

- 37 FLC P (4) 1. Note in relation to the justification of the modifications added to the initial project, dated the 30 January, 1963.
 38 FLC P (4) 8. 14 October 1965
 39 Le Corbusier, vol. 8, Zurich, Artémis, 1970, p. 208.

U.S. EMBASSY IN BAGHDAD: INGREDIENTS OF A COLD DISH

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Fruit salad is a common dessert in many restaurant meals. It is eaten cold because of its refreshing properties and varied tastes. Before being served the fruit has to be prepared by selecting, peeling carefully, and cutting in small, similar-sized pieces. A base of juice and some time soaking provides the fusion of its bouquets. The diner can check how each spoonful offers a different taste, which never seems to coincide with the name of what is been eaten. He never knows exactly what he has eaten. A bit of this, a tiny part of that... no single taste is dominant. John F. Dulles, Secretary of the State Department (SD) with Eisenhower, and ultimately responsible for the assignment made to José Luis Sert, called the American embassies "the good fruits of our freedom".

Something similar occurs when one tries to analyze the project that Sert, Jackson and Gourley designed in 1955 for the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. It is extremely complex to identify the ingredients necessary to catch a glimpse of the singular components which take part in its form. The analyst can easily arrive at some fragmented discourses which architecture can hardly join together. All of them are in the building. But it is impossible to know which proportion each has in the final result. To display all the fruits of the fruit salad makes it possible to get to the knowledge of an architecture, which, in the end, is only thinkable as the juice in the bottom of the cup, and the diner still does not know exactly what it is.

Iraq, a stormy background

In 1920, the British took control of what we call today Iraq. One year later, they installed a monarchy and defined the territorial borders in correspondence with the natural ones. They redacted a constitution and created a parliament. They were interested in petrol and they wanted to construct a railway to unite Europe and the Persian Gulf to trade with India without crossing Africa.

Between 1932 and 1958 Iraq went from independence to the constitution of a Republic. In 1932, the British term of office

went apparently to its end. Iraq was no longer a colony. However, the monarchy was not fully accepted by various from the several groups of power operating in the country: Baathis, Kurds, Shiites, and Sunnis. Several revolts organized by nationalists and leftists were repressed, and in 1945 the country entered the United Nations. Two years later, the agreement between the UK and the *Irak Petrol Company* is renewed. The IPC, contrary to the interests of the USA and the precursors of companies such as Shell, Total, BP and Exxon, would keep the discovery of petrol in Iraq secret, and would decrease production in order to keep the price high. Wasps in their nest start to wake.

Shortly later, King Faisal took a pro-USA position. In 1954, Nouri Al Said forbade political parties. Powerful Sunnis from the northeast of the country, who were owners of lands and also nationalists, and southern Shiites, employees of the Sunnis and pro-communists, who saw how Michel 'Aflaq's ideology (he was the founder of the Baath party, democrat and defender of human rights), a secular form of Arab nationalism, and that of Akram Al-Hawrani, pro-Arab and socialist, were able to organize the Ba'at party in 1945, which took the name of the Ba'at Socialist Party in 1947. In the same year, a document called "The United Status Petroleum Policy" says, "The USA must try to eliminate or modify existing barriers to the expansion of American petrol operations and promote the entrance of new American brands in every step of foreign petrol operations". Nationalism and socialism do not join easily with imperialism and capitalism, so the wasps' nest now has many chances to explode.

In February 1955, Iraq entered the USA-sponsored Baghdad Agreement, and this inflamed those who were already against the king. It was a military alliance between Iraq and Turkey; England, Pakistan and Iran also joined in which caused the discontent among different factions in the country, nationalists and socialists, to increase. The assignment of the Iraqi Embassy dates from this time. July 14th, 1958 a coup d'état took place, organized by nationalist left wing officials, communists, Shiites and Kurds. In the Cold War times this represented a clear pro-soviet turn, although the pro-communists were soon repressed; there was no need to explain who encouraged these actions. In spite of that, and as a sign of a diverse Iraqi reality, the country established diplomatic relationships with communist nations.

