History in the making. Built and Thought: with regard to the Historiography of Architecture
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Overwhelmed by the proliferation of an increasing number of formats through which the themes that occupy historians of architecture and urban planning are also subject to constant scrutiny at the service of creating content controlled by parameters of production and performance — a form of knowledge that cancels thought, with its symptoms most prevalent in universities — one cannot help but feel a certain relief when coming across a book, published on the occasion of a research meeting on the historiography of architecture, that is not only capable of questioning this recision objectively but also does so, inquiring what is the way in which this story has been and is being thought. It is a unique format that works as an analogue tool for action and that establishes a relationship between authors and readers (non-consumers). Or in other words, not by judging the past, but by interrogating it, as seems to be the aim of architecture historians every time their work has achieved a level of autonomy that is justified by the establishment of its own epistemological foundations.

How is architecture written? How is the history of architecture written? What are the connections between buildings and the ideological assumptions that support them? How to link the universal condition of the grand historical narratives and the ideological assumptions that support them? How have alterity, the presence of the other and the other, for example, as well as other paradigms or currents of thought that are no longer so recent (cultural, gender, global, environmental, digital studies) influenced the historiography of architecture? How have some survived (namely those related to language, first, and connotative senses)? Furthermore, it does it through a book that stands up for itself and demands attention and time, starting from its colourful red covers. And it couldn’t be otherwise in a meeting on historiography, dedicated to “sketch a profile of how the construction of the history of architecture has been addressed”4. The book, designed by Montse Lago (tipos móviles), recovers a certain avant-garde graphic style on the cover through the use of typeography and, by extension, text as a communication tool. Therefore, and revealing again how much the medium is the message, the challenge of the book was triple (allow me the pun): how to tell how researchers tell how history has been (and is being) told (and, also, thought)?

The first two conferences of the AhAU, held in Madrid in the autumns of 2017 and 2019, were focused on the symbiotic relationship between Spain and two important milestones of contemporary architectural culture raised in the first third of the last century – specifically in the interwar period – without which the historical and social context of the avant-garde and modern architecture could not be explained. One is the International Conferences of Modern Architecture (CIAM) inaugurated in 1928 and, the other, Bauhaus, founded by Walter Gropius in Weimar (Germany) in 19191. However, those first two conferences had a common denominator that does not appear in the third of them: Spain and the particularity of its own most recent history in relation to the rest of the western countries or, at least, the European ones – interestely rejected today from some openly reactionary positions.

This issue, together with the careful selection of the nine topics used to address, as stated by Guerrero and Medina Warmburg, a reflection on “the historiographical construction of architecture from within and from outside at the same time, that is, (…) about the discipline itself, but within the currents of thought and the challenges that characterise the cultural world in order to build another history”, made the list of participants more than a frontal approach, especially in those moments of crisis, and origin, including the variable presentations that opened each of the nine thematic roundtables mainly presented by the members of the Scientific Committee of the Conference formed by Juan Calatrava, Julio Garmea, Jorge Fernández Liernur, Joaquín Moreno, María Teresa Muñoz, Carlos Plaza, Eduardo Prieto, Delfín Rodríguez, Josep Mª. Rovira and Andrés Tavares.
The themes were the following: the genres of the history of architecture (from grand narratives to microhistory); the generational question (masters and disciples); the materials, techniques and tools of the historian (the archaeologies of knowledge and the historian as *bricoleur*); the western canon and its questioning; the operational issue (the relationship between history and the project); the issue of identity (construction of national identities and international networks); post-colonial and post-Eurocentric historical approaches; the relationship between the history of architecture and Mass Media (from the travel guide to the World Wide Web); and, finally, the irruption of new paradigms and the renewal of historiographic traditions (through the debates about globalisation, the environment and the digital, among others).

Each thematic block was thus characterised by four texts with images (communications), preceded by the previously mentioned introductory presentations without images. This enabled each thematic block to be read independently, despite the fact that, in many cases, when reading the book as a whole, inevitable links between them are perceived. There are a total of 44 contributions – including the presentations except for the first one – from Germany (2), Argentina (4), Australia (1), China (1), Spain (17), United States (3), France (1), Greece (1), Italy (10), Mexico (2), Portugal (1) and Switzerland (1).

Woven into each of the nine themes, the different contributions clearly reflect the approaches of the conference. Each of the themes is dealt with from its own specificity and in a kaleidoscopic way, inevitably subjected to the space created by the contextual and temporal margins marked by the call for research itself (European and transatlantic correspondences). Each demonstrates how the study of the principles of the different historiographic constructions used by the history of architecture is, at least, as necessary if not more so as the historization of the buildings themselves.


2. Ibid., p. 9.

3. The first of them, under the title of *Los años CIAM en España: la otra modernidad*, led by Sambricio himself with Ricardo Sánchez Lampreave (Universidade da Coruña, UDC), proposed a debate of opposites: the apparent orthodoxy of the approaches of the CIAM in comparison with the heterodox response from Spain as a result of the development of its political events. All this was around thematic lines that went from, among others, traditional architecture or the existence of Francoist architecture to developmentalism or the relationship between engineering and architecture. (See: Sánchez Lampreave, Ricardo (ed.), *Los años CIAM en España: la otra modernidad*, Asociación de historiadores de la Arquitectura y el Urbanismo (AhAU), Madrid, 2017). The second conference, with the title of “Bauhaus In and Out: Perspectives from Spain”, directed by Laura Martínez de Guereñu (IE University) and Carolina B. García-Estévez (Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya), based on several themes (including the connections between art and architecture, the issue around technique and the generational issue between masters and disciples) had an ambition similar to the first conference: to refute or, at least, to question from omission, the contradiction and, also, from revelation, the European artistic and architectural avant-garde of the beginning of the last century and its links with Spain through the Bauhaus. (See: Martínez de Guereñu, Laura and García Estévez, Carolina Beatriz (eds.), *Bauhaus In and Out: Perspectives from Spain, Asociación de historiadores de la Arquitectura y el Urbanismo (AhAU), Madrid, 2019*).