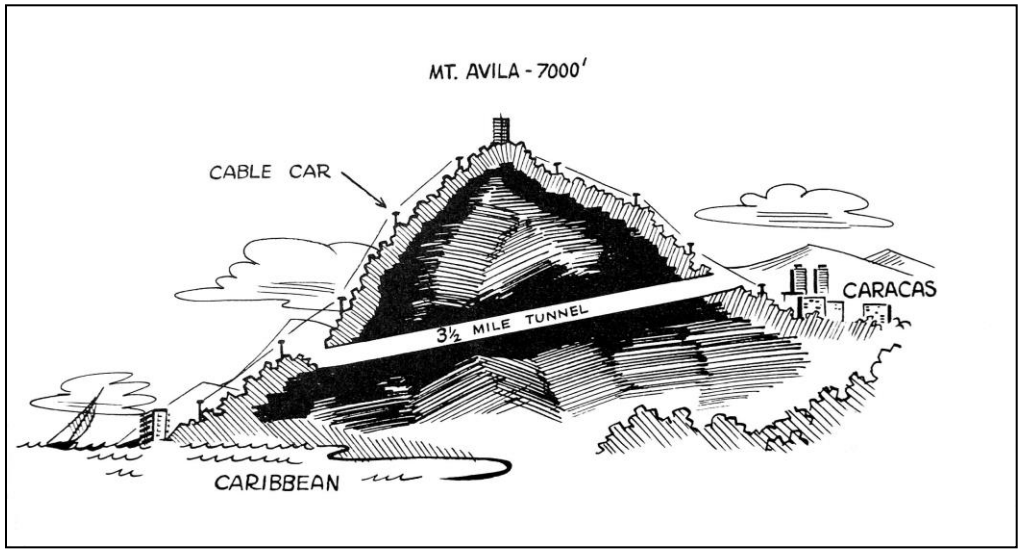


FIGURE 8.23
"Vehicular tunnel will pierce Avila Mountain." Source: *Venzuela Up-to-date* (Oct. 1957), 11.

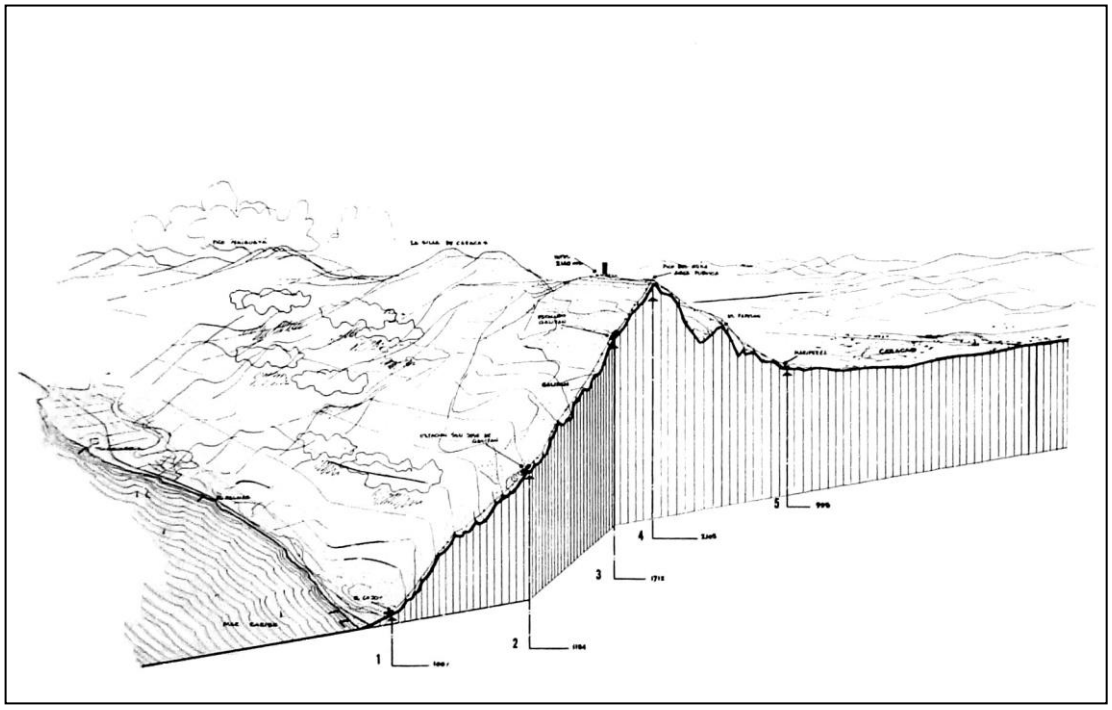


FIGURE 8.24
Proposal for El Avila National Park, section showing its main facilities: 1)Terminal in La Guaira, 100 m. above sea level; 2) Station for changing direction, 1,184 m.; 3) Station for changing direction, 1,712 m.; 4) Station Caracas-La Guaira, 2,105 m.; 5) Terminal in Caracas, 995 m. Source: *Integral 10-11* (1958).

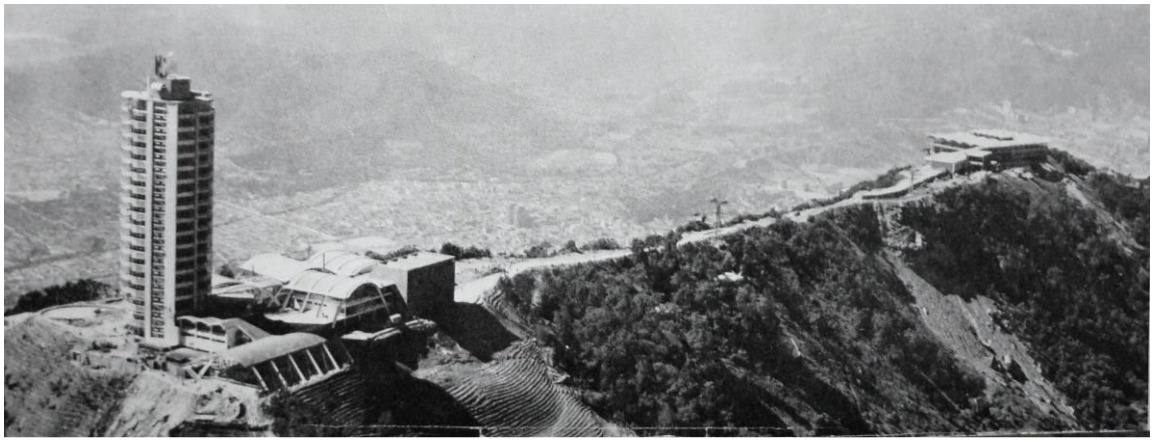


FIGURE 8.25
Tomás José Sanabria, Humboldt Hotel and Cable Car Station Caracas-La Guaira, 2,105 m, completed 1956. In the background, the city of Caracas. Source: *Integral 10-11* (1958).

FIGURE 8.26
Susana Duijm, Miss World 1955. Source: *Venezuela Up-to-date* (Nov. 1955), 2.

FIGURE 8.27
"A century of progress in five years," Venezuelan exhibition in New York, United States. Photo Hamilton Wright. Source: *Venezuela Up-to-date* (June 1957), 9.

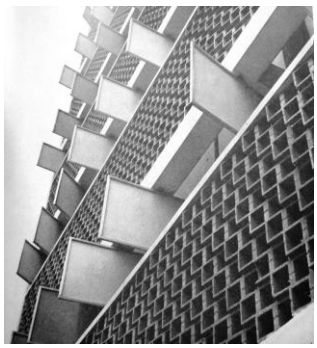


FIGURE 8.28
Carlos Guinand and Moises Benacerraf, Sun Screens on Office Building, Caracas. Source: *Architectural Record* (Sept. 1957), 201.

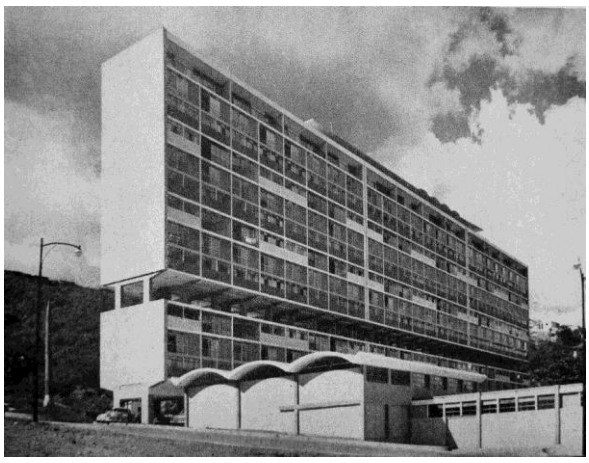


FIGURE 8.29
Guido Bermudez, Cerro Grande Housing Unit, Caracas. Source: *Architectural Record* (Sept. 1957), 203.

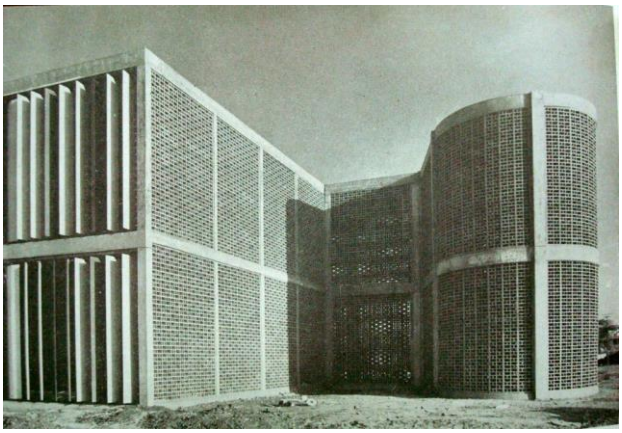


FIGURE 8.30
Carlos Raúl Villanueva, School of Petroleum Engineering, University of Zulia. Source: *Architectural Record* (Sept. 1957), 202.

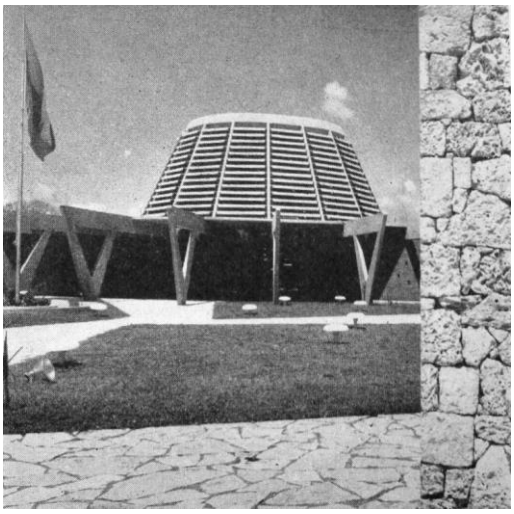


FIGURE 8.31
Alejandro Pietri, Venezuelan pavilion for international exposition, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 1955. Source: *Architectural Record* (Sept. 1957), 203.

FIGURE 8.32
Tomás José Sanabria, Hotel Prado del Rio, Mérida. Source: *Architectural Record* (Sept. 1957), 204.

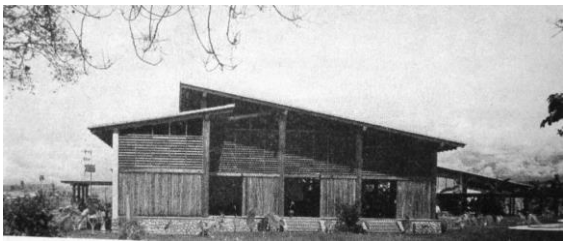


FIGURE 8.33
Oscar Carpio and Guillermo A. Suarez, Hotel Alto Llano, Barinas, 1956. Source: *Architectural Record* (Sept. 1957), 203.

PART 3: CASE STUDIES

Chapter 9

The Architecture of Energy: Lathrop Douglass' Works in Caracas

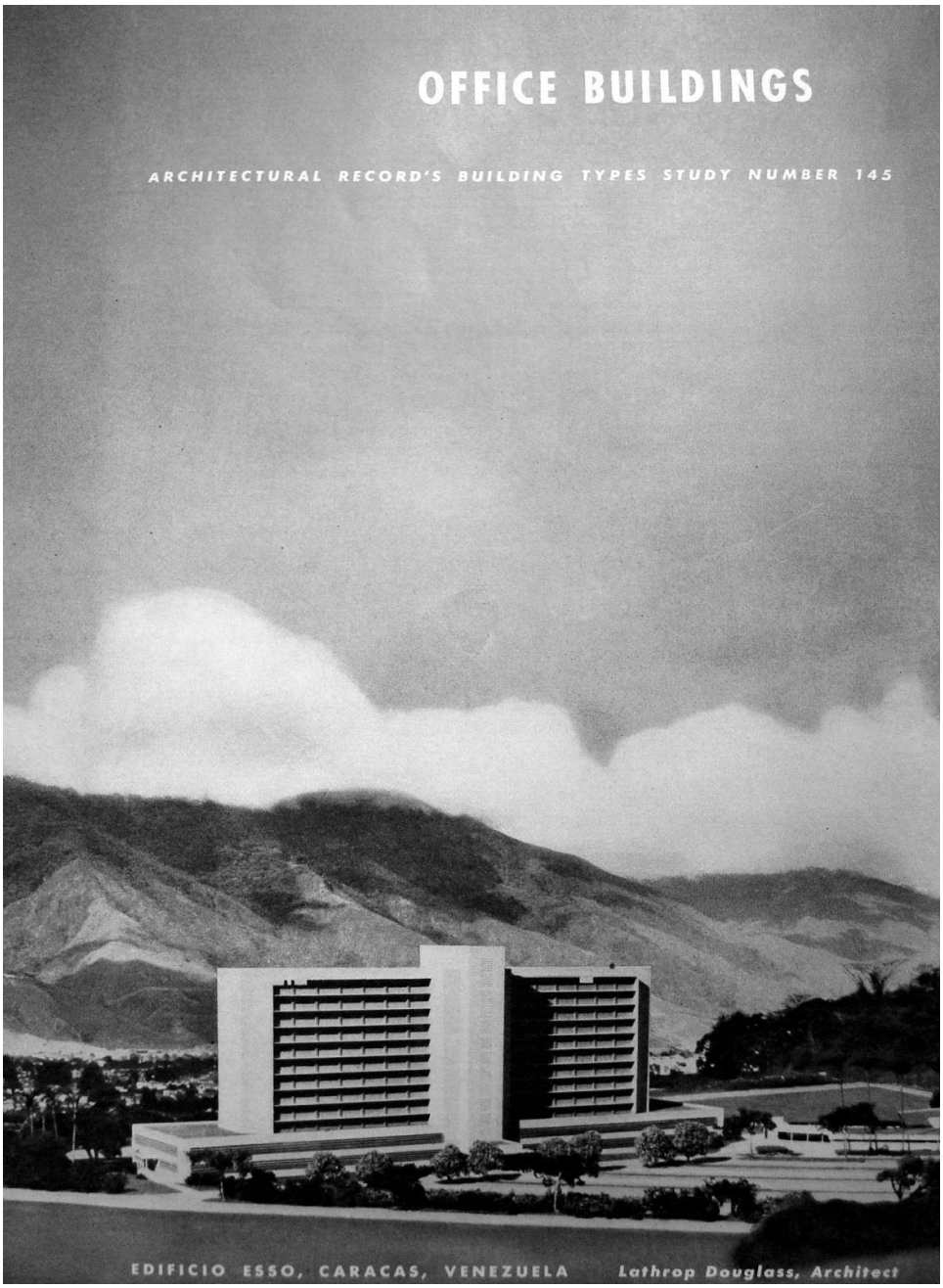


FIGURE 9.1
Lathrop Douglass (Architect), Fred N. Severud (Structural Engineer), John W. Harris Associates Inc. (Construction Management), *Edificio* Esso (later, *Edificio* Creole), Caracas, Venezuela. Completed 1954. Source: *Architectural Record* (Jan. 1949), 97.

The Caracas climate, (…) hovered so constantly over the architect's drawing boards (even though they were in New York)

Passage of *Architectural Record*'s report
on Edificio Esso, Caracas.

In January 1949, *Architectural Record* published its Building Type Study Number 145. This report's first page exhibited an office slab standing out from what seemed to be an extremely, almost naïve traditional urban context. The serene presence of a mountain chain in the background, however, made the building part of a majestic scene. The clouds on the mountaintops created amorphous shadows in their path. The building, in turn, under intense sunlight, provided an abstractionist spectacle of bright surfaces and deep, dark shadows, all strictly organized in patterns of lines and volumes. A set of horizontal sun visors, and screened walls seemed to provide the building with a sort of permeable skin, adapted to "breathe" in a tropical climate. Its sheer composition gave a clear message of functionality. Its location (far from downtown, probably in the periphery) and its horizontal proportion looked uncommon. They both seemed to define a tendency diametrically opposed to the process of urban verticalization; the use of cars seemed to be an implicit need.

This was the Esso Office Building in Caracas. Later known as *Edificio* Creole (after the Standard Oil subsidiary in Venezuela, Creole Petroleum Corporation), it would eventually be completed in 1954. The building had been designed by Lathrop Douglass, who had received other commissions from Standard Oil of New Jersey, which included nothing less than the Esso Building in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, completed in 1950 (different in many respects from its Esso office predecessors), and the Standard Oil Administrative Building at the Bayway Refinery, completed in 1953 (the first of its kind in the United States for its modular functional furniture). Douglass also designed the Esso Svenske in Stockholm, Sweden (1952), the Esso Standard Oil in Belgium (1954), and the *Edificio* Esso for Colombiana S.A. in Bogota, Colombia, completed in 1956 (the latter a good example of the exportation of U.S. know-how of large office structures combined with local building materials). These works definitely were not just beyond the U.S. borders, but also beyond the International Style paradigms. It was not coincidental that

Architectural Record dedicated its Building Types Study 145, and even the cover of the issue, to Douglass' Esso office buildings, both in Baton Rouge and Caracas (*figures 9.1 and 9.2*).

Concerned with the comfort, efficiency, and flexibility of his projects, Douglass would always provide himself with a professional team of experts, including engineers and consultant architects. His Standard Oil buildings proved to be not only functional, but extremely well adapted to local climate conditions. Douglass pushed the program functionality of his projects beyond the client's requirements. His buildings also provided a comfortable working environment, well-illuminated, efficiently furnished, and properly ventilated. Moreover, his buildings proved to play a significant role in terms of corporate image: their respective locations, as well as their architectural *parti* vis-à-vis the urban context, were always a matter of accurate analysis. Architecture as a corporate representative was undoubtedly part of Douglass' agenda.

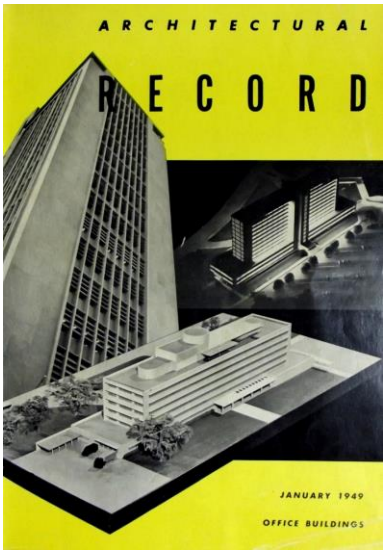


FIGURE 9.2
Architectural Record issue dedicated to office buildings. Cover: Waterman Bulding in Mobile, Alabama (left); Esso Office Building in Baton Rouge, Louisiana (foreground), and Edificio Esso in Caracas, Venezuela (right), the last two designed by L. Douglass. Source: *Architectural Record* (Jan. 1949).

The Edificio Creole embraced all those features, and even more. Given the ideal year-round temperature in Caracas (tropical, but mild), there was no need to provide either heating or cooling. The intense glare, in turn, demanded an accurate design of a passive environmental control system, which defined to a great extent the character of the building and its impact as an urban event. Finally, its earthquake-proof design, space flexibility, and its programmatic and furniture arrangement (which strongly determined the building's dimensions and proportions), as well as its ad hoc maintenance program (for which Douglasss' experience during World War II turned out to be invaluable), demanded a unique design process and led to a remarkable architectural result.

The Esso office Building in Venezuela had coincided with the gradual rise of Creole Petroleum Corporation. By the early

1950s, Creole was the foremost oil producer in the world, while Venezuela was the foremost exporter. It was not by chance that its Caracas headquarters was larger than both its Baton Rouge and Bayway office buildings combined. However, the Edificio Creole, whose construction had been voluntarily postponed because of a resources and materials shortage after World War II, turned out to be not the subsequent version of Douglass' U.S. corporate buildings (as is popularly believed), but rather its prototype. In other words, it had been designed before both the Esso Office Building in Louisiana and New Jersey.

However, it wouldn't be the only building design by Douglass in Venezuela; he would put his ideas to the test in a totally different context. As *Architectural Forum* reported in January 1955, Douglass had been proposed a "rental office building" for American and local tenants in Caracas. The building in question, whose whereabouts had been unknown, turned out to be the Electricity Building, completed in 1957 (and whose authorship, in turn, had remained undetermined as well). This project, impressive in terms of architectural image and urban impact, represented to Douglass a unique opportunity to explore the insertion of a "suburban skyscraper" downtown. More importantly, it bore a complex (and revealing) network of bilateral interests and professional connections, including colleagues, builders, private entrepreneurs (particularly Nelson Rockefeller), and the Venezuelan government.

The Electricity Building turned out to be a sort of catalyst for later real estate investments in downtown Caracas. By incorporating cutting-edge air conditioning and structural technologies, it had established a new trend in design and standards. It was the first flexible, open floor, large rental office building in Caracas, as well as the first one to use central air-conditioning.

Even more importantly, as a prototype, the Edificio Creole proved to be a sort of milestone. Its early arrival in Caracas had caught two U.S pioneers by surprise. It had come even before the appearance of the two most celebrated office buildings in American soil: Skidmore, Owings & Merrill's Lever House, in 1950 (completed in 1952), and Mies van der Rohe's Seagram, in 1954 (completed in 1958), both in New York City. Somehow, the seed of U.S. corporate architecture was not in the United States; it was in Venezuela.

Any account of the Standard Oil buildings either abroad or in the United States, however, will not be complete without previously having an insight into Lathrop Douglass' professional career. Who was Douglass and how did his early experience contribute to his later explorations on corporate architecture? How did his professional affiliations and personal connections lead him to be in the right place at the right time? The answer to these questions is essential to this study, and particularly to the reconstruction of a vanished chapter in the history of American architecture.

LATHROP DOUGLASS: A KEY FIGURE

OPENING THE PATH: FORMATION AND PROFESSIONAL PHILOSOPHY[1]

Lathrop Smith Douglass was born in Kansas City, Missouri, on September 5, 1907 (*figure 9.3*).[2] After graduating from Yale University both as a Bachelor of Architecture in 1929, and as a Bachelor of Fine Arts in 1932,[3] he started his professional training, as an Assistant Architect, at the Office of the Supervising Architect in Washington D.C., from 1934 to 1936. The same year he moved to New York City, where he worked as a Designer for the Paramount Communities until 1937. Then, from 1938 to 1940, he took part as a Senior Draftsman in several public housing projects,

FIGURE 9.3
Lathrop Douglass, *ca.* 1960. Source: courtesy of The American Institute of Architects Archives.

[1] Information mostly based on both the *American Architects Directory,* published in 1956, 1962 and 1970, under the sponsorship of American Institute of Architects (New York: R.R. Bowker Company), and Lathrop Douglass' Membership File at The American Institute of Architects Archive, *The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects*. This information was checked, revised and complemented with other sources.

[2] Douglass attended the Kansas City Polytechnic Institute, and the Kansas City Country Day School, graduating from the latter with honors in 1924. He was the Country Day School valedictorian that year (student with the highest grades, who delivers the farewell statement at the graduation ceremony). See Lathrop Douglass, Membership File, The American Institute of Architects Archive, *The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects*, s.v. "Lathrop Douglass (1907-1981)," (ahd1011556), http://communities.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/AIA%20scans/C-E/DouglassLathropFAIA.pdf (accessed 10/10/2012)

[3] In both cases Douglass graduated *cum laude*. During this period he held several honor awards, including a competitive scholarship (Tuition Scholarship for Highest Scholastic Standing, 1929-1930), Orations Appointments (cum laude, 1929), a Society of the Sigma Xi associate membership (1929), and the AIA School Medal (First Medal, Yale-Princeton Competition, 1932). One year before his graduation, he undertook a summer course at the *École Américain* in Fountainbleau, France. See Lathrop Douglass, Membership File, The American Institute of Architects Archive, *The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects*, s.v. "Lathrop Douglass (1907-1981)," (ahd1011556).

carried out by the then newly created New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA).[4]

Right after this training, still in 1940, Douglass started his professional practice strictly speaking. His early relation with the NYCHA probably led to the New York State Housing Board, where he worked as a Housing Control Architect. His professional career, however, would undergo a shift when he joined two important construction firms in New York City, in 1941 and 1943.[5] Those were difficult times that marked his professional life, and undoubtedly would lead his future explorations and achievements. As he remembered, the conditions of the job, even meeting the standards (of that time), were not the best in terms of comfort and efficiency:

> I worked in a room with two other people, no acoustical material, hard floor and ceiling, poor lighting, drafty, no air treatment. When I wasn't wasting time talking to my office mates I was going crazy listening to the racket of their talking to each other. When people came in to see me I was apologetic. In the summer the office had to be closed every so often because the heat made work an impossibility. Yet this was structurally and in appearance one of the best office buildings in New York. I used to try to calculate the average amount of time I lost every day over a long period of time.[6]

In 1945, just after finishing the Second World War, he finally organized his own architectural firm, "Lathrop Douglass," located at 518 Fifth Avenue, New York. The firm would be eventually registered in ten states: Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.[7] After having applied for the American Institute of

[4] Ibid. These projects included: Red Hook Houses, in Brooklyn (Alfred Easton, Chief Architect); South Jamaica Houses, in Queens (Carl Vollmer, Architect); East River Houses, in Manhattan (Perry Coke Smith, Chief Architect), and Fort Greene Houses, in Brooklyn (Ely Jacques Kahn, Chief Architect).

[5] They were Johnson, Drake & Piper, Inc., in which Douglass worked as an Assistant Chief Engineer from 1941 to 1943, and John W. Harris Associates, where he worked as a Chief Architect until 1945. Douglass' work in Johnson, Drake & Piper, Inc. will be analyzed later (see subchapter "His early professional practice: an engineer searching for comfort)."

[6] Lathrop Douglass, "Perhaps the best is actually the cheapest," in *Architectural Record* (Oct. 1947), 122.

[7] He actually was a NCARB holder (Certificate of National Council of Architectural Registration Boards), which entitled him to apply for licensing in any federated state of the United States of America.

Architects (AIA) membership on July 8, 1948, Douglass was admitted and assigned to the New York Chapter (effective December 17, 1948).[8] He became member of the AIA Executive Committee, New York Chapter, from 1959 to 1962. In October 20, 1959, the AIA New York Chapter nominated him for Fellowship, whereas the Executive Committee believed that Douglass had made "so notable a contribution to the advancement of the profession because of his achievement in design."[9] Finally, five months later, the Institute conferred upon him the honor of Fellowship and membership in the College of Fellows.[10] Douglass eventually would become vice president (1963-1964), treasurer (1966-1967), first vice president (1967-1968) and president (1968-1969) of the AIA New York chapter.[11] He was also Member of the American Society of Civil Engineers; Fellow of the International Institute of Arts & Letters; Trustee and Secretary of the National Institute of Architectural Education (1959-1961), and director of the New York Board of Trade (1967-1970), as well chairman of its Architectural Advisory Council (1966-1968).[12]

As a designer he was highly prolific. However, Douglass was not a mere practitioner; his projects were the result of a reflective process, always revolving around the notions of comfort, flexibility and efficiency.[13] Moreover, this personal reflective process can be regarded as holistic. Douglass

[8] AIA Secretary, Washington D.C., to Lathrop Douglass, New York City, 17 December 1948, Lathrop Douglass' Membership File, The American Institute of Architects Archive, *The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects*, s.v. "Lathrop Douglass (1907-1981)," (ahd1011556).

[9] "The American Institute of Architects. Nomination for Fellowship by Chapter," ibid.

[10] Roy Carrell Jr. (AIA Secretary), Washington D.C., to Lathrop Douglass, New York City, 18 February 1960, ibid.

[11] Douglass became AIA Member Emeritus in March 30, 1979. He died on January 21, 1981. See Lathrop Douglass, Membership File, The American Institute of Architects Archive, *The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects*, s.v. "Lathrop Douglass (1907-1981)," (ahd1011556).

[12] See Jack Bernstein Associates Inc., New York City, to the AIA New York Chapter, NY, June 5, 1968, ibid. See also the *American Architects Directory* (New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1970), 233.

[13] His thoughts on the relationship between comfort and efficiency remind the reflections of Herman Wordsham about the Milam Building. See "The Milam Building," *Heating, Piping and Air Conditioning* 1, no.3 (July 1929): 181. See also chapter 1 of this dissertation.

was Consultant Architect for the New York State Civil Defense, and Consultant Engineer for the War Department, between 1943 and 1944. Eventually he would be also Consultant Architect for the Atomic Energy Commission (A.E.C.), Washington D.C., in 1951, serving on the committee that worked out both design criteria and standardization of planning for the A.E.C. program.[14]

His projects were published in *Architectural Record, Progressive Architecture* and *Architectural Forum,* among other important magazines.[15] His thoughts, in turn, were expressed in several periodical articles: "The Personal Pilots Sky Port," *Skyways* (1946); "New Departures in Office Building Design," *Architectural Record* (Oct. 1947); "Perhaps the Best is Actually the Cheapest," *Architectural Record* (Oct. 1947); "How to Estimate the Value of Modernization," *Management Methods* (1954); "Shopping Center Design," *Traffic Quarterly* (1958), and "Regional Shopping Centers," *Time-Saver Standards for Building Types* (1973). As an expert in shopping centers, Douglass also participated as a speaker in several events during the 1950s.[16] Even several television and radio programs had Douglass as a guest speaker between 1954 and 1959.

Douglass' comprehensively professional viewpoint can also be seen in his trips. By 1948 he had visited Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Austria, Italy, France and one Latin American country: Venezuela. His relationship with Venezuela would eventually go beyond,

[14] See the *American Architects Directory* (New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1962), 176.

[15] They included *Engineering News-Record* (Jan. 1951); *Revista Informes de la Construcción* (Spain, March 1957); *Proa: Urbanismo, Arquitectura, Industrias* (Colombia, Oct. 1957), and *Business Week* (Feb. 1959). His projects also appeared in books, such as *World's Contemporary Architecture* (Japan); *Shops & Stores* and *Shopping Centers* (both published by Reinhold), and *Commercial Buildings* (published by F.W. Dodge Corporation). Douglass' close relation to publishing actually dated back to the 1930s; he had illustrated two books for J. Wiley and Sons, Inc.: *Outlines of Physical Geology* (1934) and *Outlines of Historical Geology* (1937) (in this sense, see Chester R. Longwell, Adolph Knopf and Richard F. Flint, *Outlines of Physical Geology* [New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc./London: Chapman & Hall, Ltd, 1934], and Charles Schuchert and Carl O. Dunbar, *Outlines of Historical Geology* [New York/London: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1960, originally published in 1937]).

[16] They included the International Congress of Chain Stores (1957), the International Conference of Shopping Centers (1958), the Connecticut Development Conference (1955), and the Greenwich Retail Association (1956).

particularly in terms of commercial architecture. He visited the country in a second occasion, in 1955, as an AIA delegate at the IX Pan-American Congress of Architecture, held in Caracas.

HIS EARLY PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE: AN "ENGINEER" SEARCHING FOR COMFORT

Douglass did not achieve his expertise overnight. By 1949 he had designed and built the A.G. Spalding & Brothers's Plant in Willimansett, Massachusetts. Known just as the Spalding Plant, it had been designed by request of the client to consolidate and improve manufacturing operations at a single plant site. This two-story, horizontally proportioned building, with ribbon windows along the upper level, and a dead level roof (to reduce costs), offered an image of sobriety and efficiency. It was certainly a balanced combination of brick and steel sash. At a first glance, it seemed to be an aesthetically, well composed building (*figure 9.4*). And actually it was. Nevertheless, Douglass provided it with certain complexity in terms of program and particularly mechanical systems. The building counted with a sawdust collecting system and large hoppers, and a special ventilating system to remove obnoxious fumes from the air. As a manufacturer of rackets, the Spalding Plant in Willimansett was the largest in the world at the time.[17]

Besides specific technical requirements, Douglass was also concerned with the quality of the interior spaces. The two-story lobby, provided with an excellent combination of artificial and natural lighting, was the first place where the customers have contact (*figure 9.5*).[18] The building was also a model of economy and efficiency. This is evident in the wall section, through a simple, economical relation of structure, wall, window and roof. In order to reduce the high cost of the brickwork and to eliminate the necessity of erecting scaffolding, Douglass proposed the continuation of steel sash from the brick spandrel wall to the roof line (*figure 9.6*)."[19]

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[17] "Economy and efficiency in Spalding's consolidated plant at Willimansett, Mass.," in *Architectural Record* (July 1949), 106-109.

[18] The program, in turn, had certain complexity. Apart from executive offices, conference rooms, and even a complete research laboratory to develop new product, the building had cafeteria, kitchen, recreation room for employees, and a health center.

[19] Moreover, part of the construction process deserves to be mentioned as an efficient combination of building, mechanical services and planning: "wall and roof were completed in November 1948 just before

This architectural retrospective leads directly to the professional origins of Douglass, before starting his private practice as individual in New York. He came from John W. Harris Associates, a New York-based firm, where he worked as a Chief Architect from 1943 to 1945. During the Second World War, from 1941 to 1943, he had worked for Johnson, Drake & Piper, Inc., a construction-contracting firm also located in New York City, which had achieved recognition for the erection of architectural facilities in Fort Peck, Montana, during the construction of the dam in the 1930s. Between 1942 and 1943 the firm was in charge of programing and design, for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, system of repair bases, housing, hospitals, and recreation facilities in the Middle East and East Africa. It included an evolved system of standardization of equipment and details to achieve minimum ship tonnage, erection by unskilled labor, and flexibility of use in case of ship and airplane losses.[20] Still during the war, in 1943, the firm made an impressive publication of its achievements in this strategic region, entitled *Middle East War Projects*. Enriched with geographical descriptions and relation of local customs and traditions, the book was a detailed account and an excellent graphic record of Johnson, Drake & Piper's building production in there.[21] The complexity of such enterprise could be inferred from the ad hoc organization chart of the firm (*figure 9.7*). Two big teams were arranged, in New York City and abroad respectively, to undertake three different tasks: business administration, engineering, and construction. Despite the fact that it was a rapidly shifting program, and many of the personnel tackled more than one duty at the same time (as warned in the footer), that organization chart allowed to have a good picture of individual responsibilities per result obtained.

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winter set in. While masons were erecting walls, unit heaters, supplied by steam from the owner's existing plant, were placed in their permanent positions. Consequently, interior craftsmen were able to work without auxiliary heaters or loss of time (ibid, 107-108).

[20] Douglass, Lathrop, Membership File, The American Institute of Architects Archive, *The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects*, s.v. "Lathrop Douglass (1907-1981)," (ahd1011556), http://communities.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/AIA%20scans/C-E/DouglassLathropFAIA.pdf (accessed 10/10/2012).

[21] Johnson, Drake & Piper, *Middle East War Projects of Johnson, Drake & Piper, Inc., for the Corps of Engineers, U.S. Army, 1942-1943*, New York: private printed, 1943.

Douglass was part of the team working in the New York Headquarters.[22] He worked as the Assistant Chief Engineer, in the Department of Engineering, under the coordination of Aymar Embury II, a notable American architect who had started his practice in Cass Gilbert's office (1902-03), and who had been professionally linked since the 1930s to the Park Department of New York, the Port of New York Authority, and the Triborough Bridge Authority.[23]

The places under the firm's contract included Massawa, Asmara, Gura, Ghinda, the Levant Area, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, South Arabia, and the Delta Area. Among them, the city of Massawa, in Eritrea, drew their attention particularly. The firm was responsible for the construction of several facilities in the city's Naval Base. One of this works was the Plate Shop, extraordinarily captured in a watercolor by Louis C. Rosenberg, a well-known American artist since the 1920s (*figure 9.8*). The drawing showed the dynamics involved in the building's erection: roof trusses being assembled on the ground, along with temporary scaffolding and wood forms. However, what draws particularly the attention is the coexistence of modern mass production and local labor: impressive rows of reinforced concrete piers, almost infinite in number, being handled by foremen and probably unskilled labor.

Officially commissioned to record the achievements of Johnson, Drake & Piper, Rosenberg draw forty-three perspectives of all the places assigned; from them, twelve were about Massawa. The interest (and concern) in this city was not just for its strategic location, but also because of the inclemency of its weather. The terrific heat and humidity made almost impossible to work in Massawa continually. Work delays, discomfort, and the cost of transporting thousands of men twice a day from different places to this city, led the U.S. Army to take extreme measures. As a result, the firm was ordered to provide the facilities with air conditioning, including barracks, mess halls and recreation buildings. Despite being apparently very simple (and even traditional)

[22] In the organization chart Douglass appeared as "Douglas." Nevertheless, in the comprehensive list of personnel (accompanying the chart), his name appears written correctly.

[23] See Aymar's Embury II's Roster Questionnaire, 1946, 1953, The American Institute of Architects Archive, *The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects*, s.v. "Aymar Embury II (firm)," (ahd4001637), http://communities.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/AIA%20scans/Rosters/EmburyAymarII_roster.pdf (accessed 02/02/2013).

in terms of building technique, an interior view of Massawa's Recreation Hall shows the overwhelming (and modern) display of a grid ceiling along with hanging lamps. The building was totally air-conditioned and had screened porches (*figure 9.9*).

As part of the firm's New York staff, Douglass never had the opportunity to work *in situ*. Nevertheless, as an Assistant Chief Engineer (especially under Embury's coordination), he learned a lot about building comfort and efficiency, and started putting these aspects into practice. This experience was reinforced, paradoxically, by the "Spartan" conditions of the New York office in which he used to work (with poor lighting and no air treatment). These early years undoubtedly would leave a deep mark in his future professional ventures.

Douglass would eventually become a shopping center expert in the 1950s and particularly in the 1960s. Among the multiple commissions he received were Cross County Shopping Center (Yonkers, Westchester County, New York, a 1,000,000 sq. ft. complex of merchandising and office space in 12 buildings, totally air conditioned and heated, completed 1955), and Chapel Square, New Haven, Connecticut (one of the first enclosed air-conditioned downtown malls, completed 1967).[24] His expertise in this area involved publications as well. In his article "Regional Shopping Centers," considered the authoritative summary of regional shopping centers planning of the time, Douglass provided accurate information on a high variety of topic related to this building type's design.[25] However, he embraced a wider array of programs. In

[24] He also designed Reisterstown Road Plaza (1965), in Baltimore, Maryland; Main Place Mall (1969), Buffalo, New York; Lafayette Plaza, Bridgeport, Connecticut (completed 1969), and Tysons Corners Center, near Washington D.C. (completed 1968). His previous experience included: John Wanamaker Department Store (Great Neck, New York, a steel and concrete construction, completed 1953); Levittown Shopping Center, Levittown, Pennsylvania, and Prince George Plaza, Washington D.C. (completed 1959). Douglass' work also included a consultancy for the Cortez Plaza Shopping Center, Bradenton, Florida, remarkable for its combination of efficiency and comfort (the first use of hyperbolic paraboloids in a shopping center, as an inexpensive method of roofing and cooling the mall). See Lathrop Douglass, Membership File, The American Institute of Architects Archive, *The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects*, s.v. "Lathrop Douglass (1907-1981)," (ahd1011556). For an analysis and deeper description of Douglass' shopping centers, see the text "An always trendy pioneer: the shopping-center expert" in Appendix 3 of this dissertation.

[25] Lathrop Douglass, "Regional Shopping Centers," in Joseph De Chiara and John Hancock Callender (ed.), *Time-Saver Standards for Building Types* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980 [second edition]), 713-720.

1950 he designed a residential building in New York City (completed 1952), at 200 East End Avenue.[26] He also designed his own house in Greenwich, Connecticut, and the Offices & Laboratories for Continental Baking, Rye, New York; both completed in 1958. He would also receive a sui generis commission to design the Temple for Understanding (1962), from Mrs. Judith Hollister, a housewife of Greenwich, Connecticut, who had been obsessed with the idea of an ecumenical temple.

There is no doubt that Douglass' works and reflections on shopping centers were certainly influential in the United States. Nevertheless, the impact of his oil industry buildings both in this country and abroad was strategically deeper and broader. As a pivotal activity during the 1950s, the oil industry represented a focal point where many forces converged and come from.

[26] The building is a double-Y-form construction faced with bricks, showing a canopied entrance. Its owner was the Corporation Sol G. Atlas, the same that would eventually promote Cross County Shopping Center (see *Progressive Architecture* [Dec. 1954, 81], and Office for Metropolitan History, "Manhattan NB Database 1900-1986," search parameters: Architect: Lathrop Douglass [accessed on Dec. 25, 2012], http://www.MetroHistory.com). The building is still standing and considered nowadays as "one of the most distinctive post-war apartment houses on the Upper East Side," according to the real-estate and architectural columnist of New York City Carter B. Horsley. This seventeen-floor building has 182 apartments, and it is located very close to Gracie Mansion, adjacent to Carl Schurz Park (see http://www.cityrealty.com/nyc/manhattan/200-east-end-avenue/6144). The marquee or canopied entrance of this building would be eventually a kind of hallmark in Douglass' projects during the 1950s.

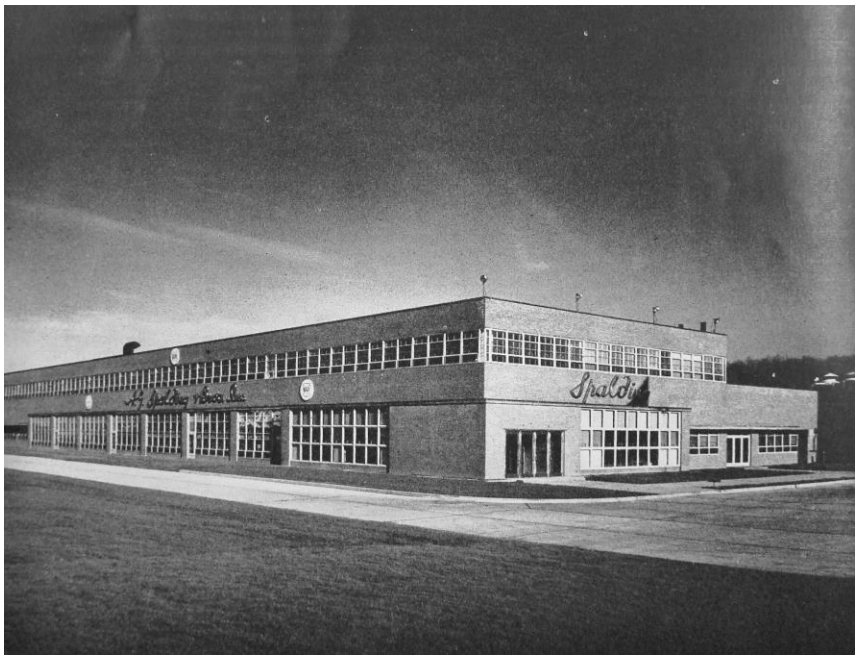

FIGURE 9.4
Lathrop Douglass (Architect), B. Panero (Engineer), John B. Harris Associates (Builders), Spalding Plant, Willimansett, Mass. Exterior view. Source: *Architectural Record* (July 1949), 106.

FIGURE 9.5
Lathrop Douglass, Spalding Plant, Willimansett, Mass. View to the lobby. Source: *Architectural Record* (July 1949), 108.

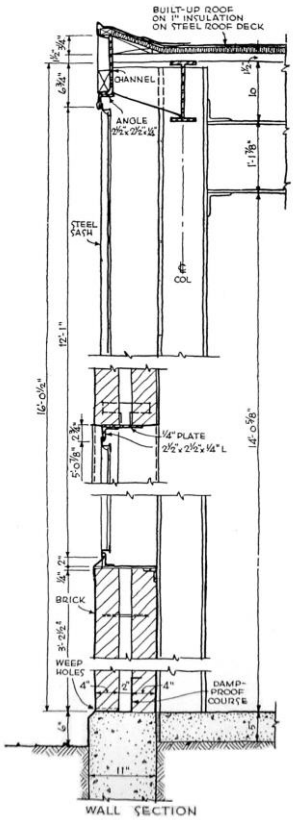

FIGURE 9.6
Lathrop Douglass, Spalding Plant, Willimansett, Mass. Wall section. Source: *Architectural Record* (July 1949), 109.

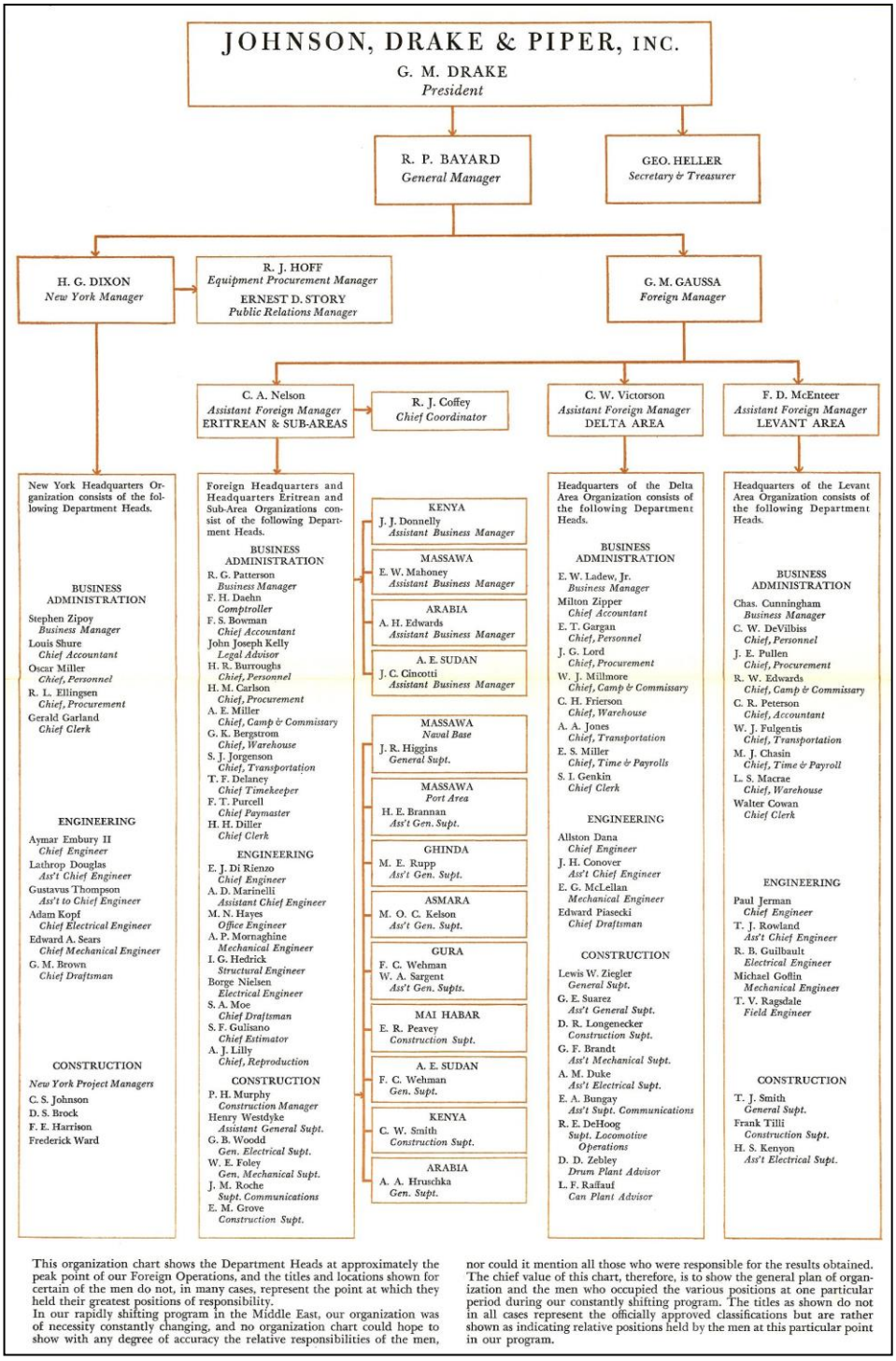

FIGURE 9.7

Organization chart of Johnson, Drake & Piper, Inc. during the construction work performed in the Middle East, between 1942 and 1943, for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Lathrop Douglass appears in the left box (New York Headquarters Organization, "Engineering"), as the "Asst. Chief Engineer" of Arch. Aymar Embury II. Source: Johnson, Drake & Piper (1943), booklet attached.

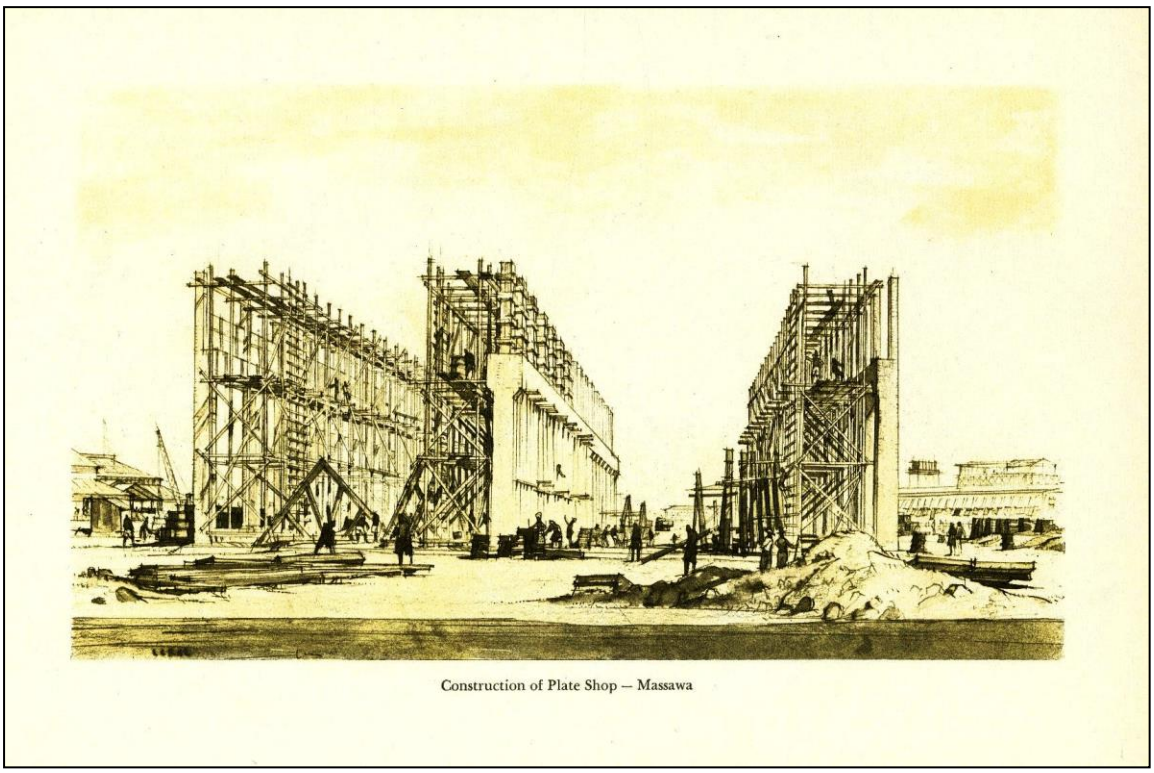

FIGURE 9.8
Johnson, Drake & Piper, Inc. (L. Douglass, Asst. Chief Engineer), completing concrete piers for a plate shop at Naval Base in Massawa, Eritrea, 1942-1943. Forge and foundry shop on the left; contractor's Mess Hall on the right. Watercolor by Louis C. Rosenberg. Source: Johnson, Drake & Piper (1943), 118-119.

FIGURE 9.9
Johnson, Drake & Piper, Inc. (L. Douglass, Asst. Chief Engineer), Recreation Hall in Massawa, Eritrea, 1942-1943. The building was air conditioned and complete with screened porches. Source: Johnson, Drake & Piper (1943), 48.

PREAMBLE (IN THE FUTURE): EDIFICIO ESSO IN BOGOTÁ

The United States had emerged fortified from World War II, and so had the U.S. corporations. They would find in the International Style their best ally to represent their interests. Architecture would become, certainly, a kind of public relations agent for U.S. corporations. The oil industry, one of the torchbearers of those corporations, however, was not totally taken with the International Style principles. American idealism and pragmatism, in turn, would have found in the International Style a fertile ground for their expression. The key architectural production of Lathrop Douglass appeared amid such a complex civilizational and cultural crossroads. Seasoned by the cold war's mushroom clouds and the concern with control of the energy sources, his architectural proposal would be based on comfort, flexibility and efficiency. It would represent the interests of Standard Oil, not just in the U.S. territory, but also (and particularly) abroad. Douglass had acquired a unique expertise in both building climate control and standardization of building procedure in the Middle East and Africa (combining mass production and local labor force). He also had worked as a consultant for the War Department and the Atomic Energy Commission. Such skills and expertise would lead him to receive significant commissions from Standard Oil Company of New Jersey to design its respective office buildings abroad, not only in Europe, but also (and particularly) in Latin America. One of these buildings was the Edificio Esso for Colombiana, S.A. in Bogotá, Colombia, completed in 1956.[27]

Despite being a small building, if compared with the Esso or the Socony-Vacuum office buildings in New York City, or even with other American investments abroad, the Esso Building in Bogotá had significant features. As *Architectural Record* asserted, "while exporting some solid American know-how on large office buildings," the Edificio Esso for Colombiana also exerted "a bit of leadership toward brightening the local scene."[28] For this building, Douglass designed a seven-

[27] Douglass' last oil industry commission would be the International Petroleum Building in Coral Gables, Florida, completed 1966.

[28] "American Design to Brighten Bogota," *Architectural Record*, March 1958, 165.

story office slab (where Standard organized its office section), laid out on a two-story, longitudinal unit (for Esso medical and personnel departments, as well as a rental unit for a branch bank) (*figures 9.10*). This kind of podium on the ground floor left an open space through the building, in order to develop a sense of "enjoying the views from either side" (*figures 9.10, 9.11,* 9.*12* and 9.*13*). The arrangement of its plan recalled the early experiment of Pietro Belluschi in Portland, 1943, and particularly the Equitable Saving & Loan Building of 1948: an office slab with inner circulation along the plan, and an almost-centered vertical circulation core (*figure 9.12*). For the building's structure, Douglass turned to engineer Leon Selzer, whose proposal was as simple as sui generis: reinforced ribbed concrete and bamboo forms (left in place after pouring). Combining mass production with local techniques, Douglass and Selzer obtained both a light and economic solution. The bamboo was woven together (forming small squares, like metal pans), and since there was no need for it to be removed, it also worked as lathing, where plastering was necessary.[29]

The building was located on one of the main avenues leading toward the Bogota residential section, in the path of business expansion, and facing a handsome park with a grand view of the Andes. In addition to this aspect, Douglass paid careful attention to the environmental conditions. Although the temperature of Bogotá[30] demanded an east-west orientation (to catch the heat of sunlight), Douglass – even on recommendation of the client – decided to place the building along the street, in order to display value of its frontage and take advantage of the mountain view.[31] Also, since in Bogotá cloudiness tends toward drabness, and taking into account that most local buildings were colorless, Douglass "hoped to establish a new trend toward color:" opaque glass spandrels were deep blue; metal fenestration grid was dark brown

[29] Ibid, 170.

[30] 50 degrees Fahrenheit year-round.

[31] Along with Sidney W. Barbanel, project's mechanical engineer, Douglass proposed a simple hot water heating system.

with white sash; tile end walls were in variegated pattern of white, tan and dark brown (*figure 9.14*).[32]

However, perhaps his most significant achievement abroad would be the Edificio Esso in Caracas, Venezuela, completed in 1954, for which he won the First Medal Award from the *Festival Internationale d'Architecture* in Paris, 1956.[33] Both buildings were inextricably linked with other two significant works on American soil, located in very different regions, far away from each other: the Esso Office Buildings in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and the Standard Oil Company Refinery Office in Elizabeth-Linden, New Jersey, completed in 1950 and 1953, respectively.

[32] Ibid, 167.

[33] *American Architects Directory.* Published under the sponsorship of American Institute of Architects. New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1962, 176.