A republic was then installed under general Kassem's rule, who, at the same time, was minister of the Army. This institution took the power in a fragilely balanced space. The Unified

National Front of communists, Shiites and Kurds was against Abdel Sarem Alef's Baathists. In January 1960, when Sert's building was being finished, a plural party law was stated (it was actually a way of giving dictatorship powers to the government) and on February the 2nd 1963, a new *coup d'état* by the Baathist party took place, and Kassem was judged and executed.

When the US ambassador in Iraq, Waldemar Gallman, wanted the landlord of his residence to repair the building he was renting, the landlord refused. Then, in 1943, Loy Henderson was the ambassador in Baghdad and he reported the discomfort in the rented embassy, which he defined as a poor imitation of the White House. He asked for air conditioning and he recommended the construction of a new building. The State Department got tired of paying the increasingly expensive rent of its building, and in 1946 the future plot of ground for the new embassy was bought, near the royal palace, on the banks of river Tigris.

1946: MOMA LOOKS FOR A NEW ARCHITECTURE

In January 1946, when the war was just over, an exhibition in the MOMA tried to put some order into more than a decade of difficult relationships between the USA and modern architecture. There had been two previous exhibitions in 1932 (dedicated to the *International Style*) and in 1942 (called "What is Modern Architecture?") and, contrary to the desires of the directors of the museum in New York, they were not very successful. The presence of migrated architects such as Gropius, Breuer, Sert, Hilbersheimer and Mies van der Rohe and others had no noticeable effect. Once the struggle was finished, and with a very different political future, something had to be done.

The new exhibition, with Elisabeth B. Mock acting as curator, was given an apparently inoffensive title, "If You Want to Build a House". Behind that name a decisive message was hidden: how to find an authentic American architecture. In spite of such a late date as 1946, the first pages of the catalogue made clear the need to eliminate historicism and the correspondence between program and style, "We get English castles for colleges, Italian palaces for banks, Spanish villas for filling stations, and houses which try to look as though they have been built two hundred years ago in New England".

Confidence in the architect and in modern architecture was a possibility that had to be taken seriously and it carried a certain baggage: there was the need to find a "fresh and human approach, a sensitivity to materials and proportions, and

the ability to conceive a building in its three full dimensions rather than as something drawn on paper". An eloquent way to interpret those changes arrived from Europe. It was like saying nothing and, at the same time, it was a way of making people understand that modernity was not anything formally codified. It was as if it was another formula; "Reach in the second drawer, Joe, and we'll put a flat roof and corner windows on Number Twelve". It was also said that it was something complex, not a simple formula; "Modern architecture isn't that easy. It isn't just another imitative style; it is an attitude towards life, an approach which starts with living people and their needs, physical and emotional... there are no rules". This is an architecture which unleashed too many prejudices; "too many people believe that a flat roof, corner windows and chill suggestions of Superman make a modern house".

And then, if there are no rules, nor style, nor prejudices, what is "modern" in architecture? Mock states it in a very pragmatic way: modern architecture is that which makes the most of every centimeter of space, that which offers flexible programs and multi-use rooms, open, flexible, time-adapted spaces, that which uses modern, light, standardized materials, light serial furniture, that which is able to adapt to the environment where it is built. And, most of all, it is the one you like, not because it is chic, snobby or antique. New times must rule and the machine aesthetic must be abandoned, "Only a few years ago, our run-of-the-mill modern houses, even those of more than ordinary sophistication, tended to look like refrigerators. Their external characteristics were box outlines, uniform whiteness, a few freestanding pipe-supports and a sprinkling of round windows and glass brick".

The catalogue has obviously many illustrations. Buildings by Gropius, Breuer, Neutra, Le Corbusier or Mies van der Rohe share the place with those by Wright, Saarinen, Jackson, Belluschi, Eames, Rudofsky and others. Skillfully pictured to show the "innovations" exposed by Mock, the buildings flee from the five point topic or from any other attempt at repetitive codification. Wood, bricks, wide projections, double-pitched roofs, etc, constitute another possible modernity. The text concludes, "After a half-century of enslavement to a multitude of arbitrary styles, the architect has finally freed himself to answer your needs directly, imaginatively, without prejudice. If you choose a good one, he can give you a house which is both livable and beautiful".

