

Thursday, 14 June
14.30-17.15

Track: Open session
Room: *National Library, Miller Salon*

OPEN SESSION

Session chair: Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen, Yale University

PAPERS:

The Process of Change in Zurenborg: The Evolution of the Suburban House in Antwerp

Susan Galavan, KU Leuven

As the first country on the European continent to industrialize, Belgium was an important centre for the flowering of modernism. It was also the first country in Europe to move out of the city into suburban villas, aided by solid transport networks. This paper will focus on the Zurenborg district of Antwerp, a large real estate development which emerged outside the city in the late nineteenth century. Built between 1884 and 1929, the district was managed by one development company that interpreted the needs and tastes of its rising suburban population, reflected in the diverse social and spatial stratification of its architecture. The paper will focus on the work of Joseph Bascourt, a particularly skilled architect whose designs oscillated between modest Neoclassical dwellings, Art Nouveau houses, and eclectic mansions. Through a study of original drawings as well as the as-built artefact, it will follow his work over time, examining its main characteristics from external form to plan type; from building materials to architectural expression. How does his work reflect the rapid changes occurring in society at large, and the reactions for and/or against these changes? Furthermore, how did the architect mediate between the strict controls imposed by the building company and the macro socio-historical developments that were changing residents' desires? This paper will highlight the role of the suburban house as a vehicle for the expression of the themes of late nineteenth-century life in the birthplace of industrialization in continental Europe.

Postwar Gaudí: Acts of Ventriloquism and Architectural Criticism

Pep Avilés, Penn State University

Growing international attention towards the architecture of Antoni Gaudí during the post-war years was historically opportunistic. Architects and critics promoted Gaudí's work as the ideal companion for the visual and dialectical renewal of architectural culture that ran in parallel to the development of American formalism. Some concentrated on his 'freedom' in the use of materials; others, on Gaudí's original and 'fantastic' organic forms. All of them fostered architectural imagination to bring new impetuses to the idea of modern architecture. Bruno Zevi, for instance, selected an image of the undulating benches in Parc Güell for the cover of his *Storia della architettura moderna* published in 1950 and Nikolaus Pevsner added additional footnotes and photographs of Gaudí's 'strange' architecture in each subsequent post-war remake of his *Pioneers* while publishing longer articles in widely read journals such as *The Listener*. Magazines such as *Perspecta*, *The Architectural Association Journal*, *The Architectural Review*, *The Architectural Forum*, and *Zodiac* (as well as mass media like *Time Magazine*), introduced the work of the Catalan architect to a wider professional audience during the 1950s with significant formal and ideological overtones. Institutions like the Museum of Modern Art sponsored research by Henry Russell-Hitchcock in Barcelona in preparation of the first exhibition on Gaudí's work in New York (1957–1958). Equally significant was Josep Lluís Sert's collaboration with art critic and curator James Johnson Sweeney, resulting in several writings during the 1950s and the publication in 1960 of a monograph on Gaudí's work. Sert and Sweeney underscored Gaudí's photogenic materiality, a 'new vision' reminiscent of the work of Moholy-Nagy and that echoed previous studies by Carola Giedion-Welcker on Parc Güell's tiles published in 1955. Considering the increasing fascination towards Gaudí's architecture, this paper will discuss the role that architecture

critics played in the construction of post-war sensibilities and ideologies. The work of Gaudí was alibi and illustration: a litmus test against which architectural criticism could ascertain post-war liaisons and formal agendas.

Formalizing Knowledge: The Example of the Ethio-Swedish Building Institute in Addis Abeba

Helena Mattsson, KTH Royal Institute of Technology

Erik Sigge, KTH Royal Institute of Technology

The Ethio-Swedish Institute for Building Technology, ESIBT, in Addis Abeba was founded through a bilateral agreement between Ethiopia and Sweden in 1954. The institute was established as a response to the foreign control of building construction in Ethiopia with the aim to educate Ethiopians in building professions, to conduct research and testing of building materials, and to plan and build low-cost housing. The agreement was modeled on the principles for development cooperation set forth by the UN after WWII, in particular through the type of aid called 'technical assistance'. The agreement thus sought, as declared in General Assembly Resolution 200 (III), to arrange for: the organization of international teams of experts to advise local governments; the training abroad of experts (in Sweden); the training of local technicians (in Ethiopia); and to provide facilities designed to assist Ethiopia in obtaining technical personnel, equipment, and supplies.

This paper will investigate ESIBT's development during the 1950s and 1960s from the point of view of knowledge circulation, in which the analytical emphasis is on the role of knowledge in the historical development of the building institute, and knowledge's relation to cultural, political, and economic contexts in which architecture and planning expertise are produced. This perspective could be described as a knowledge history of building technology in which European technology is transferred to Ethiopia, while at the same time local traditional building techniques and materials are documented and categorized in line with emerging international classification systems. The analysis will focus on ESIBT's relation to the UN and international institutions like CIB (International Council for Building), and highlight ESIBT's emphasis on building research in the establishment of their new educational programmes and the development of new course curricula.

Postmodern Architecture in Poland: Meaning and Appropriation under Late Socialism

Florian Urban, Glasgow School of Art

Postmodern architecture—the term usually evokes images of candy-coloured façades, fake marble, plaster columns, and the joyfully ironic use of no-longer venerated classical precedents. The scholarly literature tends to root it deeply in a pluralist, economically saturated society that cherishes playfulness and individual expression, as well as a certain level of superficiality and self-satisfaction. But what if postmodernism had developed in a completely different environment, far removed from capitalist exuberance?

This was exactly the situation in socialist Poland during the 1980s. While Polish postmodern architects received important impulses from their colleagues in the West, they were faced with a very different environment. They worked under conditions of scarcity and used their design as a form of resistance against a collectivist dictatorship, connected to a yearning for truth, inner values, and spiritual fulfilment.

My presentation will attempt to make sense of this apparent contradiction. I argue that Polish postmodern architecture is remarkable for several reasons. First, it appeared 'through the backdoor', manifesting within the rigid framework of the communist planned economy, often without explicit support by the rulers, and often, particularly in sacred architecture, through bottom-up or self-build initiatives. Second, it was influenced by strong national-conservative ideas in which the Catholic Church became a catalyst of anti-socialist opposition and hopes for political change, and by a design tradition that had

inspired much of nineteenth and twentieth-century architecture. And third, it was not connected to a post-industrial society like postmodernism in the West, but largely grew out of an industrial economy that at the time was subject to certain modifications.

Against this background, I argue that the habitual connections of postmodernism to post-Fordism, a post-industrial society, and neo-liberal politics have to be revised. At the same time, my article will point to the flexibility of meaning and content in architecture, and to the windows of opportunity within an apparently rigid system.

Examples will include the housing schemes Na Skarpie in Cracow-Nowa Huta (1985–1995, Romuald Loegler/ Wojciech Dobrzański/ Michał Szymanowski) and Nad Jamną in Mikołów near Katowice/Silesia (1983–1986, Stanisław Niemczyk), the Old Town rebuilding project in Elbląg/Masuria (1983–1997, Szczepan Baum, Ryszard Semka, Wiesław Anders) and the examples of sacred architecture such as Ascension Church in Warsaw-Ursynów (1980–1985, Marek Budzyński and Piotr Wicha), Holy Ghost Church in Tychy/Silesia (1978–1983, Stanisław Niemczyk), and Our Lady of Częstochowa Church in Cracow-Nowa Huta (1984–1995 Krzysztof Dyga, Andrzej Nasfeter).