FIGURE 9.10
Lathrop Douglass (Architect), Leon Selzer (Structural Engineer), Sidney W. Barbanel (Mechanical Engineer), Martínez Cardenasy Cía. (General Contractor), Pizano, Pradillo y Carlo (inspectors), Edificio Esso for Colombiana, S.A., Bogotá, main facade. Completed in 1956. Photograph by Paul Beer. Source: *Architectural Record* (Mar. 1958), 165.

FIGURE 9.11
Lathrop Douglass, Architect, Edificio Esso for Colombiana, S.A., Bogotá, 1956. Rear façade and parking area. Photograph by Paul Beer. Source: *Architectural Record* (Mar. 1958), 167.

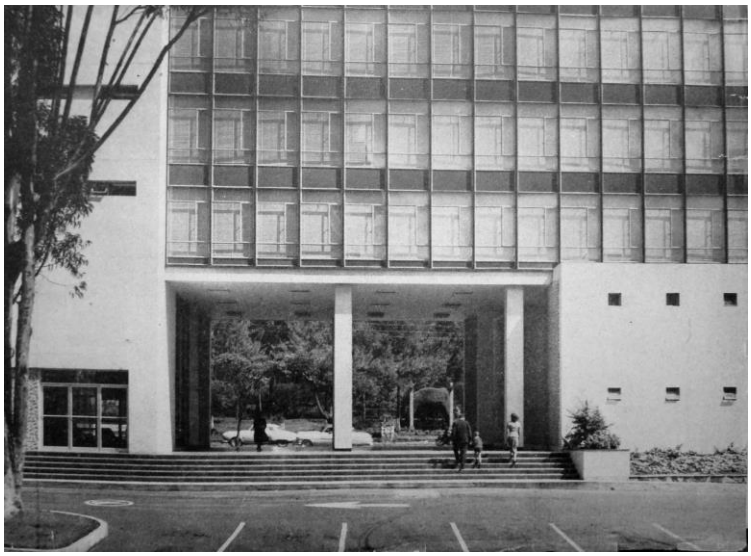

FIGURE 9.13
Lathrop Douglass, Edificio Esso for Colombiana, S.A., Bogotá. Entrance threshold, and detail of rear facade. Source: *Architectural Record* (Mar. 1958), 169.

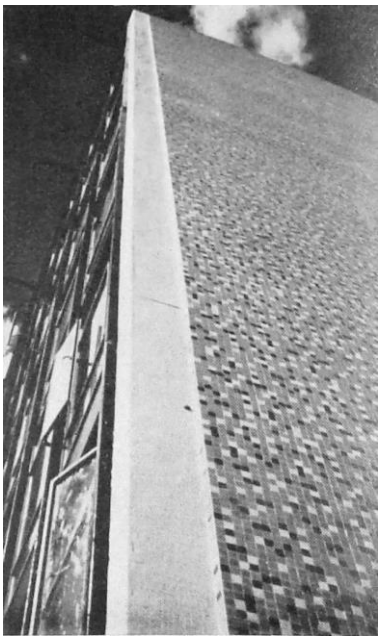

FIGURE 9.14
Lathrop Douglass, Edificio Esso for Colombiana, S.A., Bogotá. Colored ceramic tiles on lateral facade. Source: *Architectural Record* (Mar. 1958), 170.

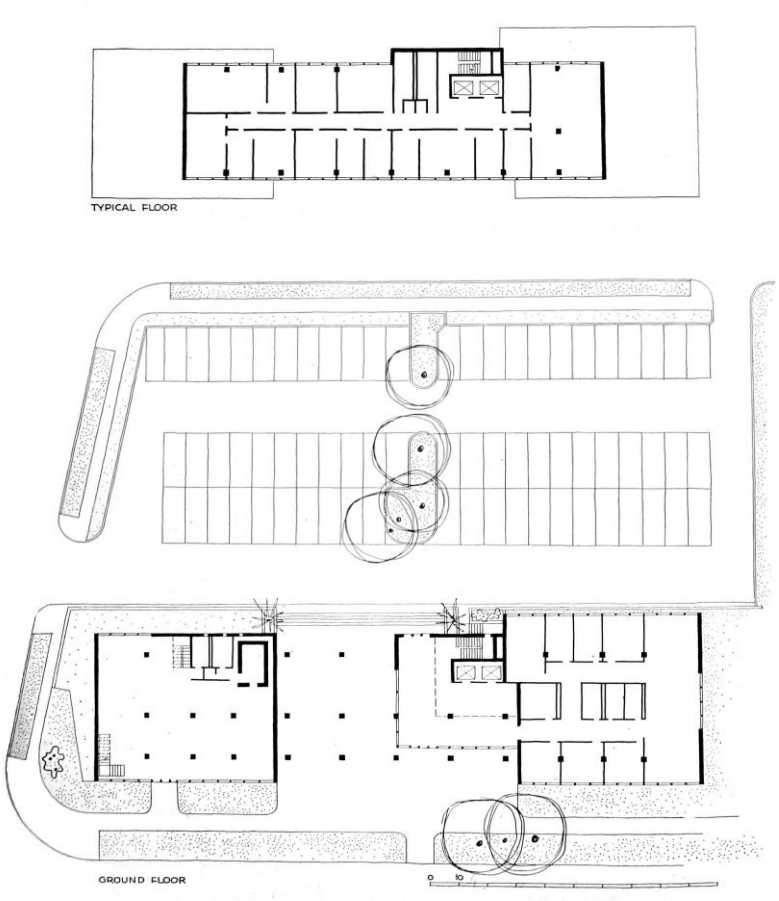

FIGURE 9.12
Lathrop Douglass, Edificio Esso for Colombiana, S.A., Bogotá. Typical and ground floors. Source: *Architectural Record* (Mar. 1958), 166.

Douglass had received in the late 1940s the commission to design the Esso Building in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.[34] For this project, initiated in 1947 with the technical support of Carson & Lundin (Associate Architects),[35] Douglass proposed a building "different in appearance, structure, and in many other respects" from its Esso office predecessors.[36] Moreover, it would turn out to be different than any oil company office building. He paid special attention to the owner's requirements and the local climate. However, what definitively marked the distinctiveness of the Esso Building in Baton Rouge was the combination of these features, as well as his explorations on flexibility and efficiency for office buildings.

Douglass proposed a long narrow volume running North and South, parallel to the Scenic Highway. This orientation, not precisely appropriate for the local climate, had to be chosen to meet the urban context's characteristics (both surrounding buildings and street patterns). The summer temperature in Baton Rouge is, simply put, hot and humid, so Douglass had to implement a double system to make the building thermally comfortable. In order to control the solar heat and glare, he displayed sun visors on both the East and West facades, complemented with venetian blinds. However, since it would be impossible for any static device to do the whole job (particularly with such an orientation in that latitude), air conditioning became a necessity.[37]

[34] The building is presently known as Exxonmobil Refining & Supply Company.

[35] Carson & Lundin had been formed in 1941 by Robert Carson and Earl H. Lundin. Carson had worked previously with Raymond Hood.

[36] "The Esso Building," booklet produced and distributed by Esso Standard Oil Company, Baton Rouge Refinery. East Baton Rouge Parish Library Digital Archive, Baton Rouge Room Collection, Baton Rouge Room Vertical File, 1950 (brr317).

[37] See "Esso Office Building, Baton Rouge," *Architectural Record*, Jan. 1951, 85-86.

John W. Harris Associates, construction manager in charge, broke ground for the new building in November 1948; it would be completed by July 1950.[38] A very comprehensive report of the project, still under construction, was published by *Architectural Record* in 1949.[39] The note was accompanied by a set of drawings and photos of the model.[40] The first of these images depicted an elongated structure whose horizontal emphasis seemed to emulate the broad horizon of Baton Rouge. More importantly, this appealing perspective displayed a steamship-like building placed alongside the highway. Sketched with a very dynamic gesture, the building seemed to be racing against the cars next to it. A series of *Purist* volumes, in turn, placed on the upper part of the structure, recalled the exploration of Le Corbusier during the 1920s (*figure 9.15*). The Esso Building in Baton Rouge actually presented itself as a kind of eulogy of the machine aesthetics. While driving on the Scenic Highway, people got a prolonged flash of very different images: Purist semicircular towers, a series of infinite ribbon windows, a marquee with the recognizable *Esso* logo, and an adjacent breezeway casting a battery of shadows (*figure 9.16*). It was certainly a sort of "magnificent play of volumes brought together in light." Moreover, by way of a metaphor of transparent corporate administration, the building also allowed to see what was happening behind it; beyond its limits: looking through its glass doors, and framed by the marquee, a second building (the cafeteria) appeared in the background.

The analysis of its first level plan reveals certainly a synthesis of transparency, efficiency (including the arrangement of the program and its horizontal and vertical circulations), climatic aspects, and obviously a corporate image (*figure 9.17*). A limpid, diaphanous direction that went across the building, leading from the East entrance (main building's entry from the highway) to the West one (for the rear parking area and cafeteria), was articulated with an off-center double corridor that ran along the building. In the center of both directions, Douglass located the lobby and the vertical circulation core: four 20-passenger elevators and a sculptural, spiral stairway.

[38] See "The Esso Building," booklet. East Baton Rouge Parish Library Digital Archive, Baton Rouge Room Vertical File, 1950 (brr317_2).

[39] See "Esso Building, Baton Rouge, Louisiana (for Esso Standard Oil Company)," in *Architectural Record*, Jan. 1949, 105.

[40] Ibid., 104-107.

This "vertical traffic system" was complemented with two secondary stairways at the quarter point of the building.[41] Also, in the central portion of the structure, close to the entrance and adjacent to the elevators, Douglass provided a waiting area and a U-form showcase, where visitors could see and buy Esso products on exhibit. Besides the emphasis on the circulation, the first floor was "extended" for mechanical equipment (air conditioning and fan rooms on both ends), which provided this level's plan with a windmill form; a subtle recall of Wright's compositions.

Two particular aspects in the plan also drew attention. The first one is the simple, well-articulated way through which Douglass solved the entrance's design, combining the zigzag-form marquee and the breezeway (both raised by *estípite*-like columns), and the waiting area. Moreover, the waiting area's dark granite wall contrasted with the whiteness of the building's plastered surfaces, and particularly with the fenestration system. Two images published by *Architectural Record* in 1951, showing the building recently completed, showed such articulation of different materials and the effects of shadows. Under the sunlight, the Esso Building definitely displayed a striking corporate image in the landscape of Baton Rouge (*figures 9.18* and *9.19*).

The second aspect has to do with the singularity of the fenestration system. According to Douglass, the decision to arrange the ribbon windows following a specific modulation was strongly influenced by the client. Standard Oil "had very intelligently insisted on a 4-ft. module, in order to provide 8-ft. secretary offices or engineer cubicles, 12-ft. standard offices for one or two people, and 16-ft. executive offices." This would have been impossible "without an absolutely uniform spacing of windows on the 4-ft. module."[42] For this, and after having studied several combinations of normal steel for light columns, Strobel & Salzman (Structural Engineers in charge) chose a combination of channels and plates, shop-welded and fireproofed with

[41] See "The Esso Building," booklet. East Baton Rouge Parish Library Digital Archive, Baton Rouge Room Vertical File, 1950 (brr317_3).

[42] Lathrop Douglass, "New Departures in Office Building Design," Architectural Record's Building Types Study No.130, *Architectural Record*, Oct. 1947, 122.

vermiculite plaster, and alternated with simple T-section mullions, equally fireproofed (*figure 9.20*). Between columns and mullions, Douglass had proposed the use of Venetian blinds by way of thermal control. Also, he had designed sun visor for the East and West facades, which cast shadow on the ribbon windows. They permitted easy exterior washing of the windows as well (employees could do it while standing on them) (*figure 9.21*).[43] Far from being a flat surface, the façades seemed to have gained three-dimensionality.

But the façade arrangement of the Esso Building in Baton Rouge was more than a play of light and shadow. Such 4'-module structure allowed both a diaphanous building skin (without projecting or obstructing columns in the exterior wall) and an interior flexibility. In the Esso Building of Baton Rouge, a sheer, ample office space replaced the inefficiently crowded bullpens of the past. A comfortable working environment, well-illuminated, efficiently furnished, and properly ventilated had been achieved. Douglass had provided a total office area of 142,000 square feet (of which 60,000 sq. ft. were net area, after deducting for corridor, elevators and service portions). Fluorescent lighting provided 40 foot-candles at the working level. Also, acoustical ceilings and asphalt tiles helped to establish pleasant working conditions.[44] The same 1951 issue of *Architectural Record* featured an eloquent interior photo of a typical floor (*figure 9.22*). Also noticeable in the image's foreground was the presence of wall air conditioning grilles, which would be a leitmotif in all the office spaces throughout the building.

This concern of Douglass for climate comfort in Baton Rouge even had an aesthetic expression on the top of the structure: that series of *purist*, cylindrical fan rooms and cooling towers which served the air-conditioning system. In fact, the building was completely air-conditioned to maintain a temperature of 75 degrees (23° C) and 50% relative humidity.[45] This important feature had been delegated to Guy B. Panero Inc., as Mechanical Engineers. Also, demonstrating

[43] See "Esso Standard Oil Company, Baton Rouge, Louisiana," Building Types Study Number 221: Office Buildings, *Architectural Record*, April 1955, 214.

[44] "The Esso Building," booklet. East Baton Rouge Parish Library Digital Archive, Baton Rouge Room Vertical File, 1950 (brr317_7).

[45] Ibid.

design talent to distribute office area efficiently, Douglass proposed in the very same Penthouse a general assembly room for 90 persons, "fully equipped with projection booth, screen, sound, and lecture facilities," from whose windows and terrace could be seen "a fine panorama of the refinery and the city of Baton Rouge."[46]

The Baton Rouge Office definitely surpassed its predecessor. The building was undoubtedly an architectural event in suburbia; a celebration of a rational aesthetics, the car and the oil industries through the highway landscape. Above all it was an accomplishment of Douglass' objectives: comfort, efficiency, and flexibility.

[46] Ibid, Baton Rouge Room Vertical File, 1950 (brr317_5).

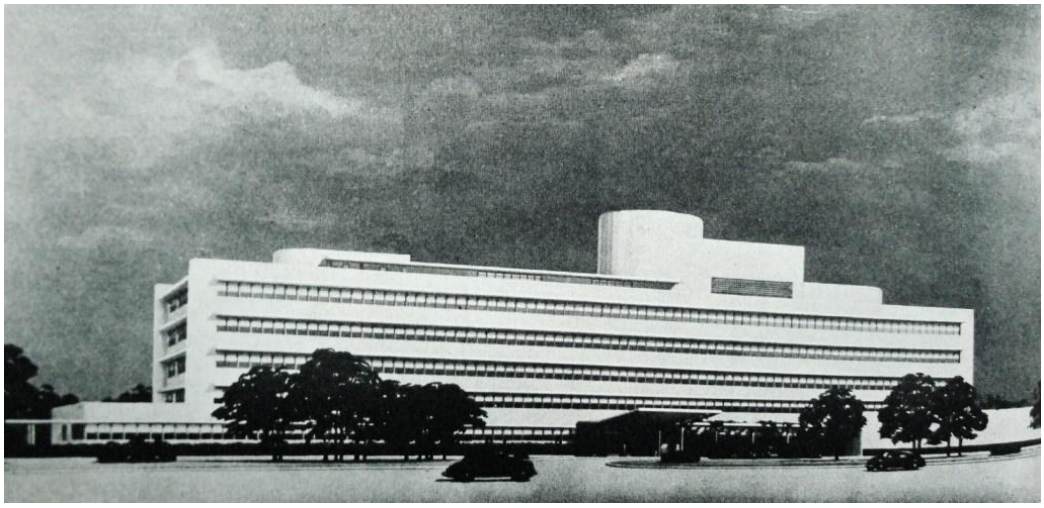

FIGURE 9.15
Lathrop Douglass (Architect), Carson & Lundin (Associate Architects), Strobel & Salzman (Structural Engineers), Guy B. Panero (Mechanical Engineers), John W. Harris Associates (Construction Management), Esso Building, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Completed 1950. View from the Scenic Highway (perspective). Source: *Architectural Record* (Jan. 1949), 104.

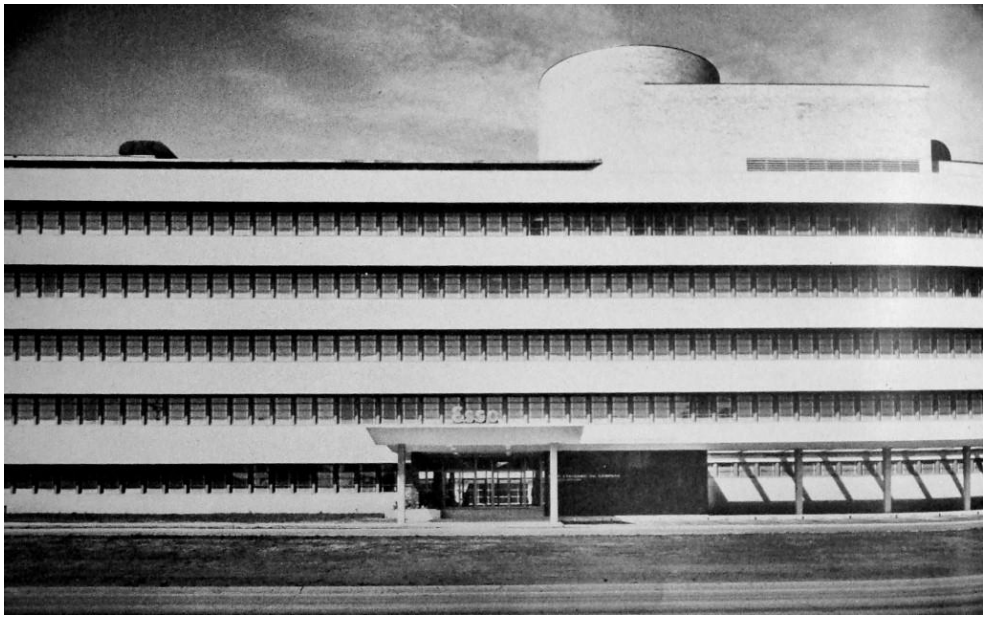

FIGURE 9.16
Lathrop Douglass (Architect), Carson & Lundin (Associate Architects), Strobel & Salzman (Structural Engineers), Guy B. Panero (Mechanical Engineers), John W. Harris Associates (Construction Management), Esso Building (Esso Standard Oil Company), Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Completed 1950. East façade, partial view from the Scenic Highway. Source: *Architectural Record* (Jan. 1951), 86.

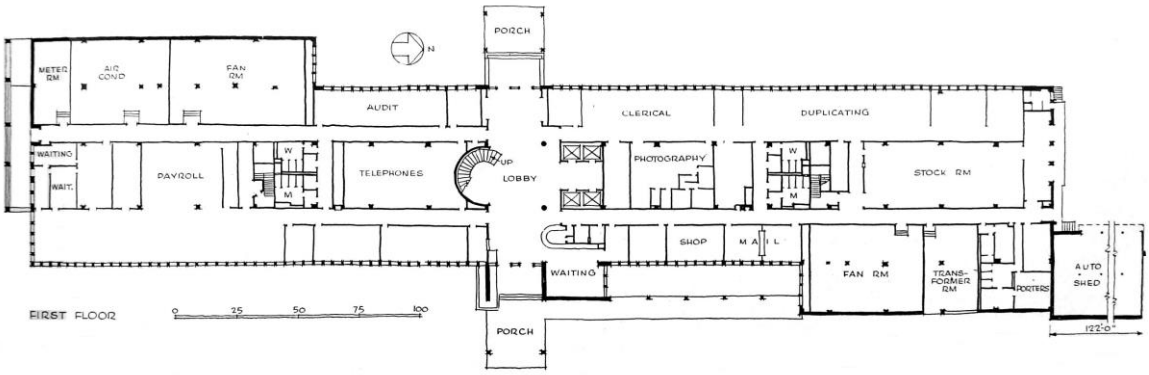

FIGURE 9.17
Lathrop Douglass (Architect), Carson & Lundin (Associate Architects), Strobel & Salzman (Structural Engineers), Guy B. Panero (Mechanical Engineers), John W. Harris Associates (Construction Management), Esso Building, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1950. Source: *Architectural Record* (Jan. 1949), 105.

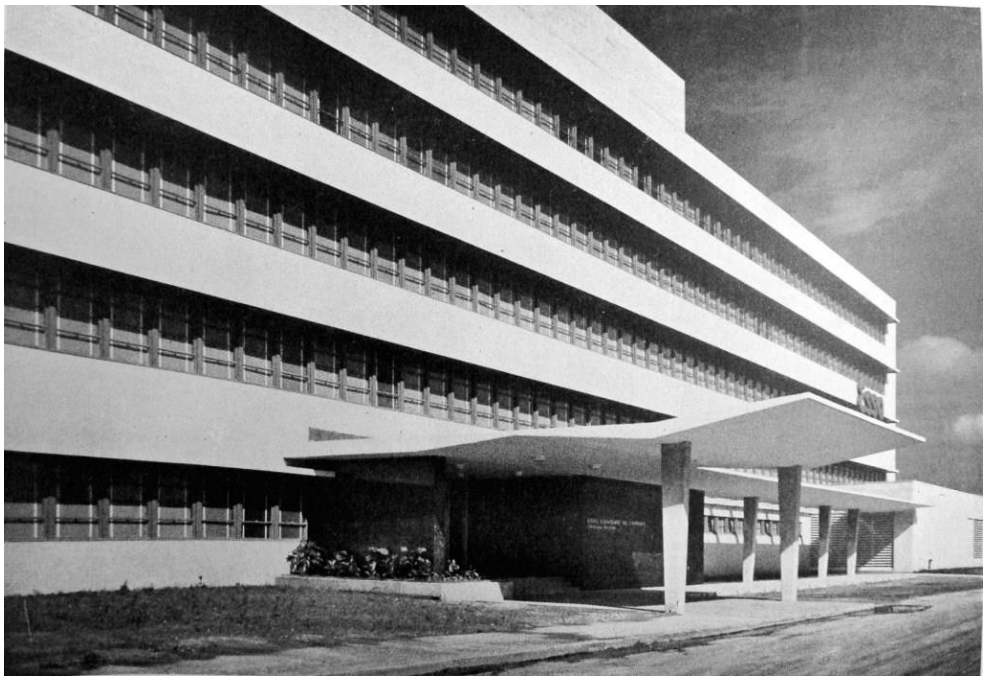

FIGURE 9.18
Lathrop Douglass (Architect)/Carson & Lundin (Associate Architects), Esso Building (Esso Standard Oil Company), Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1950. Source: *Architectural Record* (Jan. 1951), 85.

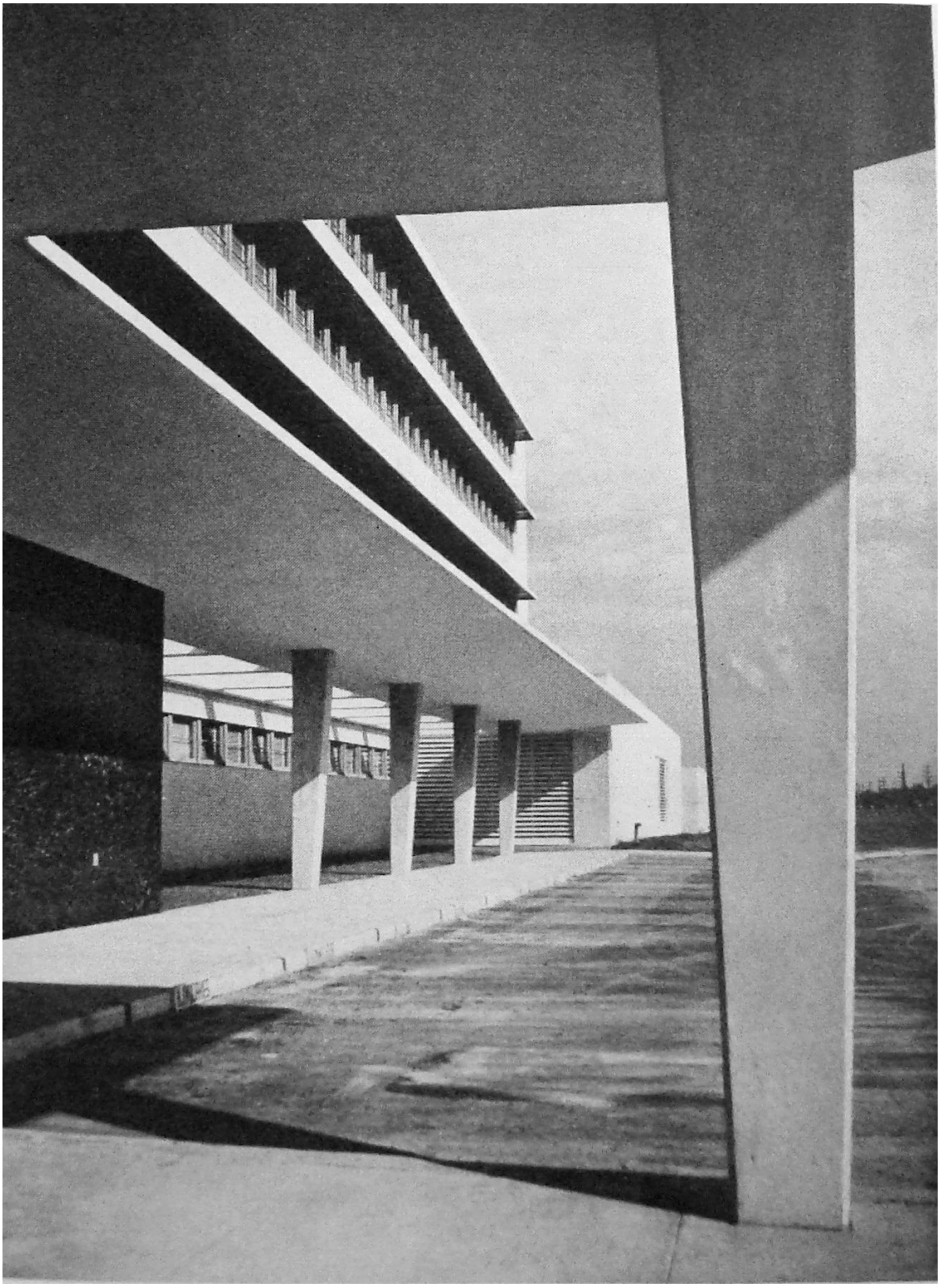

FIGURE 9.19
Lathrop Douglass (Architect)/Carson & Lundin (Associate Architects), Esso Building (Esso Standard Oil Company), Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1950. Source: *Architectural Record* (Jan. 1951), 87.

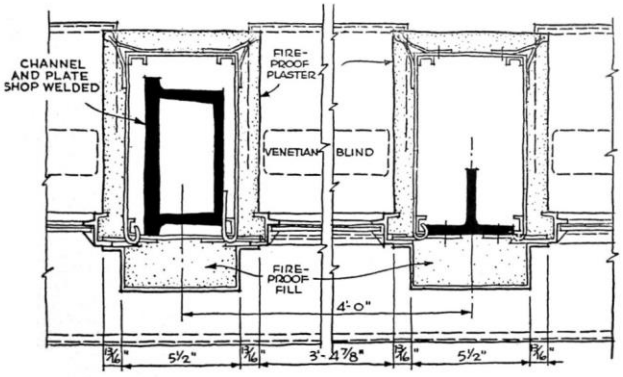

FIGURE 9.20
Lathrop Douglass, Esso Building (Esso Standard Oil Company), Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1950. Detail of the 4-ft. module and the structure (column and mullion). Source: *Architectural Record* (Jan. 1951), 87.

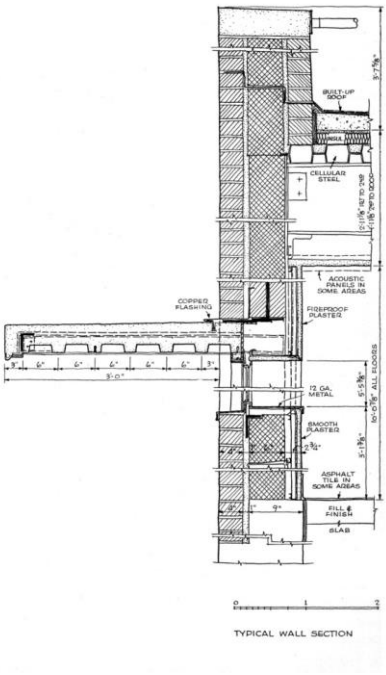

FIGURE 9.21
Lathrop Douglass, Esso Building (Esso Standard Oil Company), Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1950. Section of the wall (detail). Source: *Architectural Record* (Jan. 1951), 87.

FIGURE 9.22
Lathrop Douglass (Architect)/Carson & Lundin (Associate Architects), Esso Building (Esso Standard Oil Company), Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1950. Working environment: notice the absence of columns in the façade, the good quality of lighting (electric and natural), the efficient arrangement of furniture, and the air conditioning grilles. Source: *Architectural Record* (Jan. 1951), 89.

A PIONEER: THE STANDARD OIL COMPANY REFINERY OFFICE AT BAYWAY, NEW JERSEY

The second commission was the Standard Oil Administrative Building at the Bayway Refinery (also known as Linden Refinery), located between the cities of Elizabeth and Linden, in Union County, New Jersey. Since the beginning of its operations, in 1909, Bayway Refinery had been expanded quickly, and become increasingly important. It also came to be an important research facility and a highly valuable bastion during the Second World War. To increase the nation's supply of high octane aviation gasoline, and to provide raw materials for synthetic rubber and explosives, in 1943 the standard Oil Company had opened a huge catalytic cracking plant at Bayway, "said to be the first constructed in this part of the country."[47] By 1949, the refinery managed to have the world's largest fluid catalytic cracking unit, which marked the last step in a two-year program, as part of "a multi-million dollar expansion designed to meet consumer demand for oil products."[48]

Amid such growth, Douglass started working on the building right after the Baton Rouge project. Having been completed in December 1953, the Administrative Building at Bayway held an "open house" six months later, on June 19. On that occasion, officials of the company were hosts "to scores of guests from near-by communities."[49] Standard Oil was proud of its recently completed $1,000,000 administrative office building. Heading the celebration was Daniel L. Hussey, general superintendent of the company's Bayway Refinery. Located at 1400 South Park Avenue, the building followed the direction of the street, as in Baton Rouge. Nevertheless, it had a different orientation; instead of North-South, like the former, the Bayway Office Building ran Northwest-Southeast. The drier and colder climate in Union County also represented quite different conditions from those Douglass had found in the South. Both buildings shared other

[47] "New Gas Plant," *The New York Times*, Jan. 17, 1943, 26. According to the article, there were only two fluid catalytic cracking plants in operation at that time, located in Louisiana and Texas. Standard Oil was constructing five additional units, and had made plans to build twenty-five additional catalytic cracking units.

[48] "The Largest Catalytic Cracking Unit in the World," *The New York Times,* Oct. 18, 1949, 41.

[49] "Open House at Esso Building," *The New York Times*, June 20, 1954, 48.

resemblances. Containing 100,000 square feet of office, it was slightly smaller in area than its southern predecessor. Their dimensions, however, were very similar: 345 feet long by 55 feet wide in the case of Bayway, versus 336 feet long by 72 feet wide for Baton Rouge.

An illustration published in *Architectural Record,* shortly after its completion, exhibited the general characteristics of the Refinery Office: a four-story building consisting of a long, narrow volume that emphasized its horizontality through ribbon windows.[50] A play of sliding volumes surmounting the building provided dynamism to the composition (*figure 9.23*). As usual, Douglass placed emphasis on the entrance: a projecting marquee of reinforced concrete, supported by three pairs of *estípite*-like stilts, interlocked with a dark brick-door airlock. An *Esso* sign above the marquee greeted visitors. A breezeway, running parallel to the building, connected the visitors parking area with the entrance (*figure 9.24*).[51]

Unlike other office buildings located in urban contexts, the Refinery Office (as its name suggests) was surrounded by a factory environment. Windows in the southwest facade and wide openings in the penthouse lounge allowed Esso managers and executives to command the oil field in full production (*figure 9.25*).[52]As for the structure, Douglass proposed a reinforced concrete frame. The long, thin rectangle of the building plan had a row of columns running down the center, and equal spans on either side. Douglass relied on the technical support of Severud-Elstad-Krueger as Structural Engineers. He also relied on Guy B. Panero as a Mechanical Engineer.[53] Both the air conditioning/heating and the lighting systems were very sensitive requirements in the Administrative Building at Bayway.[54]

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[50] See "Building Types Study Number 221," in *Architectural Record* (Apr. 1955), 215.

[51] The geometric composition of the Refinery Office, the horizontal display of its ribbon windows, as well as its projecting marquee, recalled Le Corbusier's Villa Stein in Garches (1927).

[52] See "Architectural Record's Building Type Study Number 209" (specifically "Mechanical Equipment and Design"), in *Architectural Record* (Apr. 1954), 208-209.

[53] Guy Panero would eventually be involved in projects and publications related to fall-out shelters during the Cold War (see "Civil Defense: For Survival," in *Time* [Oct. 6, 1961]).

[54] "Office Buildings. Structure, Enclosure, Equipment. Esso Standard Oil Company, Bayway Refinery," Building Types Study, *Architectural Record*, April 1954, 208-209.

However, the most remarkable feature was inside the building; Douglass had designed it completely around modular furniture. Such furniture included partitions between private and semiprivate offices, and between departments. In this way, the entire floor layout could be revamped without changing the actual structure or building finish. "This type of office equipment saved several thousand square feet of office space per floor."[55] As in Baton Rouge, a large part of the Bayway Office Building had to contain engineering groups. The experience gained in the former had indicated that private offices greatly increased employee efficiency, while supervision and collaborative group action were obstructed. Hence, the program called for privacy, supervision and encouragement of collaborative action, all on the basis of 80 square feet maximum per person.[56] To solve the problem Douglass proposed the use of functional furniture: "6-feet high movable partitions, semi-private offices with no doors and separated into interconnecting groups of 6 to 12 engineers"[57] (*figure 9.26*). He placed this arrangement on one side of the building corridor, and typical private offices on the opposite side (*figure 9.27*). As offices, for reasons of economy, had to be at least 4 offices deep (transverse to building axis), Douglass set out sills 6 ft. 6 in. above the floor for those windows on the functional furniture side. As for the columns, he arranged them with their long axis parallel to the exterior walls (*figure 9.24* and *9.28*). In this sense, Douglass set the convectors behind a 6 ft. 6 in. plastered panel reaching to the window sills. Actually, the panel turned out to be a radiant one (*figure 9.29*). Consequently, the exterior wall (on the inside) worked as a smooth, flush surface "capable of taking the furniture literally at any point without complications due to windows, columns or radiators, or without causing one man to have more heat or light than another."[58]

[55] "Office Buildings. Structure, Enclosure, Equipment. Esso Standard Oil Company, Bayway Refinery," Building Types Study, *Architectural Record*, April 1954, 208-209.

[56] "Fenestrations," Building Types Study Number 221: Office Buildings, *Architectural Record*, April 55, 215.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid.

As *The New York Times* reported shortly before the inauguration, the Standard Oil Company Refinery Office at Bayway was said to be "the first of its kind specifically designed to accommodate modular functional furniture" in the United States. "When the building opens near the end of this year," the *Times* said, "about 500 office employees and executives will start pushing the functional furniture around in a series of desk and table combinations to which six-foot-high movable partitions may be attached." The functional description of the furniture was remarkable:

> The partitions may be applied on one or more sides of the planned unit. (…) Placed against a wall, a 'private' office can be obtained by attaching partitions to two sides of the unit, with the fourth 'wall' created by the adjoining unit. When placed in free space the same privacy can be gained by attaching partitions to three sides of the unit, the third partition substituting for the structural wall.[59]

The functional furniture had been developed by the Arnot-Jamestown Corporation of Jamestown, N.Y., one of nine firms licensed to manufacture the units by E. I. du Pont de Nemours, Inc. Charles J. Lane Corporation of New York was in charge of the installing.

The design and construction of both the Baton Rouge and Bayway office buildings must be understood as complex processes that organically combine architecture, environment and mechanical systems. They were not just a simple metaphor of "machines for living;" they were real *machines a habiter*. One year after the completion of the building at Bayway, another Standard structure would be completed, this time in Caracas, Venezuela. The result would be even more impressive, not just in terms of scale, but also for its design process, architectural typology, special features, technologies involved, and particularly its adaptation to the local climate.

[59] "New Plan Creates 'Packaged' Offices," *The New York Times*, Nov. 1, 1953, R1.

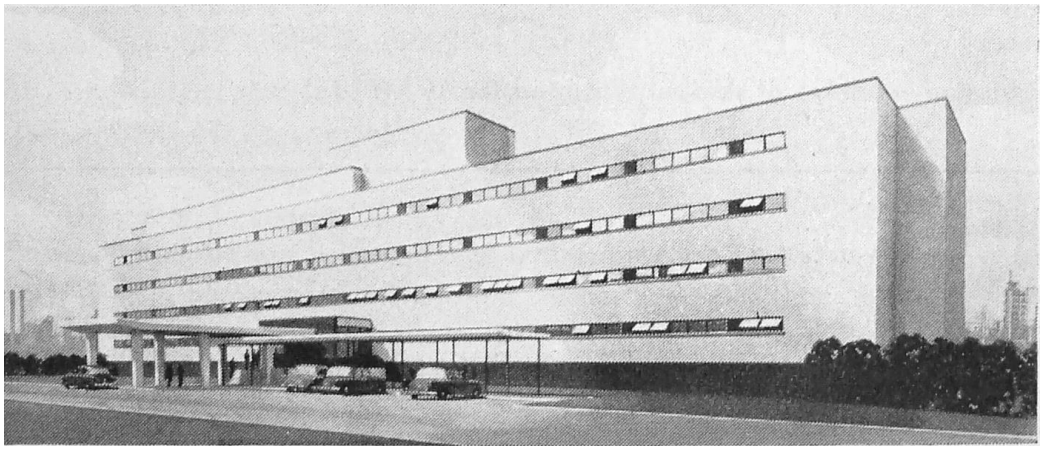

FIGURE 9.23
Lathrop Douglass (Architect), Severud-Elstad-Krueger (Structural Engineers), Guy P. Panero (Mechanical Engineer), Standard Oil Company Refinery Office (Administration Building for Esso Refinery), Elizabeth-Linden, New Jersey. Completed 1953. Perspective from South Park Avenue. Source: *Architectural Record* (Jan. 1954), 11.

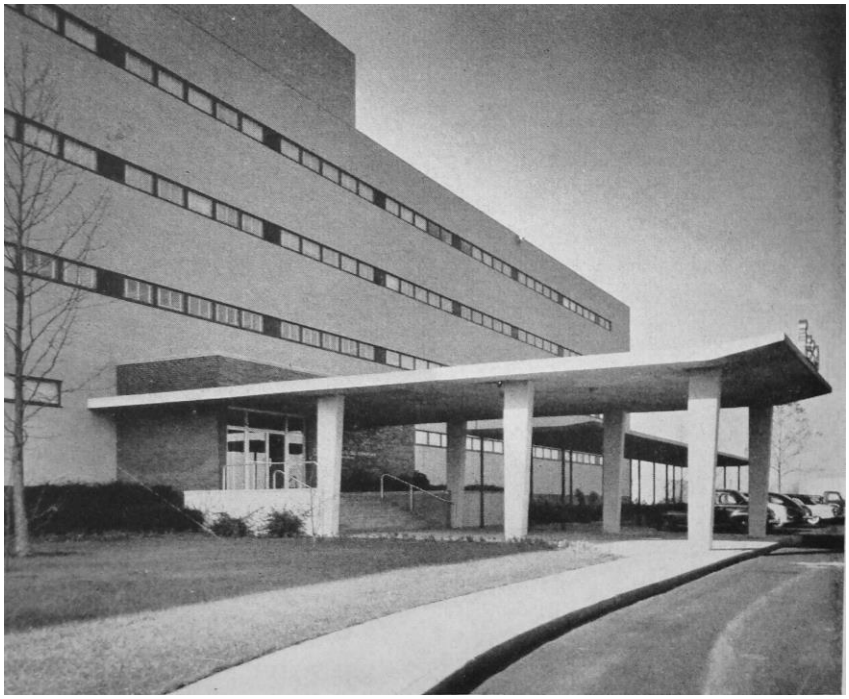

FIGURE 9.24
Lathrop Douglass (Architect), Severud-Elstad-Krueger (structural engineers), Guy P. Panero (mechanical engineer), Standard Oil Company Refinery Office (Esso Standard Oil Company), Elizabeth-Linden, New Jersey. Completed 1953. View of the main entrance's marquee from South Park Avenue. Source: *Architectural Record* (Apr. 1955), 215.

FIGURE 9.25
Lathrop Douglass, Standard Oil Company Refinery Office (Bayway Office Building), Elizabeth-Linden, New Jersey, 1953. Penthouse lounge (rooftop assembly room); in the background, a view of the refinery. Source: *Architectural Record* (Apr. 1954), 209.

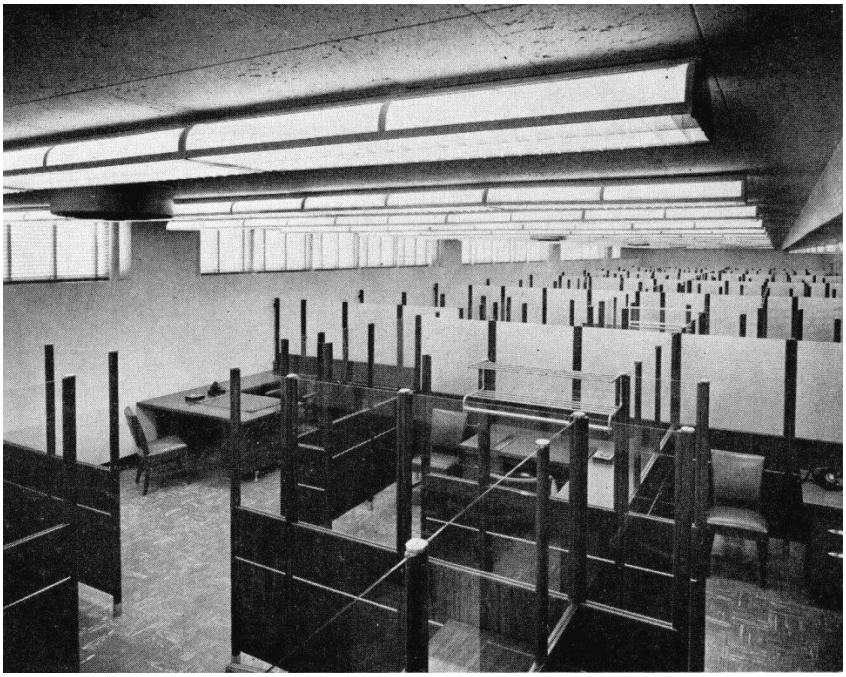

FIGURE 9.26
Lathrop Douglass, Standard Oil Company Refinery Office (Bayway Office Building), Elizabeth-Linden, New Jersey, 1953. Partitions between private and semiprivate offices, and between departments. Windows had sills 6 ft. 6 in. above floor level. Source: *Architectural Record* (Apr. 1954), 209.

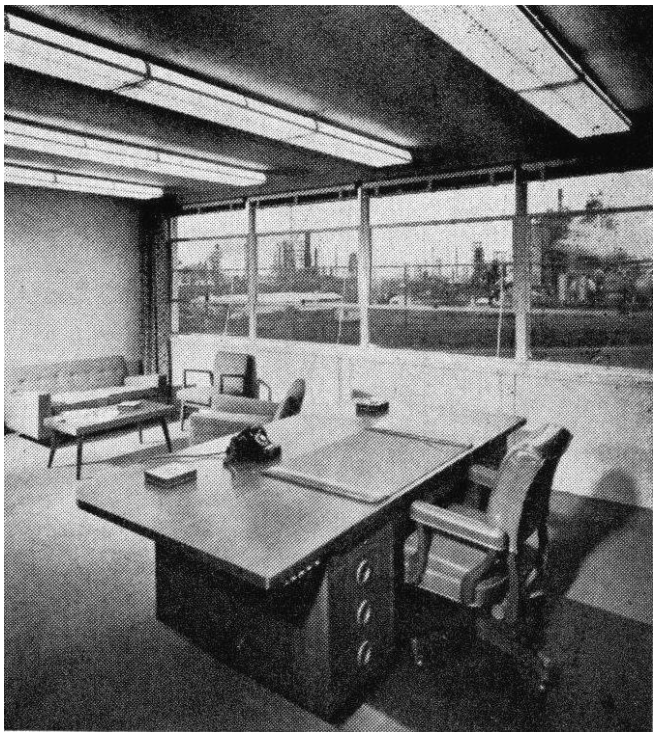

FIGURE 9.27
Lathrop Douglass, Standard Oil Company Refinery Office (Bayway Office Building), Elizabeth-Linden, New Jersey, 1953. Executive office with a view of the refinery (toward the Southwest). Source: *Architectural Record* (Apr. 1954), 209.

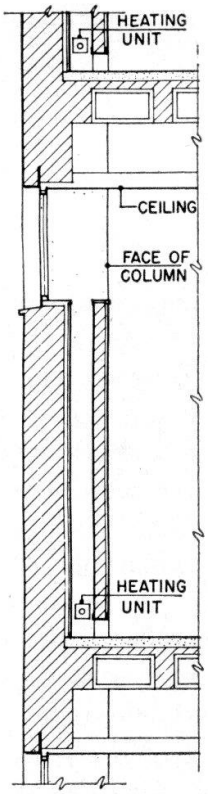

FIGURE 9.29
Lathrop Douglass, Standard Oil Company Refinery Office (Bayway Office Building), Elizabeth-Linden, New Jersey, 1953. Wall section (detail). Source: *Architectural Record* (Apr. 1954), 209.

FIGURE 9.28
Lathrop Douglass, Standard Oil Company Refinery Office (Bayway Office Building), Elizabeth-Linden, New Jersey, 1953. Portion of the plan showing one of the multiple combinations with modular furniture (office area). Source: *Architectural Record* (Apr. 1954), 209.

A GOOD NEIGHBOR! THE EDIFICIO CREOLE

On December 19, 1955, on the occasion of the National Planning Association's fourth study, *Time* magazine published an article entitled "Creole: Good Neighbor." Both its title and the information provided could not be more eloquent:

> With what was perhaps the best-spent $135 million in the history of business, the Standard Oil Co. (NJ) in 1932 bought oil concessions under Lake Maracaibo to add to its Venezuela affiliates. Now the Creole Petroleum Corp. (formed from those affiliates) is the biggest overseas investment in any single country by the U.S. company.[60]

Creole was also Jersey's best money earner, "accounting for 48% of the parent company's dividend income in 1954." It even provided Venezuela with about 30% of government revenue. The Creole Petroleum Corporation had been formed as another Standard Oil affiliate, from the Standard Oil Company of Venezuela (which operated between 1921 and 1943). Eventually, during the 1950s, Creole managed to be the most important and largest oil company in Venezuela, with a high level of investments. In 1951 it had produced 13.4 percent more crude oil than in 1950, which was (at least at that time) the highest volume in the Company's history. The daily average of oil production in 1951 had been 758,025 barrels. Its net income had amounted to US$202,278,299. That year the company even had planned to start the construction of a second pipe line, parallel to the 143-mile line had already been built. That year Creole broke definitely all records.[61]

One year later, the reputation of Creole was on the rise among thirteen other rival companies. Its daily average production in barrels was 815,070, whereas the closest competitors' productions were much lower: Shell (569,899); Mene Grande Oil Company (264,676); Socony

[60] "Creole: Good Neighbor," *Time (the Weekly Magazine)* 66, no. 25, Dec. 19, 1955, 40. The National Planning Association's study was entitled "U.S. Business Performance Abroad."

[61] "Creole Breaks All Records in 1951," *Venezuela Up-to-date,* May 1952, 7.

(55,778); Mercedes (24,865), and Texas (20,099).[62] Yet Creole's achievement was just part of a general positive investment environment. The most important American oil companies in Venezuela – besides Creole – had increased their respective oil productions during the 1940s and 1950s. Economic exchange between both countries was on the rise. Venezuela was regarded as the American "billion-dollar cash customer," completely without any U.S. aid, while 35,000 American citizens lived and worked in Venezuela. This positive investment environment also included, implicitly, the acknowledgment of Venezuela as a strategic key region. In 1953 the U.S. Defense Department had sent a statement of policy to the Randall Commission (Commission on Foreign Economic Policy). This statement could not have been more revealing:

> a. The Department of Defense considers it impractical to plan for the wartime supply of petroleum on a purely national basis, inasmuch as our plans recognize the necessity of considering Allied military and essential civilian requirements in addition to our own military and essential civilian requirements, in evaluating petroleum policies and plans.
>
> b. In these plans, it is recognized that the most reliable source of supply in an emergency would be U.S. domestic production followed closely by the production from other Western Hemisphere sources, notably Canada and Venezuela.[63]

Under such highly favorable conditions, the Creole Petroleum Corporation decided to build its definitive headquarters. Creole's predecessors had successively occupied half a dozen buildings in Caracas, until 1944 (one year after the company had assumed its present name). At that time, it moved into its own building on Plaza Morelos, near Caracas' downtown. However, that building also became insufficient. In fact, by the time the new quarters were already, six other buildings had been rented. The Creole's new building was expected to meet the company's expansion requirements "for many years to come."[64]

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[62] Ibid.

[63] "Trade Movement Presented in Figures and Pictures," *Venezuela Up-to-date,* Apr. 1954.

[64] "Oil Company Hopes New Building will be Last," *Venezuela Up-to-date,* March 1955, 19.

The new headquarters was completed in 1954. Shortly after, *Architectural Record*'s Building Types Study number 221, about "fenestration" in office buildings, published a concise but very eloquent note on the building.[65] The image accompanying the note showed an impressive ten-story building, rational and elegantly delineated. Outlined against a clear sky and a mountain range bathed in brilliant sunlight, the building, however, looked to be prepared for the local climate (a palm tree leaf in the foreground emphasized even more the tropical nature of the place). Pierced walls and a complex system of glare and ventilation control in its façade denoted a step beyond the International Style. A large parking area and a squat two-story annex complemented the perspective (*figure 9.30*).

Architectural Record had published, however, an earlier – and a very extensive – article on the Creole Building in January 1949. As analyzed in the Building Types Study Number 145, the site selection had been based on several aspects. It was about midway between the business district of Caracas and the better residential district. In this sense, the location's landscape was privileged. The building actually made the most of the Avila Mountain at the rear and the open views to the front. But more importantly, the place was "large enough to permit placing the building as desired, and to permit plenty of room for parking and recreation," and it was open enough so that the visual impressiveness of the building was "completely unrestricted."[66]

Both the long narrow form of the Creole Building – one of its most conspicuous aspects – and the specific location on the site had resulted from three aspects: "orientation in a hot and sunny climate, planning for the most direct circulation and greatest flexibility, and integration of specific office needs of the company that will occupy the building."[67] The building ran East and West, with all offices facing north and south (*figure 9.31*). The floors measured 341 feet by 52 feet. It was bigger than Baton Rouge and slightly smaller than Bayway; however, the Creole Building's built-up area was twice as large as the former – or, even larger than both Baton Rouge

[65] "Creole Petroleum Corporation, Caracas, Venezuela," Building Types Study Number 221: Office Buildings. *Architectural Record*, April 1955, 216.

[66] "Edificio Esso," *Architectural Record,* Jan. 1949, 100.

[67] Ibid, 98.

and Bayway combined. The Creole's floor plan dimensions had been based on acceptable walking distance. Actually, the Rockefeller Center's previous experience had determined 175 feet as an acceptable walking distance from elevators.

Although the Creole's final design was "quietly happy with respect to clean lines and imposing masses, the aesthetic considerations waited upon the realization of more utilitarian objectives."[68] In fact, such considerations flowed naturally from functional solutions. In this sense, in order to gather several large departments (including I.B.M. rooms), Douglass had proposed a wide heavy base corresponding to the first two floors (*figures 9.32* and 9*.33*). The squat two-story annex included the cafeteria and other employee facilities. Such a separation – probably part of the terms of reference Douglass had received from Creole Petroleum Corporation – was a requirement of cultural nature: in Caracas, recreational and similar provisions were exceptional, and a separated building made possible a longer and more relaxed use than if they were in the main building.[69]

The building's climate protection, in turn, was a significant issue to Douglass. Moreover, one of the most striking aspects in the Creole Building was the accurate climate analysis, as part of its design process, and consequently the development of climate control devices. The building facades turned out to be a highly complex "skin." Since the year-round temperature in Caracas is ideal, there was no need to provide either heating or cooling (with the exception of the IBM rooms [with air-conditioning] to keep the cards from limply curling). The sun, however, was the main problem to be solved; otherwise, the building could become a hotbed. Douglass had calculated ad hoc climate charts for Caracas; the results indicated the sun was high and hot. It shines from the south in winter, fall and spring, and from the north in summer (*figure 9.34*). Hence, the north and south facades were easily screened off with fairly narrow visors. Douglass' calculation was so accurate that not even the desks nearest the windows were ever touched by

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid, 99.

daylight.[70] As usual, Douglass paid special attention to the façade's section, as well as its details. The outer surface along the north and south facades was made up of aluminum sheet, backed by steel cellular panel (*figure 9.35*). Also, since sun protection was almost impossible on the east and west ends, Douglass decided to block off both sides with the restrooms and the staircases. Moreover, he devised perforated walls of prefabricated panels, also known as *camdogé*, to help interior ventilation (*figures 9.36* and 9.*37*).

Both the proportion and dimensions of the floor plan had been also decisions associated with climate control. The building's slab form avoided the glare of the sun (a problem to be solved commonly in H or U plans). The building's design provided generous cross ventilation of the offices. By using the set of sun visors, the fenestration system could run continuously, and there was no need for venetian blinds inside the offices. But Douglass' integral understanding of the design process went further. The building's width actually had been determined by the desk arrangement (*figure 9.38*). Since the center row of columns has been placed offset, the office's depth from the windows differed on both sides of the building (*figure 9.33*, see third and seventh floors). The larger depth (29 ft. 6 in.) permitted five 3-by-5-feet desks in an open space, while the shallower one was better for partitioned offices.[71] By changing the original column span from Metric units (6 meters or 18 ft. 6 in.) to U.S. Customary units (20 ft.), Douglass made a deliberate effort to force a standardization of only two office sizes, 10 feet for typical, and 20 feet for department heads and managers (to minimize staff jealousies).[72] Such executive offices, located on the building's north bay, were decorated and furnished by Marshall Field and Co., a department store based in Chicago (*figure 9.39*).[73]

[70] See facades' detailed sections shown in the climate charts (*figure 10.34*).

[71] "Edificio Esso," *Architectural Record,* 102.

[72] Ibid. "Creole Petroleum Corporation, Caracas, Venezuela," Building Types Study Number 221: Office Buildings. *Architectural Record*, April 1955, 216.

[73] "Edificio Creole, Caracas, Venezuela," *Architectural Record*, June 1955, 153-154.

Always concerned with the working environment's excellence, Douglass also analyzed the lighting quality. The offices received enough indirect sunlight during the day to waive artificial illumination. However, Douglass provided the whole building with fluorescent lighting, which turned out to be highly valuable for night work.[74] He also studied the lighting effect on the building by using a study model. The bold set of uninterrupted horizontal lines, contrasting with the delicate arrangement of diffuse light on the pierced concrete walls, probably had a huge impact in the urban context (*figure 9.40*).

As for the structure, Douglass collaborated with Severud-Elstad-Krueger. Columns and beams (with H-section), as well as slabs, were designed to be of steel. In order to keep the interior free of any obstruction for furniture arrangement or partitioning, the perimeter columns were placed in line with outside walls. But besides this programmatic requirement, both architect and structural engineers had to tackle another significant demand: the geological specificity of Caracas. Since Venezuela's capital is located in a seismic zone, the Creole Building had to be provided with special features. Firstly, in order to resist east-west-directioned forces, Douglass and the structural engineers devised diagonal steel braces, articulated to columns and beams (*figures 9.41* and *9.42*). Said angle bracing was then concealed in wide spandrels. The second strategy was the lateral bracing: reinforced concrete walls located at east and west ends, full height of building, to resist north and south forces. Finally, the building was provided with a central bracing: the vertical circulation core's wall, also of reinforced concrete. The slab (floor construction) worked as a girder to transmit north-south-directioned forces to all four special walls (*figures 9.41* and *9.43*). The projection of the vertical circulation core (elevator and staircase), in this sense, was not capricious; it had come from the engineers' earthquake design.[75]

[74] "Oil Company Hopes New Building will be Last," *Venezuela Up-to-date,* March 1955, 19.