MOMA wanted the average American to get used to that language and, seeing that kind of architecture, he could

consider it his own one and go to the architect knowing that something else could be developed from European discoveries of the twenties, that means, that he assimilated those advances as his own without tensions. Having failed in their previous attempts in 1932 and 1942, and considering that now the USA should teach a lesson to the world to guarantee their predominance, new architecture should look for other support away from an architecture suspected of being communist.

COLD WAR HAS A CULTURAL NATURE

The relationship between the CIA and its cultural politics in order to encourage the American control through psychological warfare are well known². This operation, known as "The Congress for Cultural Freedom", consisted of "...moving the West-European intellectuals subtly away from their extended fascination with Marxism and communism in favor of a world vision which fits better with the American concept"³. In a document from July 10th, 1950, from the National Security Council Directive, we can read the definition of psychological war applied to these actions, "(the) planned use of propaganda and other activities (except from combat) made by a nation, which communicate ideas and information in order to have an influence on the opinions, attitudes, emotions and behavior of foreign groups of people, so they support the consecution of national goals". We have said already that oil and anticommunism were national objectives in Iraq's case.

In 1950, Sybil Moholy Nagy traveled to Berlin to talk about her husband's work and how he tried to build a Bauhaus in Chicago. A journalist wrote that the lecture was "...a documented contribution to the incomplete conception that we have about American art and culture"⁴. The exhibition was enclosed by an exhibition of non-objectual paintings from the Guggenheim Museum. Parallelism between this lecture-exposition and the exhibition from 1946 I have just analyzed is too evident not to see a sample strategy with the same aspirations: to appropriate European art and architecture, to filter its leftist ideology and offer them to the world as if they were American products which would help to reconstruct it from a Yankee supremacy.

Melvin Jonah Lasky, nicknamed "the father of Cold War in Berlin", formulated it very clearly, "The essence of the Cold War has a cultural nature. And in this field, a very important vacuum in the American program is being very much seized by the enemies of American foreign policy". To fill this vacuum it was necessary to edit books and magazines, to give lectures, to organize exhibitions and to offer classical music concerts,

sometimes conducted by Nazis. Michael Josselson and Nicholas Nabokov, together with Lasky, were the three authors of this program organized by the CIA.

In the mid fifties, and finally free from McCarthy's disturbances, the expansion of the CIA program to far off countries was made possible by the publication of moderate character magazines like *Science and Freedom*, *Soviet Survey*, *Quest* and many others. American Congress supported avant-garde music, the CIA financed Yehudi Menuhin and the Boston Symphony Orchestra gave concerts in Europe while claiming that "culture is not a homosexual word anymore. A nation like ours can be virile".

Things were more difficult for modern art in the beginning of the Cold War. It was rejected by Truman, and Missouri Senator John Dundero made an anathema of it, due to the destructive power of an art predictably identified with communism, saying, "All modern art is communistic... Cubism tries to destroy with the use of calculated disorder; Futurism with the myth of the machine; Dadaism with the ridiculous; Expressionism with the imitation of what is primitive and psychotic; Abstract art by putting confusion into one's mind; Surrealism with the negation of reason". It looked as if it had no chance in the new times⁵. The MOMA and the Harvard Fogg Museum were the target of his anger, although he said nothing about the nearby Graduate School of Design nor about the embassies' buildings. But his obsession was useless.

The ascent of abstract expressionism was unstoppable. American cultural elites and the MOMA saw in it an artistic tendency which was contrary to Stalin's socialist realism. Alfred H. Barr, who was the director of the museum since its foundation in 1929 until 1943, and the collection director in 1947, revived the heavy weapons contained in both catalogues from the institution which were released by he himself in 1936⁷, reminding the Americans that European art finished where he had shown what he had shown, and, since then, nothing new had happened. Now it was necessary to take over. Barr convinced Henry Luce, who was the owner of *Time*, *Fortune*, *Life* and *Architectural Forum*, to defend American modern art. In August 1949, *Life* magazine dedicated a central double page to Jackson Pollock, so "...the artist and his works were spread in every home in the United States"⁸. World art had to be American now and the proud succession of decadent Europe was in abstract expressionism's hands. And in the hands of the MOMA and the CIA.

