

**Cuba 1950s'-1960s': continuity and fracture in architectural culture**

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Cuban architecture of the 50s' has been almost ignored by international historiography as well as being neglected by Cuban publications. The fact that the Cuban protagonists of the 50s' fled the country in mass in 1959, caused a voluntary indifference towards their work, known in Cuba as the "architecture of nobody". One of the aims of this dissertation is to re-consider the importance of these works of art by presenting the works of a group architects that have built a national architectural vocabulary. These works are represented through iconography and plans that have been recuperated (the state of some of these residences have almost made them unrecognisable) and can be compared to the International Style brought by the North-American presence. Mario Romanach, Frank Martinez, Ricardo Porro, and other exponents/representatives of the Modern Cuban Movement have welcomed the teachings of the International avant-garde and have adapted them to the Cuban environment through the revival of elements belonging to the colonial architecture.

A fundamental role for the diffusion of the International modern movement has been played by Gropius' temporary stays in Cuba as well as the projects, completed in part, by Neutra, Mies Van Der Rohe, Franco Albini, Sert and Johnson.



*Mario Romanach, Casa José Cueto de Noval, (1949)*

The aim of this study is to demonstrate how a continuity exists between the search of a national identity that can be found in the works of art of these architects and the three most important works pertaining to the years immediately after the Revolution, this theory is in contrast to the most renowned one that admits the existence of a significant architectural production in Cuba only after the Revolution.

In contrast to the chronological division in two periods (pre and post 1959), which is usually employed to refer to the Cuban reality, it has been decided to separate the 60s' into two, placing 1965 as the chronological limit of this study; in fact according to this thesis/dissertation the first steps taken by the architecture of the Revolution belong to an initial period of experimentation of all fields that continues until the mid 60's when the revival process of the 50's ends.

The celebration in Havana of the VII UIA Congress in 1963 and the nationalisation of the profession mark the beginning of a cultural transmutation of the Revolution in the architectural field: from 1959 on architecture will follow the soviet models, losing in part its connection with its natural environment made up of the Caribbean and Latin America.

A second part of the thesis/dissertation is dedicated to specifically analysing three paradigmatic projects belonging to the years immediately following the Revolution: "La Ciudad Universitaria" José Antonio Echeverría (1964), "L'Unidad de Habitación de l'Habana de l'este" (1960) and the "Escuelas Nacionales de Arte" (1960-1963). After an initial analysis the only point they seem to have common is the unique environment in which they arise, taking into consideration the fact that opposed typological and diametrically solutions are used, however every project is, in reality, connected to the work of the previous decade.



*Humberto Alonso, José Fernandez, Manuel Rubio, Fernando Salinas. Ciudad Universitaria José Antonio Echeverría, Facultad de Tecnología, (1961)*

Despite the fact that they belong to a movement of total innovation, the first two represent a continuity and concretise the premise established by the architectural culture of the 50's, on the other hand the third constitutes a break, nevertheless the first phase of the revolutionary architecture (1959-1963) can only be read in light of what has happened in the 50's.



*Ricardo Porro, Escuela de Artes Plásticas, Havana(1960-1963)*

This thesis/dissertation aims to study in depth the history and the criticism of the ENA project, interesting for its strong use of experimentation which remained incomplete due to the interruption of the works ordered by Castro in 1963. This work was carried out by the Cuban R. Porro and two Italian colleagues, V. Garatti and R. Gottardi who arrived in Cuba in 1959, both drawn to Cuba by the Revolutionary spirit and the desire to participate in the construction of the new Socialist world. In Italy all three had shared a contact with the critical thoughts of E.N. Rogers, and in Caracas they had experienced a period of work with C.R. Villanueva. Porro assumes the role of a link between the two decades being as he is the only one to have come into contact with the discussion concerning Cuban architecture of the 50's.

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