[75] See "Creole Petroleum Corporation, Caracas, Venezuela," *Architectural Record*, 216; "Edificio Creole, Caracas, Venezuela," *Architectural Record*, June 1955, 150-151, and "Edificio Esso," in *Architectural Record,* 103.

The relation of the Edificio Creole with technology went even further. Its 1,400 employee could go up and down in six automatic elevators, holding 15 people each. The building also relied on one freight elevator, and automatic chutes (which carried mail and small packages from a central distributing room to every floor). Internal and external communications were carried out by 390 telephones. The central switchboard was capable of handling 60 calls at once. The building also had telegraphs and cable offices.[76] However, such technological integration did not forgo the aesthetic values of the building. Douglass appended his architectural signature to the building's entrance, a projecting marquee. A *Creole* sign*,* above it, announced not only its global affiliation – with Standard Oil Company – but also its local particularity and autonomy (*figure 9.44*). After passing through this threshold, visitors were received in an elegant lobby, covered with Venezuelan marble, where there was a news stand and a store selling Esso products (*figure 9.45*).[77]

As *Architectural Record*'s Building Types Study of 1949 pointed out, the criteria Douglass adopted for the Edificio Creole could be summarized in five aspects. First of all, flexibility, through standardized office sizes based on practical and efficient office layouts; secondly, foolproof circulation, both vertical and horizontal; third, ideal conditions of occupancy (job environment) for efficient work, involving temperature, light, ventilation and acoustics; fourth, planning both for individual departments and for departmental integration, and for expansion as well (on a departmental basis), and finally, economy, in both final cost and maintenance.[78]

Actually, maintenance was also a significant planning factor for Douglass. He had had an important experience at Johnson, Drake & Piper, during the Second World War, through its projects in the Middle East and East Africa. Douglass had learned how to deal with building either where normal sources of supplies were not at hand or where skilled labor might not be available for maintenance activities. In synthesis, the whole building represented "a from-the-

[76] "Oil Company Hopes New Building will be Last," *Venezuela Up-to-date,* 19.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid, 100.

ground-up study of office building functions, applied first to the individual company and then to the special considerations of its locality, everything falling into place nicely in an unusually handsome building."[79]

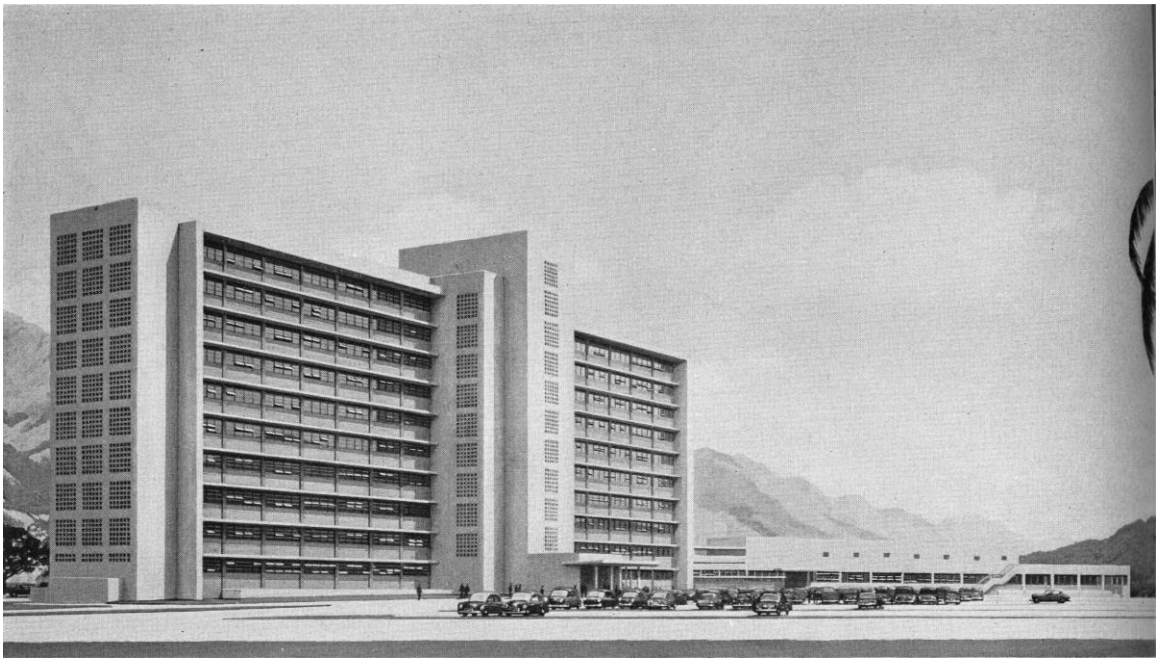


FIGURE 9.30
Lathrop Douglass (Architect), Fred N. Severud (Structural Engineer), John W. Harris Associates Inc. (Construction Management), Edificio Esso (Creole Petroleum Corporation), Caracas, Venezuela. Completed 1954. Source: *Architectural Record* (Apr. 1955), 216.

[79] Ibid, 99.

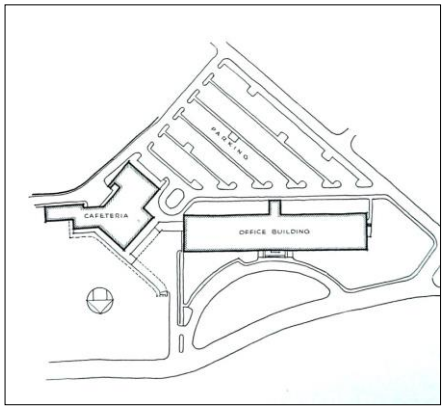


FIGURE 9.31
Lathrop Douglass, Architect, Edificio Esso, Caracas-Venezuela, completed 1954. Location plan on the one-and-one-half acre plot. Source: *Architectural Record* (Jan. 1949), 99.

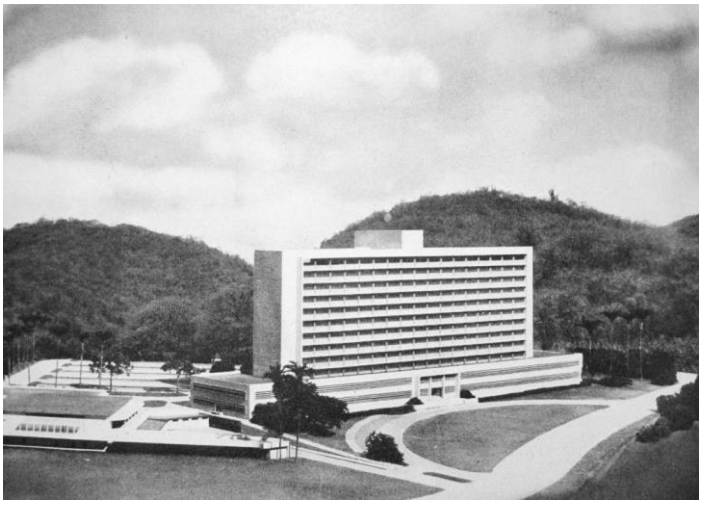


FIGURE 9.32
Lathrop Douglass (Architect), Fred N. Severud (Structural Engineer), John W. Harris Associates Inc. (Construction Management), Edificio Esso, Caracas- Venezuela. Model. Completed 1954. Source: *Architectural Record* (Jan. 1949), 98.

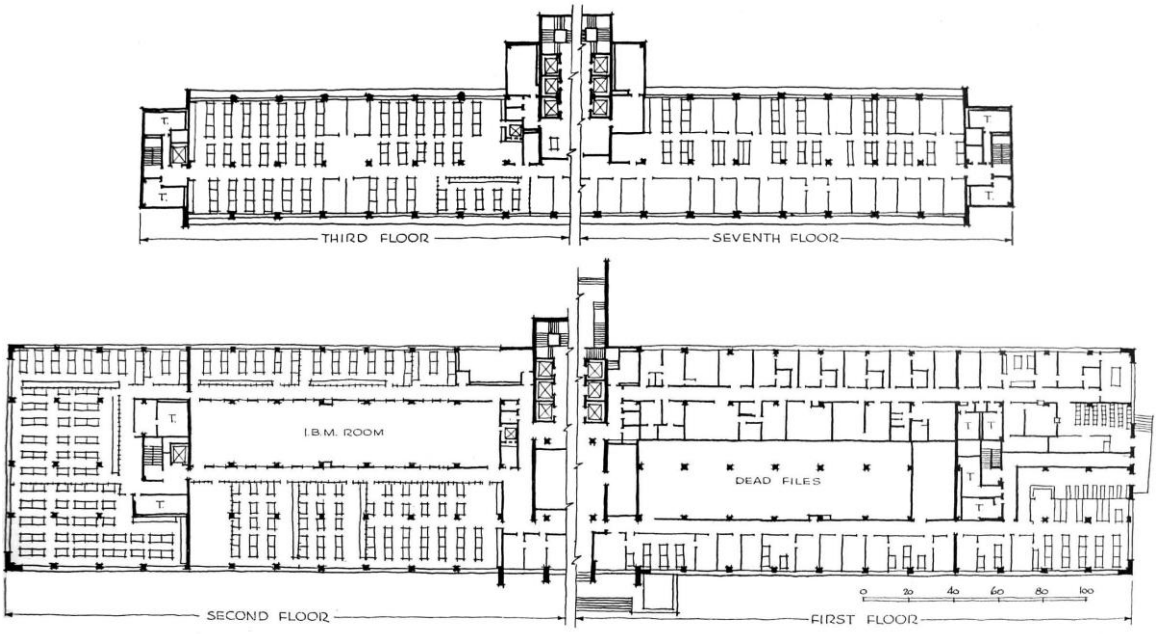
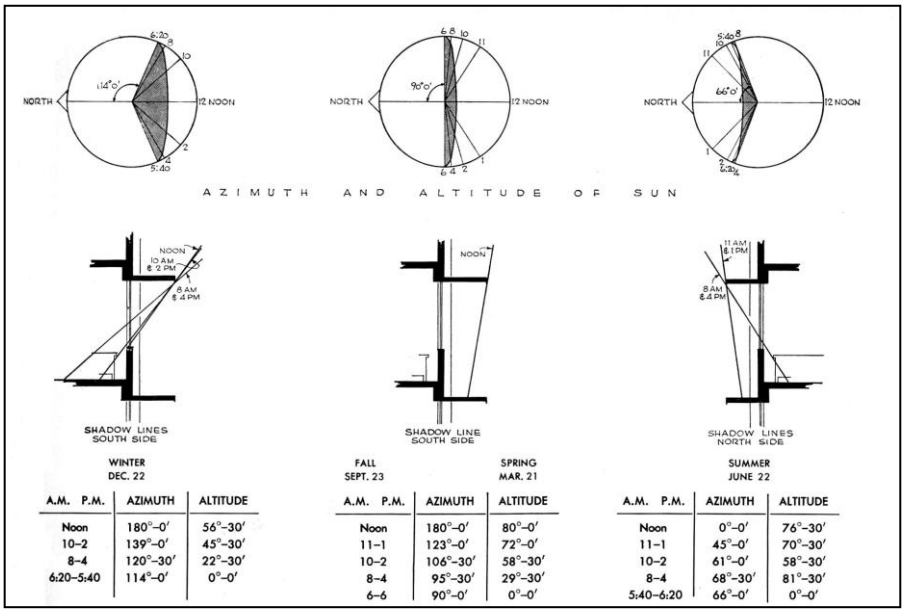


FIGURE 9.33
Lathrop Douglass, Edificio Esso, Caracas, 1954. Plans of first and second floors (below), and third and seventh floors (above). Source: *Architectural Record* (Jan. 1949), 100.



WINTER DEC. 22		
A.M. P.M.	AZIMUTH	ALTITUDE
Noon	180°–0′	56°–30′
10–2	139°–0′	45°–30′
8–4	120°–30′	22°–30′
6:20–5:40	114°–0′	0°–0′

FALL SEPT. 23 / SPRING MAR. 21		
A.M. P.M.	AZIMUTH	ALTITUDE
Noon	180°–0′	80°–0′
11–1	123°–0′	72°–0′
10–2	106°–30′	58°–30′
8–4	95°–30′	29°–30′
6–6	90°–0′	0°–0′

SUMMER JUNE 22		
A.M. P.M.	AZIMUTH	ALTITUDE
Noon	0°–0′	76°–30′
11–1	45°–0′	70°–30′
10–2	61°–0′	58°–30′
8–4	68°–30′	81°–30′
5:40–6:20	66°–0′	0°–0′

FIGURE 9.34
"Sun dictates form," solar angle chart for Edificio Creole. Source: *Architectural Record* (Jan. 1949), 101.

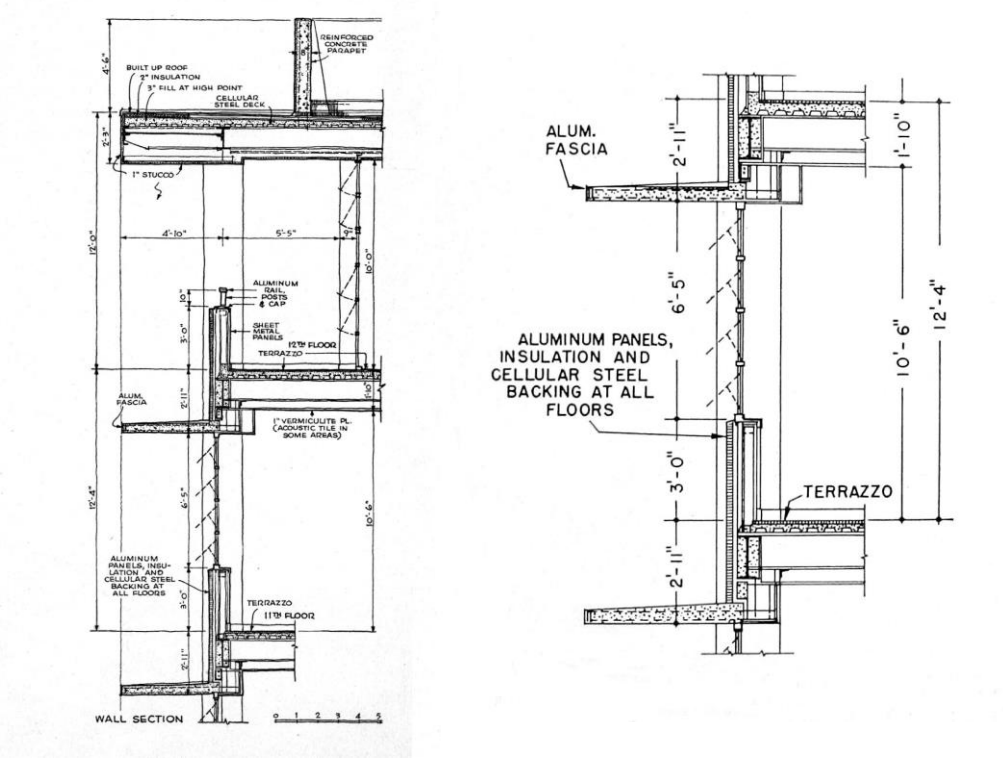


FIGURE 9.35
Lathrop Douglass, Edificio Creole, Caracas, 1954. Wall section, showing the building's special "skin" for environmental comfort: overhanging visors, metallic ledges and lining, and transparent louvers. Sources (respectively): *Architectural Record* (Jan. 1949, 101; June 1955, 152).

FIGURE 9.36
Lathrop Douglass, Architect, Edificio Creole, Caracas, 1954. East facade, protected with *camdogés,* and north, with visors. Source: *Architectural Record* (June 1955), 149.

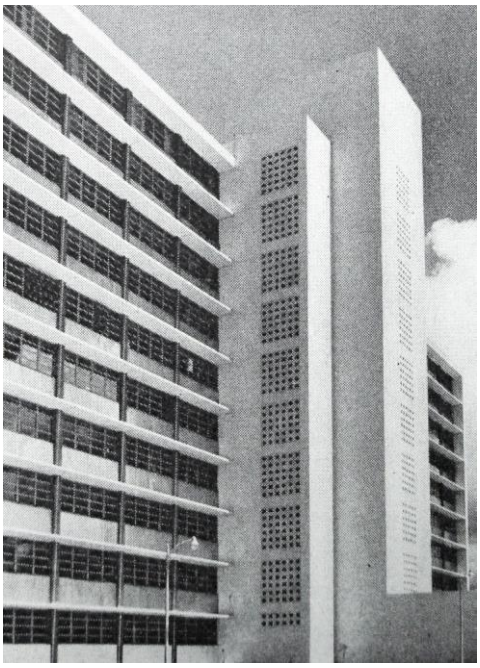


FIGURE 9.37
Lathrop Douglass, Architect, Edificio Creole, Caracas, 1954. Visors in the south façade, and *camdogés* in the vertical circulation core. Source: *Architectural Record* (June 1955), 151.

FIGURE 9.38
Lathrop Douglass, Edificio Creole, Caracas, 1954. Typical office space. Source: *Architectural Record* (June 1955), 153.

FIGURE 9.39
Lathrop Douglass, Edificio Creole, Caracas. The President's office. Executive office suite was decorated and furnished by Marshall Field and Co. Source: *Architectural Record* (June 1955), 154.

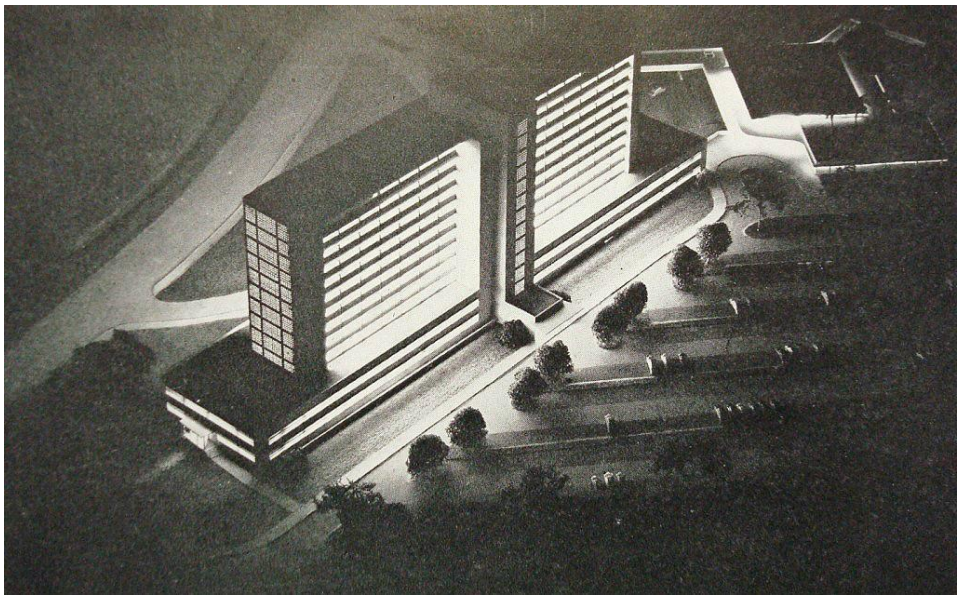


FIGURE 9.40
Lathrop Douglass, Edificio Esso, Caracas, 1954. Lighting effect of the building at night; view of the model. Source: *Architectural Record* (Jan. 1949), 103.

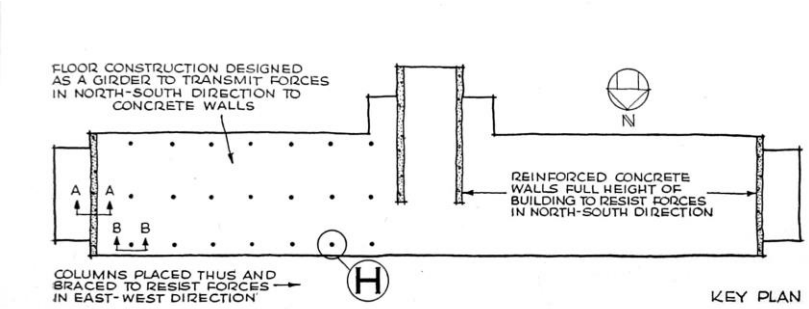


FIGURE 9.41
Lathrop Douglass, Edificio Creole, Caracas, 1954. Structural scheme. Source: *Architectural Record* (Jan. 1949), 103.

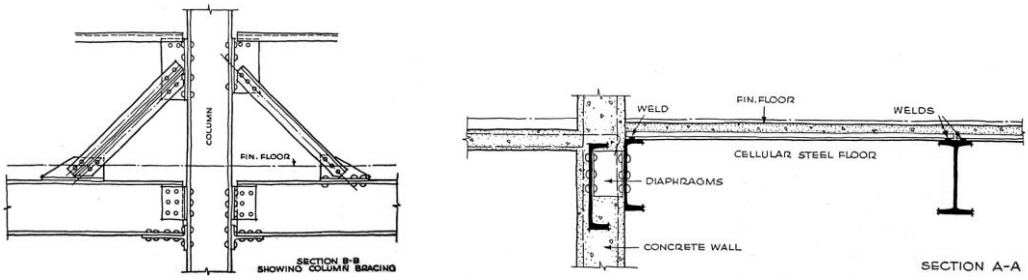


FIGURE 9.42
Lathrop Douglass, Edificio Creole, Caracas, 1954. Angle bracing (Section B-B), and detail of the lateral reinforced concrete wall and the slab (Section A-A). See indications in *figure 11.35*. Source: *Architectural Record* (June 1955), 150.

FIGURE 9.43
Lathrop Douglass, Edificio Creole, Caracas, 1954. View of the south façade with the vertical circulation core. The annex is on the right, and the parking area (for 350 cars) in the foreground; the University City is in the background, between the Creole and the Avila Mountain. Source: *Architectural Record* (June 1955), 150.

FIGURE 9.44
Lathrop Douglass, Edificio Creole, Caracas, 1954. Main entrance, at the north façade. Source: *Architectural Record* (June 1955), 152.

FIGURE 9.45
Lathrop Douglass, Edificio Creole, Caracas, 1954. View of the lobby, looking toward the south entrance, and then the parking area. Source: *Architectural Record* (June 1955), 152.

RETELLING THE STORY

When completed in 1954, the Creole Building exhibited several changes in relation to the original project. Five years had passed since *Architectural Record* released its Building Types Study Number 145. In June 1955, the magazine published a third report on the building (the second one had been published two months before), now with extensive photographic material of the building already completed. "Though many exciting buildings have sprung up in the boom in Caracas since this building was designed," stated the report (making an allusion to the *Architectural Record* issue of 1949), "and though many changes were made in the plans, the recently opened Edificio Creole is still a noteworthy example of North American design and construction techniques when exported to faraway places."[80]

Certainly, the project had undergone some modifications (and not "many changes," as the report asserted). After all, the most important aspects of the Creole still held: its location; slab form and climate control devices; earthquake-proof design; direct circulation, horizontal and vertical; space flexibility, according to departmental integration, and finally its programmatic and furniture arrangement (the scheme of private offices and desk placing in large open areas). Main changes to the original project, in turn, were both programmatic and morphological, and had to do with the wide two-story base of the building (*figures 9.32* and *9.40*). This sort of podium, planned as an enlarged air-conditioned section to house I.B.M. operations and file storage (*figure 9.33*), was omitted in the last version (*figures 9.30, 9.36, 9.43* and *9.44*). These areas were then included in the annex, originally planned to house the cafeteria, and the recreational and medical facilities.[81] The annex building finally accommodated the first aid room and the accounting department, while the cafeteria was located in the basement of the main building.[82]

[80] "Edificio Creole, Caracas, Venezuela," *Architectural Record*, June 1955, 150.

[81] Ibid, 151.

[82] "Oil Company Hopes New Building will be Last," *Venezuela Up-to-date,* 19.

That gap between the time the Edificio Creole was designed and finally completed, can be explained by the shortage of building materials after World War II. As stated in the Building Types Study 145, the project had been already approved and the drawings completed by 1949, but its construction had been voluntarily postponed by Creole. With a limited supply of steel and other critical items available for export, "Creole had elected in the national interest to devote all of its allocations to actual oil production, even though its office employees must continue under unsatisfactory conditions."[83]

Regardless of the time elapsed since its design, it was clear that the Creole Building had held its original freshness and complexity. Moreover, the year of its completion seemed to be coherent with the results. After all, the Edificio Creole looked much more evolved than its fellows in Baton Rouge and Bayway. Douglass' theoretical reflections indicated, however, that the Creole Building might have been designed before 1948, and more importantly, even before his two projects on American soil.

In the October 1947 issue of *Architectural Record*, Douglass had published two articles with his personal philosophy about how modern office buildings should be designed. In "Perhaps the Best is Actually the Cheapest," by analyzing the impact of the job environment on employee efficiency, he pointed out the financial benefits of building first costs based on correct architectural decisions. After calculating the average amount of time an employee wastes every day over a long period of time (from all causes combined, including humid, hot surroundings, ill-lighted bullpen amid the clatter of typewriters, and the gabble of his fellow employees), which he guessed about 20 percent, he managed to prove that investment in a high-quality job environment represents a small amount of money (compared with salaries), but would eventually imply more productivity.[84]

[83] "Edificio Esso," *Architectural Record,* 98.

[84] See "Perhaps the Best is Actually the Cheapest," *Architectural Record*, Oct. 1947, 122-123. According to Douglass, first costs are significantly very low compared with salaries. His calculations, in this sense, were very convincing: *acoustic tiles* to reduce distraction of noise is about 0.075 % of the salary (equivalent in cost of only 19 seconds of an hypothetical employee's working day); *Office partitions* to provide privacy and space to concentrate, and to reduce idle conversation and build morale is 0.5% of the salary

In "New Departures in Office Building Design" (Building Types Study number 130), in turn, Douglass discussed in architectural terms what he had analyzed in his other article. He translated his financial figures into design guidelines. While recognizing the aesthetic advances in matters of exterior design between the Twenties and Forties, particularly in skyscrapers, Douglass advocated for contemporary improvements in matters of function. The pattern of those old buildings of the Twenties, according to Douglass, had been repeated during the subsequent decades. They were just "façade-first design" buildings. Moreover, they did not provide that "*sine qua non* of an office building: comfortable, efficient, flexible, standardized, economically operable office space." Certainly "we can do better today," he asserted.[85] In order to support his thoughts on *flexibility*, Douglass referred favorably to the Rockefeller Center (the only exception, among those inflexible, old skyscrapers) and the Tishman Building (designed by Carson & Lundin, newly completed), both in New York City.

But Douglass also mentioned he was currently planning, along with Carson & Lundin as associates, "a long six-story office building for which the owners have very intelligently insisted on a 4-ft. module."[86] Despite the fact that he did not specify the client's name, it was clear that he was referring to the Esso Building in Baton Rouge.[87] However, it was not the only project he mentioned. As for the problem of heat transmission and radiant heat in glass facades, he referred to a building he was planning "for a tropical location at a high altitude." "We worked out," he said, "a long narrow building, with plenty of glass: all offices have continuous windows." His description was very eloquent:

(equivalent of 2 minutes of daily time); *air conditioning* is about 1.17% of employees' salary (equivalent of only 4½ minutes of the hypothetical employee's day).

[85] Lathrop Douglass, "New Departures in Office Building Design," Building Types Study number 130, *Architectural Record*, Oct. 1947, 119.

[86] Ibid, 121-122.

[87] Originally the building had six stories and a penthouse. During the design process one of the stories was eliminated. See "Esso Building, Baton Rouge, Louisiana (for Esso Standard Oil Company)," in *Architectural Record*, 105.

> The long axis is placed east and west, offices facing either north or south. Only utilities are on the sun-baked east and west ends. Fins or sunshades along north and south walls anticipate the varying angle of the sun, to the north in summer, to the south in winter. The sun never gets into any window at any season. With this protection against radiant heat of the sun, we need no air conditioning, for the air temperature is ideal the year around. Nor is there any need for venetian blinds.[88]

Again, he did not identify either the building or the client. As a matter of fact, in his articles, Douglass frequently made reference to his projects without identifying them. The same occurred with his project's drawings. Particularly in this article, Douglass provided a pair of images whose features – fortunately – were unmistakable: the plan and the section of a ten-story-slab-like building, laid on a two-story podium (*figure 9.46*). Its long, narrow plan with an offset vertical circulation stack in the center; its east and west ends closed with stairs and toilets; its particular partitions arrangement; the quantity of columns; its narrow sun visors on the north and south facades, and finally the disposition of heavy walls in the vertical circulation core, as well in both ends (by way of earthquake bracing), can lead to only one building: the Edificio Esso (cf. *figure 9.47*). The caption accompanying the drawings called attention to the specific location of the building: "for a latitude of 10 degrees north, with good year round air temperatures but intense radiant heat from the sun."[89] Continuous horizontal sunshades anticipated "sun's angles in winter and summer," so sun never struck any window, summer or winter. The sun rays inclination, as shown in the section, even coincided with the climate charts Douglass calculated for the specific case of Caracas (cf. *figures 9.34* and *9.46*). As a result – said the caption – there was "no glare, no blinds, no radiant heat, also rain protection."

[88] "New Departures in Office Building Design," Building Types Study number 130, *Architectural Record*, 121.

[89] Ibid, 119.

Caracas' latitude is actually 10°30' north. Of all the cities around the world that share a similar latitude (fourteen altogether, displayed in Central and South America, Asia and Africa),[90] only the Venezuelan capital enjoys such a privileged climate. It is not by chance that it was regarded during the 1950s as "the air-conditioned city."

By reevaluating the chronological relation between Douglass' three buildings, it is clear that they gain different historical significance. The Creole Building, whose width had been greatly determined by the diagramming process of its modular furniture placing (and whose diagrams had been made even before some other considerations, including column spacing [*figure 9.48*]), had preceded the Refinery Office at Bayway, the first one of its kind on American soil. Moreover, reading between the lines of what Douglass said, and sticking to the information he provided, it is clear that the Edificio Creole's design had been completed right before Baton Rouge's Esso Building. Although sounding paradoxical, the Edificio Creole was not the more complex evolution of Louisiana and New Jersey's Esso representatives; it was their complex seed. It was the most perfect prototype.

It would not be, however, the only building in Caracas to be designed by Douglass. He would put his ideas to the test in a totally different context. This second project would also reveal a highly complex network of professional, governmental and personal connections.

[90] Barranquilla, Colombia (10°57'50"N); Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam (10°46'10"N); Iloilo City, Philippines (10°43'N); Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago (10°40'N); Maracaibo, Venezuela (10°39'N); Liberia, Costa Rica (10°38'N); Caracas, Venezuela (10°30'N); Chaguanas, Trinidad & Tobago (10°30'N); Cartagena, Colombia (10°24'N); San Fernando, Trinidad & Tobago (10°17'N); Cebu City, Philippines (10°17'N); Maracay, Venezuela (10°14'49"N); Alajuela, Costa Rica (10°01'N), and Hargeisa, Somalia (10°00'N).

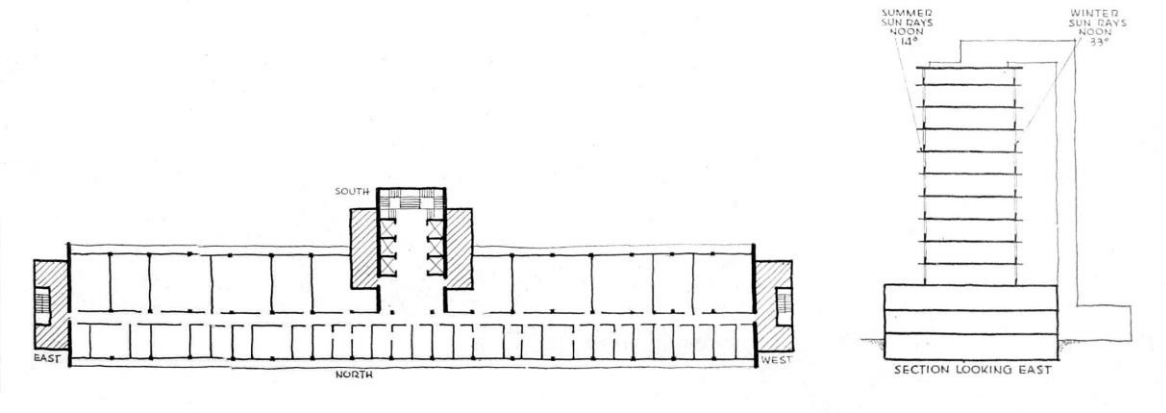


FIGURE 9.46
Lathrop Douglass, Office building plan and section "for a latitude of 10 degrees north." Source: *Architectural Record* (Oct. 1947), 119.

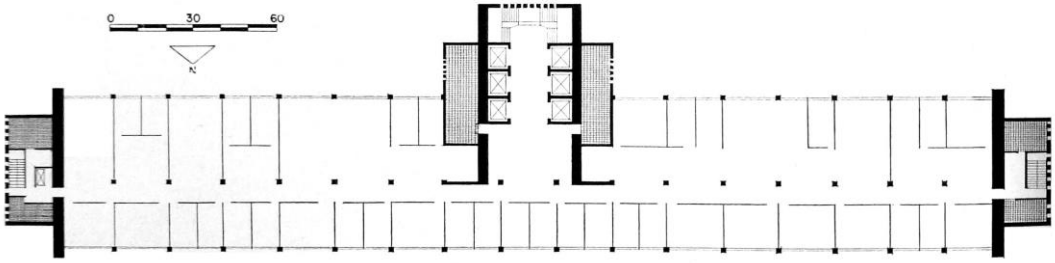


FIGURE 9.47
Lathrop Douglass, Edificio Creole, Caracas, 1954. Typical floor plan. Source: *Architectural Record* (June 1955), 152.

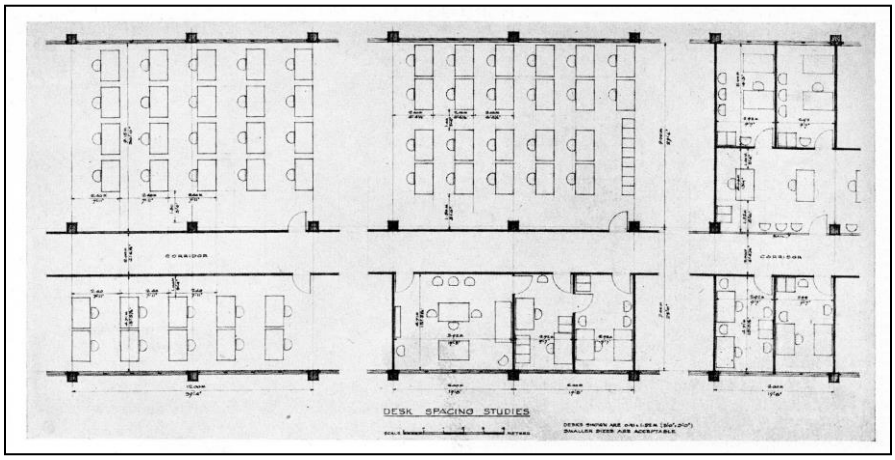


FIGURE 9.48
Lathrop Douglass, Edificio Esso, Caracas, 1954. Desk arrangement. Source: *Architectural Record* (Jan. 1949), 102.

THE MISSING SON: THE ELECTRICITY BUILDING, CARACAS

In January 1955, *Architectural Forum* issued "US Building Abroad," one of the most comprehensive reports published by any architectural magazine during the Cold War. Among the works presented, there was one that attracted the reader's attention: a glazed, geometrically well-defined office slab, with reticulated façades and open ground plan, laid out on a kind of aerial platform. It was the "Rental Office Building," designed by Lathrop Douglass for U.S. and local tenants in Caracas. The building had had the privilege of being published in such a significant report, sharing the stage with Welton Becket, Albert Mayer & Julian Whittlesey, Holabird & Root & Burgee, Richard Neutra, Antonin Raymond & L.L. Rado, S.O.M. (Skidmore, Owings & Merrill), Josep Lluís Sert, and Edward Durell Stone, among others. Unlike the whole set of projects presented, which were already finished or in construction process, the "Rental Office Building" was the only proposal to be built yet. Moreover, it was the only work shown by using architectural rendering (*figure 9.49*).

For this $3 million project, which "will be largest in Caracas," Douglass proposed ten office floors, a penthouse restaurant, a shopping plaza, and a basement parking for 200 cars.[91] Although the article was short, the building's image was as eloquent as engaging. The modulation of its surfaces, by combining metallic windows and glass, made the volume lightweight. The open plan of the first floor, the sober darkness of its columns (probably covered with marble or granite), the shopping plaza's glazed volume, and a zigzag marquee that seemed to be floating, emphasized even more the lightness of the building. A shopping volume projecting toward the street, and a long lateral corridor (defined by a ribbon parapet) gave the first floor a sui generis urban character. Below it, several layers of basement parking made the most of the slope. In fact, at a first glance, the building seemed to be laid on a series of weightless slabs. The penthouse's design, in turn, was equally conspicuous. A projecting nine-glass-panel bay window, located at one of the building's ends, worked as a sui generis entablature. In spite of its offset location, it balanced the whole façade composition with the marquee in the first floor.

[91] "U.S. Building Abroad. Commerce: New Markets," *Architectural Forum*, Jan. 1955, 113.

The proportion of the urban plot (narrow front, and deep), the sloping street, and the mountains lined up in the background constituted a very unique context. The building's response to such context was also singular; it worked as a huge belvedere. The whole composition, irrevocably intertwined with its surroundings (and perhaps with its rendering too), seemed to go beyond the International Style's precepts.

Like many other projects abroad, the construction of Douglass' building probably depended on delicate financial issues and international circumstances. With no further records in Venezuela to track its whereabouts, the Rental Office Building seemed to be like any other never-built project: vanished into the pages of a magazine.

According to the note, however, the construction of the building was about to start in February of that year. Living in a period of oil industry bonanza, and also with excellent bilateral relations with the United States, it was improbable to think of an unexpected outcome of this imminent process. The construction had to have been finally completed. If the question on its whereabouts may arouse curiosity, the answer will be certainly as engaging as enlightening.

FIGURE 9.49
Lathrop Douglass, Rental Office Building, Caracas, 1955. Source: *Architectural Forum* (Jan. 1955), 113.

FOLLOWING THE TRAIL

A new, sober office slab marked the very beginning of Urdaneta Avenue in Caracas.[92] The slope of the avenue at that point, and the specific orientation of the building (presenting a narrow façade to the street, and a wide one to Caracas valley), made the automobile approach an engaging experience. With no other edifice nearby to block its east façade's views (to and from it), the building was a sort of huge mirador to experience – and add – modern life and worldliness in Caracas. Elevated on freestanding dark marble columns, exhibiting a reticulated combination of enamel panels, metallic windows and glass, and projecting an "aerodynamic"

[92] Urdaneta Avenue was inaugurated on November 29, 1953.

marquee in the first floor and a nine-panel bay window in the penthouse, this unusual office slab was an invitation to be part of a new, vibrant spirit. It was sophisticated and enigmatic; metropolitan and global. More than just universal, the building was cosmopolitan. It was known as the Electricity Building.

Soon after its completion in 1957, a photograph of the building appeared in *Venezuela Up-to-date*, a monthly bulletin published by the Venezuelan Embassy in Washington (*figure 9.50*).[93] This bulletin embraced news of different nature, including science, technology, oil industry, art, architecture, economic exchanges, and international relations. As an official government means, it always published information about new significant buildings and urban public works. Actually, the Electricity Building would be the new headquarters of the Venezuelan Electricity Company, "Luz Eléctrica de Venezuela."

According to the bulletin, this structure of steel framework and reinforced concrete consisted of "ten stories for offices, three underground floors (two for automobile parking and one for storage) and a penthouse for a private businessmen club."[94] It had 140,000 square feet of office floor space and was air-conditioned throughout. The offices had been designed "with the utmost flexibility for the installation of partitions at the tenant's convenience."[95] Its total cost by 1957 had been 15 million bolivars (US$4.5 million), including land and construction. The bulletin did not offer any information about the authorship of the building.

However, a simple morphological comparison between the Electricity Building and Douglass' Rental Office Building shows striking similarities. Both of them had same number of stories, same number of columns, same façade arrangement (modulation), same general proportions, and same first floor organization, including a shopping plaza's glazed volume. But perhaps even more striking was the use of the same morphological repertoire: a sui generis marquee defining

[93] *Venezuela Up-to-date*, Washington D.C.: Embassy of Venezuela, Nov. 1957, 15.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Ibid.

the building's entrance, a projecting bay window in the Penthouse (constituted by nine glass panels in both cases), and the display of platforms below the first floor (parking area). Moreover, the resemblance of both contexts was noticeable: a slightly sloping avenue, and the mountain at the background. Even the viewpoint of both images was the same.

The proximity of dates and budgets was also telling. The first communication related to the Electricity Building was dated July 15, 1954.[96] At that time the building had a different name: Edificio *Nueva Caracas*. Later, on June 28, 1955, the building was renamed as *Luz Eléctrica de Venezuela*.[97] Its construction permit was dated July 15 of that year, while the habitability permit was granted on June 28, 1957.[98] The total estimated budget by 1955, including land and construction, was 10,160,000 bolivars (US$3,051,051).[99] The budget proposed for Douglass' Rental Office Building had been US$3 million.

As for the construction process, the building contractor had been *Oficina Técnica Gutierrez*, the same office in charge of the Tamanaco Hotel's construction. Both the checking of plans and the technical direction of building work had been under the responsibility of engineer Raúl

[96] A series of valuable documents were found in the Code Compliance Department's archive, City Manager Office in Caracas (Corporación de Servicios Municipales [archivo], Alcaldía del Municipio Libertador, Caracas). The review was made between July 15 and 19, 2010. The specific aforementioned document is the Communication 02829, in File 2305E.

[97] Letter from Oficina Técnica Gutierrez & Co. to Director of Code Compliance Department (Director Obras Municipales). File 2305E (Corporación de Servicios Municipales [archivo], Alcaldía del Municipio Libertador, Caracas).

[98] Building Permit, File 2305E (Corporación de Servicios Municipales [archivo], Alcaldía del Municipio Libertador, Caracas).

[99] Form issued by "División de Control de Construcción" (Building Control Division), Caracas: Dirección de Obras Municipales (City Manager Office. Code Compliance Department), n.d. (circa 1955); document transcribed by hand. According to this document the lot cost was Bs. 2,660,000 (US$ 798,799), while the building cost was 7,500,000 (approx. US$ 2,252,252). The total amount, including lot and building costs, was US$ 3,051,251 (exchange rate at that time: Bs. 3.33 per US$ 1)

Henríquez Asprino.[100] The Electricity Building's owner was *Inversiones Orinoco, C.A*., a Venezuelan company that, despite the local character of its name, turned out to embrace bilateral interests.

One of the most remarkable pieces of evidence to prove that both buildings were, in fact, one in the same, can be found in the Electricity Building's architectural drawings, submitted in 1954 along with the application to obtain the building permit. The first particular item that attracts attention is the seal that identified the plans. In the whole set of drawings, the professional staff's names are provided through their respective initials. Two letters, in this sense, identified always the designer: "L.D." (*figure 9.51*). The analysis of the façade yielded telling results as well. The marquee originally designed for the Electricity Building had the same zigzag form of that proposed by Douglass for the Rental Office (cf. *figures 9.49, 9.52* and *9.53*). Even the final result of the Electricity Building's marquee underwent a transformation (cf. *figure 9.50*). Also, the display of the complete façade revealed a total correspondence with the perspective published by *Architectural Forum* in 1955. With the exception of the penthouse's projecting bay window, which had been displaced three modules to the left in the built version, everything coincided (cf. *figures 9.49* and *9.53*).

[100] The Tamanaco Hotel had been designed by Hollabird, Root & Burgee (see subchapter "El Nuevo Ideal Nacional [the New National Ideal]" in this dissertation). Besides being in charge of the Tamanaco Hotel's technical direction, Eng. Raúl Henríquez Asprino was also involved in its construction.

FIGURE 9.50
"L. D.," Electricity Building (the new headquarters of "Luz Eléctrica de Venezuela, C.A."), Urdaneta Avenue, Caracas. Source: *Venezuela Up-to-date* (Nov. 1957), 15.

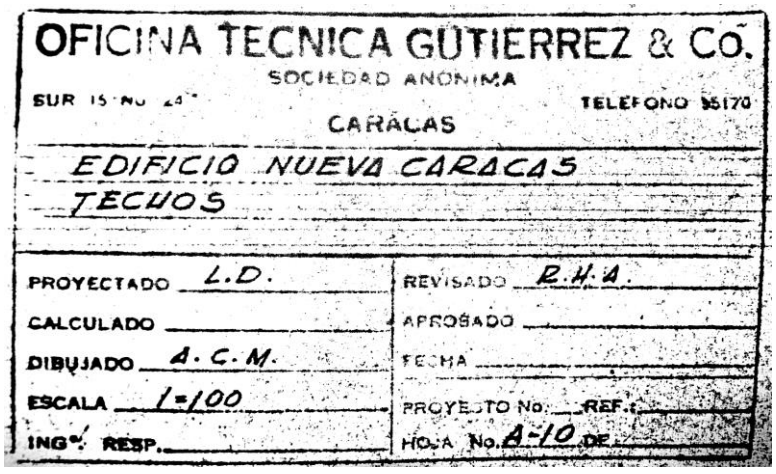


FIGURE 9.51
"L. D.," Electricity Building, seal located on architectural drawings, as submitted to the City Manager Office in Caracas, January, 1955.

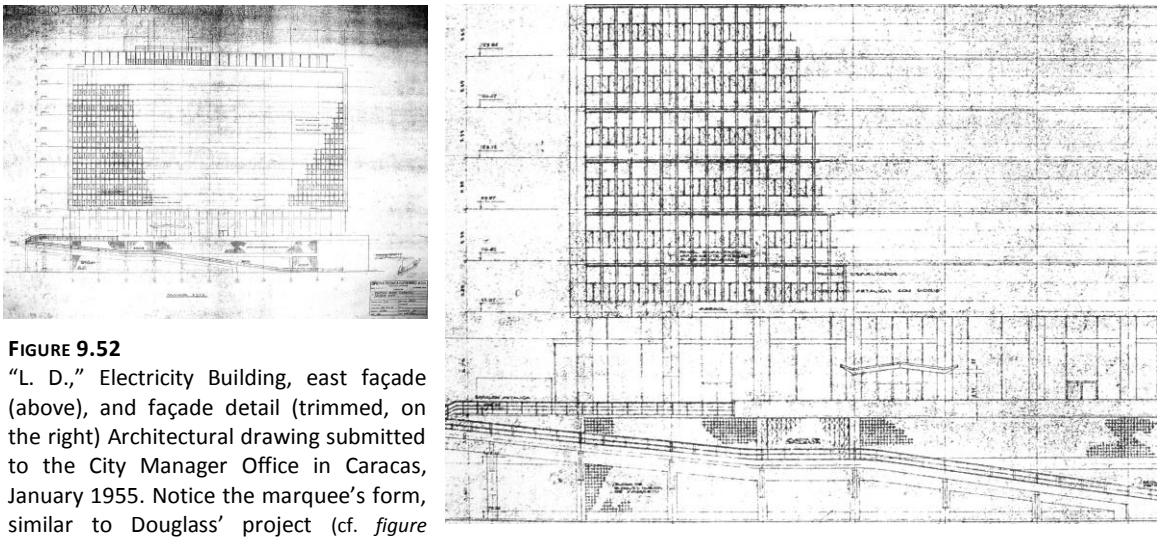


FIGURE 9.52
"L. D.," Electricity Building, east façade (above), and façade detail (trimmed, on the right) Architectural drawing submitted to the City Manager Office in Caracas, January 1955. Notice the marquee's form, similar to Douglass' project (cf. *figure 11.48*).

FINAL THRUST: LET THE ARCHITECT SPEAK

"L.D." certainly stood for Lathrop Douglass. The Electricity Building was actually the second project by Douglass in Caracas, and, in fact, the second one to be built in the Venezuelan capital.[101] A careful observation of the Electricity Building's plans provides valuable information. As for the first floor, Douglass proposed an urban connection with the avenue by means of a small square or plaza, which combined garden areas and a pair of wide steps (*figure 9.54*). He extended laterally such urban space, leading to the building's entrance (indicated with a sui generis marquee), and also creating a long veranda, from which visitors could get a wide view of the building's urban surroundings. Also in this level, and located partially below the building projection, Douglass proposed a large, one-story shopping plaza, with independent accesses. Somehow, Douglass' urban approach echoed the Office Building proposed by Pietro Belluschi in

[101] In the list of buildings attached to his application for the American Institute of Architects membership, the Electricity Building appeared as "Luz Electrica Building." See Lathrop Douglass, Membership File, The American Institute of Architects Archive, *The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects*, s.v. "Lathrop Douglass (1907-1981)," (ahd1011556), http://communities.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/AIA%20scans/C-E/DouglassLathropFAIA.pdf (accessed 10/10/2012). It is important to notice that the AIA archive updates its website and adds new information continuously. The Membership File of Douglass, in this sense, was uploaded to the site in January 2011.

1943. The Electricity Building was rotated 90 degrees in relation to the street's axis. So, taking advantage of the lot's sloping ground, and given that the south facade would not be blocked,[102] Douglass designed the whole building (including its ground floor) as a true urban balcony. In this way, the building was able to enjoy the benefits of urban life without the stress caused by smells, noises, and perhaps even dangers in the streets. Despite the fact that both architects performed different solutions for their respective projects, both buildings certainly shared the same strategy. Perhaps Belluschi's project for Portland's Main Street was much more ambitious than Douglass' building for Caracas. However, while the former was just a project, the latter had a real completion. Not even Belluschi, in the Equitable Saving & Loan Building, could put his urban ideas to the test so deeply.

The typical floor's arrangement, in turn, was simple and clear. It provided a large, sheer office area, with no walls or any other divider. Douglass also paid special attention to the corners' design, setting aside a specific plan to show the details. But perhaps what he definitely emphasized was the concentration of vertical circulation and services around the same point. In this sense, the vertical circulation core was constituted by four elevators and a couple of staircases; behind it, there was a service core made up of two restrooms and a generous machinery room. Both, vertical circulation and service areas, were framed by a sort of structural box, which combined columns and a perforated-reinforced-concrete screen wall (*figure 9.55*). The machinery room actually was of vital importance. The Electricity Building was not just the first flexible, open floor, large rental office building in Caracas; it was also the first one to use "central air-conditioning in Caracas, for quiet, cleanliness, and dehumidification rather than cooling."[103] Moreover, it had been designed with a unique low-cost peripheral duct system, achieved by upturned spandrel beams.[104]

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[102] The adjacent southern lot did not allow tall constructions.

[103] Lathrop Douglass, Membership File, The American Institute of Architects Archive, *The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects*, s.v. "Lathrop Douglass (1907-1981)," (ahd1011556), http://communities.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/AIA%20scans/C-E/DouglassLathropFAIA.pdf

[104] Ibid.

Unlike the typical floor plan, simple, rational, and open in programmatic terms, the penthouse floor plan was definitely complex, and much more defined in its functionality. For the south wing, Douglass had designed a library, an adjacent reading hall, and a bar with curvilinear forms, located in the projecting bay window area, from which people could be delighted with a splendid view of Caracas' valley. The bar was complemented with a large drink cabinet. The north wing, on the other hand, had a gym, a barbershop area, a Turkish bath, and lockers. It also had kitchen facilities, a dining hall, as well as smaller dining rooms. Between both wings, Douglass proposed different ceiling heights. Definitely, it was the hedonist floor of the building (*figure 9.56*). Finally, a long list of kitchen equipment with technical specifications, probably to support the large kitchen area, was located on the right side of the plan.

In Douglass' own words, the Electricity Building had established a new trend in design and standards.[105] Unlike the Edificio Creole, whose suburban location and lot's large dimension gave Douglass the freedom to orient the building in the most favorable way, the Electricity Building was placed in a downtown lot, with particular advantages but also with limitations. Douglass had to sacrifice climate control strategies in favor of making the most of this specific location. The parcel's dimensions were roughly 58 meters front by 82 meters depth (190 by 269 feet), and its area was approximately 4,756 m^2 (51,110 $ft.^2$). The sloping relief of the plot, a natural consequence of its proximity to Anauco Stream, was another added difficulty to consider. Douglass turned all these limitations in his favor to put his office slab type to the test. The Electricity Building was a sort of horizontal skyscraper downtown: a suburban type, with cosmopolitan character, inserted in Caracas. Yet also importantly, the building's design had incorporated cutting-edge air-conditioning and structural technologies.

Despite being downtown, the Electricity Building's specific location was not in the old center of Caracas. In fact, it rose on the border of downtown and San Bernardino, a new neighborhood that already counted the Avila Hotel and the Shell Building among its most relevant buildings. Douglass, in this sense, found a very sui generis historical condition, since the Master Plan's

[105] Ibid.

zoning for that area would be approved just in 1958, a year after the Electricity Building's completion. Douglass had this way a certain freedom of action to design an office building, with such morphological and programmatic characteristics, in that specific plot. Actually, the 1958 Master Plan would permit only residential buildings with commerce on the first floor.[106] The historical circumstances were in his favor.

MERELY SOCIALIZING: EXPLAINING DOUGLASS THROUGH HIS CONNECTIONS

Paradoxically, the Electricity Building was not near the Edificio Creole, but close to its corporate competitor, the Shell Building. American oil companies had defined specialized urban territories in Caracas, by way of oil districts (*figure 9.57*). Royal Dutch Shell had given Badgeley & Bradbury, a New York firm, the commission to design its offices in Caracas. Established in 1944, the firm was formed by C. Dale Badgeley and Charles Akers Bradbury.[107] Like Douglass, Bradbury had graduated from the Yale School of Fine Arts; they met in 1933, one year after Douglass had earned his degree.[108] Actually, Bradbury was one of the two proposers on Douglass's Membership application before The American Institute of Architects in 1948. They were

[106] See *Resumen de Ordenanza de Zonificación* (Summary of Zoning Regulations), specifically the R-10 zone, and *Plano de Zonificación de la Comunidad 3-12,* in *Plano Regulador,* República de Venezuela, Gobernación del Distrito Federal, Dirección de Obras Municipales, Oficina de Planeamiento Urbano, Dec. 1958.

[107] The firm dissolved in 1948. Eventually, the former established his own firm in 1949 (C. Dale Badgeley). He worked as a consultant architect to Jose Puig in the design of the *Edificio* Phelps Condominium Office Building in Plaza Venezuela, Caracas, 1969 (in the same location as Don Hatch's Automobile Showroom). It is also known that Venezuela was among the countries Badgely had visited by 1956. See *American Architects Directory,* published under the sponsorship of American Institute of Architects, New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1956, 26.

[108] See Badgeley & Bradbury's Roster Questionnaire, The American Institute of Architects Archive, *The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects*, s.v. "Badgeley & Bradbury (firm)," (ahd4000256), http://communities.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/AIA%20scans/Rosters/BadgeleyBradbury_roster.pdf (accessed 10/13/2012), and Lathrop Douglass, Membership File, The American Institute of Architects Archive, *The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects*, s.v. "Lathrop Douglass (1907-1981)," (ahd1011556), http://communities.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/AIA%20scans/C-E/DouglassLathropFAIA.pdf (accessed 10/10/2012).

contemporaries; Bradbury was only two years older. It is not clear what circumstances brought them together. In any case, it is common knowledge that graduates from Yale develop strong links, by way of fraternity, during their professional careers.

Another important name associated with Douglass is Robert I. Carson, who had been one of the supporters in his A.I.A. Nomination for Fellowship in 1959.[109] Carson, in turn, had received the support of Wallace Harrison and Max Abramovitz in his application for the A.I.A. Membership in late 1946.[110] Carson was also contemporary with Douglass (the former was only one year older). He had worked at the Raymond Hood, Godley & Fouilhoux office in New York (1928-33), as well as at the Harrison & Fouilhoux office, also in New York (1933-1939). Carson had been the resident architect for the Rockefeller Center for eighteen years (1939-1957), and his relationship with the oil companies had been prolific. Besides his Esso Building in New York City, completed in 1947 (as part of Carson & Lundin's projects, along with Harrison as a Consulting Architect), he had also designed the Shell Oil Company Building in 1945, and the Sinclair Oil Building in 1951, both in New York City. And of course, between 1947 and 1948, Carson had collaborated with Douglass in the design process of the Esso Building in Baton Rouge, Louisiana (as Carson & Lundin).

Hence, it seems that the direct relation between Douglass and Carson, and between Carson and Harrison (and then, obviously, between Harrison and the Rockefellers) allowed the incorporation of Douglass into the exclusive circle of architects working in the oil industry, either for Nelson Rockefeller or for Standard Oil of New Jersey. In this sense, it is interesting to notice the way Douglass – strategically – supported his ideas in "New Departures in Office Building Design," one of the article published by *Architectural Record* in 1947. He was critical of

[109] Architect Antonin Raymond was also supporter of Douglass for Fellowship before the A.I.A.