Since 1952, this American art began to travel to Europe. There is no need to say who was financing the "invasion". Eisenhower was delighted by this operation and defended

modern art as "the mainstay of freedom". He insisted, "When artists become slaves and tools in the hands of the State... creation and genius are destroyed". America, thanks to its free-creation political system, kept the flame of modern art alive. Taking into account that architecture is not transportable, the equivalent of abstract expressionism's role had to be played by the embassies of the United States around the world. The *Foreign Buildings Operations* (FBO) were founded in 1946, at the same time of the exhibition we have talked about in the beginning, and also when abstract expressionism's attack starts to be prepared. Another fruit for our fruit salad.

DWIGHT DAVID EISENHOWER

After twenty years of government, the Democratic party had to hand power over to the Republicans in January 1953. Dwight Eisenhower had won the match against Adlai E. Stevenson. It is necessary to explain the battle against McCarthy, which started because the new president could not stand that the senator of Wisconsin doubted General George Marshall's honesty, in order to understand the change in US embassies' design during Eisenhower's term of office. What were these buildings like until 1953?

Ron Robin and Jane C. Loeffer's works have documented their related circumstances, their financing systems and the criteria to select the architects⁹. Let us simplify it: until 1945 all of them have something in common because they share an old fashioned historicism which deserves no further commentary. Their architects had studied in Paris' EBA where they certainly could not develop anything else. Embassies in Rio de Janeiro (1923), Mexico (1925), Managua (1927), Tokyo (1932), Peru (1944), and the American delegation in Baghdad (1938) had a Palladian or colonial image.

The end of the war motivates a decisive change in the way of conceiving those American enclaves. The embassies in Rio (1948-53), Cuba (1950-52) and Madrid (1952-54) are explicit in their form. They were stripped of historicism and they show a categorical image now, an image taken from a stereotyped *International Style* as if it was derived from a United Nations building. This was an eloquent coincidence by the times of Democrat party's government.

Ron Robin explained the organizational changes in the State Department during the Democrat's term of office after 1945, saying, "The quest for unambiguous political architecture abroad led to the dismantling of the interdepartmental Foreign Service Building Commission (FSBC) after World War II and the

subsequent re-hauling of the building procedures. By separating the architectural process from the inevitable cross-currents of an interdepartmental agency, the State Department could now pursue its own agenda with no outside interference. A new internal division in the State Department, the Office of Foreign Buildings Operations (FBO), enjoyed almost complete autonomy in deciding upon relevant styles, as opposed to the mostly technical duties of the State Department building officials during the reign of the FSBC"¹⁰.

An autonomy which allowed an initial program to develop in which representative buildings should appear as "oases of American soil in foreign lands" and be seen as "the only physical embodiment of our culture they are likely to see other than automobiles or refrigerators". The first person responsible for this operation was Leland King, who would now impose new directives, close to the *International Style*, as a completely opposite choice to the soviet policy, consisting of the construction of their buildings abroad in a historical key. Doing so, the USA demonstrated their capability to be current and to offer a modern image to their democratic convictions, while the USSR proved a formal backwardness corresponding to the poor credibility of its communist project. Leland did not catch the message from MOMA's exhibition in 1946; it was necessary to wait. He had to pay dearly for it.

SOM's architecture, who was also involved with these kind of assignments, would be the image that the reader could have in mind to know which type of architecture I am talking about. "The undecorated surfaces of these ahistorical structures, their simple shapes and deliberately conspicuous display of modern building materials, were the communal representations of a future-oriented society completely at ease with the new technologies, a society that would not repeat the mistakes of history"¹¹. A way of constructing which identified the buildings of private business (very numerous in American and European cities) with the public and official architecture was the first symptom that something was not working right. US Congress saw them as an "alien intrusion".