[110] Robert Carson, Membership File, The American Institute of Architects Archive, *The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects*, s.v. "Robert I. Carson (1906-1960)," (ahd1006926), http://communities.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/AIA%20scans/C-E/CarsonRobert.PDF (accessed 12/26/2012).

contemporary commercial architecture, but at the same time particularly laudatory of the Rockefeller Center:

> As for the great American skyscraper, perhaps there is a temptation to think that it reached a high state of functional efficiency in the late Twenties. At least some of the few that have been built since then seem to repeat the pattern. I cannot agree that the old ones were so good. Some of them – Rockefeller Center, for example – provided good office space, with a notably quantity of that all-important ingredient, flexibility.[111]

Moreover, it is also remarkable how he managed to win such an important commission as the Edificio Creole, so quickly, just two years after having established his private practice. After his graduation from Yale in 1932, and before opening his office in New York in 1945, Douglass had worked eight years basically as a Senior Draftsman, and then, during World War II, as a Housing Control Architect, Assistant Chief Engineer for a contracting firm, and a Consultant for a construction firm. During those thirteen years, there is no explicit evidence linking his professional practice with the oil industry. Just two exceptions deserve to be mentioned, precisely during the War: his work as an Assistant Chief Engineer for Johnson, Drake & Pipe, from 1941 to 1943, which implied repairs of U.S. Army bases in the Middle East, and his Consultancy for John W. Harris Associates between 1943 and 1945, the same builders of Carson & Lundin's Esso Building in New York (designed in 1946).[112]

In a letter released on the occasion of Douglass' appointment as President of the New York Chapter of The American Institute of Architects (the largest A.I.A. Chapter in the country), on June 5, 1968, Jack Bernstein pointed out some of Douglass's achievements during his career. Among many significant accomplishments mentioned in the letter, there was a specific passage

[111] Lathrop Douglass, "New Departures in Office Building Design," Architectural Record's Building Types Study No.130, *Architectural Record*, Oct. 1947, 119.

[112] See Lathrop Douglass, Membership File, The American Institute of Architects Archive, *The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects*, s.v. "Lathrop Douglass (1907-1981)," (ahd1011556), http://communities.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/AIA%20scans/C-E/DouglassLathropFAIA.pdf (accessed 10/10/2012).

at the end which depicted very well that turning point in 1947: "His architectural career began with the design of the main office building for Creole Petroleum in Caracas, Venezuela, for which he won a First Medal Award from *the Festival Internationale d'Achitecture* in Paris."[113]

Douglass' personal connections certainly formed a complex network. Yet, the same can be said for the links between Douglass' professional acquaintances and their clients, and also –why not? – for the geographical mobility of their relations and projects. Like Bradbury, Carson had designed an office building for Royal Dutch Shell (the closest competitor of Standard Oil), and for Sinclair Oil Corporation. Harrison, in turn, had designed the New York office building of Socony-Vacuum, an independent-second-generation scion of Standard Oil, after the breakup of 1911. It looked like the rigid boundaries that separated oil companies did not reflect the flexibility of the architectural practice. Such flexibility (or mobility) leads again to Bradbury. The links between Badgeley & Bradbury and Venezuela were not restricted only to the Shell Building's commission. By 1948 they had designed an industrial building in Caracas, the Mavesa Plant; two years earlier they had designed a hospital in Valencia (an industrial city near the Venezuelan capital), and a house for William Coles in Caracas, at a cost of $40,000. This is another knot, whose disentanglement will lead to a second front: private investment, "apparently" parallel to the oil industry, and strongly associated with the Venezuelan politics at the time.

By the mid-1950s several of Nelson Rockefeller's associates had formed a strong and interlocking group of investors and entrepreneurs in Venezuela, whose influence was felt in the North American Association, the CVA (*Centro Venezolano-Americano*), the AmCham (Venezuelan American Chamber of Commerce), and the *Daily Journal*.[114] William Coles was actually one of Rockefeller's associates, as was Robert Bottome (probably the most prominent of all of them). Both had graduated from Dartmouth College, like Rockefeller. Coles would

[113] Jack Bernstein Associates Inc. 37 West 57th Street, New York City, to American Institute of Architecture, New York Chapter. Ibid.

[114] Judith Ewell, *Venezuela and the United States: From Monroe's Hemisphere to Petroleum's Empire*, Athens/London: The University of Georgia Press, 1996, 185.

eventually become manager and vice president of the VBEC. His investments in Venezuela also included *The Caracas Journal* (eventually known as *The Daily Journal*) and the food manufacturer Mavesa.[115]

Now, as mentioned previously, the Electricity Building's owner was *Compañía Anónima Inversiones Orinoco*, which usually did business with the Venezuelan government, while its builder was *Oficina Técnica Gutiérrez* (OTG). These two corporations, at first glance, seemed to have no connections. However, in the sale contract (in which the latter transferred the building's lot to the former) there were two conspicuous names that deserve attention: Silvio Gutiérrez Méndez, President of OTG, and Henry F. Rodner, President of *Inversiones Orinoco*.[116] *Inversiones Orinoco* had been organized in 1948 by Leopoldo Romero Sánchez, Carlos Daboin, Silvio Gutiérrez and Henry F. Rodner. In this sense, Gutiérrez was not just President of OTG, but also a founding member of the other corporation, in addition to being Pérez Jiménez's Minister of Development. Moreover, the same four men held shares in OTG. *Inversiones Orinoco* also held twenty percent of the ownership of *Empresa Venezolana de Ingeniería y Construcción S.A.*, in which Pérez Jiménez had interests. As for Rodner, he was an American naval engineer who had arrived in Venezuela in 1945. Eventually he also became Director of the Avila Hotel.[117]

There is not explicit evidence that Rodner and Coles were acquaintances. They probably knew each other, since Coles had come to Venezuela in 1940 to promote the Avila Hotel in association with Bottome. In any case, it is clear that Marcos Pérez Jiménez had business interests in the Electricity Building. Rodner, in turn, as an eventual Director of the Avila Hotel, probably knew Harrison, and perhaps even Rockefeller. Finally, William Coles, for his part, leads directly both to Rockefeller and Badgeley & Bradbury, and probably then to Lathrop Douglass.

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[115] Ibid.

[116] Sale contract, date: March 26, 1955 (Corporación de Servicios Municipales [archivo], Alcaldía del Municipio Libertador, Caracas).

[117] Judith Ewell, "The extradition of Marcos Perez Jimenez, 1959-63: Practical Precedent for Enforcement of Administrative Honesty?" *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol.9, No.2 (Nov., 1977): 303.

On this sort of map of personal, professional and political connections of Lathrop Douglass and his acquaintances, everything seems to be revolving around Nelson Rockefeller. It also shows the complex network of relations that existed in Venezuela, during the 1950s, between buildings, people and circumstances. Although the commissions he received can be explained by means of such connections, it must be regarded as a partial account. As a matter of fact, as a professional, Douglass had acquired noteworthy experience in extreme climate-related projects during the Second World War. More importantly, his projects in Caracas were more than just tests (before something similar was built in American territory). They turned out to be even more advanced than their counterparts eventually built in the United States.

Nevertheless, Douglass' buildings were not the only cases in which bilateral relations produced remarkable architecture in Venezuela. Two hours away from Caracas, another architectural project had been taken shape at the same time. Like the Edificio Creole, it had started in the late 1940s. Nevertheless, its morphological result, as well as its design and building process, would be very different. It did not rely on a well-known figure like Douglass. Moreover, its designers neither were Americans nor directly included the U.S. knowhow, but by using architectural magazines, they strongly reflected the American imagery in outstanding organic structures. The project would be known as Higuerote Beach Resort.

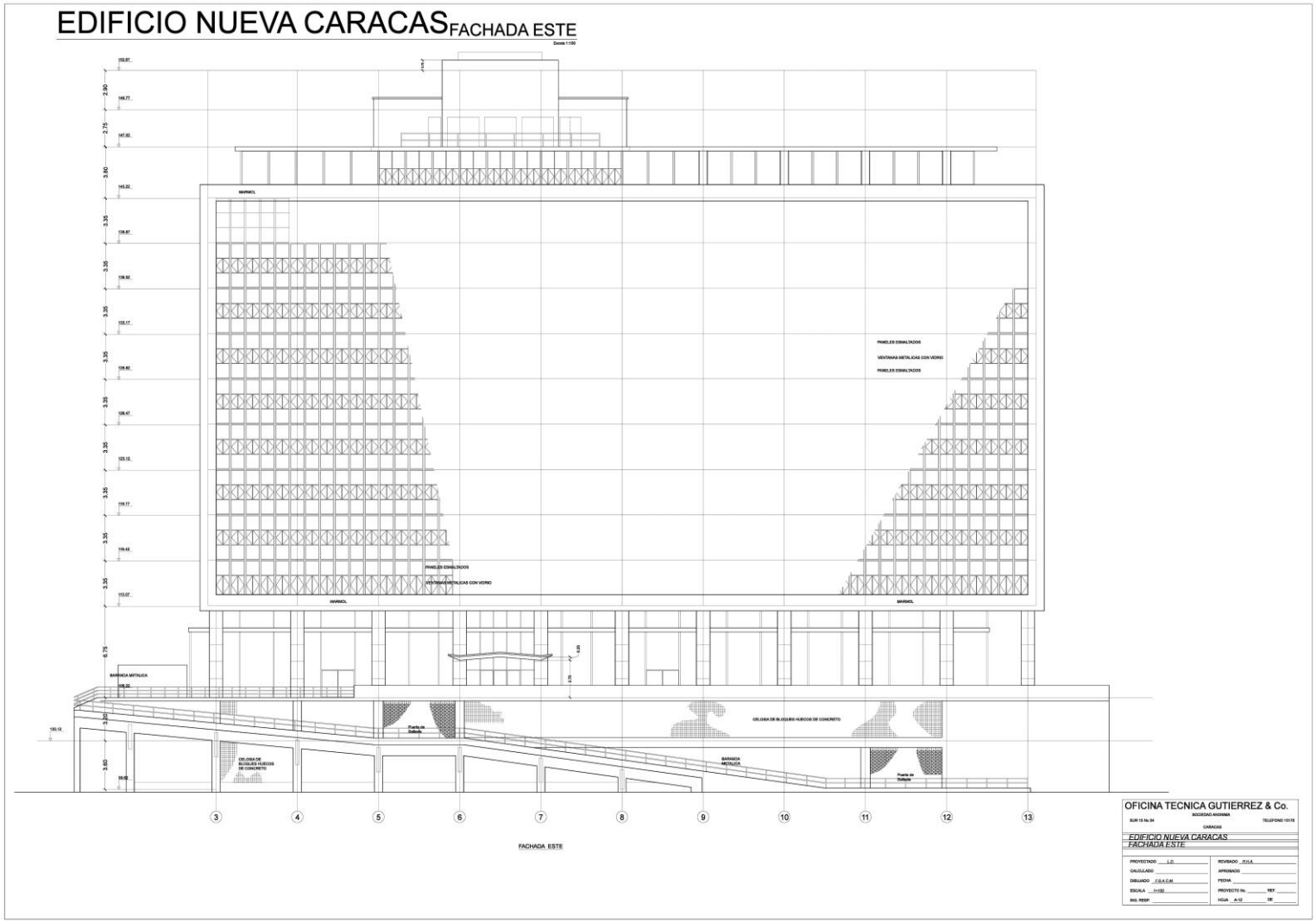

FIGURE 9.53

Lathrop Douglass, Electricity Building (Edificio Nueva Caracas), Caracas, 1955. East facade. Trustworthy copy of the original. Source: prepared ad hoc by the author for this Dissertation (with the assistance of Liliana Amundaraín in CAD).

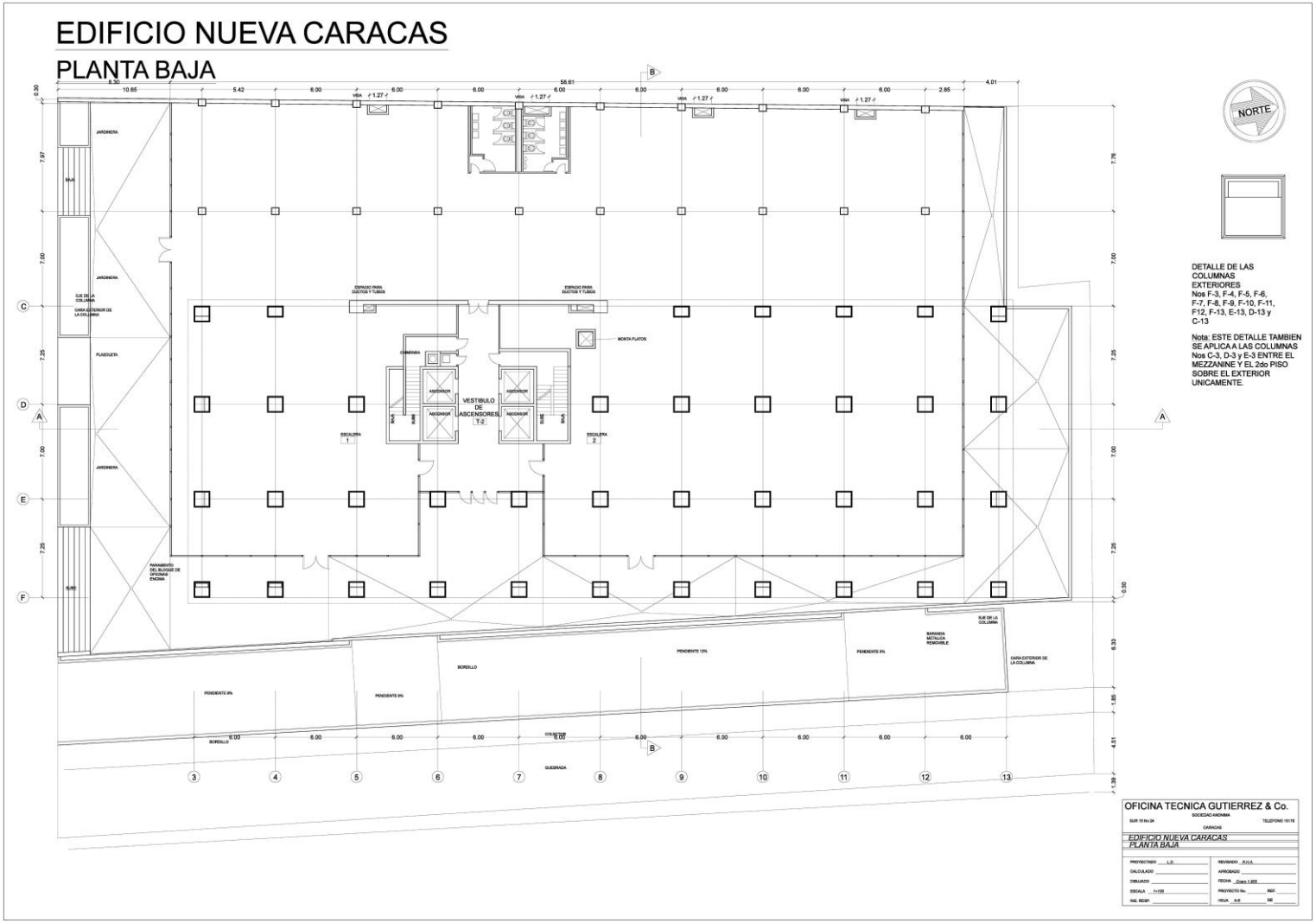

FIGURE 9.54
Lathrop Douglass, Electricity Building (Edificio Nueva Caracas), Caracas, 1955. Ground floor plan. Trustworthy copy of the original. Source: prepared ad hoc by the author for this Dissertation (with the assistance of Liliana Amundaraín in CAD).

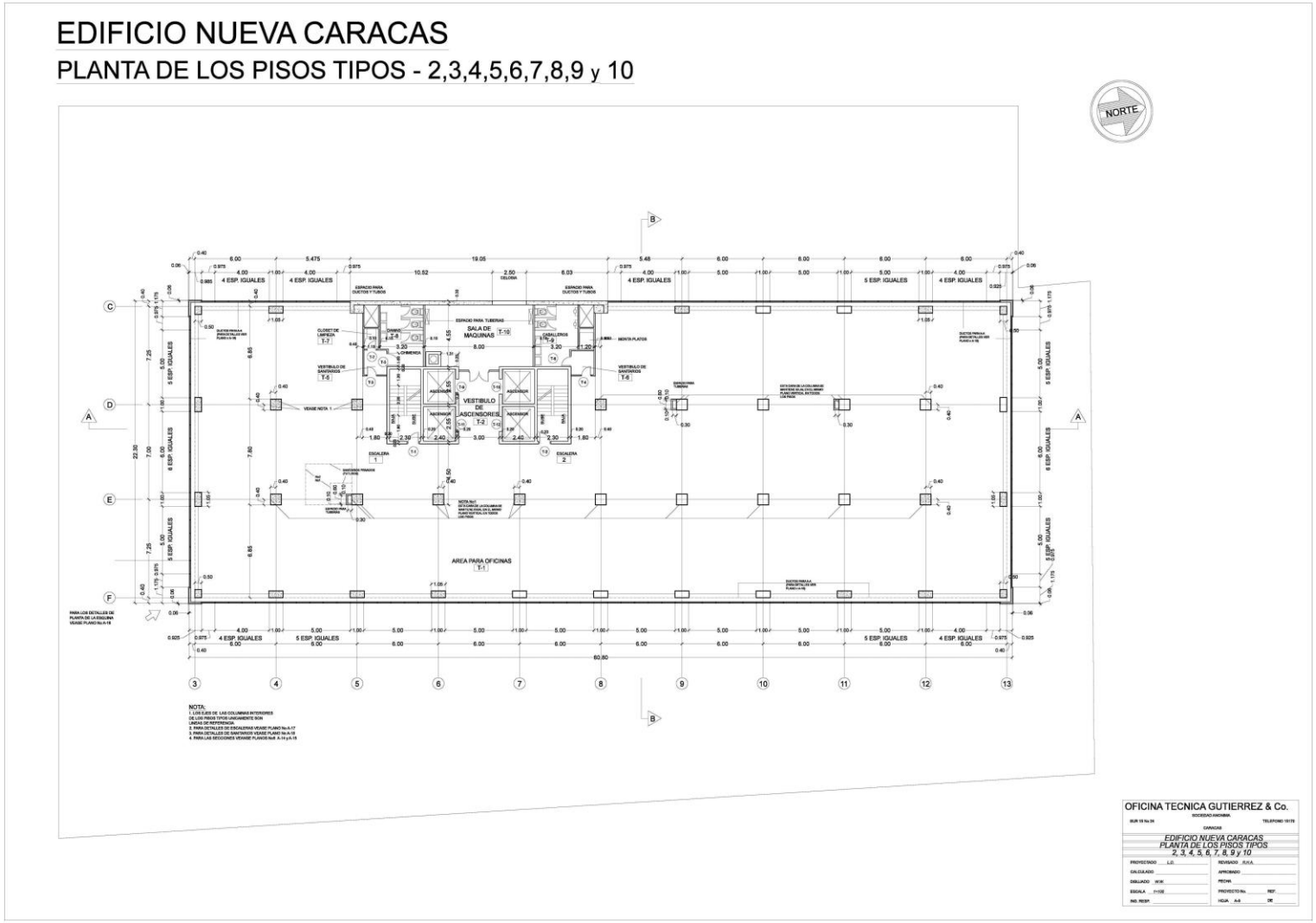

FIGURE 9.55
Lathrop Douglass, Electricity Building (Edificio Nueva Caracas), Caracas, 1955. Typical floor plan. Trustworthy copy of the original. Source: prepared ad hoc by the author for this Dissertation (with the assistance of Liliana Amundaraín in CAD).

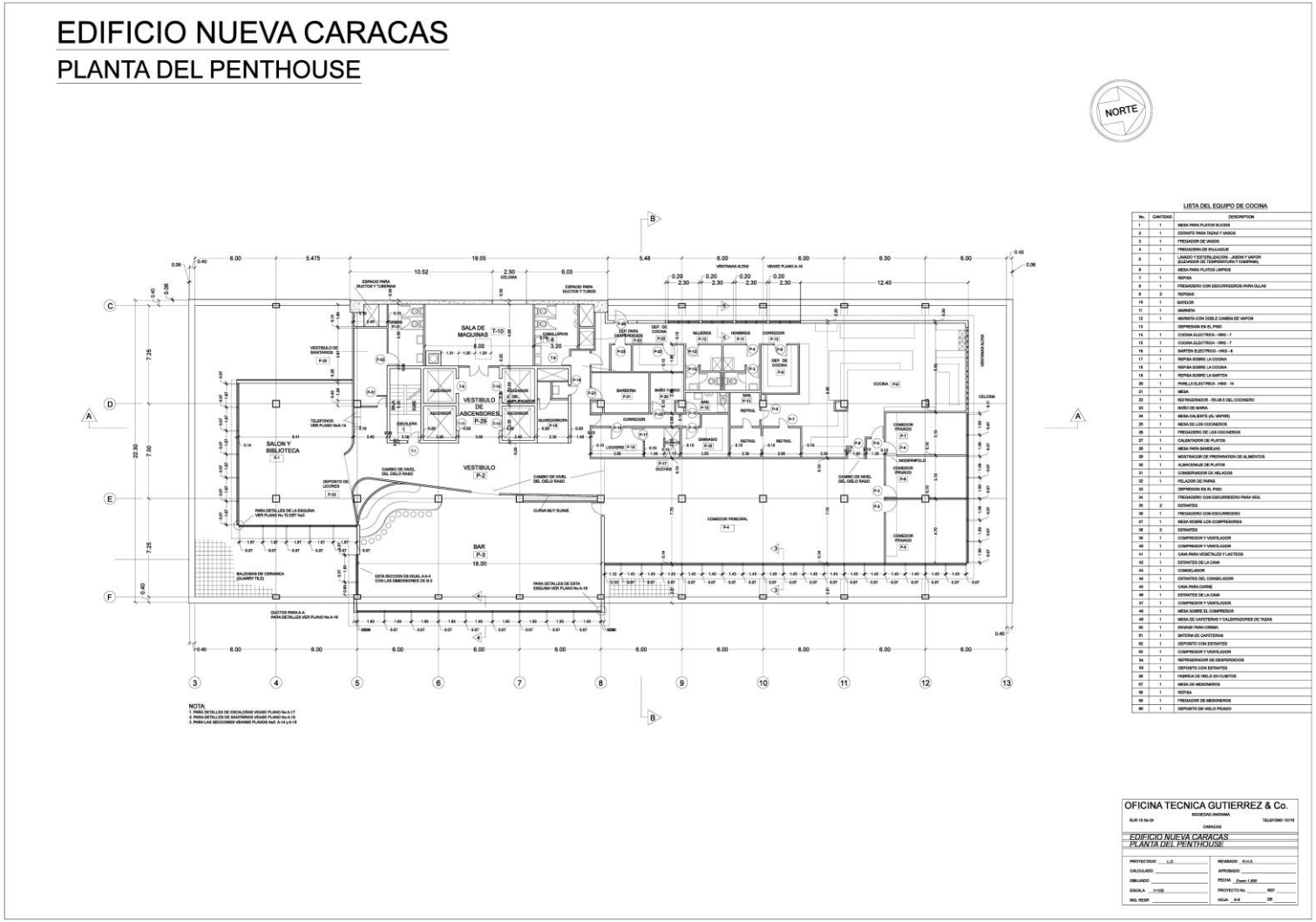

FIGURE 9.56

Lathrop Douglass, Electricity Building (Edificio Nueva Caracas), Caracas, 1955. Penthouse floor plan. Trustworthy copy of the original. Source: prepared ad hoc by the author for this Dissertation (with the assistance of Liliana Amundaraín in CAD).

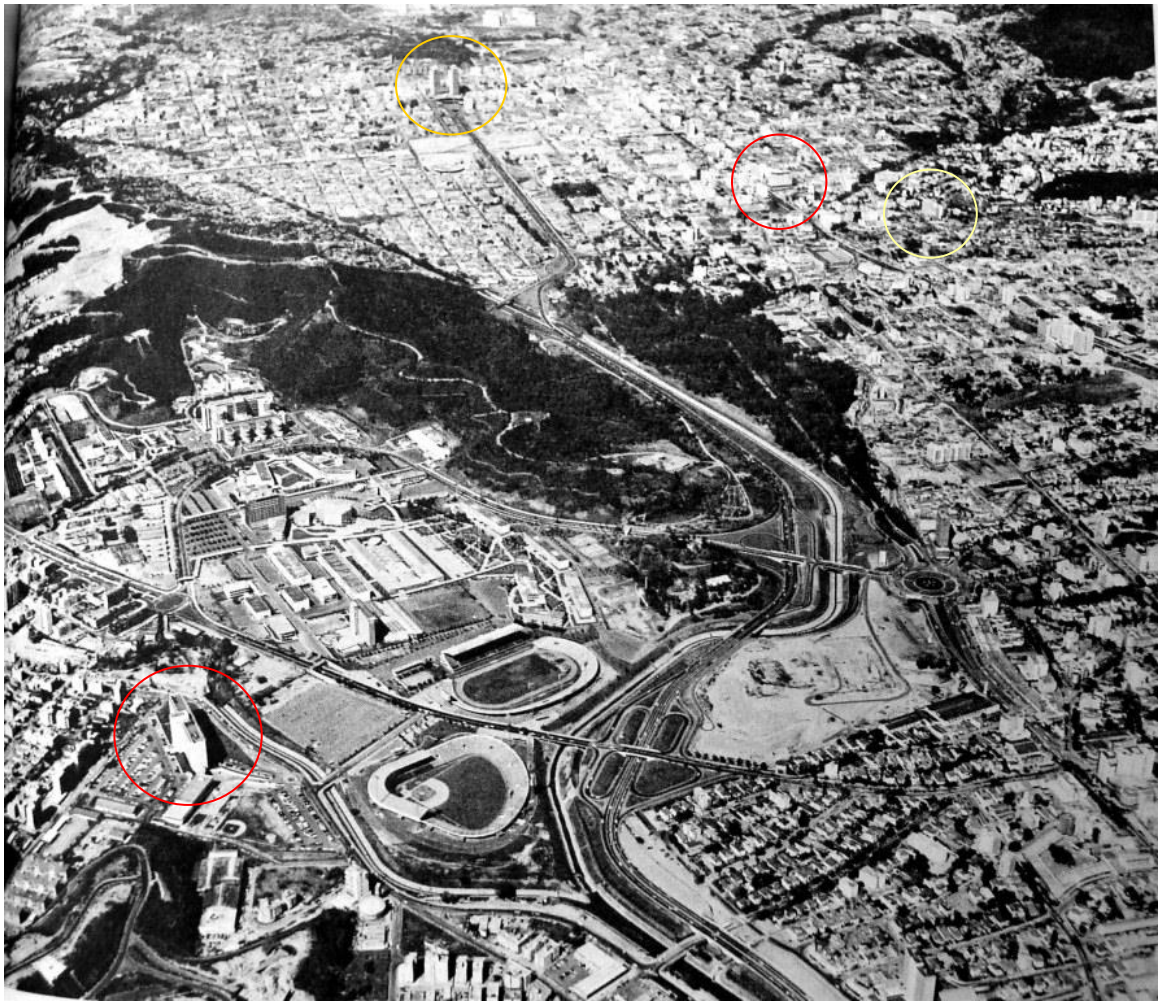

FIGURE 9.57
In the foreground, the Edificio Creole (red circle) and the University City. In the background, the Simon Bolivar Center (left yellow circle), the Electricity Building, recently completed, and the Shell Building (red and yellow circles, respectively). Notice the strong presence of the Guaire River and the East Highway, dividing the Caracas territory. Source: *Venezuela-up-to-date* (June, 1957), cover photo.

Chapter 10

American Magazines on the Drafting Table: Higuerote Beach Resort

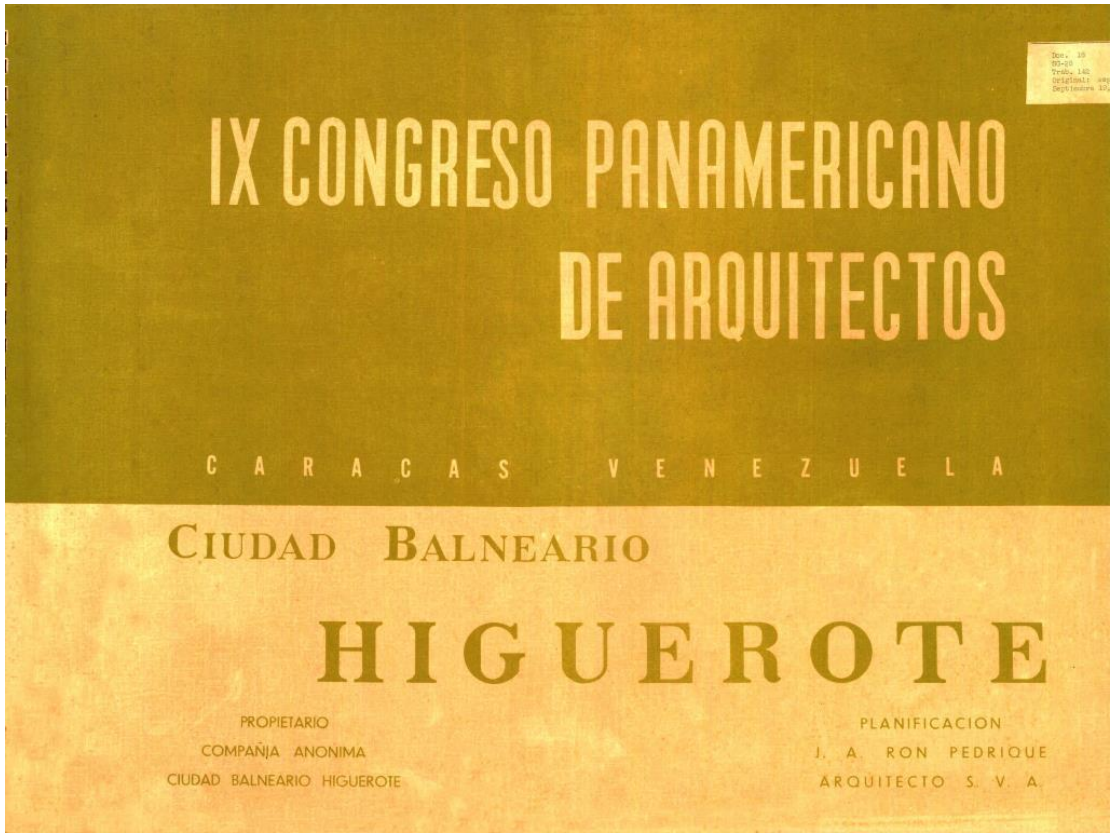

FIGURE 10.1
Cover of "Ciudad Balneario Higuerote," dossier presented at the 9th Pan American Congress of Architects, Caracas, Sept. 1955. Source: Ron Pedrique, 1955.

So, at the end of the day, who designed them? — I asked.

Well, you know, he had a lot of guys who collaborated with him — said V.R.P.
He created all that decorative stuff.
Bertorelli, magazines in hand, used to speak to his engineers, saying:
I want to build a restaurant like this!
Then, the draftsmen were called upon.

Interview given by Eng. Victor Ron Pedrique
on Higuerote Beach Resort, 2003.

In 1955, Caracas held the 9th Pan American Congress of Architects.[1] The event, which took place at the University City, was an opportunity to congregate professionals from the Americas around the general theme of "The social function of the architect: architect and Planning" (and "The integral planning of human habitation" as its main topic). The Organizing Committee of the Congress was constituted of significant names: Gustavo Wallis (President); Leopoldo Martínez Olavarría, Carlos Raúl Villanueva and Luis Eduardo Chataing (Vice-presidents); Diego Carbonell

[1] My research interest on Higuerote Beach Resort dates back to 2003. I presented my preliminar finds in a lectura entitled "Architectural Record, 1948-1958: en busca de la referencia primigenia para la Ciudad Balneario Higuerote," during the Semana Internacional de Investigación Facultad de Arquitectura y Urbanismo, Central University of Venezuela (Caracas, October 2008). With no conclusive results at that time, my exploratory interest had to wait until Fall 2009, when I retook the research as part of my activities within the PhD program in Architectural History at the University of Texas at Austin, specifically in Prof. Richard Cleary's course "History of Building Technology." Under the title "Higuerote Beach Resort: a critical approach on its building process, and the influence of American specialized periodicals in architecture," my final paper for the course offered both a broader information survey and a sharper analysis. The research underwent subsequent improvements and enrichments in Spring 2010 through the courses "On Beauty" (Prof. Michael Benedikt), and "Place and Historical Imagination" (Prof. Hope Hasbrouck). As part of the final requirements in these courses, I respectively produced an eight-minute video entitled "Higuerote: the quest for its pristine aesthetic experience," and wrote the paper "Higuerote Beach Resort: identification of its phenomenological triggers." Finally, I presented the lecture "Higuerote Beach Resort: influence of American specialized periodicals in architecture" during the 2nd International Research Forum for Graduate Students and Emerging Scholars (Art & Archives: Latin America and Beyond from 1920 to Present, The University of Texas at Austin on October 15th, 2010), which counted on the presence of Prof. Valerie Fraser (University of Essex) as discussant. In this regard, this chapter includes not just the result of this refining process, but also my subsequent review of *Architectural Record* and *Architectural Forum* until July 2013.

(Secretary General); Cipriano Domínguez (Public Relations); Jorge Romero Gutiérrez (Lectures Coordinator); H. González Méndez (Pan-American Exposition Coordinator); Ernesto Fuenmayor (Venezuelan Exposition Coordinator); Miguel Salvador (Finances), and Guido Bermúdez (Marketing and Publications).

The Congress attracted both local and international attention. *Integral* magazine opened its first issue with a detailed note on the event.[2] *Cruz del Sur* also contained a report and a series of interviews concerning the Congress.[3] Among the international delegates was Lathrop Douglass, representing the American Institute of Architects. In short, it was an outstanding episode that left a mark in the development of the profession in Venezuela. As Ernesto Fuenmayor asserted, "now, people in Venezuela have just started understanding the profession."[4]

One of the works presented in the Congress was the dossier of *Ciudad Balneario Higuerote,* a vacation and residential complex to be located near Caracas (*figure 10.1*). Its designer, architect José Antonio Ron Pedrique, had presented a very meticulous document. The description of the project came along with an impressive set of 21 large-format drawings. They showed a sui generis urban proposal constituted by canals, following an organic pattern, as well as a remarkable set of structures with sculptural character. For the development of the project, Ron Pedrique had relied on a large professional staff, which included architect Jorge Romero, who was closely involved in the master plan (and who would eventually be co-designer of Caracas' Helicoid), and engineer Jorge Cortés, in charge of the general coordination.[5]

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[2] See "IX Congreso Panamericano de Arquitectos," *Integral* 1, Sept. 1955.

[3] See "Una Encuesta entre los Arquitectos Venezolanos con Motivo del IX Congreso Panamericano de Arquitectura y Urbanismo," and "IX Congreso Panamericano de Arquitectos," *Cruz del Sur* 24, Apr.-May 1955, 22-23 and 24-26, respectively.

[4] "Una Encuesta entre los Arquitectos Venezolanos con Motivo del IX Congreso Panamericano de Arquitectura y Urbanismo," *Cruz del Sur* 24, 22-23.

[5] See José Antonio Ron Pedrique, "Ciudad Balneario Higuerote," dossier — unpublished — presented at the *IX Congreso Panamericano de Arquitectos* (9th Pan-American Congress of Architects), Caracas, September 19th, 1955. Other names included: Fernando Royo, civil engineer (Work Building Manager); C. Olivares Sosa, civil engineer, and Ferrer Fernández, sanitary engineer (Hydraulic Works); Gustavo

However, behind the project there was another fundamental figure; a visionary, who gave birth the idea in the mid-1940s, and without which would have been impossible to carry out the project during the following two decades: Antonio Bertorelli. Actually, as the evidence shows (and regardless the professionalism that J.A. Ron Pedrique office stamped on the project), the astonishing, sculptural character of Higuerote's architecture was strongly in debt with Bertorelli and his particular staff of engineers and draftsmen. Moreover, they would rely on American magazines' imagery to produce the impressive set of architectural pieces that characterized both the perspective drawings in Ron Pedrique's dossier and the buildings erected in situ.

"URBAN SCULPTURES" ON EXHIBIT: THE PLACE AND GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Higuerote Beach Resort is located in Miranda State (northern region of Venezuela), facing the Caribbean Sea, and very close to the traditional town of Higuerote. Since its inception, the resort was conceived as a competitive tourist destination respect to Jamaica, Cuba, the state of Florida, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and the Lesser Antilles (*figure 10.2*). Its location within the national context was no less enviable: ninety kilometers radius from Caracas; two hours by road. It was also accessible by ship and plane (*figure 10.3*).[6] As the project dossier eagerly stated, the resort would undoubtedly be "the largest and most important recreational community, and the closest one to Caracas."[7]

At a first glance, one of the most conspicuous characteristics of the project was the curvilinear form of its urban pattern (*figures 10.4* and *10.5*). A closer examination of its images revealed (apart from the accurate definition of the project zoning) other important aspects of this

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Matamoros M., architect (Yacht Club Project); Domenico Filippone, architect (Office Project), and Arnaldo Ron Pedrique, agriculturist (Agronomy).

[6] There was an airfield two kilometers from the town of Higuerote (ibid).

[7] Ibid. The Project was also published in "Ciudad Balneario Higuerote," *Integral* 10-11, Apr. 1958, by J.A. Ron Pedrique, as well as in "New Tourist Resort Arising on Venezuelan Coast," *Venezuela Up-to-date*, March-Apr. 1957, 29.

community: a system of canals, a network of coastal public spaces, and a series of sculptural, architectural pieces, all of them exhibiting both free-flowing forms and bold structures. Canals, bridges, walkways, sculptural public pergolas, and vertical landmarks, along with a landscape treatment, created a system of very sui generis places *(figures 10.6* and *10.7*). The movements of sailboats completed the fluid harmony of these scenes. Even the buildings, when devised with rectilinear parameters, seemed to fit perfectly into the whole picture. The Yacht Club was a good example of this: placed in a sort of peninsula, two rational buildings maintained a perfect harmony with a set of curvilinear walkways and terrain elevations (*figure 10.8*).

Apart from the Yacht Club, the dossier featured other impressive facilities of the project. Particularly gripping were the Locker Room Building, a one-story facility characterized by a sort of open hypostyle hall and a projecting curvilinear roof (*figure 10.9*), and the Reception Center, a one-story-round building, elevated on V-shape stilts above a curvilinear pool, with free ground plan and an organic gesture in the upper section. Near the latter, there were a sui generis diving board and a series of vaults, linearly arranged, by way of carport (*figure 10.10*).

However, the project that Ron Pedrique showed in the 9th Congress of Pan American Architects had a long story that dated back to the mid-1940s. Moreover, its design process would turn out to be more complex than expected. In any case, the vitality of project relied, at all times, on the key figure of its urban developer, Antonio Bertorelli (*figure 10.11*).

DISENTANGLING THE KNOT: THE DESIGN-BUILDING PROCESS

IT'S ALL ABOUT IMAGE!

Bertorelli's idea of creating the "resort capital of Venezuela" came along with the purchase of large portion of land in 1944, part of what was known as *Sabana Bustamante.*[8] Located between Carenero Bay, to the north, and the traditional town of Higuerote, to the south, it had an extension of 600 ha (1,500 acres approximately). The quality of the soil, prone to flooding, was

[8] Interview with Sergio Bertorelli, son of Antonio Bertorelli, at Higuerote Beach Resort on July 17, 2010.

not the most appropriate to carry out an urban development. Bertorelli, however, would turn this problem into an opportunity. Engineer Víctor Ron Pedrique, brother of J.A. Ron Pedrique, and who had been closely involved in the resort's building process since its inception, remembered this setback and how the idea of a beach resort with canals was born: "the soil was so prone to flooding that in some occasions it was under 20 cm (8 in) of water; to cap it all, in order to obtain the official building permit, it was necessary to make a backfill of 1,5 m (5 ft)." Thus, the solution was clear: an urban development with canals.[9]

As a project developer, Bertorelli was concerned with the image of Higuerote Beach Resort, even since the resort's early stages. On many occasions, a sui generis advertisement of the project appeared in *Integral*: a grid in perspective (perhaps a metaphor of streets, or even canals) combined with two organic forms, in blue and yellow (again, maybe a metaphor, in this case of sea and sand) (*figure 10.12*). The project was also publicized through an article in *Venezuela Up-to-date,* accompanied with several images,[10] as well as high-quality printing brochures for shareholders (*figure 10.13*).[11]

The special interest of Bertorelli in the attractiveness of Higuerote Beach Resort can be regarded as a kind of marketing strategy that relied on architecture. "Bertorelli admired Oscar Niemeyer and Lúcio Costa; he also came up with architectural quotes of Le Corbusier," said Eng. Ron Pedrique. Furthermore, trying to emulate Copacabana's sidewalks in Rio de Janeiro, Bertorelli ordered Higuerote's boulevards to be done with an undulating paving design (*figure 10.14*). He also bought an estate that had a coconut grove in order to transplant the trees to Higuerote

[9] Víctor Ron Pedrique, interview given in 2003.

[10] See "New Touristic Resort Arising on Venezuelan Coast," *Venezuela Up-to-date*, March-Apr. 1957, 29-30.

[11] I was fortunate to review the personalized brochure of Mr. Ovidio Pérez Agreda, who had been Minister of Work and Communication (1941-42) during the presidency of Isaias Medina Angarita. See "Ciudad Balneario Higuerote," shareholder brochure, Caracas, ca. 1958-60.

beach. He even displayed a series of pennants along the waterfront, from the town of Higuerote to Carenero Bay, to attracted attention of potential shareholders .[12]

Nevertheless, Bertorelli did not stop here. Still concerned with the image of the project, he requested some important works from his technical staff. Among his petitions were a luminous fountain at the entrance of the resort (known as *Fuente Luminosa*, an organic sculpture made up of linked circles), and a touristic-commercial center (which included several facilities and an apartment-hotel, located in the heart of the project). However, his interest was placed on two pieces of architecture, with sculptural character and strategic location: the Pergola and the Terminal (also known as the *Pergolita* or little pergola). Bold and strongly evocative, they marked the character of the place. The "imageability"[13] of Higuerote Beach Resort definitely relied on both pieces.

Located on a large open area at the south end of the Great Canal, facing a splendid vista, the Pergola was a symmetric, two-story-semicircular building, made up by a series of shells supported by two different types of sui generis structural ribs (*figure 10.15*). A mezzanine followed the semicircular arrangement of the structure. The set of ribs and shells, as well as the mezzanine, were in reinforced concrete, and worked as an organic unity (*figures 10.16, 10.17* and *10.18*). Approximately in the center of the building, the mezzanine receded creating the conditions for a generous entrance. Here, a ramp and a staircase were displayed through the entire space. Finally, a jetty went sinuously into the Great Canal, by way of a continuation of the ramp and the staircase. The ramp, the staircase and the jetty were covered with small colored ceramic tiles. Taking into account its scale and location, as well as its plastic and ornamental values, the Pergola had a clear vocation of urban facility. In fact, it was originally designed to be

[12] The vivid description of V. Ron Pedrique recalls the international expositions and the skyline of theme parks, such as Interama in Florida. In this regard, see "Trailing the Spark" in this chapter. In this sense, it is interesting to notice that he mentioned a group of investors of Miami that were interested during the 1950s in buying the land (corresponding to Higuerote Beach Resort), in order to build a theme park. Bertorelli never accepted the offer.

[13] As coined by Kevin Lynch in *The Image of the City* (1960, 9-12), the term means the capacity of some places to stand out and remain in the memory of any observer or user.

a restaurant, which even started operating as soon as the building was completed.[14] It got even the nickname of "aerial cafeteria."

The Terminal, in turn, was located in front of San Andrés Lake, and shared a splendid view as well. Like the Pergola, Terminal's structure was basically made up by a series of shells, supported by ribs in reinforced concrete (*figure 10.19*). However, as a building, it was smaller and simpler. The section of this roof developed a concave-convex curvature. The ribs, numbering nine, were shaped in organic forms too, displayed in linear battery (with certain inclination, which endows the structure with dynamic movement), and covered by colored ceramic tiles. Very close to the Terminal, toward the sea, there were two striking organic kidney-like sculptures, covered also with vividly-colored ceramic tiles (*figures 10.20* and *10.21*). The Terminal and the sculptures constituted an urban-architectural set known as *Plaza de los Pintores,* or Painter's Plaza (because of the similarity between the sculptures to palettes and paintbrushes).

Undoubtedly, all these outstanding landmarks were in debt to Bertorelli and his technical staff. This sort of strategy of urban beautification, or as Bertorelli used to say "sculptures" or just "ornaments," moved away from traditional beautification practices. These "sculptures" actually worked on a large scale, organically integrated to public space by way of landscape architecture. However, they also evidence the complex process of design and construction that Higuerote Beach Resort underwent, and raise some important questions: were there two parallel processes of design?; did the construction in situ follow the project of J.A. Ron Pedrique?, and more importantly, who designed those outstanding pieces of landscape architecture?

[14] There is not accurate information regarding the original function of the Pergola (I have not found written or iconographic records about this topic). However, according to Victor Ron Pedrique, it was designed to house a restaurant, which would begin to operate when the building was concluded. Actually, time and again during the interview, he referred to the Pergola as "the Restaurant", and the Terminal as "the Pergola." On the other hand, the report "Photographic and Deterioration Record, Structural Analysis, and Fundamental Conclusions" (Registro Fotográfico y de Deterioros, Análisis de la Estructura y Conclusiones Fundamentales), elaborated by *Universidad Central de Venezuela* in 2006, mentioned that the building had been originally designed to be an architectural facility for a boat jetty (and only later, its function changed to a restaurant). This information was also confirmed by Eng. Sergio Bertorelli, the son of Antonio Bertorelli, during an interview given on July 17, 2010, in Higuerote Beach Resort.

BOTH ON PAPER AND IN SITU: TWO RESORTS?

From its inception, this vacation and residential set underwent a complex design-building process. According to Víctor Ron Pedrique, Bertorelli did not follow to the letter the technical recommendations given either by the engineers or J.A. Ron Pedrique office. As a matter of fact, there was a "divorce" between what was conceived in the office and what was built in fact. "Since the beginning Bertorelli had his own ideas; his own mental images," exclaimed Víctor Ron Pedrique as he remembered his professional relations with the project developer; "he started to build here and there." J.A. Ron Pedrique, in turn, was more interested in planning than in construction. He was also concerned with the diffusion of his ideas; the 9th Pan American Congress of Architects' dossier and the later publication of articles in periodicals are evidence of this.

The urbanization process of Higuerote Beach Resort had started in 1953, after a trip to Miami, in which Bertorelli visited the works of Carl Graham Fisher (American entrepreneur and real estate promoter, responsible for the development of Miami Beach's infrastructure and facilities during the 1910s and 1920s). Bertorelli, who had been practically "forced" by Pérez Jiménez to sell some of his new real estate investments, took advantage of this situation and reinvested the capital in the urbanization of the resort.[15] The difficult period of dredging to create the canals, which had begun in 1948, was followed by the urbanization per se during the entire next decade. Then Bertorelli invested in his urban "sculptures." The Luminous Fountain, the Pergola, and the Terminal were completed between 1957 and 1958. While it was true that Bertorelli kept

[15] Interview given by Sergio Bertorelli. According to him, Pérez Jiménez forced Bertorelli either to develop or to sell those "new real estate investments;" since Bertorelli did not have enough capital to keep on developing the projects, he decided to sell them. The sale amount was Bs.7,000,000 (approximately US$ 2,120,000 at that time). They included both land and ideas (intellectual property) for the housing developments of *Los Palos Grandes*, *Manzanares*, *Alto Prado*, and *Prados del Este*. For the preliminary study of *Prados del Este* (1948), Bertorelli had relied on Jorge Romero Gutiérrez and the then student of Architecture Dirk Bornhorst. The project was finally developed by José Antonio Ron Pedrique (for this topic see also Instituto de Estudios Regionales y Urbanos, *Preinventario del Patrimonio de Bienes Inmuebles del Municipio Baruta* [Caracas: IERU, Universidad Simón Bolívar, 2003], record # 56, "Urbanización Prados del Este").

a close relation with J.A. Ron Pedrique office and its guidelines, it was also true that the former was characterized for his creativity, impulsiveness and independence. Actually, there is strong evidence that Bertorelli maintained a staff parallel to J.A. Ron Pedrique office. Among those who influenced the design of such urban "ornaments" (and who probably glanced through Bertorelli's architectural magazines) was Ariel Severino, a Uruguayan artist and set designer who had come to Venezuela in 1949. Natalio Yunis, in turn, an engineer-architect with some significant works during the early 1950s, did the calculations for the Pergola.[16] None of them were part of the organization chart of J.A. Ron Pedrique.

SEARCHING FOR THE REAL FATHER

The authorship of those pieces, in addition, has turned out to be different than was originally believed. Víctor Ron Pedrique remembered the strong influence that international architecture magazines had on the technical staff responsible for designing the resort's architectural image. According to him, draftsmen and engineers had the direct reference of these publications, particularly *Architectural Record,* which were put at their disposal by Bertorelli himself. What is more, according to him, architects in charge of the urban proposal wouldn't have had any influence on the sui generis character of those sculptural-architectural pieces. In other words, the real hallmark of the project was designed by Bertorelli's low and middle-level staff. "He — Bertorelli — had a system: he looked for many magazines (…), and brought them from his multiple trips to the United States", mentioned Víctor Ron Pedrique; "we didn't design the fountain (…) nor those 'ornaments', as Antonio used to call them; we only designed the urban pattern." "Bertorelli just came into the office, magazines in hand," he remembers, "and after displaying them on the table, before his staff of engineers and draftsmen, he said: 'I want something like this!'"

There is not conclusive information about the "transit" of these architectural images between Bertorelli's staff and J.A. Ron Pedrique office. Which did come first? Which one influenced the

[16] Interview with Sergio Bertorelli.

other? And more importantly, did J.A. Ron Pedrique receive the perspective drawings from Bertorelli's staff? Probably he did. As evidence indicates, J.A. Ron Pedrique office was exclusively responsible for the urban planning, which included both the technical layout of the canals (with its characteristic organic pattern) and the landscape design. On the other hand, the architectural expression of all the facilities and infrastructural pieces, both on paper and in situ, was undertaken by Bertorelli's staff.[17] In this regard, the Clubhouse and the Locker Room Building, for instance, as well as the Pergola and the Terminal came from the drafting table of Bertorelli's staff and his personal advisers (such as Ariel Severino). Moreover, all the perspective drawings in the dossier of Higuerote Beach Resort, unlike the technical drawings (such as plans and sections), had a particularity: the signature of the draftsman, "Lizarralde" (*figure 10.22*).[18] Lizarralde, a skillful artist (sufficiently competent to see his own work published in an international-circulation dossier), was not in fact part of the J.A. Ron Pedrique office's technical staff.[19]

[17] Despite the fact that there is not an accurate account of the building process chronology in Higuerote Beach Resort, it is highly probable that the dossier's imagery came before the construction of the Pergola and the Terminal.

[18] Compare respectively, in this sense, *figures 10.2* and *10.3* with the set that goes from *10.6* to *10.10*.

[19] For the full organization chart of J.A. Ron Pedrique office, see Appendix 4 of this dissertation.

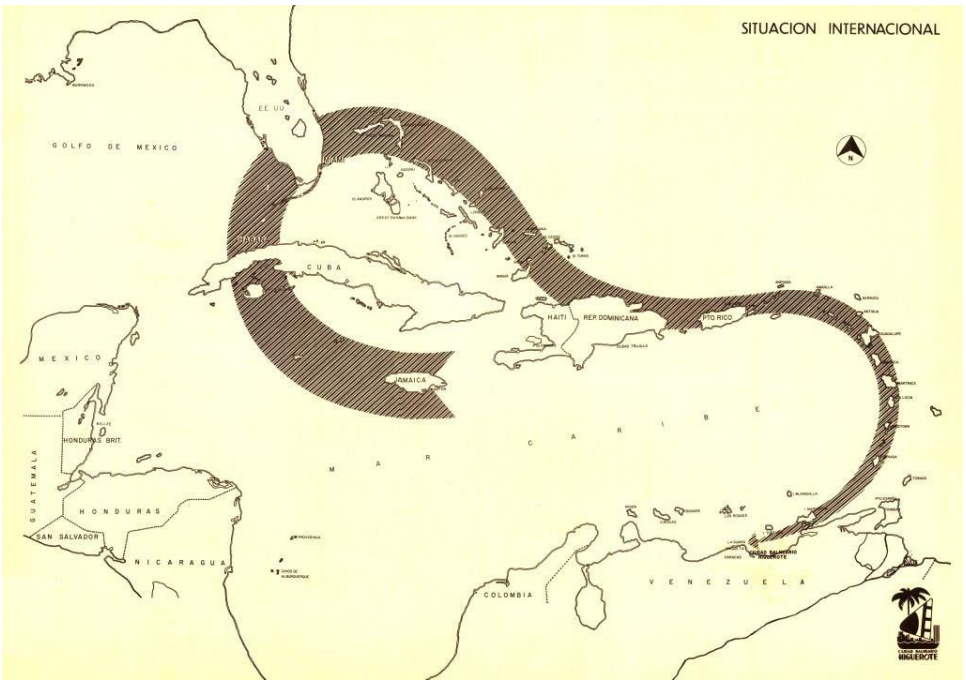

FIGURE 10.2
Higuerote Beach Resort, international context. Source: Ron Pedrique, 1955.

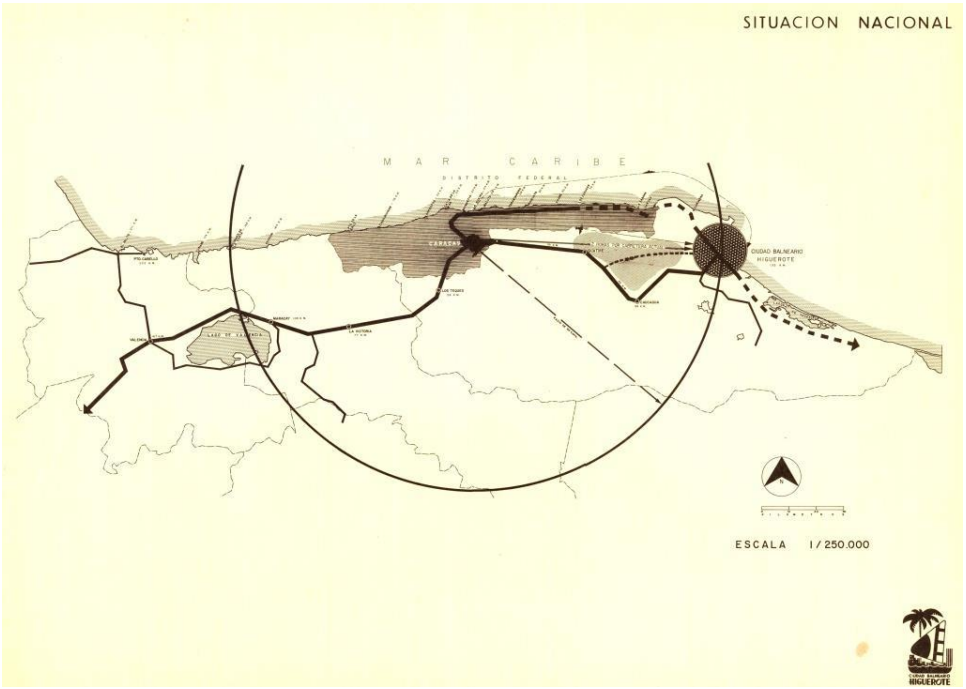

FIGURE 10.3
Higuerote Beach Resort, national context and location. Ninety kilometers radius from Caracas; two hours by "present road." Two dotted lines also indicated accessibility by ship and plane. Source: Ron Pedrique, 1955.

FIGURE 10.4
Higuerote Beach Resort, general location (red box). The traditional town of Higuerote is located southeast (left). Source: Instituto Geográfico Simón Bolívar, 2007. The original image was edited for the purposes of this dissertation.

FIGURE 10.5
J.A. Ron Pedrique, Higuerote Beach Resort, Miranda State. General plan. Source: Ron Pedrique, 1955.