An excessive authority, a worrying hermeticism, an indifference towards receptive countries: that was what neither Dulles nor Eisenhower liked of the form of these embassies. Anti-communist policy had to push on though (this is why Eisenhower did not hesitate to use the death penalty on the Rosenbergs in the spring of 1953, despite the protests of the international community), so the circumstances forced to change it to make it possible and more efficient. To put McCarthy on one side could help to increase external confi-

dence in the American system and its parable of freedom. "Temperament and style, of course, separated Eisenhower and McCarthy more than did fundamental differences about the role of political dissent in a free society"¹².

In June 1953, after a journey through several European capital cities, businessman Philip D. Reed warned about serious European worries related to McCarthy. He wrote to Eisenhower that many Europeans were wondering if the American concept of "democratic government and the rights of individuals is really different from that of the communists and fascists". As we can notice in Broadwater's news, it seems it was not only in Europe; "While communist controversy acutely disturbed America's Western allies, foreign dismay with Senator McCarthy also surfaced in the Far East. After a tour on the Orient, Senator Alexander Smith and Francis O. Wilcox, chief of staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, reported to the president widespread concern in Asia about the Wisconsin Senator and general bewilderment as to why his influence had not been curbed"¹³. While this feeling was growing, in July 1953 Sert was appointed *Dean* and *Chairman* of the GSD.

Concerning McCarthy, Eisenhower answered, "I hope that somebody will do something relatively soon". More reports about the subject came, in many cases with haughty manners, and both Dulles and Eisenhower kept them secret¹⁴. In 1954, McCarthy was cornered and he eventually died in 1957. By that time he was an alcoholic. In the summer of 1958, the President sent three marine battalions to Lebanon in order to protect the American interests in Iraq when the coup d'état took place. The embassy designed by Sert was about to be finished.

UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE FBO: THE ADVISORY ARCHITECTURAL COMPANY (AAC)

Another question was floating in the air during the first years of Eisenhower's presidency; the atomic bomb was no longer just in the hands of the USA. The Russians, English, French and Canadians had it too. That should moderate the moods in Cold War times in order to avoid a catastrophe. On 8th December 1953, the President made a speech with a very significant title, "Atoms for Peace"¹⁵. With their idealism, but also pragmatic and realistic, these words were precise. They were reconciling with the Russians ("We will never say that the peoples of Russia are an enemy with whom we have no desire ever to deal or mingle in friendly and fruitful relationship"), they were also cautious with the situation in China and with the necessity to strengthen bonds with Asian countries ("Beyond the turmoil

and strife and misery in Asia, we seek peaceful opportunity for these peoples to develop their natural resources and to elevate their lot") and it ended up with a call for concord ("The United States would be more than willing—it would be proud—to take up with others 'principally involved' in the development of plans whereby such peaceful use of atomic energy would be expedited"). In this cautious climate it is easy to understand why things changed in the FBO. Now the buildings should be "friendly and inviting". The fruit salad has more ingredients now.

Jane C. Loeffler's words were not concealing; "American embassies serve as showcases for the art, culture and political philosophy of the United States"¹⁶ and their difference with other countries "...had been an underlying assumption, articulated first in 1954, that American embassies should 'fit in' and reflect their surroundings". It does not look so easy that a building could fulfill both demands, at least at first. We will have to go by to look for these bridges that, between pride and guilt, between the ostentatious and the simple, between colonialism and friendship, at first sight look impossible.

May, 1952 was a key month in that process: the Democrat Congress approved, in the middle of protests for the waste, the amount of \$90,000,000 in order to finance an ambitious program for 14 embassies, 245 residences for officers, 85 office buildings and other necessary buildings.

In March 1953 Henry Luce and his Architectural Forum came to the defense of modern architecture¹⁷, saying, "No country can exercise political world leadership without exercising a degree of cultural leadership as well, whether consciously or not. The US Government has now made US architecture a vehicle of our cultural leadership". In front of Stalin's classical monumentalism, US example was the pure image of modernity which allowed people to identify modern architecture with democracy, "a colorful picture of a young, progressive and modern-minded America".