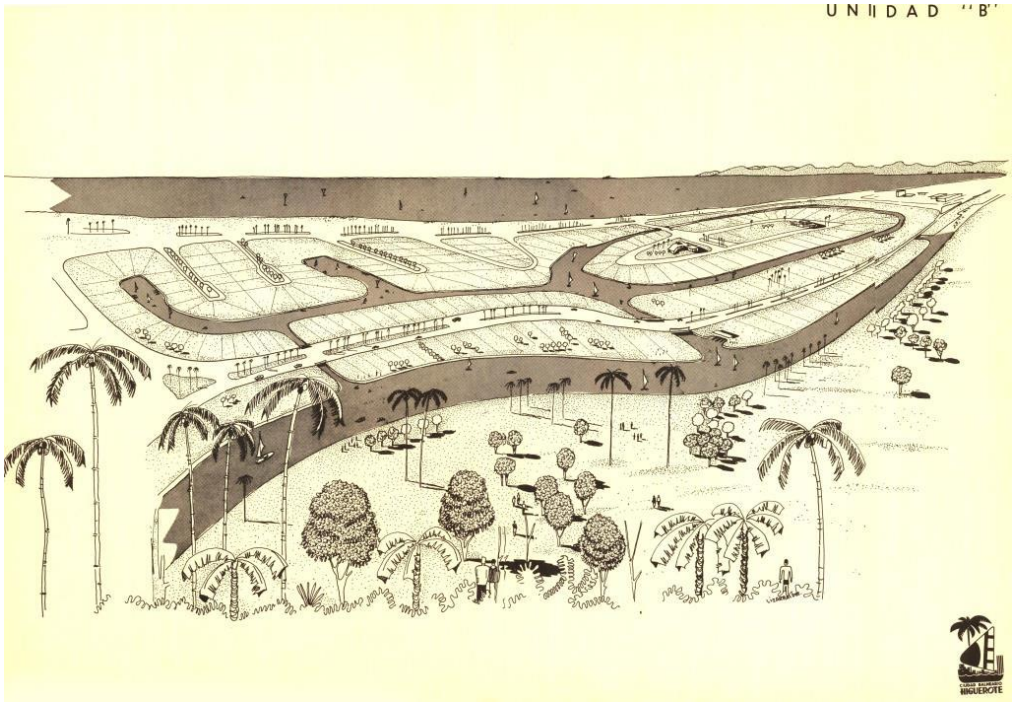

FIGURE 10.6
J.A. Ron Pedrique, Higuerote Beach Resort, Miranda State. Residential Unit (general plan's middle sector). Source: Ron Pedrique, 1955.

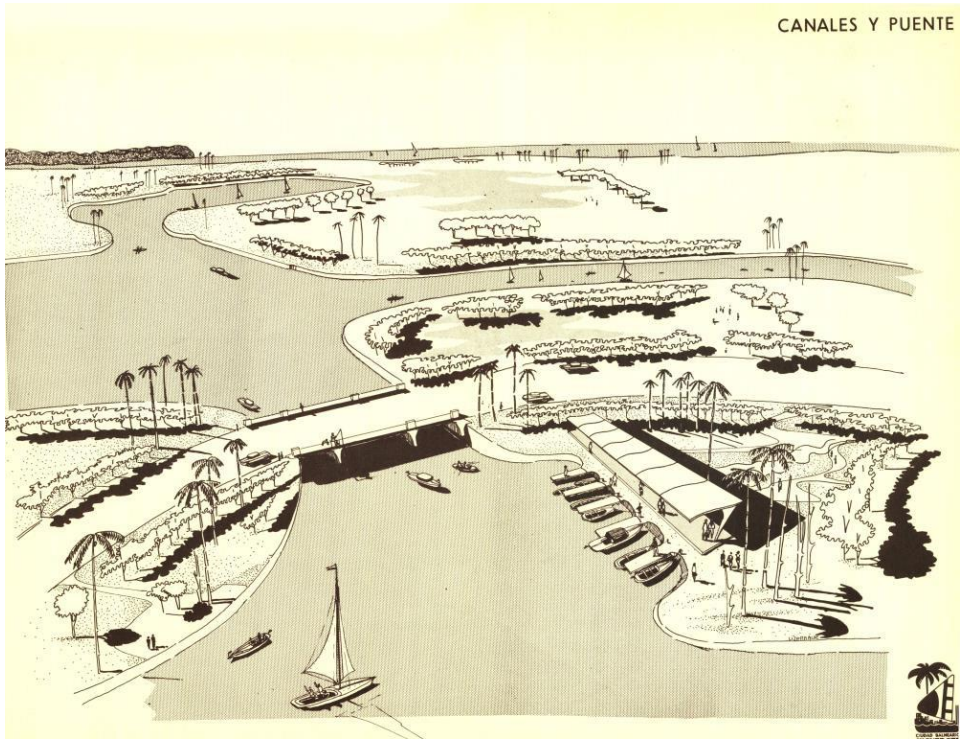

FIGURE 10.7
Higuerote Beach Resort, Miranda State. Sector close to the Yacht Club (general plan's middle sector). Source: Ron Pedrique, 1955.

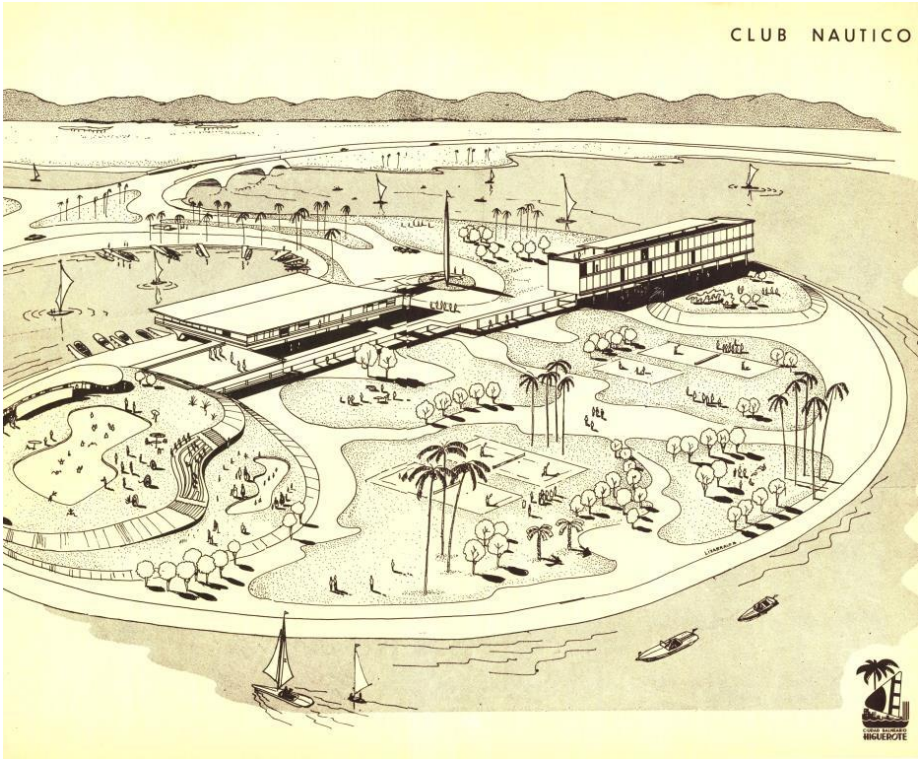

FIGURE 10.8
Higuerote Beach Resort, Miranda State, Yacht Club (project; general plan's middle sector). Source: Ron Pedrique, 1955.

FIGURE 10.9
Higuerote Beach Resort, Miranda State. Locker Room Building (project). Source: Ron Pedrique, 1955.

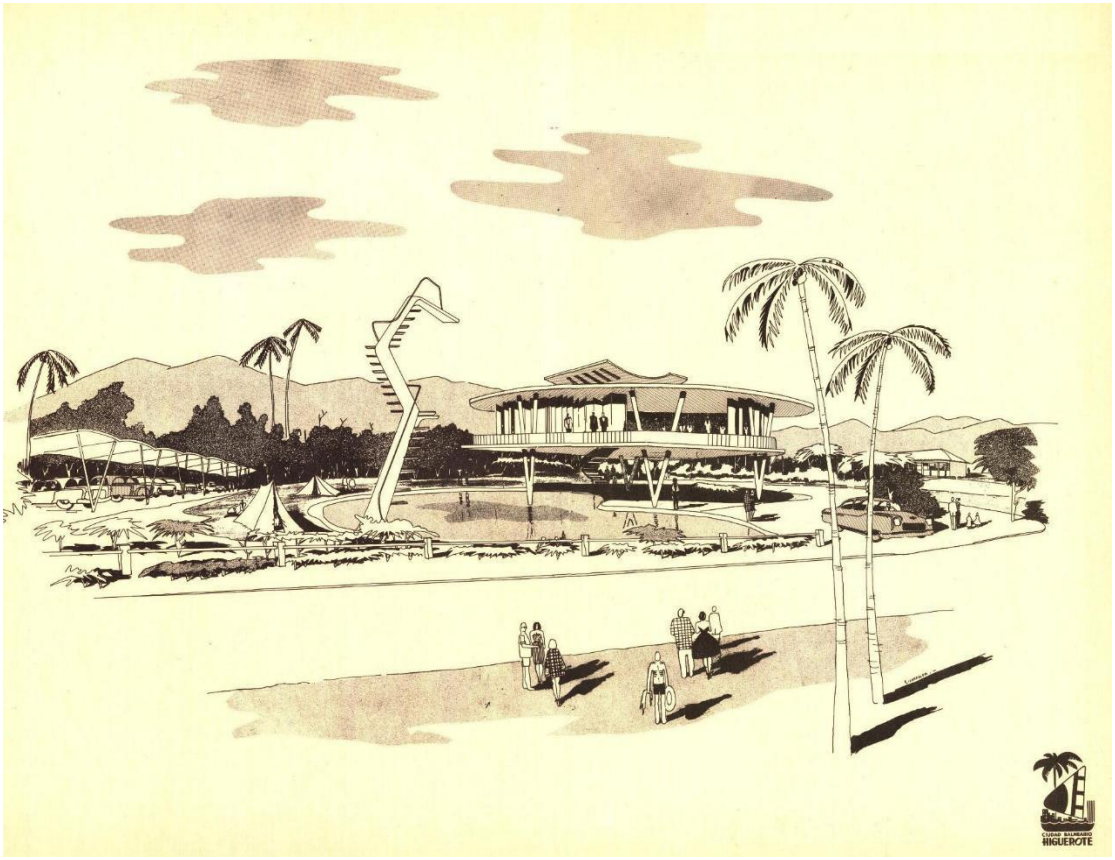

FIGURE 10.10
Higuerote Beach Resort, Miranda State. Clubhouse (project). Source: Ron Pedrique, 1955.

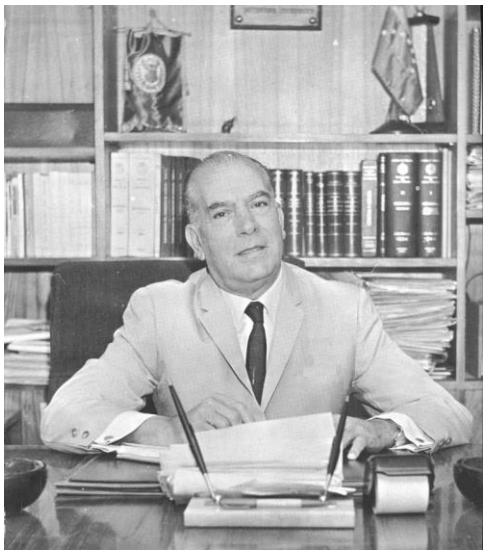

FIGURE 10.11
Antonio Bertorelli Cisneros (as Governor of Miranda State, 1966-68), project developer of Higuerore Beach Resort and architecture aficionado, who used to bring American architectural magazines to his office, and whose technical staff utilized them as "inspirational" references. Source: *Estado Miranda,* 1968.

FIGURE 10.12
Higuerore Beach Resort, advertisement. Source: *Integral* 2, Nov. 1955.

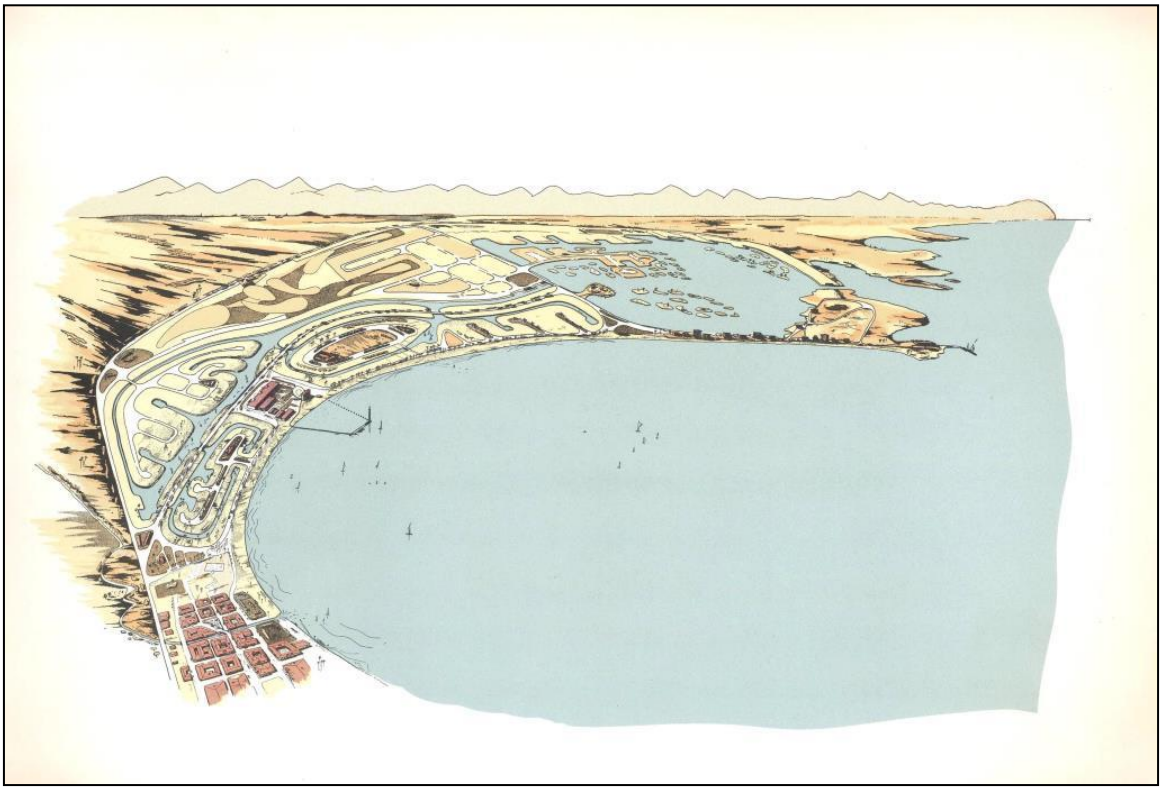

FIGURE 10.13
Aerial view of Higuerote Beach Resort. Source: "Higuerote…" shareholder brochure (belonging to Ovidio Pérez Agreda, ca. 1958-60), also published (in black & white) in *Venezuela Up-to-date* (March-Apr. 1957), 29-30.

FIGURE 10.14
Burle-Marx-esque sidewalk with undulating design (the temporary concrete-pipeline dwellings, which dated back to the 1950s, were recently demolished). Photo by Jorge Villota P., 2003.

FIGURE 10.15
Isometric view of Higuerote Beach Resort, marking the respective approaches to the Pergola and the Terminal, by car (yellow line) and through the Great Canal (in blue). The view also shows the pieces that Bertorelli actually built: 1) *Fuente Luminosa*; 2) Pergola; 3) Touristic-commercial Center, and 4) Terminal. Around the Pergola can be seen some recent vertical residential slabs. Source: elaborated by Jorge Villota P., 2013.

FIGURE 10.16
The Pergola, view from the jetty. Notice the organic integration of the structure: ribs, shells, slab (mezzanine), and metallic bars (in tension, holding the cantilever). Completion 1957-1958. Source: photo by Jorge Villota P., 2010.

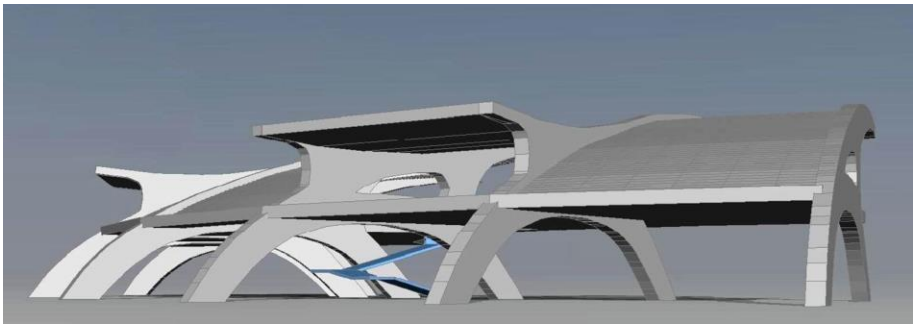

FIGURE 10.17
Perspective of the Pergola. Notice the two different types of rib, and their effects on both the shells and the building stereometry. Source: drawing by the author, with the assistance of Gabriela Einsiedler (student of architecture at Simon Bolivar University), 2009.

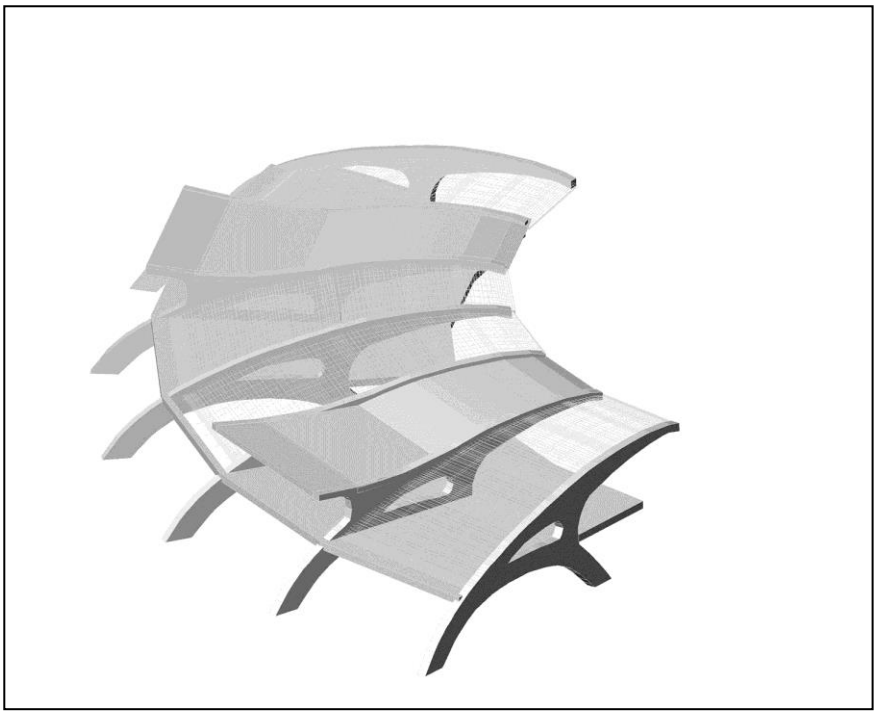

FIGURE 10.18
Isometric view of the Pergola, showing the arrangement of ribs and shells. Source: drawing by the author, with the assistance of Gabriela Einsiedler (student of architecture at Simon Bolivar University), 2009.

FIGURE 10.19
The Terminal, also known as *Pergolita*, open to San Andrés Lake. Shells and ribs are made up of reinforced concrete. The latter are covered in gradated colored ceramic tiles. Completion 1957-1958. Source: photo by Jorge Villota P., 2003.

FIGURES 10.20 AND 10.21
The two sculptures placed in Plaza de los Pintores, close to the Terminal, and between San Andrés Lake and the Sea. The surfaces were covered in gradated colored ceramic tiles. Completed between 1957 and 1958. Neither sculpture is not standing anymore. Source: photo by Jorge Villota P., 2003.

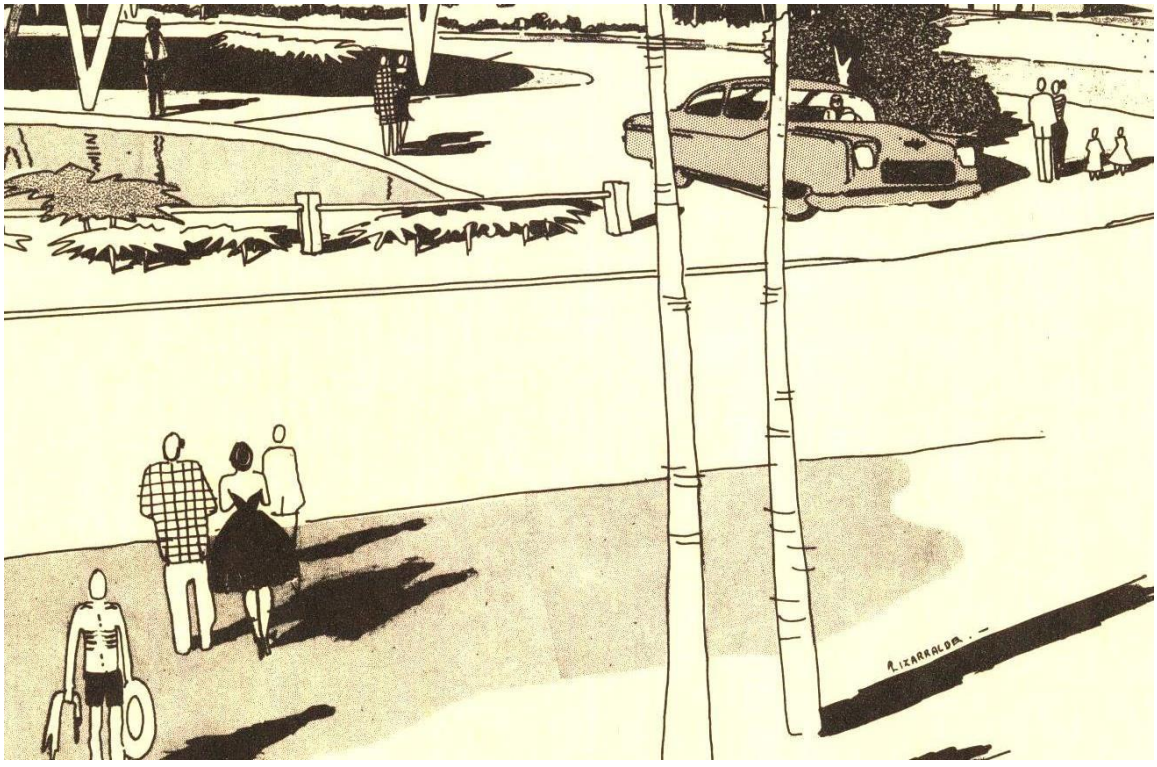

FIGURE 10.22
Higuerote Beach Resort. Clubhouse (project), detail of *figure 10.10*. Notice the draftsman's signature at the right bottom corner (following the palm tree shadow): "Lizarralde." Source: Ron Pedrique, 1955.

TRAILING THE SPARK

It is not easy to accurately track specific references through *Architectural Record* or any other American architectural magazine. The difficult task of trailing the spark of any architectural creation might lead to some potentially valuable information (different than specific projects), such as the provocative article about organic architecture that Fred Severud published in the September 1945 issue of *Architectural Forum*,[20] or even the inspirational influence of Abstract Art in modern architecture (particularly *Avenue* by John Tunnard) as gathered in the January 1949 issue of *Architectural Record*.[21] This would be an impractical challenge that goes beyond the limits of this research. It is possible, however, to identify some morphological similarities between Higuerote Beach Resort's imagery (both on paper and in situ) and specific projects published in American magazines. This way of tracking (which looks more appropriate, given the "direct" method Bertorelli utilized with his staff) leads to Higuerote Beach Resort as it was built in situ.

In 1955, *Architectural Record* published a report on the Center of the Americas (eventually known as Interama), a permanent exposition to be located ten miles North of Miami, Florida.[22] Since the early 1950s, H. D. Walker (Chairman of Florida's Inter-American Center Authority) had asked Robert Fitch Smith, then president of the Florida South Chapter of the American Institute

[20] "Turtles and Walnut, Morning Glories and Grass," *Architectural Forum*, Sept. 1945, 149. The close relation that Severud identified between form, structure and nature (profusely supported by historical and contemporary case studies) was probably very inspiring to both architects and engineers of the time. It is also important to remember that Severud worked close to Lathrop Douglass, as a structural engineer in the Edificio Creole (Caracas), and the Standard Oil Company Refinery Office (Elizabeth-Linden, New Jersey).

[21] See "Architectural Design and Abstract Art," *Architectural Record*, Jan. 1949, and The Miller Company, *Painting toward Architecture,* text by Henry-Russell Hitchcock; foreword by Alfred H. Barr, jr. (New York: Dwell, Sloan and Pearce, 1948), 92-93.

[22] This $200 million project, a new and expanded version of Miami's perennial dream of creating a "center of trade and cultural relations for the Westerns hemisphere," had even brought the attention of two important New York investment houses, Lehman Brothers and Van Alstyne Noel. See "Center of the Americas: Miami plugs new version of a big dream," *Architectural Record*, Jan. 1955, 11.

of Architects, to name an Architectural Board of Design.[23] Hugh Ferriss would eventually be associated with the Board in visualizing the concepts of the project.

The Center was regarded by the Architectural Board as an "unparalleled opportunity for a regional architectural expression," indigenous not only to the site itself, but to the areas from which many of the Latin American visitors would come.[24] It was envisioned as a subtropical garden with free-curvilinear canals and a Theme Center, which consisted of a "lagoon area with a multipurpose amphitheater surrounded by circular levels of exhibition buildings"[25] (*figure 10.23*). A complex organic-form circulation system was displayed all over the Center: a canal system wound through the grounds, as the lowest of three levels of circulation, then sidewalks on the intermediate level, and finally roadways on top. All the buildings were between the sidewalk and the roadway levels, allowing visitors to see them both from different perspectives and speeds. As a system, the Center of the Americas was so well planned that motorists could get an overall view of the buildings before parking, and the relationship between gardens, buildings and walkways gave weary visitors as little "not one more building!" feeling as possible.

Despite the fact that the Board was only concerned with the basic design ideas, Ferriss hinted at some architectural themes to be developed. In a sort of recreation of the Encounter, flanked by rows of palm trees and flags, he imagined Christopher Columbus' caravels arriving to the Theme Center's multipurpose amphitheater: an impressive, open-air dome-like building made up of about twenty ribs. The structural members were connected to each other by an oculus on the top, and a lower ring working as an ample, long ambulatory. An inverted tent, hung from the ribs, provided shadow. Finally, a stepped podium and a breakwater with a tall spire, by way of landmark, received the visitor coming from the lagoon (*figure 10.24*).

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[23] Besides the own Fitch Smith (Board chairman), this advisory group was constituted by Russell T. Pancoast of Miami Beach, and Alfred B. Parker, John E. Petersen and Robert Law Weed, of Miami. Associate architects were William K. Jackson of Jacksonville, Arthur Gale Parish of St. Petersburg and James Gamble Rogers of Winter Park. Ibid.

[24] "Center of the Americas: Miami plugs new version of a big dream," 11.

[25] Ibid.

Such impressive building had had a sort of precedent in the New Municipal Outdoor Amphitheater in Pittsburgh, designed in 1949 by Mitchell & Ritchey, Architects, with the assistance of Ammann & Withney, Consulting Engineers. As featured in a special report of *Architectural Forum*, the building was basically constituted by a giant steel rib-like cantilever frame, projecting from the rear to the center of the amphitheater overhead (bearing a mast to which the roof's supporting cables are attached), and a flexible fabric tent comprised of segments which fanned out on both sides (from its furled position on either side of the cantilever frame).[26] Such remarkable structure was the first retractable roof major-sports venue in the world (*figure 10.25*).[27]

Also in 1949, another building would be outlined for similar purposes: the Baldwin Hills Theater in Los Angeles, California. Probably not as imposing as the Pittsburgh's Outdoor Amphitheater, but also engaging, it had been designed by Louis Eugene Wilson for Fanchon and Marco, a show business family with a long tradition. Said to hit new low in construction cost, the Baldwin Hills Theater was high and narrow at screen, and low and wide at its entrance. As depicted in *Architectural Record*, the building's spacious access was defined by two slender arches, covering a large span and supporting the theater sign (*figure 10.26*).[28] Once again, slim structural members, by way of skeleton, dominated the architectural composition. Actually, during the 1940s it would be a common image in magazines, particularly in advertisements. A General Electric ad for instance, published in *Architectural Record*, drew readers' attention by asking about their "plans for postwar homes." "Evolution or revolution;" these were the choices. In the advertisement illustration, an enlarged traditional house (representing the former) was contrasted with a future-oriented building (representing the latter) made up by a curvilinear roof, a battery of acute, slender ribs (from which the roof was hung), and an undulating wall

[26] "Pittsburgh Renascent: Amphitheater Umbrella," *Architectural Forum*, Nov. 1949, 72-73.

[27] The building broke ground in 1950, and the building process took three years, from 1958 to 1961. It was eventually known as Civic Auditorium, Civic Arena and Mellon Arena. The Municipal Outdoor Amphitheater was finally demolished between 2011 and 2012.

[28] See "The Record Reports," *Architectural Record,* May 1949, 164.

(which recalled Don Hatch's lath screens in the Display Room) (*figure 10.27*).[29] Finally, the Technical Institute of Cement Construction near Madrid, published in the February 1955 issue of *Architectural Forum,* deserves to be mentioned. Designed by engineer Eduardo Torroja, the Institute had some "excerpts," such as its Angular Pergola Frame, that bears a striking resemblance to Higuerote's Terminal (*figure 10.28*).[30]

Architectural magazines were certainly a pool of inspiring examples of organic architecture during the 1950s. As a matter of fact, they were plenty of works made up of ribs, arches, vaults and shells. It would not be difficult to match either the Pergola or the Terminal with any other work published in American periodical publications. The dossier's specific building projects can also echo some works issued in magazines. The Locker Room Building's sui generis entrance hall in Higuerote bears a strong resemblance, for instance, to the proposal of a drugstore with expendable food service by J. Gordon Carr (published in *Architectural Record,* 1944). Even both perspective viewpoints and general arrangement are similar (*figure 10.29*).[31]

Nevertheless, perhaps the most significant case was included by *Architectural Forum* in its February 1955 issue. Through a short item entitled "Six-mile beach will be peppered with airy pleasure structures," this magazine reported an entertainment development proposed for Long Beach, California. According to the text, this modern beach development would include a series of architectural facilities, such as a ballroom, a bandshell, and a supper club, all of them designed by New York Architects Antonin Raymond and L.L. Rado,[32] with the collaboration of

[29] See *Architectural Record,* Sept. 1943.

[30] In 1956, Eduardo Torroja Miret would act as a consultant during the design process of the club's shell at the Táchira Club (sse chapter 8).

[31] See "A drugstore with a prominent pharmacy and expendable food service," *Architectural Record*, Apr. 1944, 100.

[32] Raymond was a Czech architect, who arrived in the United States in 1910, and worked with Cass Gilbert and Frank Lloyd Wright, especially on the construction of the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo (1919). Having decided to stay in Japan, he designed some buildings in reinforced concrete; actually, Raymond is considered one of the pioneers of modern architecture in that country. During the Second World War he returned to the United States and founded an architectural office with Ladislav Leland Rado, also Czech

Elwood Allen, as park planner.[33] Each one of these pieces showed a high morphological fluency. The bandshell consisted of a hyperbolic paraboloid (apparently made of concrete, and framed by two opposed arches), placed on a round-form landscape, while the supper club, in turn, was a very thin shell, with organic form, displayed over a glazed space (*figures 10.30*).

The piece that definitively attracted attention, however, was the ballroom (*figure 10.31*). Very close to the seashore, and sharing the scene with an elegant row of coconut palms, the ballroom consisted of a circular, transparent volume, raised above the ground by inclined stilts, surrounded by a cantilever corridor, and surmounted by a kind of dome (as a morphological continuity of the inclined system of stilts). The ballroom's perspective bore a strong resemblance to the Clubhouse Ron Pedrique had presented in the dossier, along with twenty other drawings, during the 9th Pan American Congress of Architects. Moreover, the chronology plays an important role, as support of the arguments. As a matter of fact, a fast check on the respective dates is revealing. *Architectural Forum* published the project of Raymond and Rado in February of 1955, whereas, seven months later, in September of that year, Ron Pedrique came up with his set of architectural drawings. The architectonic link between these works, and the potential process of influence, however, does not finish here. Beyond the formal analogy, the ballroom's program per se (an architectural facility located at the beach) might have also been significant to Bertorelli.

As expected, there is not conclusive evidence that supports the existence of a specific original model. Nevertheless, as a case study, Higuerote Beach Resort provides three important lessons that deserve to be mentioned. The first one is about the demystification of the architectural authorship; the second lesson regards the demystification of the architectural object per se, and the third one talks precisely about the significance on the *process* (and not the object) as an analytical tool to understand the influence of American ideals and their reception in Venezuela.

(Raymond & L.L.Rado). In this sense, see the article "Art: Orient's Architect", *Time*, March 20, 1939. http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,789513,00.html

[33] See *Architectural Forum* 102, no. 2 (February, 1955), 17.

The very same year that Caracas held the 9th Pan American Congress of Architects, another significant project was being conceived at the office of one of Higuerote's urban designers. The Venezuelan capital actually saw the parallel construction of a sui generis building, which was neither the direct result of an American corporate commission nor a U.S.-magazine-influenced project developed by locals, but whose origin, principles, and resonance were completely intertwined with the American ideals. It would also have something in common with Douglass' works and Higuerote Beach Resort: the culture of the automobile. Moreover, beyond the influence-and-reception process, it opened the doors to a potential counterinfluence. Given its unusual form, the building would be known as the Helicoid.

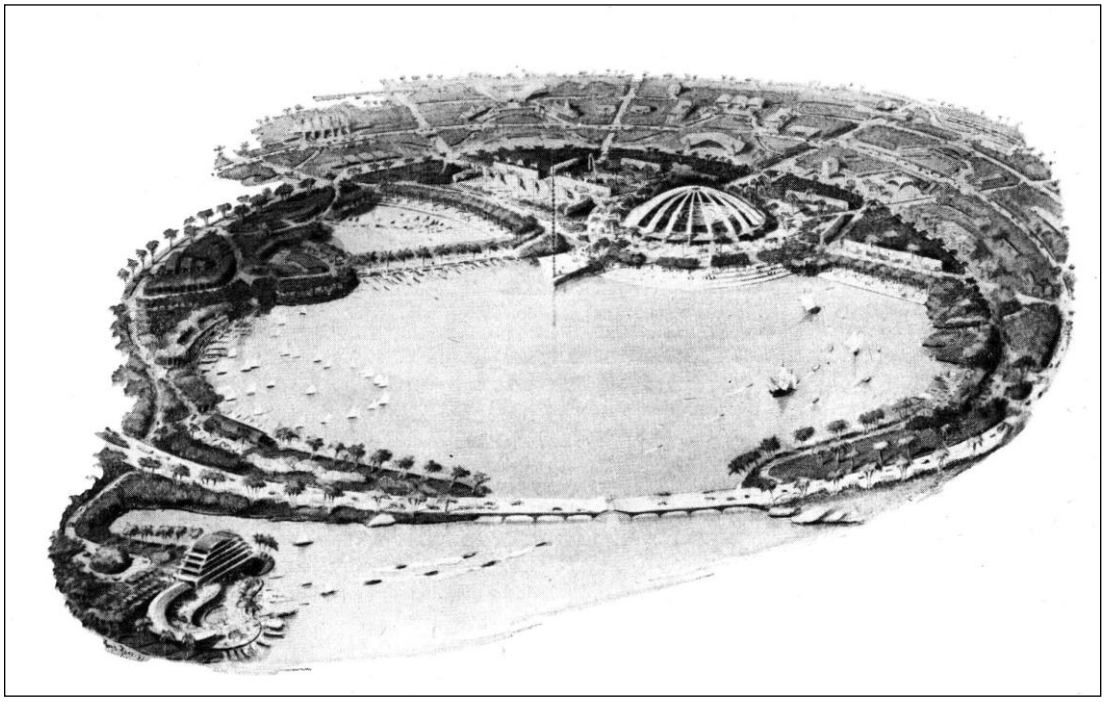

FIGURE 10.23
Robert Fitch Smith et al., Theme Center with lagoon and multipurpose amphitheater, Center of the Americas (project), near Miami, FL. Drawing by Hugh Ferriss. Source: *Architectural Record* (Jan. 1955), 10.

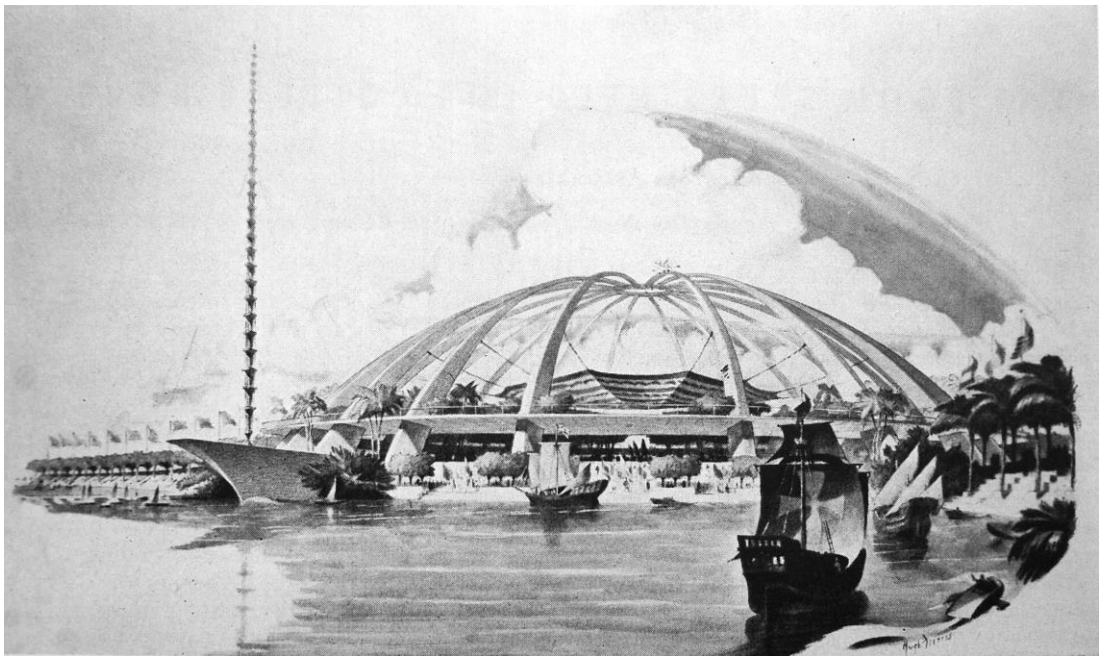

FIGURE 10.24
Robert Fitch Smith et al., multipurpose amphitheater at the Theme Center, Center of the Americas (project), near Miami, FL. Drawing by Hugh Ferriss. Source: *Architectural Record* (Jan. 1955), 11.

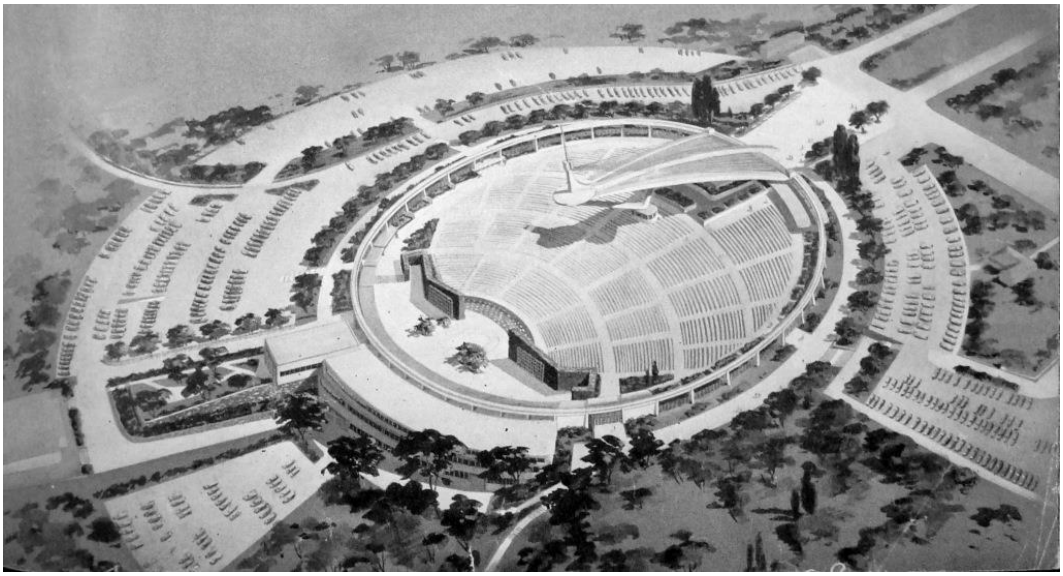

FIGURE 10.25
Mitchell & Ritchey, Architect; Ammann & Withney, Consulting Engineers, New Municipal Outdoor Amphitheater, Pittsburgh, 1950. Source: *Architectural Forum* (Nov. 1949), 73.

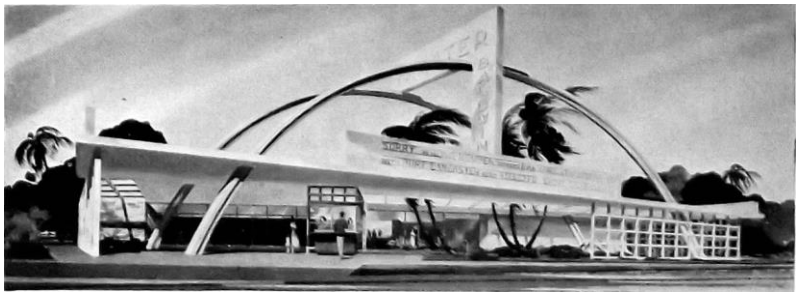

FIGURE 10.26
Louis Eugene Wilson, Baldwin Hills Theater, Los Angeles, California, 1949. Source: *Architectural Record* (May 1949), 164.

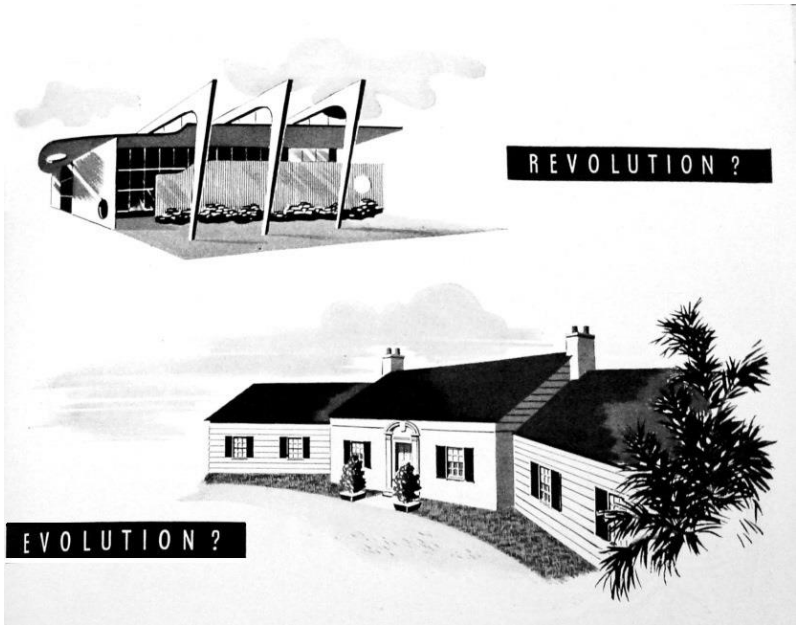

FIGURE 10.27
Postwar revolutionary home: ribs, and undulating roofs and walls. Detail of General Electric advertisement. Source: *Architectural Record* (Sept. 1943).

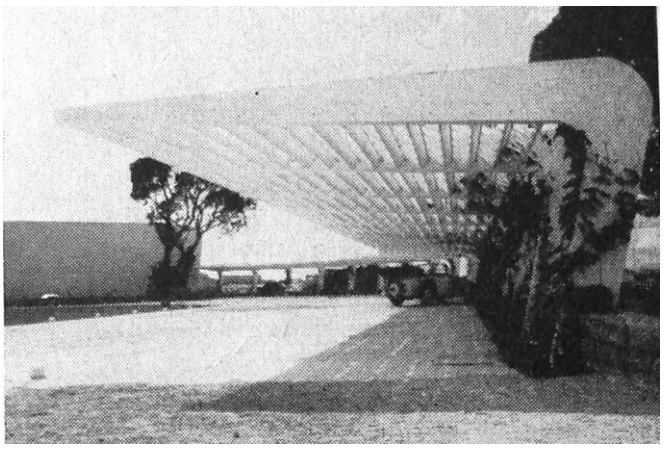

FIGURE 10.28
Eduardo Torroja, angular pergola frame, new structure for the Technical Institute of Cement Construction, near Madrid. Source: *Architectural Forum* (Feb. 1955], 149.

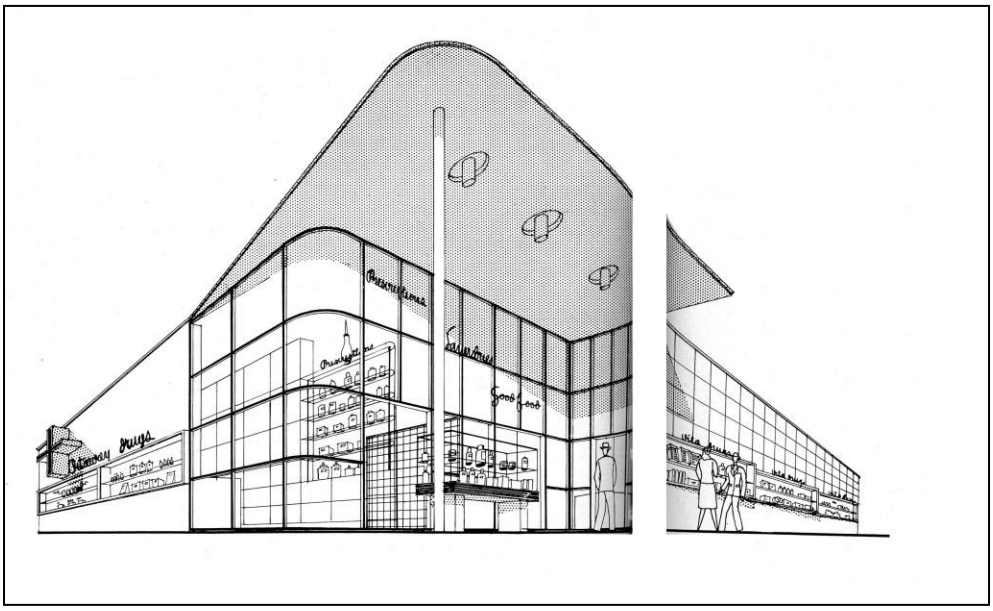

FIGURE 10.29
J. Gordon Carr, Architect, "a drugstore with a prominent pharmacy and expendable food service." Compare with Locker Room Building (*figure 10.9*). Source: *Architectural Record* (Apr. 1944), 100.

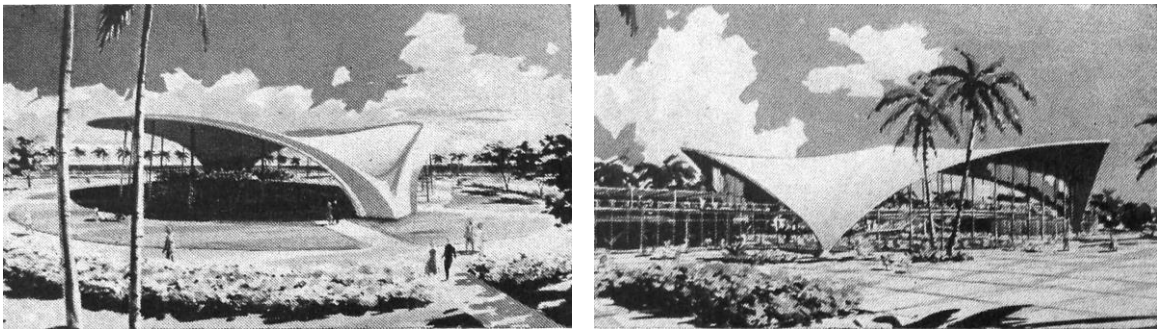

FIGURE 10.30
Antonin Raymond and L.L. Rado, Bandshell and Supper Club Long Beach, California, 1955-60. Source: *Architectural Forum* (Feb. 1955), 11.

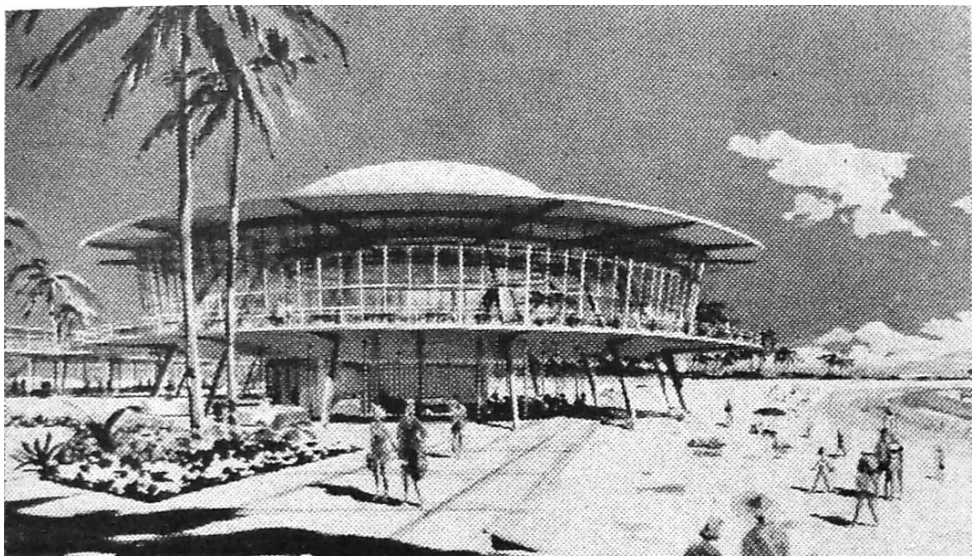

FIGURE 10.31
Antonin Raymond and L.L. Rado, Ballroom in Long Beach, California, 1955-60. Compare with the Clubhouse (*figure 10.10*). Source: *Architectural Forum* (Feb. 1955), 11.

Chapter 11

Reshaping the Hill: from Sugarloaf Mountain to the Tarpeian Rock

THE NEW YORK TIMES, TUESDAY, AUGUST 15, 1961.

Art: 'Roads' Photo Show Is at Museum

Studios Jacky, Caracas

Helicoide de la Roca Tarpeya, a complex that combines a mountain road with a shopping center in Caracas, Venezuela. The architects for the project are Jorge Romero Gutierrez, Pedro Neuberger and Dirk Bornhorst. Studies of the construction are included in the exhibit entitled "Roads," which will open at the Museum of Modern Art today.

70 Works in Basement of the Modern

By JOHN CANADAY

IT is a small exhibition and it is tucked away in the basement (the auditorium lounge) of the Museum of Modern Art, but it is as interesting a show as you could ask for, and an important one too, called, simply, "Roads."

Since you cannot put a road on exhibition in a museum, this is a display of enlarged photographs, seventy of them. But anyone who does not respond to it is dead to the world, particularly the world we live in at this moment.

"Roads," praise be, is a traveling exhibition that can be rented by other museums, by schools, or by anybody with a place to hang it. It was assembled under a grant from the CBS Foundation, which should feel gratified. There could not be a much better subject to spread awareness of our civilization in an aspect familiar to everybody and noticed by hardly anybody.

So many of the museum's recent painting exhibitions have seemed so routine, so slanted toward a tired propagandistic point of view, that it is a delight to find this influential institution engaged in the kind of thing it has always done best. Instead of the repetitious plugging of rapidly staling ideas, we have an original, imaginative and scholarly treatment of an unexpected subject.

What is a road? By the museum's gratifyingly inclusive definition it includes everything from the Appian Way to the contemporary aircraft runways, "the shortest and costliest roads." A road is the road we know in France, "affording wanderers and beasts of burden protection from wind and sun," where "shade trees are inseparable from the concept of a noble road." Or it is an ugly four-story snake running through the heart of Tokyo.

A road is also the virtually indescribable combination of highway and shopping center in staggeringly scaled helicoid form in Caracas, designed by Jorge Romero Gutierrez, Pedro Neuberger and Dick Bornhorst, now under construction. A road is the runway along the top of the Great Wall of China, 1,400 miles long and built 200 years before the birth of Christ. And it is the fantastically engineered composition of loops, swirls and crossovers of a four-level interchange in Fort Worth, Tex.

Exhibition Will Travel After Sept. 17

This kind of exhibition is an eye opener, based on an idea that could have degenerated into preciousness and stuntsmanship. But in the hands of Bernard Rudofsky, an architect-engineer who teaches at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Arthur Drexler, the director of the museum's department of architecture and design, it is at once imaginative and sound.

"Roads" stays at the museum until Sept. 17. Don't miss it. And if you are connected with a school or a museum, book it.

FANS QUEUE FOR BALLET

Line Starts at 5 A.M. for Kirov Troupe's Visit From Russia

A long and patient line of customers stood outside the Metropolitan Opera House yesterday when the public sale of seats for the Leningrad Kirov Ballet opened. Earlier sale of tickets had been made through mail orders to Hurok Concerts, Inc., which will present the company for three weeks beginning Sept. 11.

First arrivals took up their stand at 5 A. M. to apply for the remaining tickets. The box office opened at 10 A. M., and the lines swelled to around 175 standees by mid-day. To reach the windows required two to three hours in the line.

The greatest demand was for tickets in the middle price range. A chart of sales already made, posted in the lobby, showed that Family Circle seats at $3 had sold out for six of the twenty-one performances.

Cabaret Tonig

VILLAGE VANGU... Seventh Avenue Sout... Peterson's Trio; Caro... singer; the Ronnel... Trio.

MUSIC NOTE

The First Army B... Governors Island will... Downtown Manhattan... Band in a band concert... ing Green Park at no...

The final concert of... nings-by-the-River se... be given at 8:30 toni... East River Park Amp... Franklin D. Roosev... south of Grand Street... Korn will conduct and... Mitchell will be piano...

"La Traviata" will... ented by the Heigh... Company in the Cent... Mall tonight at 8 o'clo...

FIGURE 11.1

Jorge Romero Gutiérrez, Pedro Neuberger, and Dirk Bornhorst, the Helicoid under construction, Caracas, *ca.* 1961, press note on occasion of the exhibition "Roads" at the Museum of Modern Art of New York. Source: *The New York Times* (Aug. 15, 1961), 25, from Dirk Bornhorst Archive.

This kind of exhibition is an eye opener (…). Don't miss it!

J. Canaday on "Roads"

It is worth that this adventurous enterprise has been undertaken in Latin America rather than in the USA, where both highways and shopping centers are among our most ambitious efforts.

B. Rudofsky and A. Drexler on the Helicoid, "Roads"

The Helicoid is the most ingenious and advanced structure in the entire world for its topographical integration.

Ludwig Glaeser,
curator of MoMA's department of Architecture and Design, 1964.

On August 15, 1961, *The New York Times* published a review of the exhibition "Roads," which opened that same day at the Museum of Modern Art. Among the Cold War-related news of that day, including Kennedy's concern about the increasing tension in Berlin, the Eichmann trial, Arabian reluctance to a U.S. base in the Middle East, and a successful atomic submarine's underwater firing test, readers probably found *The New York Times*' entertainment guide very appealing. Cabaret Tonight section announced Oscar Peterson Trio's performance at the legendary Village Vanguard; American Shakespeare Festival opened its season, while a "long and patient line" of U.S. fans stood outside the Metropolitan Opera House for the Leningrad Kirov Ballet. Nevertheless, it was the prominent news article on MoMA's exhibition what definitely attracted the readers' attention. Its title was as short as provocative: "Art: 'Roads' Photo Show is at Museum."

Signed by John Canaday, a leading American art critic, the review provided a highly favorable assessment of the exhibition. It was a small display, and tucked away in the basement of the Museum, but Roads was "as interesting a show as you could ask for, and an important one." An eloquent photo of a new building in Caracas headed the article. An impressive reinforced concrete structure, made up of hundreds of columns and a sequence of huge, curvilinear slabs, seemed to emerge organically from the ground. Such a bizarre building, hard to categorize and

harder to define (because of its form, scale and immediate context), became even more perplexing when its program was revealed: a complex that combined "a *mountain road* with a shopping center." It was, at the same time, architecture, infrastructure and integral part of the landscape.

Among 70 works and projects on display at Roads, the editors of *The New York Times* (or probably Canaday himself) had chosen the image of the Helicoid to head the article. Moreover, the building played a pivotal role in Canaday's review; since the beginning it was a continuous reference in his text, by way of leitmotiv. It would be neither the first nor the last time the Helicoid was a subject matter of a newspaper or magazine article. In fact, since the late 1950s, the building had received significant international recognition through the print media. Likewise, many important artistic and engineer figures paid a visit to the Helicoid throughout the years, among which were Buckminster Fuller and Ludwig Glaeser, curator of MoMA's Department of Architecture and Design. Its unique form and original design solution certainly attracted attention. Made up of two parallel ramps (upward and downward), this helix-like building worked as an uninterrupted roadway with retails that wrapped themselves around a hill (known as the Tarpeian Rock). As a matter of fact, the building had been specially devised for the automobile.

Its design began in 1955 at *Arquitectura y Urbanismo, C.A*., a Venezuelan office constituted by Jorge Romero Gutiérrez, Pedro Neuberger and Dirk Bornhorst (the latter a University of California at Berkeley graduate). The place chosen for its construction was the Tarpeian Rock, a smooth hill located at the crossroads of two important highways. The Helicoid's management, construction process and marketing strategy turned out to be as innovative as holistic. On this regard, the launch of *Integral* magazine in 1955, as well as the use of architectural models, would prove to be fundamental.

Besides its approximately 300 shops, the Helicoid combined multiple activities in its program, including an exhibition and recreation center, an automobile center, a hotel, a multi-room movie theater, a bowling alley, and a centralized publicity service. The Helicoid also proved to be

more than an original idea expressed in a sui generis form. The building incorporated a complex network of cutting-edge technology, which went from structural innovations to mobility and telecommunications. Moreover, its impressive presence in the city went beyond the modernist patterns of the time; it became a sort of surrealist, awe-inspiring image that changed drastically Caracas' skyline.

Totally committed to the automobile since the beginning, the Helicoid had been originally designed to house a permanent exhibition for the oil industry. Such a relation between architecture and cars was not entirely new in the international context. The sudden, uncontainable irruption of the automobile in modern life had prompted critical reactions in newspapers since the early twentieth century. But it had also fostered creative design solutions, both in terms of forms and programs, by incorporating mobility into the traditional agenda of architecture. This uncommon combination of building and automobile was clearly expressed in well-known examples, either realistic or utopian, such as the Fiat Factory in Turin, by Giacomo Matté-Trucco (1916-1923), and the serpentine building that Le Corbusier proposed for Rio de Janeiro's expansion (1930). Nevertheless, the projects that would manage to organically incorporate the automobile into the design solution were the Point Park Civic Center in Pittsburgh (1947) and, earlier, the Gordon Strong Automobile Objective and Planetarium at Sugarloaf Mountain in Maryland (1924), both by Frank Lloyd Wright. Incarnation of Wright's ideas on the "automobile objectives," a new architectural type, both projects combined a varied cultural, recreational program with the automobile, as well as transportation technology and telecommunications.

The resemblance between both projects and the Helicoid is remarkable in all respects. And despite the fact that Wright's Automobile Objectives and the Helicoid were located in different contexts (the former in "natural places of great beauty," while the latter in an urban hill), they were unmistakably megastructures that transformed their respective landscapes into awe-inspiring, surrealist scenes. By way of supernatural pieces of architecture, they unequivocally recalled the technological sublime's principles. Neither the Point Park Civic Center nor the

Gordon Strong Automobile Objective were ever built. Nevertheless, they both would find their utmost realization in the Tarpeian Rock's Helicoid in 1956.

THE RECOGNITION: "ROADS" AT MoMA

In 1961 the Museum of Modern Art of New York opened the exhibition "Roads." It was Tuesday, August 15, and the local newspapers informed about the event. That very same day, the celebrated American critic John Canaday[1] published a particularly commendatory article about it. An eye-opener one, the display was "as interesting a show as you could ask for, and an important one."[2] MoMA had hosted significant exhibitions since its foundation in 1929. However, "Roads" went beyond any traditional display. Its sui generis character was certainly remarkable; even seminal. Assembled with a CBS Foundation grant, and under the direction of Bernard Rudofsky and Arthur Drexler,[3] the exhibition was "at once imaginative and sound."[4] As Canaday mentioned,

> So many of the museum's recent painting exhibitions have seemed so routine, so slanted toward a tired propagandistic point of view, that it is a delight to find this influential institution engaged in the kind of thing it has always done best. Instead of repetitious plugging of rapidly staling ideas, we have an original, imaginative and scholarly treatment of an unexpected subject.

Displaying enlarged photographs of seventy case-studies around the world and throughout history, Roads made a comprehensive account that went from the Great Wall of China and the Appian Way to the airport runways; from the oldest roads dating back about 5,000 years to a four-level interchange in Fort Worth, Texas. Despite this broad historical approach, Roads paid special attention to the most recent projects. "We have learnt to enjoy the aesthetic qualities of

[1] Canaday (1907-1985) earned a Bachelor of Arts in French and English literature at the University of Texas at Austin, in 1929.

[2] John Canaday, "Art: 'Roads' Photo Show is at Museum," *The New York Times* (Aug. 15, 1961).

[3] Bernard Rudofsky (1905-1988), architect-engineer who taught at MIT at that time. Arthur Drexler, for its part, was the director of the MoMA's department of architecture and design.

[4] Canaday, "Art: 'Roads'."

structures designed by engineers," mentioned Rudofsky and Drexler; after all, bridges and silos appeal to us for their clean, hard geometry and monumental scale. In the last few decades "these forms of engineering have been surpassed by highways, which now begin to dominate the landscape." Roads actually illustrated the complexity of built highways and suggested that we might witness "a wholly new kind of architecture, road-inspired and road-conditioned."[5]

From the seventy case-studies on display, one drew particular attention: Caracas' Helicoid. When Canaday asked himself what a "road" is, he passed through many different cultural and historical definitions, until arrived at the building in question: "A road is also the virtually indescribable combination of highway and shopping center in staggeringly scaled helicoid form in Caracas, designed by Jorge Romero Gutierrez, Pedro Neuberger and Dirk Bornhorst, now under construction." In fact, his article put special emphasis on this building. Even a generous photograph headed his critique, accompanied with an eloquent caption:

> Helicoid de la Roca Tarpeya, a complex that combines a mountain road with a shopping center in Caracas, Venezuela. The architects of the project are Jorge Romero Gutiérrez, Pedro Neuberger and Dirk Bornhorst. Studies of the construction are included in the exhibit 'Roads,' which will open at the Museum of Modern Art today.

This unusual building had in fact a deep significance in the eye of the American experts in architecture, engineering, urban planning, and obviously, the MoMA's curators. After all, in 1959 alone expenditures for United States roads had reached US$ 6,720,000,000.[6]

"Roads" was open for one month, until September 17. After that, it became a travelling exhibition. One of its visitors was architect Dirk Bornhorst, who was working on the Helicoid construction at that time, and traveled to New York specifically to attend the exhibition and meet Drexler. As architect Romero Gutiérrez mentioned in a letter dated August 22, addressed

[5] Bernard Rudofsky and Arthur Drexler, "'Roads' (presentation of the Exhibition)," 1961, published in Dirk Bornhorst, *El Helicoide* (Caracas: Oscar Todtmann Editores, 2007). A copy of that presentation, as a separate document, can be found also in Dirk Bornhorst's archive.

[6] Rudofsky and Drexler, "'Roads' (presentation of the Exhibition).

to the Director of the Museum's Department of Architecture and Design, the Helicoid's designers were very interested in bringing "Roads" to Venezuela.[7] At that occasion, and with a camera always in hand, Bornhorst did not miss the opportunity to capture images of the exhibitions. One of those photographic moments showed the impressive and elegant array of enlarged pictures of the Helicoid at the MoMA (*figure 11.2*). Images of a very detailed model and the construction process were on display.

Two years later Buckminster Fuller visited Caracas. Invited by Central University of Venezuela, and under the auspices of the U.S. Embassy, Fuller presented three lectures at that occasion. His professional links with Venezuela, however, were even deeper. Responsible for designing the top of the Helicoid, Bornhorst had passed through different alternatives, until arriving at a definitive solution: a geodesic dome, which would eventually be designed by Fuller. Despite the fact that Bornhorst did not make a dated note in his diary about this choice, the decision for this technical solution had been made already in 1959. It would be the first geodesic dome to be exported by Fuller. In a press release photo published by *The Daily Journal* in November 1963,[8] Fuller appeared explaining his dome for the Helicoid, accompanied by Romero Gutiérrez, Neuberger, Bornhosrt, and members of the U.S. Embassy (*figure 11.3*). During the event (held coincidentally in the Helicoid), "he suggested making a sort of rocket cable to cross the valley of Caracas, which the public found hilarious; whereupon he replied: "I'm serious; in my country they pay me three thousand dollars per minute for my advice."[9]

One year later Caracas received another prominent visitor: Ludwig Glaeser, curator of MoMA's Department of Architecture and Design. In an interview he mentioned that the Helicoid was the most ingenious and advanced structure in the entire world, precisely for its topographical

[7] See Appendix 5, Letter addressed to Mr. Arthur Drexler by Arch. Jorge Romero Gutiérrez.

[8] Published in Caracas, *The Daily Journal* was one of the three English language newspapers published in Latin America. Despite its modest circulation (approximately 30,000 copies), it was highly influential because of the kind of reader: oil industry executives, international bankers, and diplomats.

[9] Dirk Bornhorst, *El Helicoide* (Caracas: Oscar Todtmann Editores, 2007), 99.

integration.[10] "Caracas should be congratulated on being the first city in the entire world to have an architectonic structure based on topographical integration," — he said — going ahead of its time as "it incorporates the automobile road to an urban shopping center."[11] According to him, the Helicoid should compel our admiration for two reasons:

> for the first time it was accomplished the integration of road and building in a big scale. Secondly, because the time has arrived to create a new kind of architecture, functional and altogether engaged to topography, that manages to solve urban problems.[12]

But this long list of praises and distinguished visitors had started even before, during the late 1950s. In 1959, a group of thirty three British engineers, members of the Building Contractors Federation of England, paid a visit to the Helicoid. They were touring several countries in the Americas to take a close look at the development of their engineering and architectural works, and their approach to the building was frankly positive. William Weaver, group's head, just had laudatory words. The Helicoid "is one of the engineering and architectural works that has most lively impressed us," he said. Unique in its kind worldwide, "it is one of the highest expressions of the development achieved by Latin American architecture and engineering, which we deeply admired for both its advanced technique level and the creativity and originality that inspire professionals in Venezuela."[13] The utilization of the Tarpeian Rock's hill, in successfully solving urban problems to create a new shopping center of such magnitude, "is a venture that must be regarded as one of the most interesting modern realizations in the Americas."[14]

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[10] "Es el Helicoide la estructura más novedosa de todo el mundo por su integración topográfica," *El Universal* (Nov. 11, 1964).

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] "33 Ingenieros Británicos Miembros de la Federación de Constructores Contratistas de Inglaterra," *Boletín Informativo* 1, Caracas: Inversiones Planificadas C.A., Helicoide C.A., Apr. 1959 (my translation).

[14] Ibid.

That year, other illustrious visitors came to the Helicoid, including Jorge Romero Brest, influential art critic and Director of the School of *Beaux-Arts* of Buenos Aires. Even non-architect artists, such as well-known Venezuelan musician Ángel Sauce and Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, paid a visit to the building.[15] Undoubtedly, the building had caught international attention since the 1950s. Major newspapers and periodicals in English, French, German, Italian, Russian, Swedish, Chinese, Arabic, etc. had been devoted to inform "throughout the five continents" about this exceptionally modern and cutting-edge architectural work. This "spontaneous international spreading" of the Tarpeian Rock's Helicoid, as well as its significance and magnitude, allowed to assure that the Helicoid would undoubtedly be, once completed, "the cultural icon of Caracas, as the Eiffel Tower is to Paris; the Parliament Tower is to London; the Statue of Liberty is to New York, and the Leaning Tower is to Pisa."[16] As Venezuelan magazine *Elite* stated in 1957,

> The most important U.S. newspapers; major publications from almost all Latin American countries; the largest and most prestigious newspapers throughout the five continents; the newsreels shown in the largest international theaters; major magazines and the most powerful radio and television stations; summing up in one word, the most important media worldwide, in almost all the languages (…) have been devoted to this magnificent project, with admiration and laudatory remarks (…), which will provide Caracas with the most important and most modern shopping center in the Americas and the entire world.[17]

Although slightly "bombastic," *Elite*'s remarks certainly synthesized the interest of the media. And it was for real. The list of newspapers and magazines were definitely large: *Architectural Record, Progressive Architecture, Engineering News-Record, Popular Mechanics Magazine, Time, Newsweek, The Chicago Daily Tribune, The Miami Herald,* and *El Diario de Nueva York*, from the

[15] Ibid; see also Bornhorst, *El Helicoide*, 17.

[16] *Boletín Informativo* 2, Caracas: Inversiones Planificadas C.A., Helicoide C.A., July 1959, cover.

[17] "El 'Helicoide de la Roca Tarpeya' será una Obra Ejemplar del Urbanismo, la Ingeniería y la Arquitectura Funcional," *Elite*, 1957 (?), 67. My translation.

United States; *Azione* and *Il Quotidiano*, from Italy; *Wir Brückenbauer*, from Germany; *Basler Nachrichten*, from Switzerland, and *The Sphere*, form the United Kingdom, among others.[18] But this was not always so. The beginning of the Helicoid's project in the mid-1950s was certainly more modest; less grandiloquent. Nevertheless, it always relied on the media.

FIGURE 11.2
"Roads," exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art *of* New York, 1961. At the image, Ragnhild Goetz Steinvorth (Dirk Bornhorst's wife) poses between the images of the Helicoid, providing a sense of scale and character of the exhibition. Photo by D. Bornhorst. Source: Dirk Bornhorst Archive.

[18] *Boletín Informativo* 2, cover.

FIGURE 11.3
"R. Buckminster Fuller, paying a visit to the still-unfinished Helicoid in downtown Caracas discusses with leading Venezuelan architects the merits of the construction. Fuller, (center) inventor of the geodesic dome, is currently in a short visit to Caracas. He looks at a model of the Helicoid which will carry a geodesic dome when completed." Journal photo by Noguera. Source: *The Daily Journal* (Nov. 1963).

THE TARPEIAN ROCK'S HELICOID

ORIGIN, JUSTIFICATION AND LOCATION

An article published in a Venezuelan newspaper, dated June 13, 1955, gave the account of a very sui generis new project to be built in Caracas.[19] This early press release, perhaps one of the first (if not the first), announced the construction of a "helicoid on the Tarpeian Rock" to house a permanent exhibition for the Oil Industry, with 60,000 m² of construction, and displayed

[19] "Los Cerros También se Construyen: Un Helicoide en la Roca Tarpeya, con efecto piramidal y costo de 30 millones" (in *El Universal* (?) [June 13, 1955]. Dirk Bornhorst's Archive).

through a double spiral made of reinforced concrete. According to this handout, this new building would give the hill a helical form with pyramidal effect (*figure 11.4*). The dimension of this kind of pyramid would not be modest: three hundred by one hundred fifty meters at its base. Its cost would not be moderate either: Bs. 30,000,000, approximately US$ 10,000,000.[20] The news had been released by one of its designers, architect Jorge Romero Gutiérrez.

The project had been presented to well-known architects of that time, such as Maurice Rotival (who had been responsible for the Caracas' Monumental Plan), Leopoldo Martínez Olavarría, Gustavo Ferrero, and Diego Carbonel, among others, receiving favorable comments. Despite the rudimentary aspect of the Helicoid's first model (as it appeared in the press release), the project was planned to be presented at the IX Pan-American Congress of Architects, in September of that year. Everything seemed to be working very well and fast. Actually, according to the article, the earthwork was about to start even before the congress, in late July.[21]

But such apparently unsophisticated model carried an unexpected complexity. The Helicoid's program and the relationship between function and form were in fact much more ambitious than just a "permanent exhibition" for the oil industry. A continuous sequence of shops would be displayed throughout the five-kilometer double ramp of the Helicoid; as a matter of fact, the building had been specially designed for the automobile. After its completion, it was expected to be the largest shopping centers in Latin America at that time. But, how (and why) did such idea come up? How could the project be justified? Where would it be located? Initially, it seems the answers come from the geography of Caracas.

By the mid-1950s, Caracas' urban sprawl already reflected a tendency to occupy the longitudinal valley where it is placed, through the East-West direction (cf. *figure 5.2*). The valley, in turn, is divided again in the same direction by a chain of barren hills, leaving two of the most densely populated areas separated. The only connection between them was Fuerzas Armadas Avenue,

[20] Based on the exchange rate of that time, and according to this press release, the Helicoid's cost would be US$ 9,090,909.

[21] "Los Cerros También se Construyen: Un Helicoide en la Roca Tarpeya," June 13, 1955.

the main highway in the North-South direction, which cuts through the mountain range forming a steep canyon called 'El Portachuelo' (*figures 11.5* and *11.6*). On its Eastern side raises a rocky hill named Tarpeian Rock or *Roca Tarpeya*,[22] "which for a long time was considered a worthless property, too steep for use as a building site."[23] The first idea of how the site was conceived originally by Romero Gutiérrez in 1955. During the next three years he developed the project together with architects Pedro Neuberger and Dirk Bornhorst, in their joint office *Arquitectura y Urbanismo C.A*. As explained in a brochure handed out to visitors, the building was constituted by a spiral ramp that wound up the hill, "providing automobile access to a continuous chain of shops."[24] Due to its shape, it was named the *Helicoide*, "meaning a spiral surface in space." The original geographical problem had been transformed into an opportunity.

By September 1955 new models of the Helicoid were completed. This time they were much more elaborated than that issued three months before. The general model demonstrated the magnitude and complexity of the building; a superproject!, as Bornhorst annotated in his diary (on January 27th). The integration between the building and the landscape was remarkable. But even more impressive was the integration between the building and the thoroughfare (either the ramps or Caracas' highway system), and the synthesis of architecture and mechanisms, particularly automobiles. More than a building, it looked as a giant mechanized artifact; a whole city within an architectural piece (*figures 11.7* and *11.8*).

By 1956 earthwork started as well as the construction process per se. But traditional management procedures were incapable to handle such magnitude of both building area and investments. Innovative strategies, in this sense, had to be implemented.

[22] The *Roca Tarpeya* of Caracas makes reference to Rome's Tarpeian Rock.

[23] "The Helicoid under Construction," brochure handed out to visitors, with its description, 1958-61.

[24] Ibid.

MANAGEMENT AND SYSTEM OF SALE: IMPORTANT DETAIL!

One of the most important buildings in Caracas by the early 1950s was the *Centro Profesional del Este*, designed by *Arquitectura y Urbanismo C.A.* As a matter of fact, by 1953 there were only two tall office buildings in all the East of Caracas; the *Centro* was one of them. With the proceeds from the sale of the offices as 'horizontal property' *Arquitectura y Urbanismo* was able to build the *Centro*. "This system of selling a building to many owners while it is still being designed and constructed was hitherto unknown in Caracas."[25] In this sense, the Helicoid was organized as a co-operative "with shop and office locations sold to future tenants, payable in monthly installments equivalent to a normal rent."[26] The success of this system encouraged Romero Gutiérrez, "high on the crest of this wave of optimism" where everything was possible, to start another horizontal-property building, this time much more ambitious: the Helicoid.[27] No wonder he was known in his office as the "creative entrepreneur."

Such system proved to be highly valuable and efficient. By 1959 the Helicoid already had 145 commercial premises' owners, with the most varied types of stores: machinery accessories; customs agencies; lottery agencies; travel agencies; clothing stores; garden and home improvement retailer; elevators; bank branches; toy stores; lawyer firms; mattress stores; sports stores; photo studio; opticians; jewelries; home decoration; boats; laundry; book stores; liquor stores; machinery stores; sale of construction materials; furniture shops; music stores; beauty shops; gift shops; commercial representatives; insurance companies; pharmacies; typographies; courier companies, and shoe stores.[28]

[25] Dirk Bornhorst, *El Helicoide* (Caracas: Oscar Todtmann Editores, 2007), 88.

[26] "The Helicoid under Construction," brochure, 1958-61.

[27] Ibid.

[28] *Boletín Informativo* 1. For the complete list of owners, see the Appendix 6 of this dissertation.

A HOLISTIC PROJECT

The Helicoid was certainly conceived as an integral, holistic project. For such important enterprise and a novel system of sale, the means of diffusion and marketing were, consequently, as important as sui generis. On this regard, Romero Gutiérrez founded the Architecture and Art magazine *Integral* with his partners, and its first edition came out in September 1955.[29] Seeing the enthusiasm of Dirk Bornhorst for the magazine, and taking into account that he was looking for international distribution channels, Gutiérrez invited him on a trip to Europe "to promote it and to invite distinguished architects and other personalities to be correspondents and collaborators." Bornhorst met Alvar Aalto in Finland and Alfred Roth in Switzerland. He also contacted André Bloc, editor of *Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* in Paris; Hans Mauer, architect-in-chief of Siemens in Munuch; Tomás Maldonado and Max Bill, directors of the Kunstschule in Ulm, Germany; Ernst Zietschmann, editor of the magazine *Bauen und Wohnen* of Zürich, and Monica Pigeon, editor of *Architectural Design* in London, who named him their representative in Venezuela.[30]

The team in charge of *Integral* was certainly working at the cutting-edge of publishing (*figure 11.9*). It is memorable its issue #5 (1956), in which a large analysis of the Helicoid was presented. At that occasion a sort of "model" of the Helicoid was inserted between the magazine's pages. The reader could virtually take a tour, or "a drive," through the different levels of the building. Such a publishing effort (a unique and engaging method of communication) was addressed not just to other professionals interested in the Helicoid, but also to those potential investors (*figure 11.10*). Also, the Helicoid issued its own bulletin, *Boletín Informativo*, for shops' owners and — again — potential investors, in which information about the building process was provided. Its

[29] See subchapter "The Local Harvest: Venezuelan Periodical Publications," in chapter 6 of this dissertation.

[30] Dirk Bornhorst, Valentina Marulanda and Mercedes Rojas, *Mi Vida en Maqueta* (Caracas: Oscar Todtmann Editores, 2010), 45-46.

first number was issued in April 1959 (*figure 11.11*), coinciding somehow with the last number of *Integral* (#16), also that year.[31]

Besides such a publishing effort, the Helicoid's models per se proved to be an extremely useful tool, not just for the design process, but particularly for architectural marketing. Both programmatically and spatially complex (and difficult to understand for its non-traditional design), the Helicoid leaned a great deal on its models. They synthesized (and expressed) very well the huge magnitude of the project, its intricacy, and the high definition of the project's details. Apart from the general model (*figures 11.7* and *11.8*), other models were prepared, such as a section with details (showing the spatial distribution of the stores, as well as the relation between thoroughfare, parking area and stores, *figure 11.12*), different versions of the project as it was evolving (*figure 11.13*), and the Helicoid's top (a model with a roller system which allowed to see the level below Fuller's dome, *figure 11.14*). Actually, both local and international print media supported their materials by using mostly photos of the models. Although technical drawings were necessary to accomplish the construction, and even to explain particulars to potential premises buyers, models turned out to be absolutely irreplaceable.

As part of this marketing process, a private inauguration of the Helicoid's models was held at the *Centro Profesional del Este,* on September 23th, 1955.[32] At that occasion Marcos Pérez Jiménez was in attendance. Three years later, the political situation in Venezuela changed. Now, the then president of the Government Junta of 1958, Rear-Admiral Wolfgang Larrazábal, visited the exhibition; his approval turned out to be fundamental for the continuation of the construction (*figure 11.14*). Although the Helicoid was a private enterprise, the fate would eventually prove the inseparable influence that the government, and the national policy, had on the building.

[31] An early version of *Boletín Informativo* had been included as a cutting in *Integral* (1957), under the title *Espiral de Noticias* (News Spiral). *Espiral de Noticias*, in turn, would eventually become a section in *Boletín Informativo.*

[32] The models' exhibition was opened to the general public on September 26th.

BACKSTAGE: WHO WERE THOSE GUYS?

Apart from Jorge Romero Gutiérrez, Pedro Neuberger and Dirk Bornhorst, the three most important partners of *Arquitectura y Urbanismo, C.A*. (*figure 11.15*), the Helicoid relied on a group of specialists and technicians who collaborated in solving the complex problems associated to this unusual edifice. *Arquitectura y Urbanismo* worked closely with *Oficina Fuenmayor Navas* (Ernesto Fuenmayor) on the architectural project.[33] Construction engineering inspector was Werner Herz, while *Oficina Vegas León* (Leopoldo Sucre Figarella) undertook the geometry and cubic calculation.[34] The geological study was assumed by *Minas, Sondeos y Exploraciones, C.A. MISECA*, and the earthwork by *C.A. Inursa*. Regarding the installations, *Ingeniería Nacional, C.A. INACA* handled the sanitary project; *Electricidad y Vapor, C.A*. (Luis E. Galavis), the electricity project; *Unión de Contratistas, S.A. UCONSA,* the telecommunications project, and José Ladislao Andara, the ventilation. Structural calculations and plans project were tackled by *Oficina Fortoul y Fernández,* while the construction per se was handled by *Ingenieros Venezolanos C.A. IVECA*, as well as *Construcciones y Canalizaciones Naiguatá, C.A*. The geodesic dome, in turn, had been designed by Buckminster Fuller, and its construction was undertaken by American company Kaiser Aluminum International. Landscape architecture project was under the responsibility of three well-known designers: Roberto Burle Marx, John Stoddart and Fernando Tábora. Reforestation was handled by *Oficina Técnica Viveros El Conde, C.A*. Finally, market, economic and financial studies were under the responsibility of *Investigaciones Económicas y Financieras, S.C. INVENCO.*[35]

But who were the three principals of *Arquitectura y Urbanismo, C.A*.? Romero Gutiérrez (born in 1924) earned his bachelor in Architecture from Central University of Venezuela (UCV) in 1948.

[33] For further references on Ernesto Fuenmayor, see chapters 6 and 8 of this dissertation.

[34] Engineer Leopoldo Sucre Figarella worked at Eng. Rafael Vegas León's office from 1948 to 1956. Sucre Figarella would eventually be Governor of Bolívar State (1960-1962), Minister of Public Works (1962-1969), Minister of Communications (1975-1976), and President of Corporacion Venezolana de Guayana (CVG, 1984-1993).

[35] See Bornhorst, *El Helicoide*, 86. See also *Boletín Informativo* 1, and "Espiral de Noticias" (News Spiral), a cutting from *Integral*, 1957.

He was founder member of the School of Architecture at UCV (*Facultad de Arquitectura y Urbanismo*) in 1953, and collaborator of the National Committee of Urban Planning (*Comisión Nacional de Urbanismo*). Neuberger, for his part, had been born in Germany (1924), and studied high school in Italy. In 1939 he went to study architecture in Montevideo and Buenos Aires, graduating in 1946. Until 1951, before moving to Venezuela, he worked for SEPRA (Sanchez Elia, Peralta Ramos & Agostini, the firm that would eventually design the Bank of London and South America in Buenos Aires, 1959, jointly with Clorindo Testa). Finally, Bornhorst had arrived in Caracas in 1948, after seven years in Asia, trapped with his parents and sister by the Second World War. He had been born in Lübeck, Germany (1927), from a third-generation German family in Venezuela. After the war he graduated as an Associate in Arts at the Pasadena City College, California (1947-1949), and then as a Bachelor of Arts in Architecture, with honors, in the University of California at Berkeley, in June 1951.[36] The "destiny," according to him, had set up a meeting with Romero Gutiérrez in Charallavito (an urban development the latter had designed). This happened even before his graduation, one day in 1950; he was in Caracas on vacations and looking for a plot of land for his family.[37]

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Despite the Helicoid being highly promoted during the 1950s and early 1960s, its dynamics was not easy to understand. Potential investors, and even architects, had difficulties to figure out how cars and people accessed, moved inside, and how the building form and the space system were interlocked in order to guarantee the functionality of the architectural program. Basically, the Helicoid was a helix-like building made up by two parallel ramps (upward and downward), working as roadways with retails that wrap themselves around a hill. A deeper analysis, however, reveals unforeseen and fascinating aspects in the building.

[36] Interview given by Dirk Bornhorst, Caracas, January 2012. See also Dirk Bornhorst, Valentina Marulanda and Mercedes Rojas, *Mi Vida en Maqueta*, 33-38. Bornhorst obtained a title validation by the Central University of Venezuela in December 1958.

[37] Bornhorst, *El Helicoide*, 88.

According to the "official" explanation of the building, the Helicoid was "formed by two interlocking spiral shopping ramps connected on the top by an S-shaped curve." This arrangement allowed a continuous one-way vehicular traffic up and down the building. Totaling 4 Km in length (2.5 miles approximately), the roads wound up and down the hill with a hardly noticeable 2% slope (*figure 11.16*).[38] From the structural point of view, the main part of the building was uncomplicated: it was a "two story structure anchored in the rock with the driveways forming the roofs of the shop levels directly below."[39] Approximately 300 shops wound up and down the hill, all of them 7.50 m wide but of varying depths (*figure 11.17*). The clear height of the shops was 7.00 m (23 feet) in the first ramp and diminished gradually. Most of the shops had sufficient height to construct a mezzanine.[40]

Angled parking right in front of the shops held 1,000 cars; pedestrian could window-shop throughout the building protected at all times by an overhanging roof (*figure 11.18*). The shopping center was subdivided into ten different zones, concentrating, for instance, all the jewelry stores in one area, automobiles sales in another and so on. This way, a grouping of similar types of shops was obtained, and subsequently a great variety to choose from, acting as a great attraction to shoppers.[41] Following this idea, the Helicoid was divided into several sections (*figure 11.19*).

The North Section, which can be regarded as the spine of the Helicoid, had a total of 25 stores, all following the contour of the mountain and connected by four inclined elevators. It extended down to the city street and the main pedestrian access (*figures 11.12, 11.19, 11.20* and *11.21*). The lower part of this section housed the Shop Owners Club or *Club de Propietarios*, a common property where it was possible "to exercise in the gymnasium or relax in the Turkish bath, or refresh oneself in the restaurant." Parties could be organized in the banquet halls, followed by a

[38] "The Helicoid under Construction," brochure, 1958-61.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid. This organization, according to the brochure, was the result of a detailed market study.

movie in the cinema. At the Club, the Management Center was found, a centralized publicity service "which could otherwise only be afforded by large companies" (*figure 11.22*). In the terraced-24-room hotel, surrounded by gardens designed by landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx, the shop owner could accommodate his guests.[42]

On the East Section (*figure 11.23*), the large rectangular Parking Building offered parking space for 1,000 cars. It was used mainly by shop owners of the complex and employees, "so as to conserve the highly valuable space in front of the shop." At the Parking Building, "people who had completed their shopping at the lower levels and did not want to go all the way to the top, could turn back at the halfway point"[43] (see *figure 11.13*). Here the visitor could also find the "Multicinema," a movie theatre consisting of seven chambers with a capacity of 180 persons each, which deserved special attention for its modern notion of synchronicity, as well as efficiency:

> All seven cinemas show the same movie starting at staggered intervals of 15 minutes. One of the theatres is always open waiting for the public. This way you may arrive at any time with a maximum waiting time of 15 minutes. In this manner the usual inconveniences encountered when arriving at or departing from a large movie theatre are avoided.[44]

Next to the Multicinema was a Kindergarten where the parents could "deposit" their children while shopping or watching a movie; just another gesture from the designers, always concerned with the efficiency. Also, a 36 lane bowling center was located on the roof of this building.

On the West Section lay the Automobile Center (*Centro Automotriz*), where the drivers could find all they needed: "a three-minute automatic car wash, a gasoline station, repair shop, automobile sales, accessories, etc." Finally, one of the most engaging attractions for the visitors was constituted by the Exhibition and Recreation Center, which formed the top of the Helicoid. A huge aluminum dome with a diameter of 52 m (171 feet) completed the silhouette of the

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

Helicoid. Under such structure (a covered area of 2,300 m² or 24,757 ft²), exhibitions, meetings or other attractions could take place. Designed by Buckminster Fuller, this *dymaxion* dome was supplied by Kaiser Aluminum International. Despite its enormous dimensions, the structure weighted only 30,000 kg (66,138 pounds), and because of that its 30 supports could be placed freely on the slab "without having to coincide with the columns below."[45]

Everything in the same architectural complex! Virtually, customers could buy with no need to get off their cars!

RESHAPING THE HILL: BUILDING PROCESS

In order to reshape the Tarpeian Rock, a dramatic earth moving which began in 1956.[46] Also the immediate context underwent a huge change (*figures 11.24*). The terraces were executed upward from the base, while the reinforced concrete structure was raised downward from the top (*figures 11.25* and *11.26*). It was estimated that the project would require 560,000 bags of cement, 120,000 tons of steel, and 600,000 m² of formworks to finish the 133,000 m² of structure (6,500,000 ft² and 1,400,000 ft² respectively). In order to accomplish the building objectives, 1,500 laborers were working three shifts, 24 hours a day for a year and a half.[47]

The Helicoid required 12,000 project plans.[48] Also, as Dirk Bornhorst mentioned, many geotechnical and structural problems were solved using "homemade 'creole' technology" (which unfortunately was not patented for inexperience). It was the case of the 60-meter semi-circular pre-stressed concrete bridge which, conceived as one of the access to the Helicoid,

[45] Ibid; "Una Cúpula de 52 metros de Diámetro," *Espiral de Noticias*, cutting in *Integral,* 1957.

[46] The news article "Los Cerros También se Construyen: Un Helicoide en la Roca Tarpeya" (June 13, 1955), stated that earthwork was about to get underway in July 1955. Nevertheless, according to Dirk Bornhorst's diary, the earth-moving process commenced in 1956.

[47] Bornhorst, *El Helicoide*, 89.

[48] According to Bornhorst, the whereabout of these plans is presently unknown.

swept over Fuerzas Armadas Avenue.[49] Its 55-meter span and 8 meters wide was held up by just two pillars, and could support the weight of fifteen-ton trucks. Eventually known as Portachuelo Bridge, its design became an "instant target of international criticism."[50] Nevertheless, after having been completed, this daring engineer piece ended up inspiring similar future structures. In fact, other international companies managed to patent this idea when they realized its economic significance.[51]

The project had advanced during 1955, and the building process lasted two years approximately, from 1956 to January 1958, when Pérez Jiménez' regime was overthrown. This sudden halt in the construction turned out to be temporary; the building process would be resumed with the support of the new Government Junta.

AS VIRTUAL AS INESCAPABLE: MOBILITY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Before 1958, however, the Helicoid incorporated another significant technological feature: the four aforementioned inclined elevators. For a building, whose leitmotiv was mobility, the use of escalators and elevators was fundamental. Fabricated by Wertheim-Werke AG, a well-known Viennese manufacturer, these elevators were able to transport simultaneously 96 persons at a speed of 2 meters per second (6.5 ft./sec.) over 440 meters up (1,440 ft. approximately), in cabins running on rails at a 30° angle.[52] An electronically controlled starting-and-stopping system, called *Thyratronic*, "a powerful and modern brain" which totally commanded the cabin's movements, produced perfect acceleration curves.[53] Also, according to the specifications, each

[49] See figures 11.11 (drawing on the right); 11.13 (upper photograph); 11.16 (bottom), and 11.19 (letter H: Portachuelo Bridge).

[50] Bornhorst, *El Helicoide*, 90.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid; "96 personas a dos metros por segundo," *Espiral de Noticias*, cutting in *Integral,* 1957; "The Helicoid under Construction," brochure, 1958-61.

[53] "96 personas a dos metros por segundo," *Espiral de Noticias*, cutting in *Integral,* 1957.

cabin had photo-detector doors, modern safety equipment, telephone, air conditioning, special lighting in the floor, and a luminous directory with the shops' names. By 1957 the rails were already put in place, and the first of the four elevators arrived in Venezuela (*figure 11.27*).

Besides the inclined elevators, an escalator system, additional elevators and stairs provided further vertical communication throughout the project. The fundamental principle of an absolute separation of motor and pedestrian traffic was strictly observed in the design. A child could walk everywhere in the helicoid from top to bottom without ever having to cross a traffic lane.

Nevertheless, the use of technology did not stop at this point; it went further. A heliport was planned to be located in the Helicoid, "intended to save tedious visits between far-off headquarters."[54] Also, between the rocky center of the building and the back wall of the shops, thre was provided a continuous tunnel for mechanical installations, including plumbing, electricity, mechanical ventilation, telephone, television, etc. The tunnel had easy access for repairs and was ideal for installation of future facilities.[55]

Finally, in order to guide the visitor, an internal television system would be provided. Also, information centers would be strategically placed.

ON THE CONTEXT: SUBLIMITY IN CARACAS?

In less than five years the immediate context surrounding the Helicoid would change drastically. In fact, by the late 1950s, new aesthetic values, a new urban scale, and a different city dynamics, all based on the notions of mobility and speed, had modified the face of Caracas. The Helicoid had certainly incorporated these new principles; even its aesthetics seemed to embrace the velocity of the futurists and the impressive movement of the expressionists. It embodied the

[54] Bornhorst, *El Helicoide*, 89.

[55] Ibid.

new highway mobility (*figure 11.28*). Notwithstanding, it went further. The building had emerged from its context carrying a complex, paradoxical character. It was both a building and a hill; an architectural work and a mechanical machine. It was volume, structure and space at the same time. It was a static building based on mobility, and also a complex network of reinforced concrete inherently combined with cutting-edge telecommunication technology. Its colossal dimensions left a huge mark in the whole urban sprawl of Caracas, while its programmatic essence didn't allow anybody to differentiate between its architectural and its infrastructural nature. Even large buildings of the time, such as Cervezas Caracas couldn't confront it (*figure 11.29*).

More dramatic and contrasting, a view from a traditional street revealed part of the essence of the Helicoid (*figure 11.30*). It certainly evidenced a city and a society with huge contrasts. But such an immense gap seemed to go beyond the simple contrast between a traditional and a modern city. The Helicoid was positively more than just a piece of modern architecture. Probably a sense of déjà vu came over some pedestrians when walking down the street. Either the awe-inspiring gesture of William Gilpin or the gravure of Yosemite Fall by Gustave Doré might irrupt suddenly in the imagination.

Very likely people at the time were intoxicated by the bizarre presence of the Helicoid. However, once inside the building (or rather, around it, through their ramps), the views were particularly engaging. A mixture of nature and city was at its feet: *El Avila* Mountain (another impressive monument), the Simón Bolívar Center, and a sea of small buildings in continuous, effervescent transformation (*figure 11.31*). Such a display of modernity and technology commanding the geography, but at the same time becoming part of it, definitely kept a close relation with timeless principles, and perhaps even with a Utopian search.

LOS CERROS TAMBIEN SE APROVECHAN: 1955

UN HELICOIDE EN ROCA TARPEYA

CON EFECTO PIRAMIDAL Y COSTO DE 30 MILLONES

MARACAIBO

Está en Estudio la Fundación De una Universidad Privada

FIGURE 11.4

"Making the most of the hills: a helicoid on the Tarpeian Rock, with pyramidal effect and cost of 30 million," one of the earliest news articles on the Helicoid. On other news (below), President Pérez Jiménez saluted some representatives of the Catholic Church. Source: *El Universal* (?) (June 13, 1955), Dirk Bornhorst Archive.

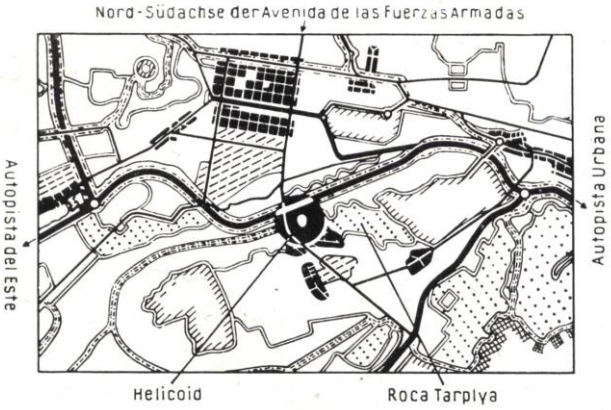


FIGURE 11.6

Location of the Helicoid in relation to some urban references: East Highway, Fuerzas Armadas Avenue and Tarpeian Rock. This area corresponds to the red box in *figure 11.5*. Source: Werner Krug, *Orion* 5, 1959, 380.

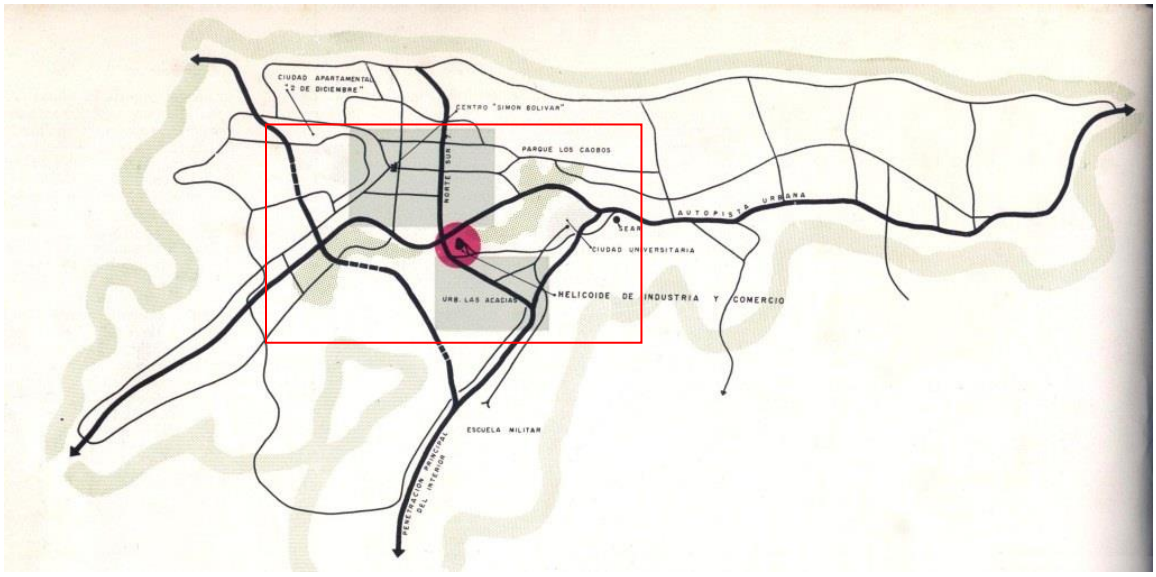


FIGURE 11.5

Location of the Helicoid in relation to Caracas' urban sprawl. From left to right: Community December 2; downtown area (indicated as a grey square); Simón Bolívar Center (within downtown); Fuerzas Armadas Av. (indicated as Norte-Sur 7); military installations, including Los Proceres Promenade (bottom); University City; Sears, and East Highway. A red box has been added to the original image for further urban details (see *fig. 11.16*). Source: *Integral* 5 (May-June 1956). Source: *Integral* 5 (1956).

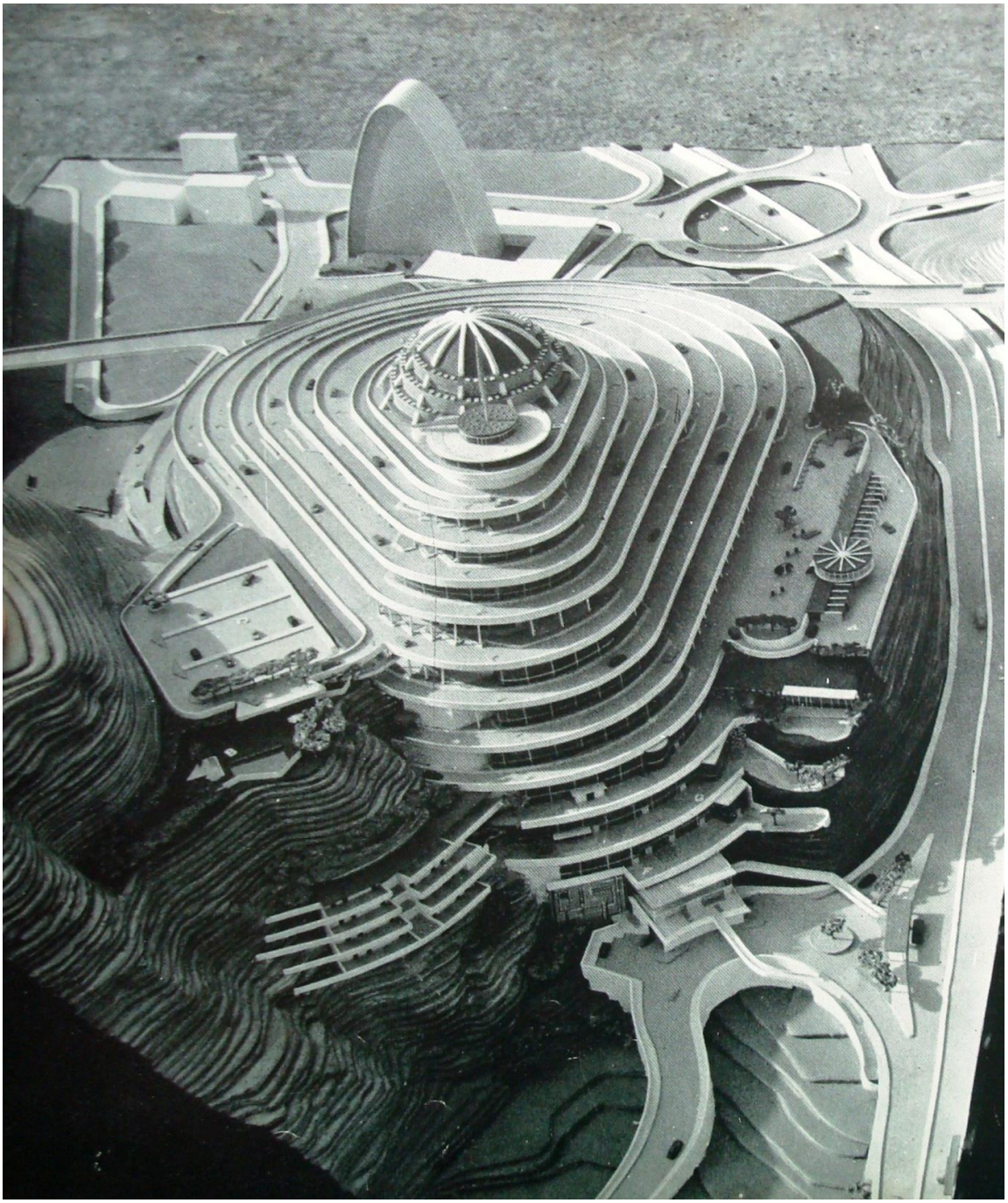


FIGURE 11.7
Jorge Romero Gutiérrez, Pedro Neuberger, and Dirk Bornhorst, the Tarpeian Rock's Helicoid, Shopping Center and Industrial Exhibition, Caracas, 1955. View of the model. Notice the entrance of the inclined elevators in the foreground, on the building's base. Behind the Helicoid, at the background: *La Parábola* Professional Center. Source: *Integral*, 5 (1956).

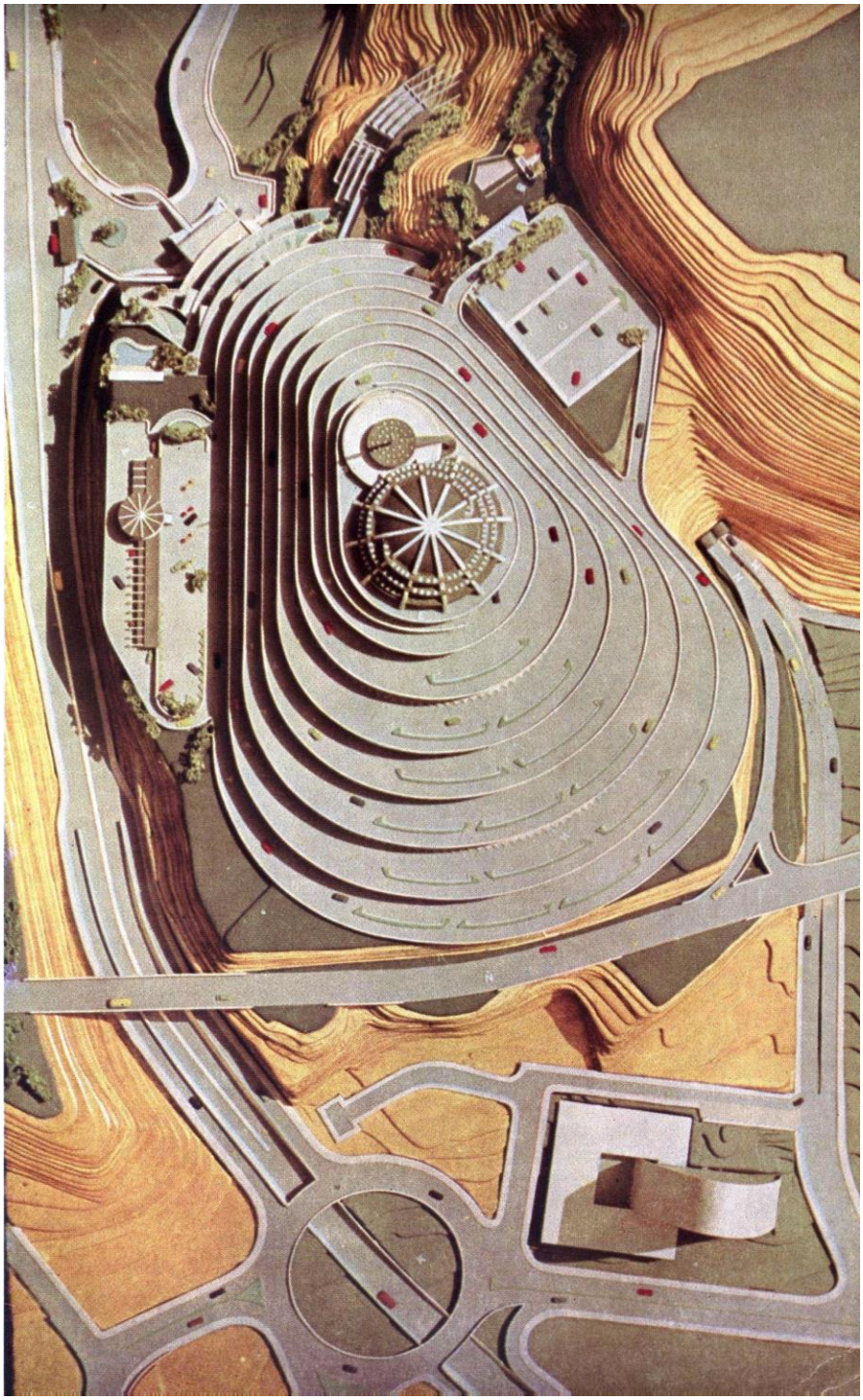


FIGURE 11.8
J. Romero Gutiérrez, P. Neuberger, and D. Bornhorst, the Tarpeian Rock's Helicoid, Shopping Center and Industrial Exhibition, Caracas, 1955. Zenithal view of the model. Notice the Automobile Center on the left, the Parking Building on the right, and an early version of the dome (in reinforce concrete) at the top. At the bottom: *La Parábola* Professional Center. Source: *Integral*, 5 (1956).

FIGURE 11.9
Partners of *Arquitectura y Urbanismo, C.A*. and the editors of *Integral*, meeting at the magazine's office, *Centro Profesional del Este*, April 1955. Standing, from left to right: Carlos González Bogen (magazine's Artistic Director), Miguel Salvador (Technical Director), Dirk Bornhorst, Pedro Neuberger, and Violeta Roffé (Coordinator); seating: Jorge Romero Gutiérrez. Source: Dirk Bornhorst Archive.

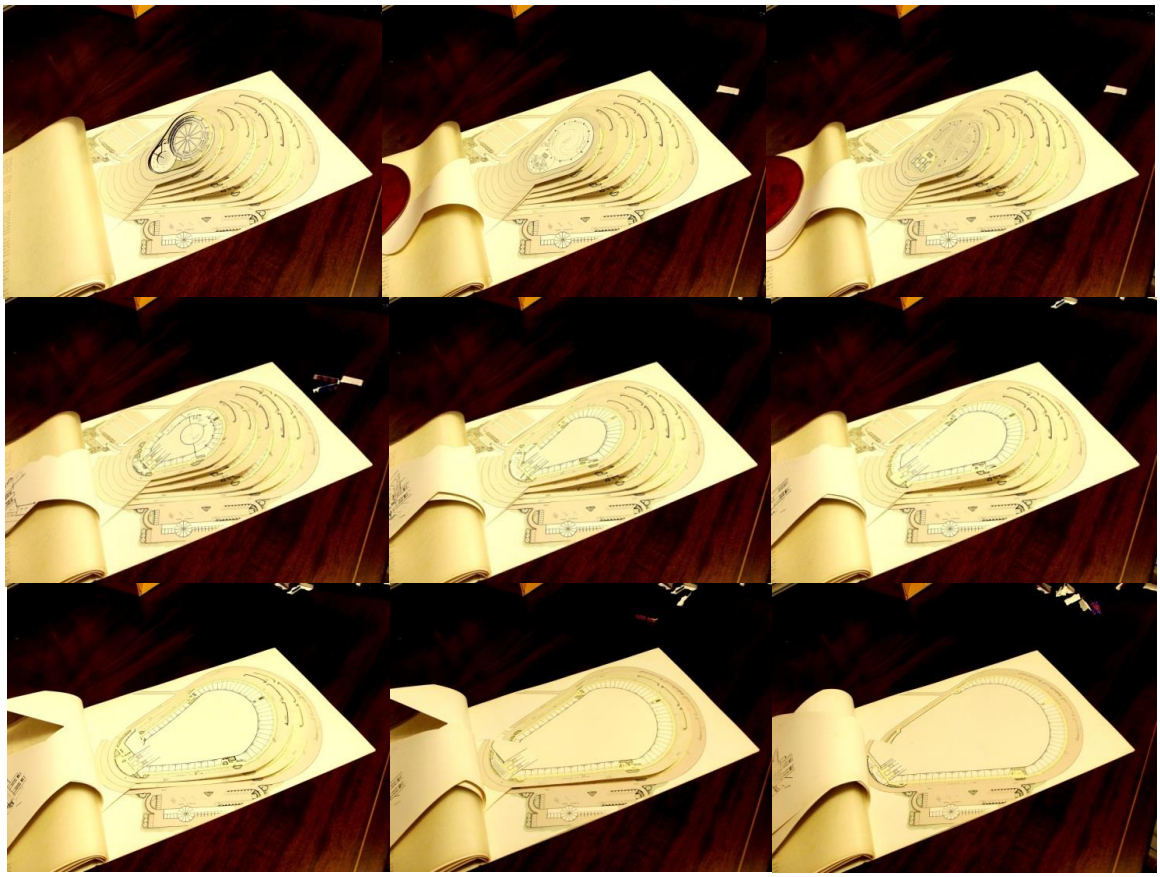


FIGURE 11.10
"Model" of the Helicoid inserted in *Integral* magazine, as part of the article "Helicoide de la Roca Tarpeya. Centro Comercial y Exposición de Industrias," published in May-June 1956. Sequence of photos by Jorge Villota P., based on material from the Dirk Bornhorst Archive.

FIGURE 11.11

Boletín Informativo of the Helicoid, Number 1, cover and first interior page. Source: *Boletín Informativo* 1 (Apr. 1959), form Dirk Bornhorst Archive.