But Leland W. King's actions, contracting modern architects for the embassies that we talked about, were not fully accepted and his work was questioned. Squandering and improvisation were the initial accusations. New winds were blowing and changes came. Budgets decreased and King had to tighten his belt. Senator Green "...asked Deputy Under Secretary Humelsine whether or not the FBO had any written policy concerning the planning and design of embassies, and Humelsine admitted that nothing of the sort existed"¹⁸. The need for a minimum planning to assure the settling of the buildings seemed a necessary point of departure.

The investigation about the FBO did not stop here. The US Congress did not like that the American buildings abroad were so similar to the UN building¹⁹. The fact that American architects such as Rudolf, Schindler, Goff and Belluschi criticized it was also decisive. Paul Rudolph condemned it for "...bringing the so-called International Style close to the bankruptcy". The political class and the architectural elite agreed. In Republican times, modern architecture was seen as a Democrat's subject. The politicians would not permit this.

What had to be done then? Some Foster Dulles' henchman like SD Assistant Secretary (since June 1953), Edward T. Wailes, said shamelessly to King that he preferred Georgian architecture to modern in an interview on July 2nd, something that King obviously considered idiotic, so he wrote a memoranda in order to put things clear and to suggest the necessity to create a commission to supervise the projects and to elaborate a clear action policy²⁰. On the 9th of July he proposed Hudnut, Belluschi, and Finley for this commission, together with public administration representatives. This was the origin of the AAC, and it was the last action King made in the FBO before being substituted by Nelson Kenworthy in November 1953. He was hurt when he left, and he pronounced a sentence only understandable under that climate, a sentence the reader will be able to interpret easily, "It was architecture, not communism that was the victim in my case".

Kenworthy acted quickly, although it may seem at first sight that things were not easy for him. He wrote a document making several points clear: the FBO depended on SD, embassies' architecture should look friendly to other countries, it was essential to create an American architectural commission to assign and control the projects and a handbook was necessary to dictate the political directives of the FBO. And he did other things too. Between September 1953 and May 1954, he re-organized, he traveled, he fired people, he contracted other people and he made a report about the buildings, insisting on a "so-called international type of architecture" which had been constructed until then and pointing out the mistakes it represented in his opinion. He also interpreted what he saw and, by that, he added something important to the document, "The policy shall be to provide requisite and adequate facilities in an architectural style and form which will create goodwill by intelligent appreciation and recognition, and use of the architecture appropriate to the site and country. Major emphasis should be placed on the creation of goodwill in the respective countries by design of buildings of distinguished architectural quality rather than adherence to any given style of architecture... will reflect credit on the United States..."²¹.

Did Kenworthy know what he was talking about? Did he know that he was defending modern architecture in a "softer" version? How could it be that this former engineer, who had been vice-president of a construction company which had participated in the building of the Rockefeller Center, saw an exit from the garden he was just in? What was he thinking about when he said that the new architecture should be "...neither committed to glass fish bowls, not to Georgian tradition"? No doubt he had great dialectic skills. When he was asked by some congressmen about what he would do, his answer was almost admirable, "It's a question of how much was modern and how much was modernistic, if you make that distinction. I do. I have nothing against modern design *per se*. To me it's not a question of whether it's a modern design, traditional, or whatever, it's a question of whether it's a good design".

If modern was already recognized as American abroad, what should be done to change the image and keep the contents? This man demonstrated that he was well-informed about current debates among architects in the USA. Now it was just a matter of naming the members of the AAC. Kenworthy contacted Ralph Walker, president of the AIA, who proposed Boston architect Henry R. Shepley and MIT dean Pietro Belluschi. In 1951, Walker started a serious incident when he published an enflaming article in the *Journal of the American Institute of Architects*, where he attacked modern architecture by saying that the machine aesthetics had impoverished architecture and the society which produced it. He went on with typical complains. For him, the buildings should have into account the place where they are designed, and he blamed the migrated Europeans for bringing negativity, nihilism and neurosis to the USA.