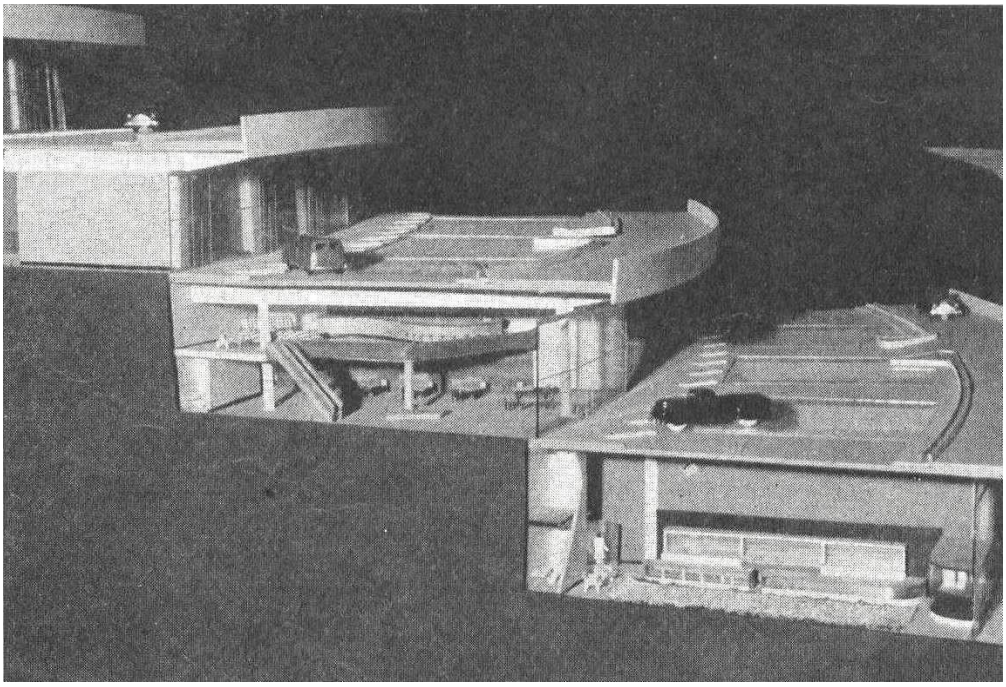


FIGURE 11.12

J. Romero Gutiérrez, P. Neuberger, and D. Bornhorst, the Helicoid, Caracas, 1955. Section model (North Sector) showing different types of commercial premises, as well as the relation between thoroughfare, parking area and stores. Source: Werner G. Krug, *Orion* 5, 1959, 383.

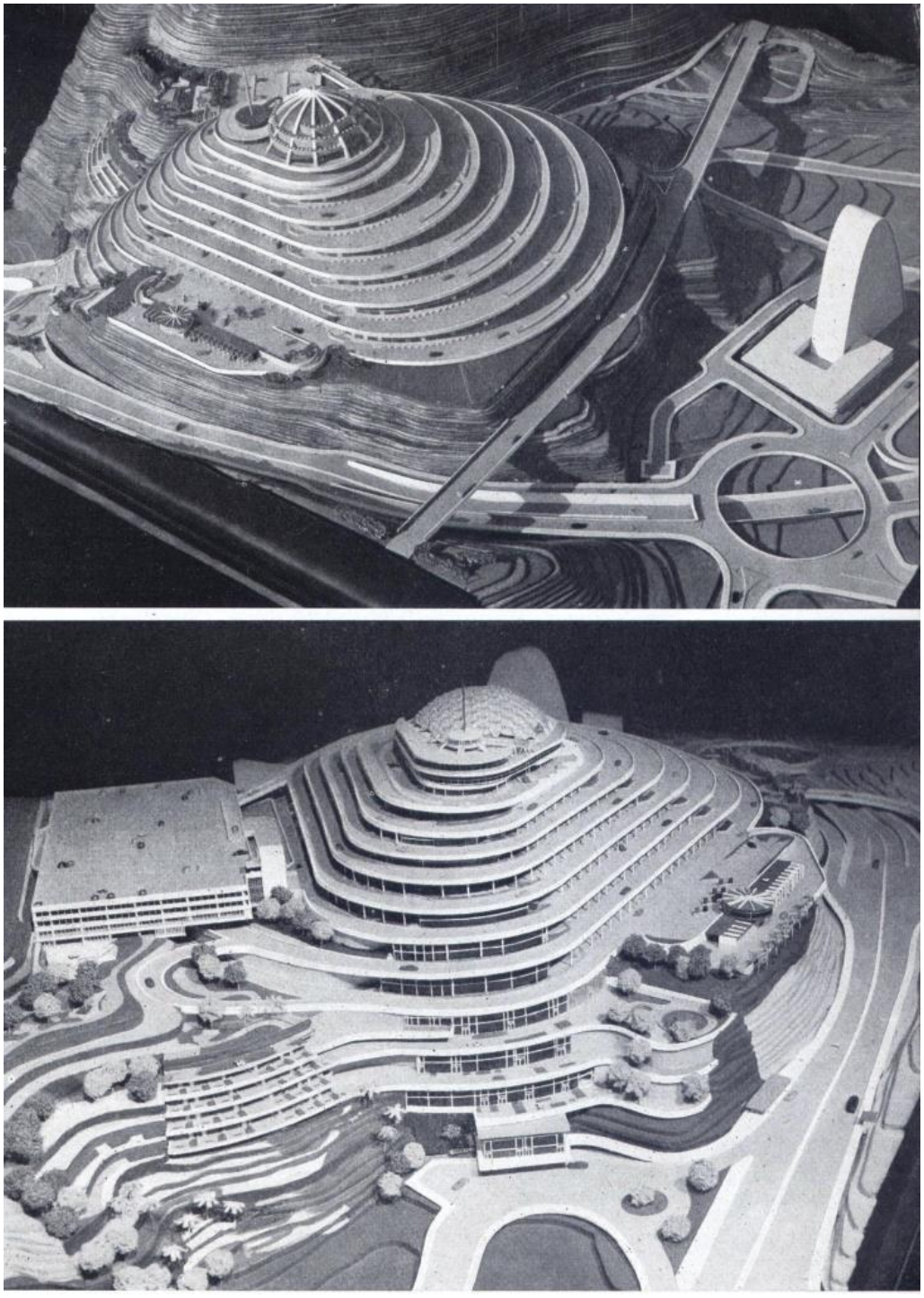


FIGURE 11.13
J. Romero Gutiérrez, P. Neuberger, and D. Bornhorst, the Helicoid, Caracas, 1955-1959. Two different stages of the project. The first one (1955) showed a sort of "Nervi" structure at the top, with a "mini-helicoid" for pedestrians. The second version (*ca.* 1959) exhibited the Fuller's dome atop the building, an enlarged parking area (Parking Building, on the left), and a landscape treatment in front of it. Source: Werner G. Krug, *Orion* 5, 1959, 385.

FIGURE 11.14
Wolfgang Larrazábal, President of Government Junta of 1958, looking at the Helicoid's dome during an official visit (probably at Centro Profesional del Este). Notice the rolling mechanism of the model. Romero Gutiérrez was third from left to right (in white suit), and Bornhorst was behind President Larrazábal. Everybody seemed to be waiting for the official approval. Source: photograph by Studios Jacky, Dirk Bornhorst Archive.

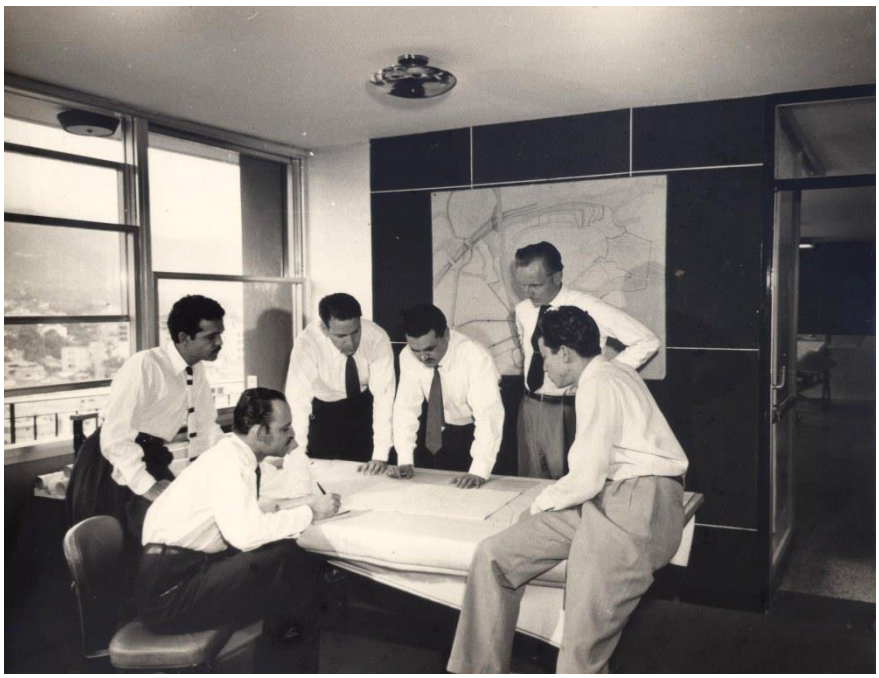


FIGURE 11.15
Arquitectura y Urbanismo, C.A., meeting at the office. From left to right (in front of the table): Pedro Neuberger, Jorge Romero Gutiérrez, and Dirk Bornhorst. Also present at that meeting: José Luis Gómez (urbanist, partner), Carlos Pietri Martínez (office manager), and an unknown person. At the background (on the wall) there was a topographic plan of the Helicoid. Source: Dirk Bornhorst Archive.

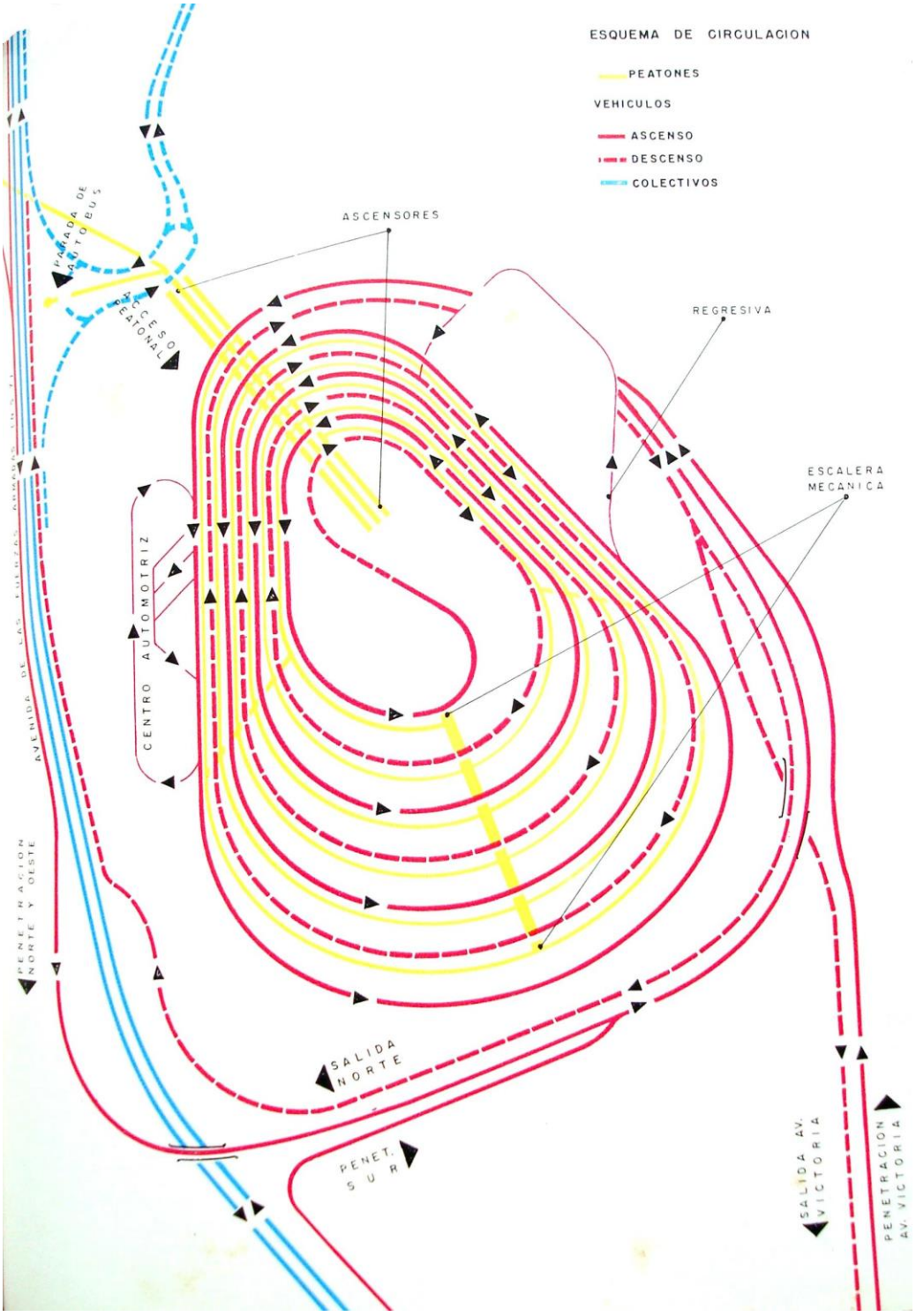


FIGURE 11.16
The Helicoid, circulation scheme. Yellow line: pedestrians; Red line (continuous): upward vehicles; Red line (dotted): downward vehicles; Blue line: public transportation. Notice also the inclined elevators (*ascensores*), and the escalator (*escalera mecánica*) Source: *Integral* 5 (1956).

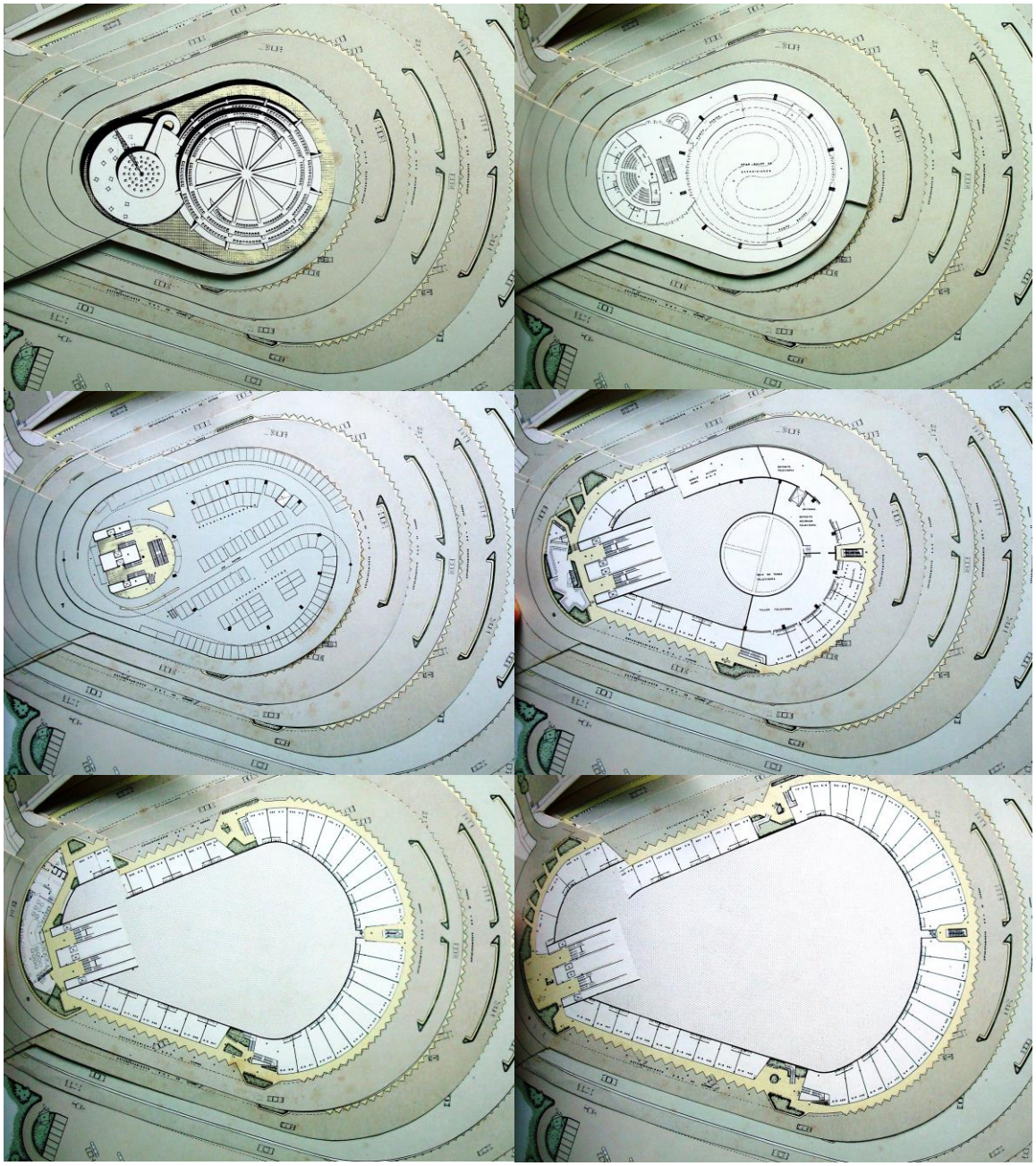


FIGURE 11.17
J. Romero Gutiérrez, P. Neuberger, and D. Bornhorst, the Helicoid, sequence of plans (from left to right) taken from de "model" inserted in *Integral* 5 (1956), as part of the article "Helicoide de la Roca Tarpeya. Centro Comercial y Exposición de Industrias" (*cf. figure 11.10*). Sequence of photos by Jorge Villota P., based on material from the Dirk Bornhorst Archive.

FIGURE 11.18
The Helicoid, angled parking directly in front of the shops, ca. 1957. Photo by Studios Jacky. Source: Dirk Bornhorst Archive.

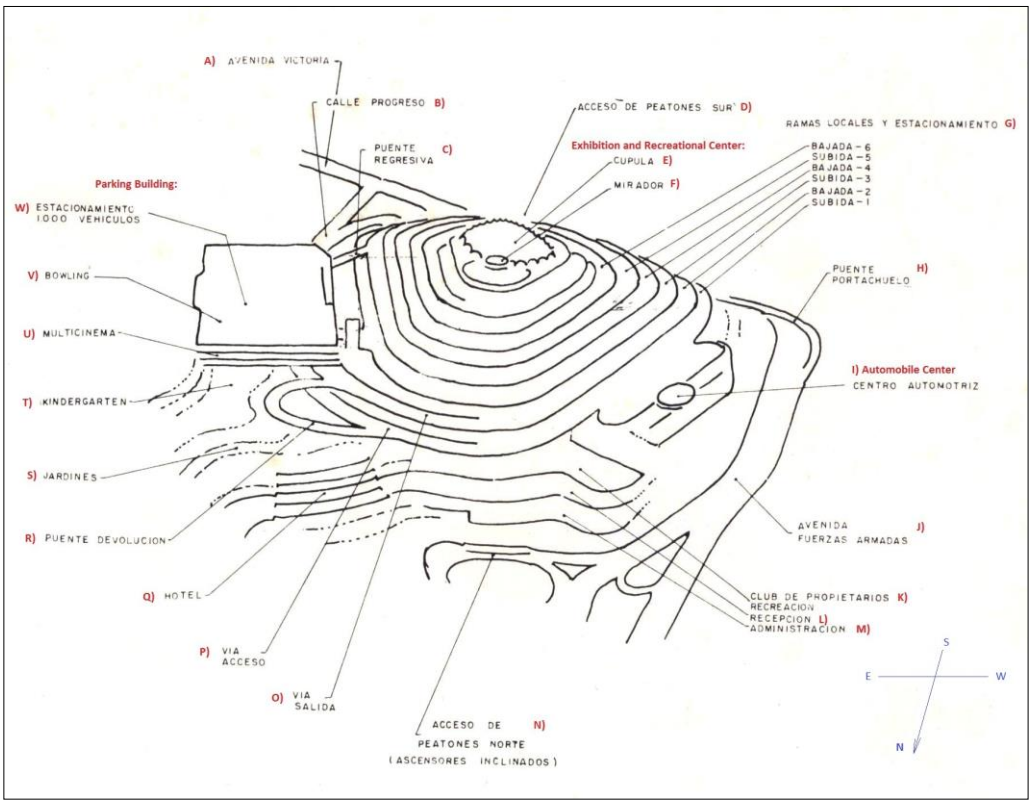


FIGURE 11.19
The Helicoid, scheme of organization. Clockwise: A) *Victoria* Avenue; B) *Progreso* Street; C) Return bridge, and D) South pedestrian access (not visible). **Exhibition and Recreation Center**: E) Dome, and F) Belvedere. G) Local branches and parking (downhill 6, uphill 5, downhill 4, uphill 3, downhill 2, uphill 1); H) *Portachuelo* bridge; I) *Centro Automotriz* or **Automobile Center**; J) *Fuerzas Armadas* Avenue; K) *Club de Propietarios* or Shop Owners Club; L) Reception desk; M) Administration; N) North pedestrian access; O) Automobile exit; P) Automobile access; Q) Hotel; R) Return bridge, and S) Gardens. **Parking Building**: T) Kindergarten; U) Multi-room Movie Theater; V) Bowling, and W) Parking for 1,000 vehicles. Source: *Baumeister* 3 (March 1961): 213. The original illustration was edited specially for the purposes of this dissertation. Identification letters (for translation), titles, and a North arrow were added.

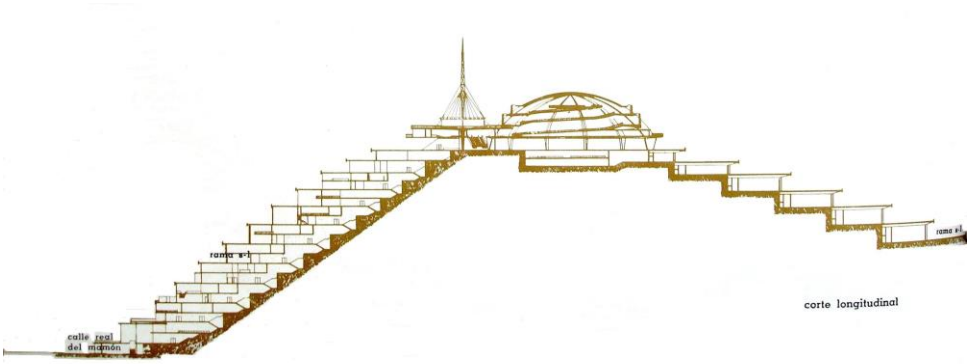


FIGURE 11.20
The Helicoid, longitudinal section (North-South). Four inclined elevators ran throughout the North part (on the left). Source: *Integral* 5 (1956).

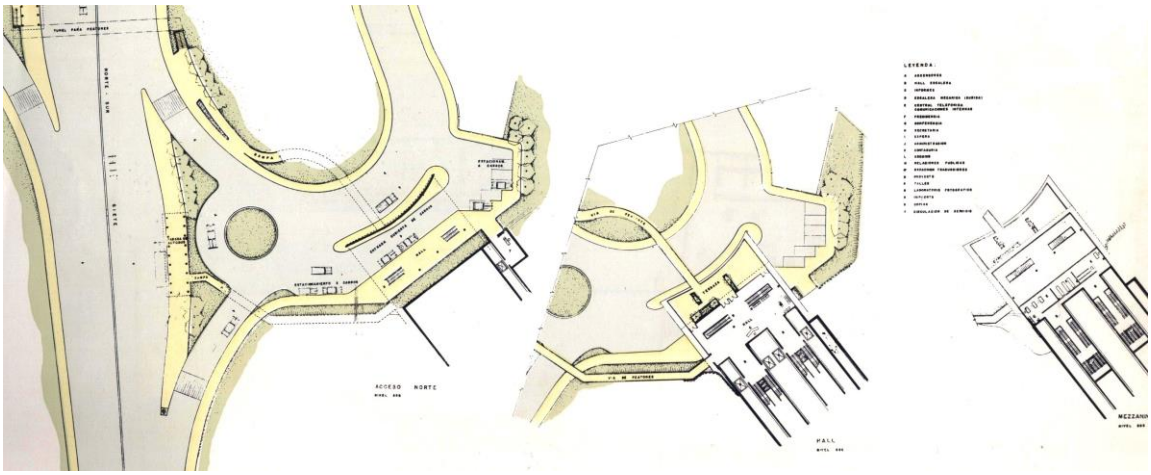


FIGURE 11.21
The Helicoid, North Entrance (automobile access), Hall (pedestrian access by bridges), Mezzanine. Notice the four inclined elevators. Source: *Integral* 5 (1956).

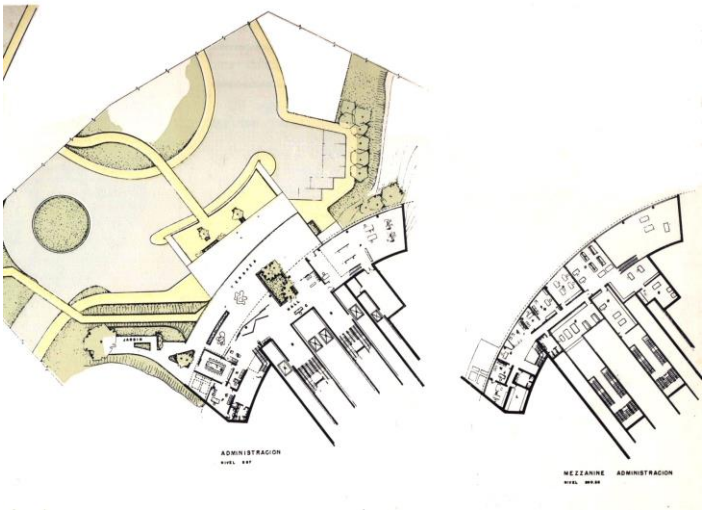


FIGURE 11.22
The Helicoid, North Section. Levels above the mezzanine: the Management Center. Source: *Integral* 5 (1956).

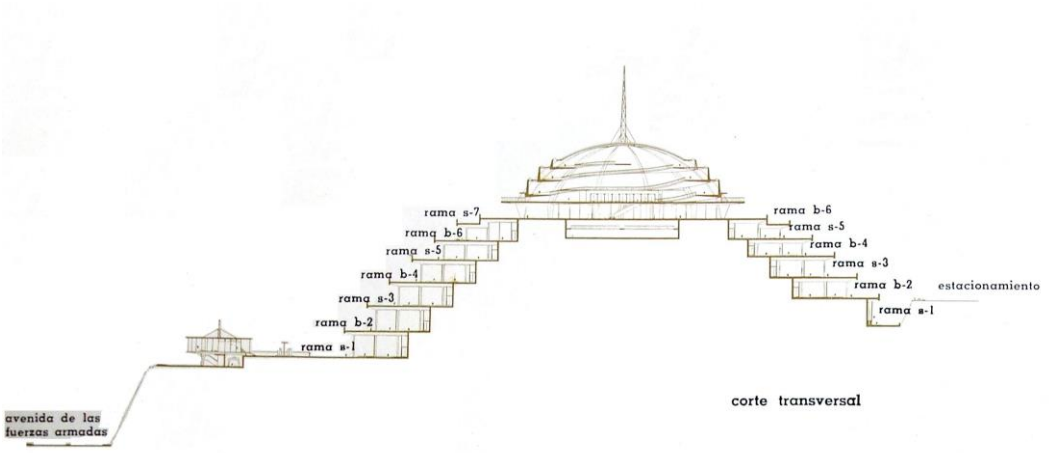


FIGURE 11.23
The Helicoid, transversal section (West-East). Notice the Automobile Center, on the left, and the Parking Building (just indicated), on the right. Source: *Integral* 5 (1956).

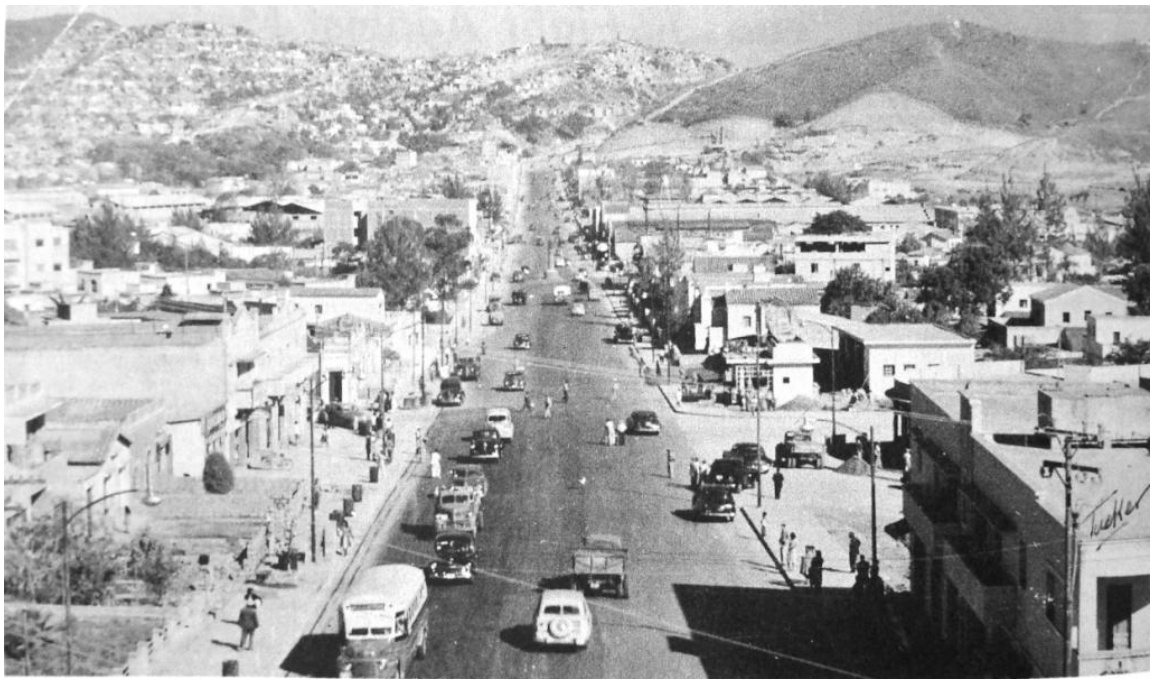


FIGURE 11.24
Nueva Granada Avenue, *ca*. 1950. At the end, the Tarpeian Rock; the construction of the Helicoid would start approximately six years later on the hill located on the right. The urban tissue of this neighborhood and the façade of the avenue would dramatically change throughout the decade. Source: *Venezuela Up-to-date* (July 1950), 16.

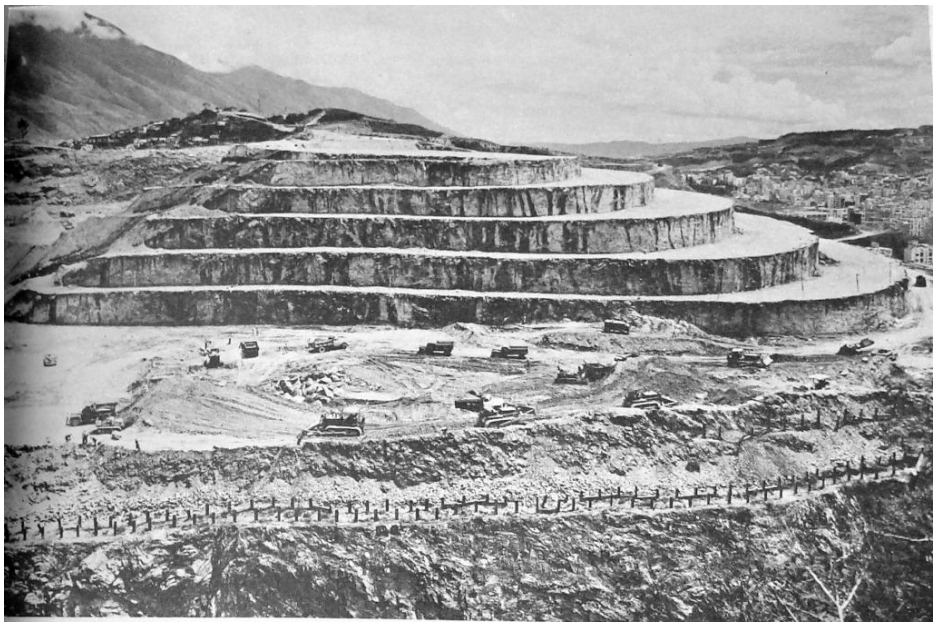


FIGURE 11.25
"Something unusual:" Helicoid's earthwork in the Tarpeian Rock, Caracas, Venezuela,1956. Photo by Hamilton Wright Org. Source: *Venezuela Up-to-date* (Jan. 1958).

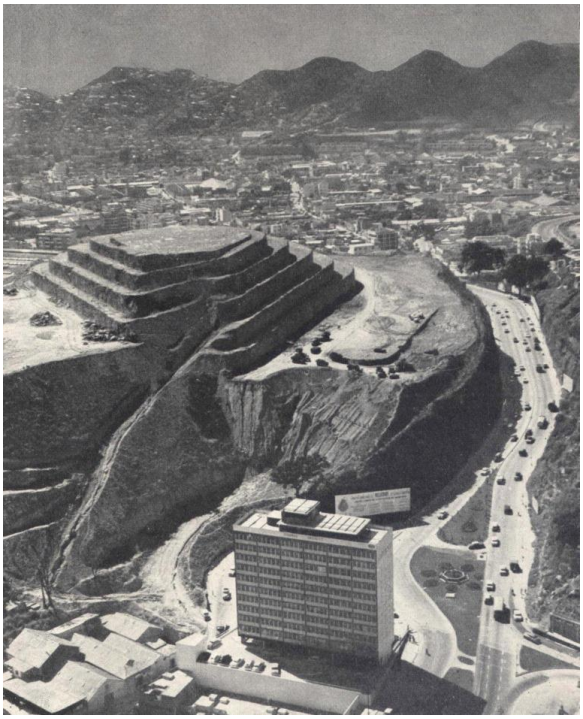


FIGURE 11.26
Helicoid's earthwork in the Tarpeian Rock, Caracas, 1956. View of Fuerzas Armadas Av. (foreground) and its continuation, Nueva Granada Av. (background). Source: Werner G. Krug, *Orion* 5, 1959, 381.

FIGURE 11.27
Helicoid's earthwork, *ca.* 1957 (almost same viewpoint than *fig. 11.28*). The structure to receive the inclined elevators was quite advanced, as well as some section of the ramp. Source: Dirk Bornhorst Archive.

FIGURE 11.28
J. Romero Gutiérrez, P. Neuberger, and D. Bornhorst, the Helicoid in process of construction, *ca.* 1958. Photo by Studios Jacky. Source: Dirk Bornhorst Archive.

FIGURE 11.29
J. Romero Gutiérrez, P. Neuberger, and D. Bornhorst, the Helicoid from Fuerzas Armadas Avenue, *ca.* 1958. Modernity had set new principles of planning and mobility over the traditional city (notice the buildings emerging from Vuelta del Casquillo Street, between the avenue and the Tarpeian Rock [cf. *fig. 11.32*]). The Helicoid would place itself beyond the reach of modern canons. Photo by Studios Jacky. Source: Dirk Bornhorst Archive.

FIGURE 11.30
J. Romero Gutiérrez, P. Neuberger, and D. Bornhorst, the Helicoid from Vuelta del Casquillo Street (parallel to Fuerzas Armadas Av. [cf. *fig. 11.31*]), *ca*. 1959. Photo by Studios Jacky. Source: Dirk Bornhorst Archive.

FIGURE 11.31
J. Romero Gutiérrez, P. Neuberger, and D. Bornhorst, the Helicoid, North direction view, *ca*. 1958: part of downtown Caracas, the Simón Bolívar Center, and the Avila Mountain. Photo by Studios Jacky. Source: Dirk Bornhorst Archive.

This unconventional amalgamation of nature, technology, mobility and architecture, however, was not actually new. Moreover, neither *The New York Times* nor the MoMA were the first media to focus their attention on the Helicoid. In fact, all these events and news articles had been preceded by a short report of *Time* magazine, issued in 1957; perhaps the first international recognition the Helicoid received. Entitled "Shapes of the Future," the report analyzed two important buildings in Caracas. Apart from the Helicoid, it also mentioned the Museum of Modern Art of Caracas by well-known Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer. The emphasis, however, was put on the former:

> Manhattan has its skyscrapers, Paris its Eiffel Tower, but the hilltops of Caracas in Venezuela will soon be capped with a pair of architectural shapes that are calculated to match any man-made wonders anywhere. One is Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer's art museum in the form of an inverted pyramid, schedule for completion at the end of next year. The other is a self-contained commercial city that looks like a stack of flying saucers in close formation flight. With foundation work already under way last week, the center should be open for business some time in 1960.[56]

Such "self-contained commercial city," by the way, was based on a not entirely new idea. As a matter of fact, the relationship between automobile and architecture had been a long-standing issue (at least, since the early twentieth century). On this regard, one of the first references to this had to do, paradoxically, with the traffic congestion. An editorial cartoon published in *Los Angeles Times* in the early 1920s, by making reference to the Bible's well-known ill-fated story, regarded this problem as "The modern Tower of Babel," (*figure 11.32*). The concern of that cartoon's author, who chose a specific example to represent a problem, recalled the dramatic character of the ziggurat showed in Michael Curtiz's *Noah's Ark*, 1928: the Tower of Babel under construction, surrounded by the stressful hubbub and tingling of thousands of workers, and close to a disaster (*figure 11.33*). There were even some "solutions," equally gigantic as the problem. Announced as "The problem solved," the Mammoth Office Building and Garage in Los Angeles incorporated a "multistory garage as a centerpiece of an office building (*figure 11.34*)."

[56] *Time* magazine (April 22, 1957, Vol.69 Issue 16), 90.

This way, "not only there would be parking space for tenants and visitors alike, but that space lay immediately adjacent to the office to which its party was destined."[57]

The Mammoth Building would be neither the first, nor the last case attempting to relate automobile with architecture. One of the most famous examples was the Fiat Factory in Turin. Designed by Giacomo Matté-Trucco, and built between 1916 and 1923, it was one of the first industrial buildings in using reinforced concrete in its structure, and more importantly, it was highly influential in modern architects because of the activation of its roof. Matté-Trucco had sequentially distributed (upward) the production line though the five-story building, from raw materials to assembled cars, so the rooftop was in reality a test track (*figure 11.35*). The movement of cars along the building's roof was probably an uncanny, bizarre scene. Nevertheless, perhaps even more surrealistic was the extension for Rio de Janeiro by Le Corbusier. Conceived in 1930 during a visit to that city, the proposal exhibited a snake-like building displaying freely throughout (and over) the traditional urban sprawl. The most remarkable, however, was the highway located atop the building. Volitively paradoxical, the building embraced a triple odd condition: an exotic (maybe natural) place, which was being invaded by an over-scale building, which in turn, to cap it all, had a highway atop (*figure 11.36*).

All of these examples have two aspects in common. The first one was, obviously, the sui generis relationship between automobile and architecture. The second one was the apprehension emerged, precisely, from this tense relation. Such restlessness also included a paradoxical feeling of fear and admiration, perhaps because of the scale or the different nature of the elements involved. In both cases, the Fiat Factory and Rio de Janeiro's serpentine mega building, the activation of the roof and the sudden, unimaginable presence of the automobile represented the main source of disquiet. Nevertheless, there were other two cases in which the car presence was not just "added" to the roof, but was organically incorporated into the building conception: the Point Park Civic Center in Pittsburgh, and particularly the Gordon Strong Automobile Objective at the Sugarloaf Mountain, Maryland. Having been designed by Frank

[57] Richard Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall. Architecture, the Automobile and Retailing in Los Angeles, 1920-1950.* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1997.

Lloyd Wright, both projects would be the incarnation of his thoughts on a new architectural type: a sort of cultural, recreational complex known as “automobile objective.”

FIGURE 11.32
“The modern Tower of Babel,” editorial cartoon. Source: *Los Angeles Times* (Dec. 13, 1923).

FIGURE 11.34
“The problem solved,” Mammoth Office Building and Garage, Los Angeles. Source: *Los Angeles Times* (Feb. 27, 1924).

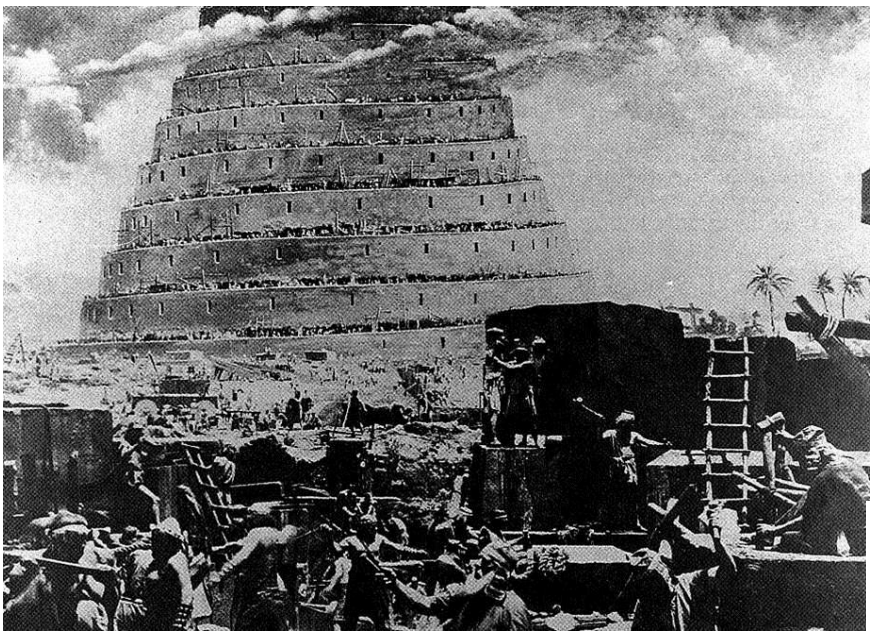


FIGURE 11.33
Michael Curtiz, frame from *Noah’s Ark*, 1928. Source: Ramirez (1991).

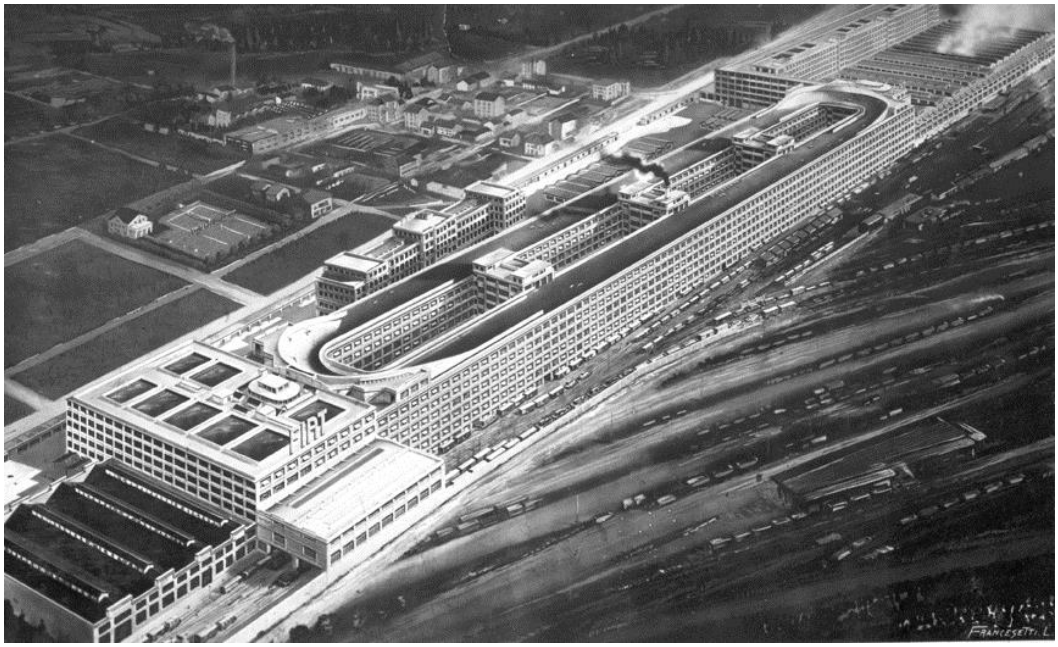


FIGURE 11.35
Giacomo Matté-Trucco, Fiat Factory, Turin, 1916-1923. A rooftop test track. Source: Frampton (2007), 39.

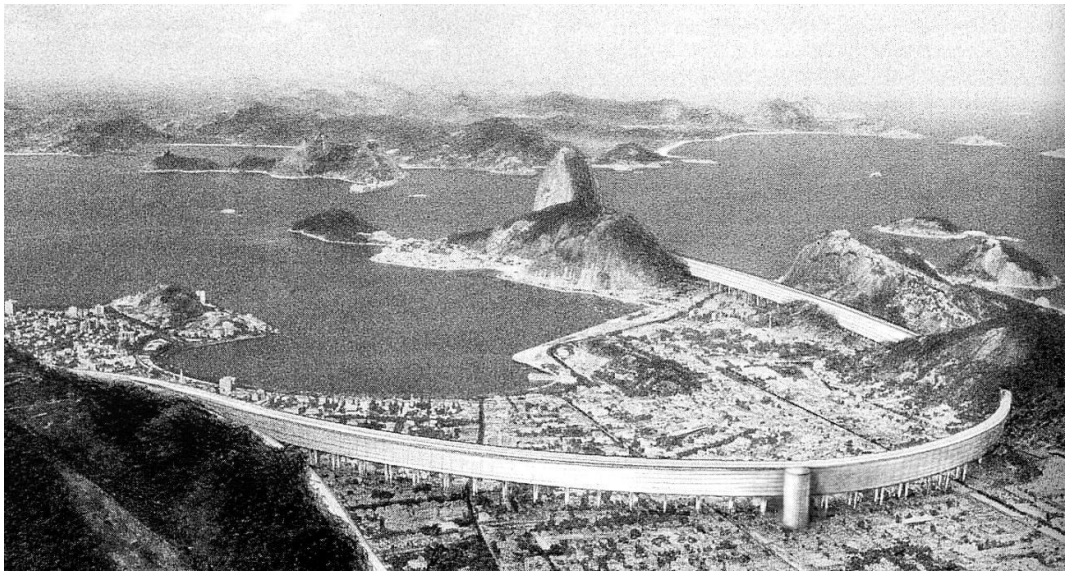


FIGURE 11.36
Le Corbusier, extension for Rio de Janeiro, 1930 (photomontage). A highway on top of curving housing building. Source: Tsiomis (1999).

SEARCHING THE *POINT* AND THE *GUGGENHEIM*'S ORIGINS: THE *AUTOMOBILE OBJECTIVE*

One of the most ambitious architectural projects designed by Wright, for its scale, complexity, and contextual impact, was the Point Park Civic Center in downtown Pittsburgh (the Golden Triangle). Conceived in 1947 as a civic center on a commission from Edgar Kaufmann,[58] the Point offered a wide variety of amenities, having in mind to bring together Pittsburghers of different social classes and interests (*figure 11.37*).[59] The project included one tall and two low office buildings; a low circular building at the tip of the Point containing an aquarium, a swimming pool, and a restaurant; and two cantilevered bridges over the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers. However, the most impressive building of the project was a round megastructure, wrapped by a spiral ramp, containing a sport arena, a domed exhibition hall, a planetarium, and three large theaters.[60] As shown in the building's section (*figure 11.38*),

> the outer edge of the ramp was a roadway, and the inner portion provided space for parking and small shops (…) The ramp was to have enclosed a vast atrium-like space, illuminated by skylights around the perimeter of the rooftop garden and occupied by a variety of structures of reinforced-concrete cantilever and shell construction (…) The arrival and lobby area left of center is framed by the distinctive columns Wright invented for the Johnson Wax Administrative Building.[61]

In fact, what was remarkable in this project is its impressive scale. In a letter sent to Wright in early 1947, Kaufmann asked for a demanding requirement of program area: 280,000 square feet of office space for federal, state, and community chest agencies; 100,000 square feet for an exhibition hall; an sport arena with 16,000 seats; parking lots; and a performing arts center that

[58] Edgar J. Kaufmann (1885-1955) was a prominent German-American businessman and philanthropist of Pittsburgh. It is important to remember that twelve years before Wright had designed the Kaufmann Residence or "Fallingwater," in rural southwestern Pennsylvania.

[59] An extensive and accurate analysis of this building, its design process, and its drawings is presented by Richard Cleary in *Merchant Prince and Master Builder: Edgar J. Kaufmann and Frank Lloyd Wright* (Pittsburgh: Heinz Architectural Center, 1999), 53-73, and 144-160.

[60] Ibid, 144.

[61] Ibid, 150-151.

included a 10,000-seat amphitheater and two smaller theaters of 1,000 and 300 seats.[62] Eventually the program that Wright developed contained an opera house, three movie theaters, a convention hall, a planetarium, and a glass-domed sports arena.[63]

Apart from its scale, there were other aspects that made the Point an outstanding and sui generis architectural proposal: its technical tour de force in using reinforced concrete in different ways, and its emphasis on the automobile. In this sense, the accessibility of the project (to the general area, and to the megastructure) was a fundamental issue to Wright. A huge underground area for parking was guaranteed. Moreover, Wright conceived the center as "a permanent fair, animated night and day by tens of thousands of people arriving by automobile, boat, and even dirigible."[64] Finally, the always present greenery throughout the project, and the contrast of the building with the urban environment (because of its scale and form) were frankly remarkable. The Point Park Civic Center would never be built.

Previously, in 1943, Wright had received the commission from Solomon Guggeheim to design the new permanent structure for the growing collection of the Museum of Non-Objective Painting. The design process went through many revisions and tribulation until the new building opened in 1959. There was never in the career of Wright a commission that has brought him "more trouble and pain than this one."[65] However, the result was of great worth. After all, as Guggenheim stipulated, the building should be "like no other in the world."[66] As it would happen later in the Point project, the building marked a deep contrast with its context; in this case, however, just in morphological terms. In its final version, the building was basically made of a spiraling interior ramp (which is reflected externally) that grows larger with height.

[62] Letter dated Feb. 7, 1947. Cited by Cleary, *Merchant*, 57.

[63] Ibid, 58.

[64] Ibid, 149.

[65] Bruce Brooks, Pfeiffer, *Frank Lloyd Wright Drawings. Masterworks from the Frank Lloyd Wright Archives* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, in association with the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation and the Phoenix Art Museum, 1990), 148.

[66] Ibid.

Programmatically, the museum contemplated an elevator that led the visitors to the upper level. Once at the top, the visitor started descending gradually through the ramp. The pieces of art were exposed on the curved wall. In other words, the building provided a single continuous spatial experience. Unlike the Point, the Guggenheim was built. However, their scales couldn't be compared.

The spiral scheme followed by Wright in those two projects was not as unique as they appeared at a first glance. Actually, during his life he designed several proposals using the strategy of ascending-wrapping ramps. Nevertheless, there was an important project from 1920s which, despite its seminal character, did not receive the importance that merited: the Gordon Strong Automobile Objective and Planetarium. Like the Point, it would never be built.

In 1924 Wright received a commission from Gordon Strong to design a resort facility for the summit of Sugarloaf Mountain, a monadnock located in Maryland. An important Chicago businessman, Strong had devoted himself to real estate. His business activities, however, were not confined to Illinois. In 1902 he started buying land on the mountain with plans to develop a rural retreat. During twenty years he was developing the area way up the mountain with facilities, and in 1926 he officially opened "Sugarloaf" to visitors. Subsequent approval from guests convinced him to develop a mountain per se, which remained in its natural state, as a profitable enterprise. It was at this point when Strong proposed an "automobile objective" as a resort facility. After all, the idea seemed to be viable. Apart from its natural beauty, the place was also accessible; next to a railroad stop between Washington and Chicago.[67]

The most important requirement of Strong was to provide maximum facility for automobile in terms of accessibility and movement within the project per se.[68] The project's sketches showed a circular ziggurat following a geometry of spiral (*figures 11.39* and *11.40*). It was planned to be

[67] An accurate analysis of the Sugarloaf Mountain project is presented by Mark Reinberger in "The Sugarloaf Mountain Project and Frank Lloyd Wright's Vision of a New World," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (March 1984): 38-52.

[68] Ibid, 39.

an uninterrupted vehicular route; once having arrived the top, the automobile followed an s-shape curve and started its downward route (*figure 11.41*). An early version proposed (apart from a mast, probably for dirigible mooring) an auditorium, while in the second one, in place of the auditorium, Wright substituted a huge dome planetarium (*figure 11.42*). The Objective was to hold about 1,000 people; all the visitors would be able to enjoy the wonderful views of the context. There were provisions for kitchen and service facilities, including 30 small bedrooms for overnight guests and employees.

In the next decade, Wright retook some of these principles and presented them in occasion of the Lectures of Princeton, 1930:

> To gratify what is natural and desirable in the get-together instinct of the community natural places of great beauty — in our mountains, seasides, prairies and forests — will be developed as automobile objectives, and at such recreation grounds would center the planetarium, the race-track, the great concert hall, the various units of the national theater, museums, and art galleries. Similar common interests of many will be centered there naturally, ten such places to the one we have now.[69]

Two years later, he presented again the notion of Objective in Broadacre City; this time in a more accurate way. To him, Communal Centers would be features of "every new city and each would be an automobile-objective situated near some major highway or in some nook of the countryside where views are inspiring and nature lovable." Later he mentioned

> (…) Golf courses, racetrack, zoo, aquarium and planetarium will naturally be found at these places grouped in architectural ensembles with a botanical garden. Of clubs there would still be many, but the community center would be the great common club, but avoiding commonplace elegance. The community center would be an educational factor as well as amusement center. The art gallery, the museum would be there. And as all would be laid out in harmony with each other and the ground, each center would take on the individuality of its circumstances. Scattered over the states these centers would embody and express the best through of which our democratic ideal is capable. There would be no commercial bustle or humdrum here. All common excitement could be

[69] Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Future of Architecture* (New York: Horizon Press, 1953), 177.

reached, further on, at the service stations. But the various community centers should be quiet places for study, reflection and introspection, in comradeship.[70]

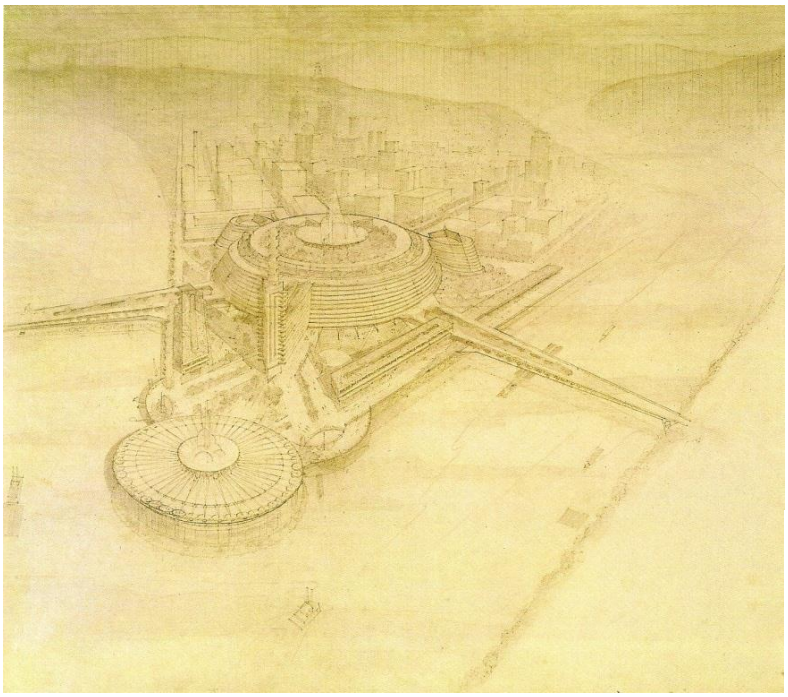


FIGURE 11.37
Frank Lloyd Wright, Point Park Civic Center Project (Scheme I), Pittsburgh, 1947. Aerial perspective. Source: Cleary (1999), 145.

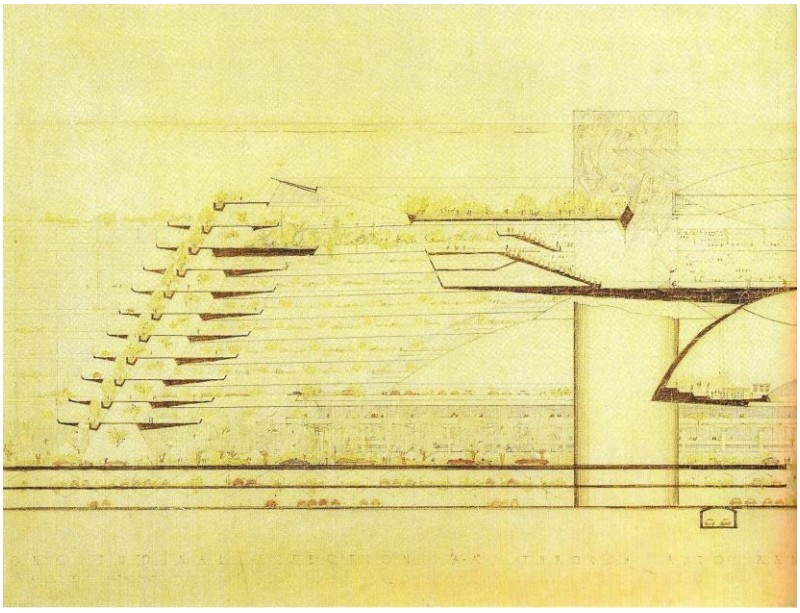


FIGURE 11.38
Frank Lloyd Wright, Point Park Civic Center, Scheme I (section), Pittsburgh, 1947. Detail of the original drawing, showing the arrangement of the ramps, the vast atrium, and part of both the sport arena and the dome exhibition hall. Source: Cleary (1999), 150.

[70] Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Disappearing City* (New York: William Farquhar Payson, 1932), 74-75.

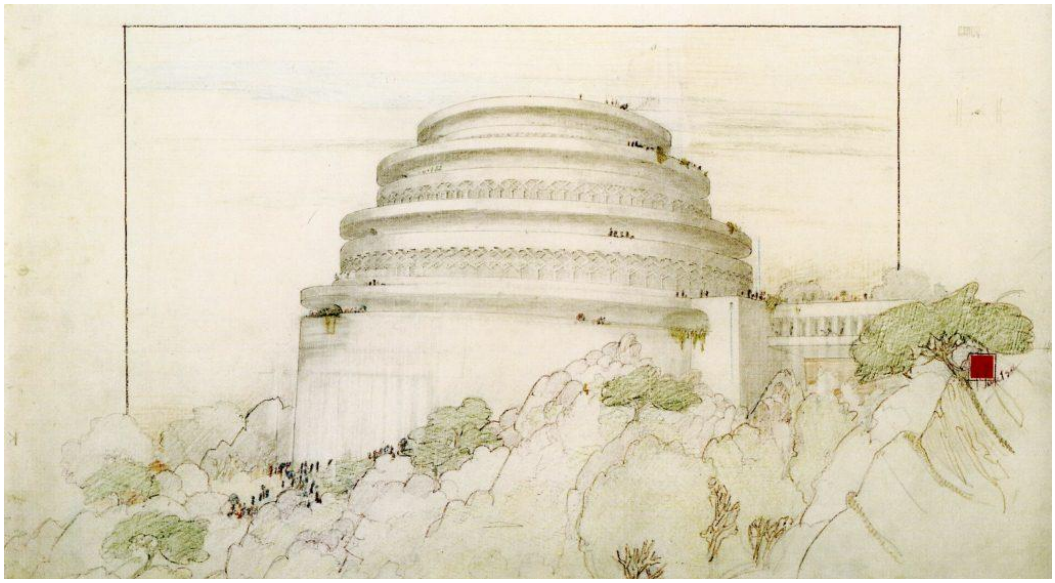


FIGURE 11.39
Frank Lloyd Wright, Gordon Strong Automobile Objective and Planetarium (project), Sugarloaf Mountain, Maryland, 1924. Perspective. Source: Cleary (2009), 172.

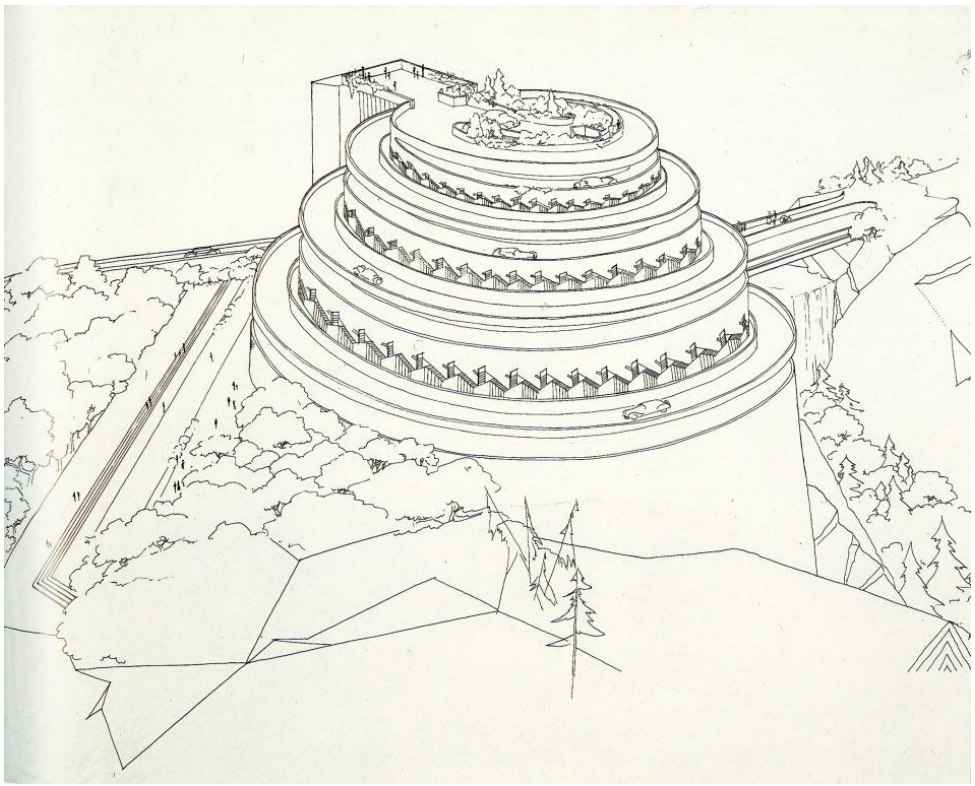


FIGURE 11.40
Frank Lloyd Wright, Gordon Strong Automobile Objective and Planetarium (project), Sugarloaf Mountain, Maryland, 1924. Aerial perspective. Source: Cleary (2009), 177.

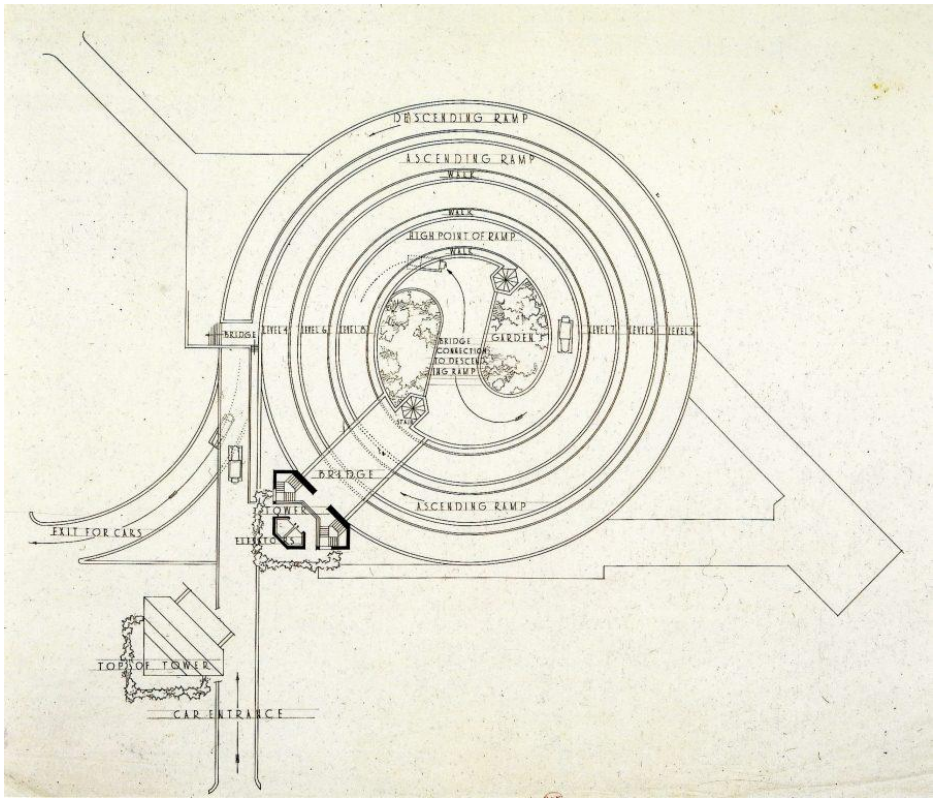


FIGURE 11.41
Frank Lloyd Wright, Gordon Strong Automobile Objective and Planetarium (project), Sugarloaf Mountain, Maryland, 1924. Plan. Source: Cleary (2009), 173.

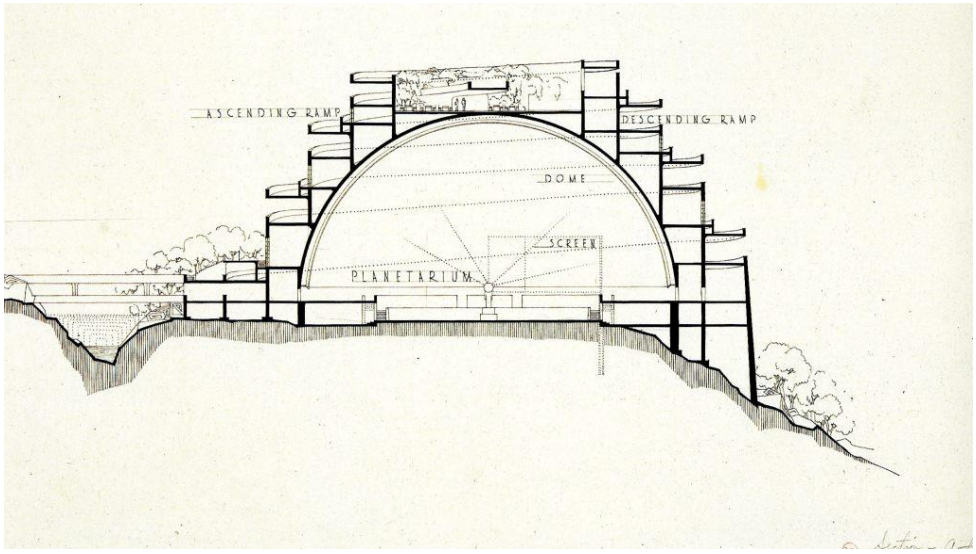


FIGURE 11.42
Frank Lloyd Wright, Gordon Strong Automobile Objective and Planetarium (project), Sugarloaf Mountain, Maryland, 1924. Section. Source: Cleary (2009), 176.

COMPARING BOTH "OBJECTIVES"

The resemblance between the Gordon Strong Automobile Objective and the Helicoid is striking.[71] Morphologically both followed the same principles: a ziggurat-like building made up of a double-parallel sequence of ramps, ascending and descending, connected at the top through an S-shape curve (in a continuous route). In both cases, the program associated was also very similar. The automobile played a fundamental role; actually, both buildings were designed keeping it in mind. This mutual interaction, building-automobile, could essentially be regarded as organic. It was all about a building designed *ad hoc* for the automobile. Both buildings had shops; facility services to stay overnight (hotel, in the case of the Helicoid); auditorium or cinema; exhibition halls; gardens (in the Helicoide, designed by Burle Marx). There was, nevertheless, a subtle difference: while the Objective, as well as the Communal Centers proposed for Broadacre City, were more cultural oriented, the Helicoid was more commercial. The second scheme of the Objective also contemplated a planetarium, which was not the case of the Helicoid.

In spatial terms there was a basic difference. The Automobile Objective was conceived as a centralized composition revolving around a chamber-like space (an auditorium in the first proposal, and a planetarium in the second), while the Helicoid was not designed as a container form; their ramps were wrapping the hill.

As for the accessibility and mobility (beyond the automobile), they were very similar. While the Objective had a mast for dirigible mooring, the Helicoid had planned to provide a heliport. Telecommunications was also an aspect that deserved special attention. Many of the cutting-edge devices proposed as integral part of the Helicoid had been mentioned in Wright's *The Disappearing City*. In some aspects, the Helicoid seemed to be even more complex. In this sense, the Helicoid's technological display that guaranteed internal mobility was impressive: escalators (something uncommon in Venezuela at the time), and four inclined elevators. Also impressive in the Helicoid was the concentration of technology located at the North entrance (*figures 11.21*

[71] Many aspects of the Automobile Objective are also applicable to the Point Park Civic Center.

and *11.22*),[72] specifically at the Management Center: a whole level devoted to control all kind of communication, a telephone exchange with 400 lines for the shops, mail and telegraph service, and TV, among other services. In some aspects, the Helicoid was technologically "over dimensioned" for the mid-twentieth-century Caracas. The quality and quantity of facilities and services were over scaled (even for today's standards). Also, the organization of shops by sections in the Helicoid recalled the principles of urban zoning, but in this case within the building (like the metaphor of the city that Le Corbusier utilized in his *Unité d'Habitations*).

The comprehensiveness of both works by way of holistic projects, not just in terms of marketing but also as cultural proposals was also remarkable. After all, the Helicoid had *Integral* magazine, while the Automobile Objective had the Lectures of Princeton as well as the publishing industry behind it. Finally, concerning the context, both buildings took advantage of the topography (with the aforementioned difference in terms of spatial system). The background of the respective contexts, however, was different. The Gordon Strong Automobile Objective was located in a natural scenery, while the Helicoid's framework was the city per se. Also, the Automobile Objective was meant to be a gathering place in a disappearing city; the Helicoid, on the other hand, was inserted within a growing city in process of modernization.[73].

THE UTMOST REALIZATION

In any case, the essence of both projects seemed to revolve around the unique relation between landscape and technology. Despite the fact that they had different immediate contexts, both were decidedly megastructures that (paradoxically) emulated the topography and at the same time transformed it into a surrealist image. These colossal monuments emerging from their

[72] See also *figures 11.7, 11.12, 11.19* and *11.20*.

[73] Such contrast recalls Leonardo Benevolo's reflections about Classical Greek and Roman architecture. According to him, the background of Greek architecture was nature, while in the case of Rome the background was the city of Rome per se. Similarly, Wright's Automobile Objective was located in a natural scenery, like in Greece, while the Helicoid seems to be closer to the Roman experience: a building which background was the city itself. See *Introducción a la Arquitectura* (Buenos Aires: Tekne, 1967. "La arquitectura griega" [17-27]; "La arquitectura romana" [35-44]).

respective landscapes (the Automobile Objective from nature, and the Helicoid from an "urban" hill) were undoubtedly supernatural pieces of architecture which somehow recalled the American technological sublime. This sort of timeless American principle, always latent, like in the Blackwell's Island Bridge (see *fig. 1.1*), had inspired Caracas' colossus.

As an exegete of the American culture, and also self-entitled to guide and engage the society, Frank Lloyd Wright had been devoted to represent, through his work, the spirit of the American Sublime. In this sense, one of his projects that best exemplify this, in practical and theoretical terms, was the Gordon Strong Automobile Objective, which had been never built, until it found its realization in the Tarpeian Rock's Helicoid, in 1955.

Conclusions

GENERAL DISCUSSION

In 1915, when Preston McGoodwin arrived in New York from La Guaira, bilateral relations between Venezuela and the United States were undergoing a clear process of consolidation. Even before the news of the impressive blowout of *Barroso 2* gusher traveled around the world in 1922, both countries already had bonds that revealed, not only commercial exchanges, but a growing influence of American culture at large. Geographical proximity and a strategic area in common (the Caribbean Sea) had definitely set the basis for close bilateral relations.

Nevertheless, the advent and gradual consolidation of the oil industry in Venezuela turned out to be the real catalyzer of this geopolitical equation. Two world conflicts and the Korean War, which accelerated the global development of the oil industry, consequently led Venezuela to play a significant role in the international context, both as an oil producer and particularly as an exporter. Among all the companies working in the country, Standard Oil of New Jersey, through its local subsidiary, Creole Petroleum Corporation, managed to have the highest level of investment and the most conspicuous corporate presence at large.

Meanwhile, the consolidation of the oil companies brought deep changes in Venezuelan society. This process also implied the physical transformation of the cities and the modification of their urban dynamics. Amid this cultural rearrangement, architecture turned out to play a highly significant role. Either directly or indirectly, American corporations displayed their architectural representativeness throughout the Venezuelan urban landscape, particularly in the capital city. The Caraqueños started experiencing a new kind of architecture; now they had direct contact with cutting-edge technology, new building materials and new spatial arrangements, all combined with a clear corporate image. These novelties (novelty for the Venezuelans) certainly represented the American state of the art in terms of architecture and engineering.

Nevertheless, on occasions, these corporate landmarks turned out to be new to Americans alike. As a matter of fact, Venezuela became a huge laboratory where these buildings were put to the test, even before than in the United States. In this regard, the Edificio Creole in Caracas constituted the prototype of two important Standard Oil structures in America. However, it was an unusual prototype: despite having been designed before the Esso buildings in Louisiana and New Jersey, it was architecturally and technologically more complex and much more impressive in size. Moreover, while a sort of reenactment of the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns was being played in American soil (the choice of the Seagram Building's architect is a good example), U.S. corporations were sending their avant-garde "ambassadors" abroad.

The local reception of this new architectural knowledge, however, was not passive. The Venezuelan assimilation of American practices and ideals turned out to be broader and more intense than the original stimulus. Venezuelans would become more American than the Americans. The daily bombardment of automobile advertisements in local newspapers, for instance, in some cases seven times more vehement than in the United States, gives an idea of this assimilation. As a matter of fact, the development of a culture of the automobile ended up being a very conspicuous signs of this *hyper-Americanism*, and would gradually become a hallmark of modern Venezuelan society. It transformed and shaped both the imagination of the Venezuelans and their daily routine.

However, the culture of the automobile transformed the Venezuelan urban landscape too, particularly in Caracas. It led to the creation of the Helicoid, a fantastic building that shows the most expansive aspect of the hyper-Americanism. Totally designed for the automobile, this outstanding work not only represented a "supernatural" presence in Caracas' skyline, but also managed to integrate cutting-edge technology with building's structure. In all its aspects, it was the utmost realization of Wright's ideals in his automobile objectives. And more importantly, for the international media attention it received since its inception, the Helicoid opens the discussion about a potential case of counterinfluence.

In this particular process of influence and reception in Venezuela (which embraced either *intensifiers* of original models, *producers* of variations of such models or even *executors* of utopias), the print media, both American and local, played a fundamental role. The capillary penetration of the U.S. periodicals in the Venezuelan professional practice could be seen, for instance, in Higuerote Beach Resort. As a case study, it demonstrated how significant American magazines were in the process of design and construction of an architecture that turned out to be "organically" outstanding, even without the inspiration of a brilliant designer.

The growth of Venezuelan magazines, in turn, was also remarkable. While American architecture magazines showed a clear process of internationalization in the 1940s, Venezuelan magazines inaugurated in the 1950s the tradition of local periodical publications. Notable among them was *Integral*, which not only was an informative and formative means for professionals, but also an innovative, holistic vehicle to make real estate marketing. It actually proved to be very useful during the construction process of the Helicoid.

Local print media played a two-fold part in this process of influence and reception. The use of graphics on modern architecture and urban landscape in newspapers, as a means of mass communication, was a clear sign hyper-Americanism. Yet, the local print media was also an outstanding mechanism to shape and consolidate the national identity. This national identity, nevertheless, was not a set of traditional principles opposed to new practices. On the contrary, it was a sense of belonging to a nation that was blending traditions with a rapid process of modernization, and in whose architecture people saw themselves represented. The New National Ideal managed to incorporate this spirit into its pragmatic statements.

But this national identity, however, also assimilated very well American culture into its precepts. Local newspapers and official bulletins, such as *Venezuela Up-to-date*, literally "constructed" a modern identity. As a matter of fact, many of the present-day manifestations of Venezuelan culture came precisely from the 1950s. In this sense, and in spite of the contemporary perception of irreconcilable differences between the United States and Venezuela (in political

and ideological terms), this dissertation opens the discussion on a possible structural compatibility linking both cultures.

SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS, CONNECTIONS, AND CRITICAL ASPECTS

The research demonstrates how long-term and novel values in American architecture, as published in magazines during the 1940s and 1950s, were received (either directly or indirectly) and assimilated by Venezuelans. The International Style and parallel forms of modernisms (including organic architecture and Regionalism), as well as the technological sublime constituted the wide range of expressions that Venezuelans interacted with during that time. The dissertation also spotlights the relationship between building and technology, a timeless hallmark of American architecture.

However, the research brought other significant aspect into the light, and even revealed some new findings. The first topic that drew my attention, probably for its academic and institutional implications, was the national-regional connection between Venezuela and Texas. The sketches by Karl Kamrath, in turn, vividly captured the essence of modern architecture in Venezuela; his sketch of the Avila Hotel, technologically sublime and Wrightian at the same time, made a deep impression on me.

The research also revealed the "transversal" capacity of some key figures to act in the right place at the right moment. The understanding of the modernization process in Venezuela, for instance, would be incomplete without a "map" indicating the links and activities of Nelson Rockefeller in both countries. Such holistic approach also made sense as the complex network of Douglass' personal and professional connections was revealed. Douglass' intricate puzzle of connections and experiences allowed me to understand his professional philosophy. But more importantly, it disclosed an intricate web of associations, which included either directly or indirectly key figures (such as Rockefeller), fellow architects (such as Wallace Harrison), building developers, and the Venezuelan government.

Douglass' buildings showed other kind of connections. The Edificio Creole and the Electricity Building clearly showed how technology, structure and corporate image were blended. These buildings were certainly pioneers. Nevertheless, they also evidenced how Douglass' typological explorations were part of a general search of the time. Pietro Belluschi's plans for the Equitable and its prototype in Portland constituted good examples of this.

The research also inevitably led me to incorporate some of my findings into a critical viewpoint. Explorations on Regionalism, for instance, led to reveal different connections and implicit paradoxes. The huge effort placed into the U.S. embassy-building program to create the appropriate image of the United States abroad was, in technological terms, a complete paradox. The use of HVAC systems made unnecessary the implementation of passive systems (such as louvered windows and sunscreens), while the use of "regional" languages ended up being as universal as the International Style. Nevertheless, the result of such search was an impressive architectural imagery that echoed the production of C.R Villanueva at the University City. In both cases, the appeal to Regionalism was a narrative construction; after all, screens and louvered windows were not as typical components of colonial architecture in Venezuela as Villanueva claimed.

Higuerote Beach Resort, in turn, allowed me to demystify (or just correct) a traditional misconception about its authorship in Venezuelan literature. Another significant discovery undoubtedly was the authorship of the Electricity Building. But more importantly, the research allowed me to bring Lathrop S. Douglass back to the American architectural frontline, where he should have stayed. In my opinion, history of American architecture is indebted to him.

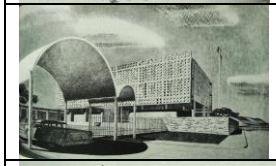
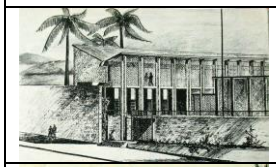
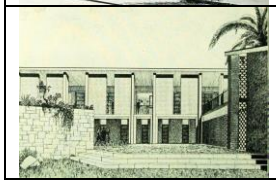
* * *

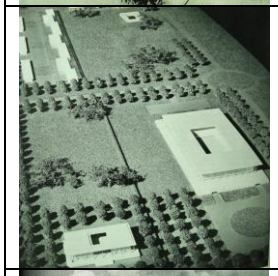
In history, things are inevitable, for better or worst. The structural constants and variables that shaped the geopolitical equation between Venezuela and the United States cannot be modified anymore. Nevertheless, as a narrative, history has the capacity, and especially the responsibility, to offer interpretations about those moments and periods that have turned out to be crucial.

Today, more than ever, a critical viewpoint on the 1950s and its architecture has become necessary. In the light of the increasing tension that have characterized the relationship between Washington and Caracas since 1999, this dissertation provides an alternative interpretation of that historical, strategic conjuncture. Venezuelan culture underwent a dramatic transformation during the 1950s, and so did the United States, geopolitically, architecturally and technologically. The analysis of what happened in Venezuela at that time explains very well the nightmares and dreams of the United States, as well as its fears and confidences. But if it is true that the center can be explained through the periphery, it is also true that our recent past can offer answers about the present (if analyzed critically, without vested interests), and more importantly, about the time to come.

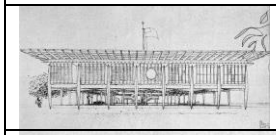
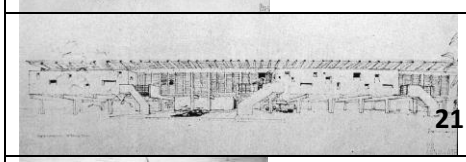
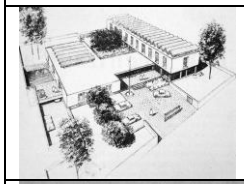
APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

ICONOGRAPHIC RECORD	AUTHOR, BUILDING, LOCATION (REFERENCE)
 1	Harrison & Abramovitz, U.S. Embassy, Havana, Cuba (*Architectural Record* [August, 1952], 160).
 2	Hugh Stubbins, U.S. Legation Office, Tangier, Morocco (*Architectural Record* [May, 1955], 187).
 3	Keyes, Smith, Satterlee and Lethbridge, U.S. Embassy Office Building, Asunción, Paraguay (*Architectural Record* [May, 1955], 188).
 4	Keyes, Smith, Satterlee and Lethbridge, U.S. Embassy Residence, Asunción, Paraguay (*Architectural Record* [May, 1955], 188).
 5	Michael M. Hare, U.S. Embassy Office Building, Tegucigalpa, Honduras (*Architectural Record* [May, 1955], 189).
 6	Michael M. Hare, U.S. Embassy Office Building, Tegucigalpa, Honduras (*Architectural Record* [May, 1955], 189).

ICONOGRAPHIC RECORD	AUTHOR, BUILDING, LOCATION (REFERENCE)
 7	Gardner A. Dailey, U.S. Embassy Staff Apartments, Manila, Philippines (*Architectural Record* [May, 1955], 189).
 8	Edward D. Stone, U.S. Embassy Office Building and Staff Quarters, New Delhi, India (*Architectural Record* [May, 1955], 190).
 9	Moore and Hutchins / Georges Pellisier, U.S. Consulate General Office Building and Staff Quarters, Dakar, French West Africa (Senegal) (*Architectural Record* [May, 1955], 191).
 10	Wurster, Bernardi and Emmons; Feltham and Cumine, U.S. Consulate General, Hong Kong (*Architectural Record* [May, 1955], 191).
 11	Weed-Russell-Johnson Associates, U.S. Consulate General Office Building, Lagos, Nigeria (*Architectural Record* [May, 1955], 191).

ICONOGRAPHIC RECORD	AUTHOR, BUILDING, LOCATION (REFERENCE)
 **12**	Raymond and Rado, U.S. Embassy Office Building, Djakarta, Indonesia (*Architectural Record* [May, 1955], 192).
 **13**	Leinweber, Yamasaki &Helmuth, U.S. Consulate General Office Building and Staff Quarters, Kobe, Japan (*Architectural Record* [May, 1955], 192).
 **14**	Edwrad D. Stone, American Embassy, New Delhi, India (*Architectural Record* [December, 1955], 139).
 **15**	Jose Luis Sert, American Embassy, Iraq (*Architectural Record* [December, 1955], 139).
 **16**	Alfred Aydelott, U.S. Embassy, Manila, Philippines (*Architectural Record* [June, 1956], 161).
 **17**	Carl Koch, U.S. Staff Housing, Belgrade, Yugoslavia (*Architectural Record* [June, 1956], 162).
 **18**	Henry Hill, U.S. Staff Housing, Vienna, Austria (*Architectural Record* [June, 1956], 162).

ICONOGRAPHIC RECORD	AUTHOR, BUILDING, LOCATION (REFERENCE)
 **19**	Earnest J. Kump, U.S. Embassy Residence and Staff Quarters, Seoul, Korea (*Architectural Record* [June, 1956], 162).
 **20**	Harry Weese, U.S. Office Building, Accra, Gold Coast (Ghana) (*Architectural Record* [June, 1956], 163).
 **21**	Harry Weese, U.S. Staff Housing, Accra, Gold Coast (Ghana) (*Architectural Record* [June, 1956], 163).
 **22**	Paul Rudolph, U.S. Office Building, Amman, Jordan (*Architectural Record* [June, 1956], 164).
 **23**	Eero Saarinen, U.S. Office Building, Oslo, Norway (*Architectural Record* [June, 1956], 164).
 **24**	Richard J.Neutra and Robert E. Alexander, U.S. Office Building, Karachi, Pakistan (*Architectural Record* [June, 1956], 164).
 **25**	Vincent G. Kling, U.S. Office Building, Quito, Ecuador (*Architectural Record* [June, 1956], 165).
 **26**	Don Hatch, U.S. Office Building, Port-au-Prince, Haiti (*Architectural Record* [June, 1956], 165).

ICONOGRAPHIC RECORD	AUTHOR, BUILDING, LOCATION (REFERENCE)
 **27**	John Carl Warnecke, U.S. Emabassy Office Building, Bangkok, Thailand (*Architectural Record* [October, 1957], 237).
 **28**	Paul Thiry, U.S. Ambassador's Residence, Santiago, Chile (*Architectural Record* [October, 1957], 238).
 **29**	Keyes & Lethbridge, U.S. Embassy Office Building, Lima, Peru (*Architectural Record* [October, 1957], 238).
 **30**	Ketchum, Giná & Sharp, U.S. Embassy Office Building and Residence, Rabat, Morocco (*Architectural Record* [October, 1957], 239).
 **31**	Victorine and Samuel Homsey, U.S. Ambassador Residence, Teheran, Iran (*Architectural Record* [October, 1957], 239).
 **32**	Rogers, Taliaferro & Lambs, U.S. Embassy Building, Ciudad Trujillo, Dominican Republic (*Architectural Record* [October, 1957], 240).
 **33**	Moore and Hutchins, U.S. Consul General's Residence, Dakar, French West Africa (Senegal) (*Architectural Record* [October, 1957], 240).

ICONOGRAPHIC RECORD	AUTHOR, BUILDING, LOCATION (REFERENCE)
 **34**	The Architects Collaborative (Walter Gropius), U.S. Embassy Office Building, Athens, Greece (*Architectural Record* [October, 1957], 241).
 **35**	Alexander Smith Cochran, U.S. Office Building and Staff Quarters, Nagoya, Japan (*Architectural Record* [October, 1957], 241).
 **36**	Harris Armstrong, U.S. Office Building and Staff Housing, Basra, Iraq (*Architectural Record* [October, 1957], 242).
 **37**	Sherlock, Smith & Adams, U.S. Regional Production Center Building, Manila, Philippines (*Architectural Record* [October, 1957], 242).
 **38**	Alden B. Dow, U.S. Staff Apartments, Manila, Philippines (*Architectural Record* [October, 1957], 242).
 **39**	Hugh Stubbins Associates, U.S. Consulate General and residence, Tangier, Morocco (*Architectural Record* [October, 1957], 242).

APPENDIX 2

TABLE 1

Oil production per year (millions of barrels) for México, U.S.S.R. and Venezuela, between 1918 and 1952

Source: graph elaborated by the author, based on data from the U.S. Bureau of Mines, *World Oil*, cited in Edwin Lieuwen, *Petroleum in Venezuela. A History*, Appendix, 121.

	México	U.S.S.R.	Venezuela
1918	64	27	0
1919	87	32	0
1920	157	25	0
1921	193	29	1
1922	182	36	2
1923	150	39	4
1924	140	45	9
1925	116	52	20
1926	90	64	37
1927	64	77	63
1928	50	85	106
1929	45	100	137
1930	40	126	137
1931	33	163	117
1932	33	155	117
1933	34	153	118
1934	38	175	136
1935	40	182	148
1936	41	186	155
1937	47	193	186
1938	39	205	188
1939	43	217	206
1940	44	219	186
1941	42	238	228
1942	35	227	148
1943	35	201	178
1944	38	275	257
1945	44	149	323
1946	49	158	388
1947	56	187	435
1948	59	218	490
1949	61	233	482
1950	72	263	542
1951	77	285	622
1952	79	311	656

TABLE 2

Daily average of Venezuelan oil production in barrels by year

Source: graph elaborated by the author, based on data from *Venezuela Up-to-date* (May 1952, 7; Dec. 1953, 5; May 1955, 6; March 1956, 6; Aug. 1956, 6; March 1959, 6; Jan. 1960).

	Creole	Shell	Mene Grande Oil	Socony (Mobil)	Mercedes	Texas	Atlantic	Richmond	Sinclair
1947	625,357	331,192	174,604	27,798	169	8,819	92	0	21,661
1948	683,531	396,990	182,131	30,464	6,952	13,278	3,052	765	18,469
1949	624,505	409,983	169,191	35,951	15,581	23,357	11,692	3,629	15,190
1950	685,893	461,601	202,211	37,003	18,706	25,711	20,944	12,502	12,598
1951	773,663	527,321	245,273	49,319	23,177	23,625	18,932	13,489	12,481
1952	815,070	569,899	264,676	55,778	24,865	20,099	17,365	19,531	12,958
1953	795,990	507,489	279,502	64,555	24,198	19,153	18,372	20,313	16,230
1954	823,710	564,141	292,207	66,148	24,823	30,723	20,656	34,432	20,188
1955	982,364	607,420	316,732	70,000	24,370	47,965	19,717	45,092	24,739
1956	1,083,700	690,200	364,700	97,100	24,190	47,100		61,700	29,100
1957	1,148,400	851,600	404,100	115,700	28,400	45,200		92,000	29,400
1958	1,071,100	681,400	388,900	127,619	34,068	50,900		75,200	61,500
1959	1,112,700	801,100	362,500	111,400	31,800	54,900		51,800	47,200

APPENDIX 3

LATHROP DOUGLASS

AN ALWAYS TRENDY PIONEER: THE SHOPPING-CENTER EXPERT

In "Regional Shopping Centers" (1973), considered the authoritative summary of regional shopping centers planning in recent time, Douglass provided accurate information on a high variety of topic related to shopping centers' design.[1] The list of subjects analyzed was certainly long: types of centers; development and financing; professional team; market analysis; site selection; schematic planning; integration with the community; planning for expansion and staged construction; general design and planning criteria (including column spacing, store depth, clear heights, ducts, HVAC location, roof equipment, and exterior walls); leasing; mall amenities; storefronts and signs on the mall; exterior facades; servicing; climate control; parking and traffic, and landscaping. Undoubtedly Douglass had become an authority on this matter. More than a simple "prescription" or procedures manual, that article (actually a chapter in a comprehensive book on building types) was the result of a long term reflection, and a huge experience designing buildings.

By 1965 he had projected the Reisterstown Road Plaza, in Baltimore, Maryland (*figure 1*). Conceived as a single-axis regional center, with a major department store at each end, it was a well-balanced combination of "closed boxes" with a few entrances, and open spaces. The common mall per se had 60 feet wide and 900 feet long. A barrel-arch motif provided aesthetic coherence. A parking area surrounded the whole center.[2]

[1] Lathrop Douglass, "Regional Shopping Centers," in Joseph De Chiara and John Hancock Callender (ed.), *Time-Saver Standards for Building Types* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980 [second edition]), 713-720.

[2] *Architectural Record* (May 1965), 204.

He even designed the largest shopping complex of Europe, located near Paris.[3] However, by the end of the decade it was clear that Douglass was concerned about the fast and out-of-control growth of the American suburbs. According to him, the proliferation of the so-called "urban sprawl" and "megacenters" was one of the more distinctive and disturbing phenomena of the time. He proposed that government and private capital should unite in big-scale renewal efforts. In his own words, "whatever can be done on a large scale and expeditiously to rebuild and revitalize the retail and commercial areas of our cities would surely be in the best public interest."[4] Actually, by 1969 Douglas had designed four other shopping centers within urban areas in the Northeastern region: Main Place Mall, Buffalo, New York, a three-level center combined with a 26-story office tower (completed 1968, as part of a major renewal project) (*figure 2*); Lafayette Plaza, Bridgeport, Connecticut, a big-scale effort to revitalize the city, against the proliferation of suburban "megacenters" (completed 1969) (*figure 3*); Tysons Corners Center, near Washington D.C. (completed 1968), and Chapel Square, New Haven, Connecticut, one of the first enclosed air-conditioned downtown malls, and part of a master plan for an urban site near Yale University (completed 1967), (*figure 4*).[5] The Chapel was a very dynamic combination of commercial activities, in which shops, offices and hotel were interconnected by the mall with a central fountain plaza. The mall's section showed also a very sui generis form, particularly in the roof's form over the plaza. The Chapel seemed to combine typological previous experience of Douglass with some morphological explorations. Actually, it would not be the unique example.

In 1962 he received an uncommon commission from Mrs. Judith Hollister, a housewife of Greenwich (Connecticut), who had been obsessed with the idea of an ecumenical temple. As Douglass remembered, at that time he was overwhelmed with too many commissions, and had told Mrs. Hollister that he required at least six months. Nevertheless, "for some reason (he)

[3] See Jack Bernstein Associates Inc., New York City, to the AIA New York Chapter, NY, June 5, 1968 (Lathrop Douglass, Membership File, The American Institute of Architects Archive, *The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects*, s.v. "Lathrop Douglass [1907-1981]," [ahd1011556]).

[4] Lathrop Douglass, "Revitalizing downtown shopping centers," *Architectural Record* (July 1969), 136.

[5] See *Architectural Record* (Apr. 1966), 161; (July 1969), 137 and 139.

wound up doing the work in ten days, and stayed up all one night to finish it."[6] The result, which incorporated some ideas of Mrs. Hollister, was known as the Temple for Understanding. With a round plan, and a fold shape aspect, the building was undoubtedly as sui generis as its program (*figure 5*). The resemblance with Chapel Square shopping center is however noticeable.

Although the activity of Lathrop Douglass during the 1960s was focused particularly on shopping centers, the previous decade was broader in terms of programs. The list of shopping centers included John Wanamaker Department Store, Great Neck, New York, a steel and concrete construction, with stone ashlar and painted brick exterior walls (completed 1953) (*figure 6*); Cross County Shopping Center, Yonkers (Westchester County), New York, a 1,000,000 sq. ft. complex of merchandising and office space in 12 buildings, totally air conditioned and heated (completed 1955) (*figure 7*); Levittown Shopping Center, Levittown, Pennsylvania; Prince George Plaza, Washington D.C. (completed 1959); and a consultancy for Cortez Plaza Shopping Center, Bradenton, Florida, remarkable for its combination of efficiency and comfort (the first use of hyperbolic paraboloids in a shopping center, as an inexpensive method of roofing and cooling the mall).[7] In 1950 he had designed a residential building in New York City (completed 1952), at 200 East End Avenue, a double-Y-form construction faced with bricks, showing a canopied entrance.[8] He had also designed his own house in Greenwich, Connecticut, and the Offices &

[6] Robert Wallace, "Judith Hollister and her Wonderful Obsession," *Life* (Dec. 14, 1962), 94.

[7] See Lathrop Douglass, Membership File, The American Institute of Architects Archive, *The AIA Historical Directory of American Architects*, s.v. "Lathrop Douglass (1907-1981)," (ahd1011556).

[8] The application before the New York City Department Building, under the number 230, was submitted in 1950. The building cost was estimated in $2,112,000.00. The owner was the Corporation Sol G. Atlas, located at 10 Grace Av. Great Neck, Long Island, the same that would eventually promote and managed the complete, integrated Cross County Shopping Center (see *Progressive Architecture* [Dec. 1954, 81], and Office for Metropolitan History, "Manhattan NB Database 1900-1986," search parameters: Architect: Lathrop Douglass [accessed on Dec. 25, 2012], http://www.MetroHistory.com). The building is still standing and considered nowadays as "one of the most distinctive post-war apartment houses on the Upper East Side," according to the real-estate and architectural columnist of New York City Carter B. Horsley. This seventeen-floor building has 182 apartments, and it is located very close to Gracie Mansion, adjacent to Carl Schurz Park (see http://www.cityrealty.com/nyc/manhattan/200-east-end-avenue/6144). The marquee or canopied entrance of this building would be eventually a kind of hallmark in Douglass' projects during the 1950s.

Laboratories for Continental Baking, Rye, New York; both completed in 1958. However, the 1950s was definitely marked by oil industry commissions.

FIGURE 1
Lathrop Douglass (Architect), Bonnett & Brandt (Associate Architects), Throop & Feiden (Structural Engineers), Sidney W. Barbanel (Mechanical Engineers), Raymond Keyes (Site Engineers), Boris Timschenko (Landscape Architect), Reisterstown Road Plaza, Baltimore, Maryland. Source: *Architectural Record* (May 1965), 204.

FIGURE 2
Lathrop Douglass (Architect), Main Place Mall, Buffalo, New York. A three-level mall combined with a 26-story office tower. Source: *Architectural Record* (Apr. 1966), 163.

FIGURE 3
Lathrop Douglass (Architect), Lafayette Plaza, Bridgeport, Connecticut. A big scale intervention as an effort to revitalize the city. Source: *Architectural Record* (July 1969), 137.

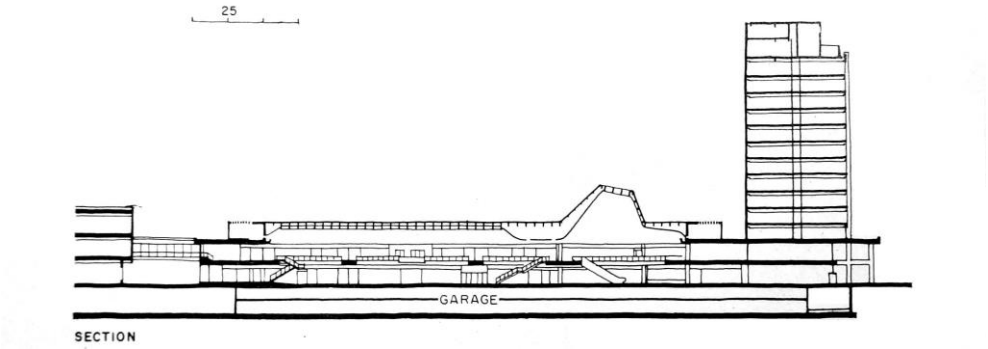


FIGURE 4
Lathrop Douglass (Architect), Chapel Square, New Haven, Connecticut. Shops, offices and hotel were interconnected by the mall with a central fountain plaza. Source: *Architectural Record* (July 1969), 139.

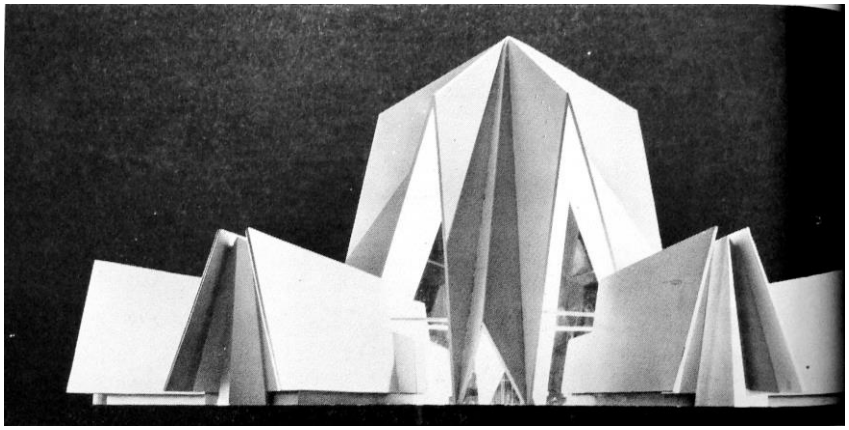


FIGURE 5
Lathrop Douglass (Architect), Temple for Understanding, model. The project incorporated some ideas of Mrs. Judith Hollister and Douglass' morphological explorations. Source: *Life* (Dec. 14, 1962), 94.

FIGURE 6
Lathrop Douglass, John Wanamaker Department Store, unit of North Shore Mart, Great Neck, New York (completed 1953). Source: *Progressive Architecture* (Jan. 1951], 83.

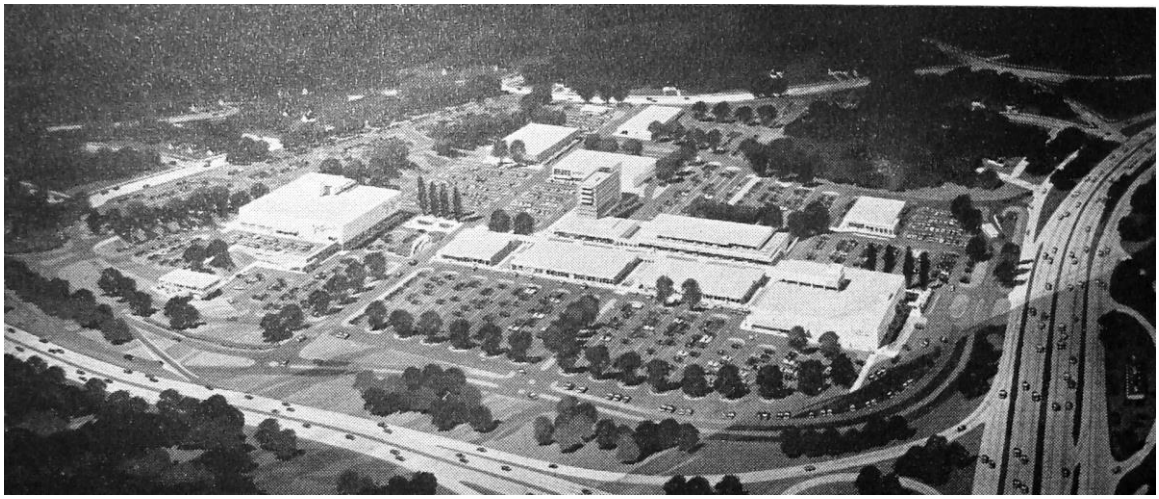
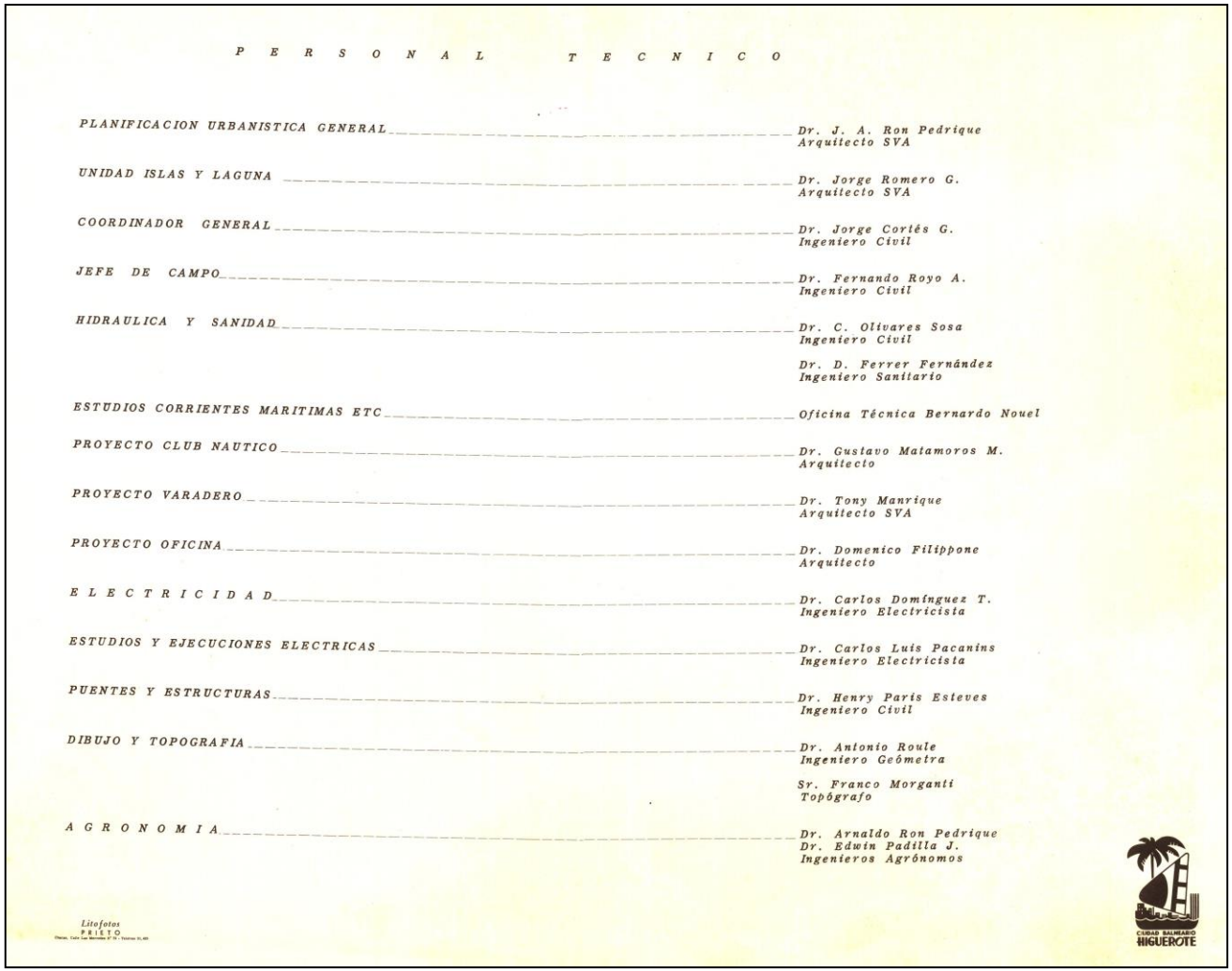


FIGURE 7
Lathrop Douglass, Cross County Shopping Center, Yonkers, New York. 1,000,000 sq ft of merchandising and office space. Major stores are John Wanamaker's (left) and Gimbel's (right). Completed 1955. Source: *Progressive Architecture* (Dec. 1954), 81.

APPENDIX 4

Organization chart of José Antonio Ron Pedrique Office. Source: Ron Pedrique, 1955.



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HIDRAULICA Y SANIDAD	Dr. C. Olivares Sosa Ingeniero Civil Dr. D. Ferrer Fernández Ingeniero Sanitario
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ESTUDIOS Y EJECUCIONES ELECTRICAS	Dr. Carlos Luis Pacanins Ingeniero Electricista
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HIGUEROTE

APPENDIX 5

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HELICOIDE DE LA ROCA TARPEYA
CENTRO COMERCIAL Y
EXPOSICION DE INDUSTRIAS
CAPITAL Bs. 10.000.000,00 TOTALMENTE PAGADO

HELICOIDE DE LA ROCA TARPEYA - CARACAS, VENEZUELA
TELEFONOS: 613416 - 613417 Y 617214

Caracas: 22 de Agosto de 1.961.-

Mr. Arthur Drexler
Director Museum of Modern Art
Department of Architecture and Design
New York.-

Distinguido Arquitecto:

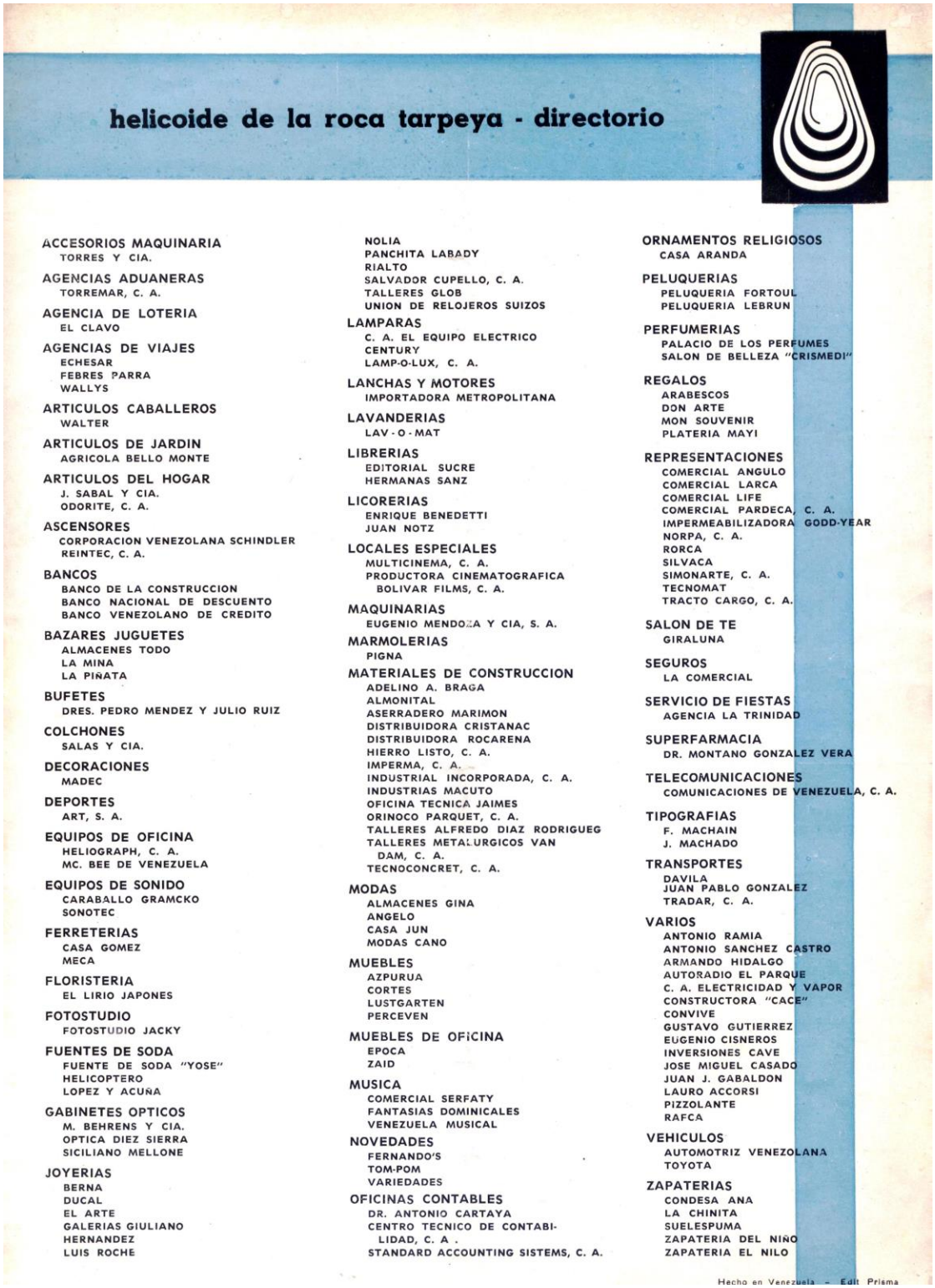
Tengo el gusto de presentarle al Arqº Dirk Bornhorst, uno de nuestros principales colaboradores en todos los proyectos y muy especialmente en el "HELICOIDE", quien se encuentra trabajando en los actuales momentos para la obra.- El desea conocerlo y ver la exposición que se presentó en el Museo de Arte Moderno de esa ciudad.- Existe la posibilidad de hacer una exhibición en Venezuela, en fecha Octubre del presente año.- Por favor explíquele al Dr. Bornhorst las posibilidades que existen en este sentido.-

Me saluda a la Sra. Parkinson y esperamos, en un futuro, establecer nuevos contactos.-

Muy atentamente,

Arqº Jorge Romero Gutiérrez

APPENDIX 6



helicoide de la roca tarpeya - directorio

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AGENCIA DE LOTERIA
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C. A. EL EQUIPO ELECTRICO
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DISTRIBUIDORA ROCARENA
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TOM-POM
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STANDARD ACCOUNTING SISTEMS, C. A.

ORNAMENTOS RELIGIOSOS
CASA ARANDA

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PELUQUERIA FORTOUL
PELUQUERIA LEBRUN

PERFUMERIAS
PALACIO DE LOS PERFUMES
SALON DE BELLEZA "CRISMEDI"

REGALOS
ARABESCOS
DON ARTE
MON SOUVENIR
PLATERIA MAYI

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COMERCIAL ANGULO
COMERCIAL LARCA
COMERCIAL LIFE
COMERCIAL PARDECA, C. A.
IMPERMEABILIZADORA GODD-YEAR
NORPA, C. A.
RORCA
SILVACA
SIMONARTE, C. A.
TECNOMAT
TRACTO CARGO, C. A.

SALON DE TE
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SEGUROS
LA COMERCIAL

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DR. MONTANO GONZALEZ VERA

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ARMANDO HIDALGO
AUTORADIO EL PARQUE
C. A. ELECTRICIDAD Y VAPOR
CONSTRUCTORA "CACE"
CONVIVE
GUSTAVO GUTIERREZ
EUGENIO CISNEROS
INVERSIONES CAVE
JOSE MIGUEL CASADO
JUAN J. GABALDON
LAURO ACCORSI
PIZZOLANTE
RAFCA

VEHICULOS
AUTOMOTRIZ VENEZOLANA
TOYOTA

ZAPATERIAS
CONDESA ANA
LA CHINITA
SUELESPUMA
ZAPATERIA DEL NIÑO
ZAPATERIA EL NILO

Hecho en Venezuela - Edit. Prisma

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