Gropius wrote him an answer, asking for explanations in the name of all them (Mies, Breuer, Neutra, Chermayeff, etc.) to whom he sent a copy. Loeffler has found documents about this incident among Shepley's papers. Walker boasted even more and he replied insisting in his arguments about European decadent culture and its negative totalitarianism which promoted engineer's aesthetic, cell-men, loss of dignity, materialism, political and social irresponsibility. All of it was contrary, he said, to America's enrichment. He attacked all CIAM postulates, dogmatic, fake intellectuals, nihilistic, alien to all American values. The background is clear: what Walker could not stand was that modern architecture was European and that it represented America in foreign countries.

On January 21st, 1954, the AAC was given Colonel Harry A. McBride's added presence. We can easily imagine Belluschi and

Sert meeting at Boston airport on the way to their respective jobs. Both were Latin immigrants who ended up in important American universities, and the content of their previous work was similar. Sert had been immersed in CIAM debates since he was appointed president of those congresses. Belluschi was the main protagonist in another kind of intellectual project, trying to enclose opposed tendencies in the architectural culture of the USA. Both had an intellectual project which was close in the idea but had different ambitions. The fruit salad increases its bouquet.

PIETRO BELLUSCHI

Belluschi was the most aggressive from all the appointed architects to develop the principles of the MOMA exhibition in 1946, where he had already some of his work. He was the most gifted for building an ideological program for the AAC. Born in Ancona in 1899, he arrived in the USA in 1922, and, since 1924, was working in Portland, Oregon: the great Northwest. In 1931 he received enthusiastic critics from Wright on his Portland Museum, and Meredith L. Clausen claims that, already in 1939, he was starting to design buildings in *regional modernism*²². In 1945, he erected the Equitable Building in the center of Portland, an office building terribly modern and astonishingly clear. Specialized press praised it. *Architectural Forum* was the first to publish it and his editor, Howard Myers, was the person responsible for Belluschi's success because he recommended him for several charges and lectures²³.

On July 14th, 1948, the University of Washington Daily published a text by Belluschi which seems almost old to us now, but chronology makes it clear; "Modern architecture must reflect the beauty of its environment, not borrowings from the past... local traditions cannot be disregarded... Architecture must not be dictated by the machine. It must express an emotional understanding of its environment"²⁴. The West Coast culture's uprising had began, and everybody was sharpening their knives in order to make the rapprochement with the refined and educated people from the East Coast possible. The West was the truly American; the pioneer's myth was reborn. Myers was the initiator of this tendency in New York and Lewis Mumford insisted, from the *New Yorker's* pages in October 1947, that the works in the West were a humanistic interpretation of the *International Style* and "...that the modern house is a machine for living in has become old hat". He asked for a richer, deeper and more flexible idiom than the impersonal and mechanic functionalism of the *International Style*.

He demanded the American architects to stop copying Mies, Le Corbusier, and Gropius in the same way their fathers imitated *Beaux Arts* architecture. He went even further and he wrote that the Western constructions could be called *Bay Region Style*, a name that must have been really appreciated by the Americans, because the word "style" was the only thing they could understand when talking about architecture²⁵. The West was in fashion, and there were so many authors, magazines, books, articles, lectures, and symposia to support this claim that we have no space here to number them²⁶, although we can quote two heavyweights: Henry Russell Hitchcock went on about these subjects in *Architectural Record* (August 1951) with an eloquent title: "The International Style twenty years after". In November, Mumford continued with his "Function and Expression in Architecture". Mies, Gropius and Le Corbusier began to lose prestige while Wright and Aalto grew.

Belluschi went on giving lectures and releasing articles to defend this regionalism, necessary to get to their own American modern architecture, not "enslaved" by the great European gurus who lived and taught in the East. In the spring of 1950, he received a telegram from President Truman, in which he was appointed member of the *Commission of Fine Arts* and, in July, William Wurster (Dean of MIT, a certified *Westerner*) called him for an interview. Belluschi went from Portland to Cambridge to listen to an offer which he could not even dream about: to be Wurster's successor at MIT. Wurster called him because he said that he needed his "West Coast perspective". The beginning of the fifties went on in this direction, with the support of Zevi and Giedion, which added appeal to this subject²⁷.

Elisabeth Gordon, director of *House Beautiful*, was more aggressive and in the edition of April 1953 she attacked museums, professional magazines and architecture schools for bothering people with the idea of "less is more" and that "...the International Style designers, represented but one branch of modern, and wholly divorced from American roots". According to her, there was a native branch to modernity far away, a "...home grown variety of modern design which has developed slowly and steady along sound functional lines for well over sixty years and is in a remarkably healthy and progressive stage"²⁸. It seems clear that Belluschi's movement to the East was a calculated operation. If the USA and the CIA had invented abstract expressionism, they looked insistently for its equivalent in architecture. The union between *Eastern* and *Western* ideas (to follow their own language) was the best way of being modern without renouncing the European achievements and also without leaving aside the pioneers' tradition,

the American. To take control of the avant-garde movements, to reduce their breaking potential, to act as if everything had happened in the USA: this was a strategy which coincided with others I mentioned before; Belluschi had to do this job.

And Belluschi constantly made the CIA think they were right about him; his article in October 1953 in *Architectural Record*, "The Spirit of the New Architecture", got the AIA prize for the best article of the year. After disqualifying the Eastern architects as "modern architecture mafia" (something shocking due to his position, but also coherent with those times), he discussed the topics he was worried about. Belluschi insisted on his project recognizing that modern architecture's look was "the striving of a new great artist-architect" to create "new aesthetic symbols"; that architecture could not ignore life's reality, because otherwise it would "...soon become decadent for lack of nourishment which its roots must have from life, but it would also leave a large void in the everyday physical environment of human society which is itself built of earthy motives and necessarily moves with earthy boundaries". His words may sound empty to us now, but we know to whom they were addressed. Two years later, when he had already given "his best" to the FBO, an article in *Architectural Record* (December 1955) was much more biting and the questions he poses are demolishing because he suspends his discourse of the late forties and beginning of the fifties. It would be more or less as Clauser formulated, "How would one go about measuring the regional content of architecture?"²⁹.

AAC'S ACTIVATION

Belluschi was obviously the most suitable person to design the program and the policy of the FBO's buildings, and that was precisely his first task while the others agreed. What so far were just manifestos about the rapprochement between East and West in order to construct an American modern architecture, was now a political ideology which had to be built. This is a resume of the program's principles: be aware of the locale, consider the history of the place, dialogue with the immediate environment, design without previous formulas, with no concessions to weirdness nor fashion, without fear of new techniques or criticism. This should be the action of those responsible for the new buildings announcing the goodness of the tolerant American democracy to the rest of the world. Belluschi took care when talking about functionalism or economy. These words were now forbidden. That was Kenworthy's task. The reader surely wonders about several questions. Let us address just two

of them. Is anybody able to say how to reconcile the local and the American (just in case we know what these things are)? Is there any architect who knows how to take into account a country's history to design a building?

In spite of that, we can say that the architects "understood each other" when talking this way. At least that is what we deduce from the annual AIA convention of 1954, when Paul Rudolph spoke out against modern architecture's monotony, with its excess of glass and its *pilotis* and its lack of respect to neighboring buildings. Rudolph, who had studied in Harvard with Gropius and who obviously had several assignments for embassies, was "his master's voice" to Belluschi. Sert also showed he was of the same school and he condemned the new architecture for producing "awfully poor clichés" and he encouraged the architects to settle harmonically in the place. At least Sert's words were his own. Already in the thirties, the philosophy of his dear GATCPAC talked about adapting modern forms to the Catalan space's conditions. By those days he was designing Miro's studio in Palma. So, much earlier than Belluschi, he had a solid background in these battlefields.

It is not strange that he was on the list of twenty seven American architects made by Shepley in the beginning of 1954, which Belluschi enlarged to forty two, Gropius, Breuer, Mies, Neutra, Rudolph, Wright, Eames, Vernon de Mars, and Johnson appeared, among others. The AAC gave the list to the FBO in March 1954 and Sert had to participate in a tender for the London's embassy won by Saarinen³⁰, and resolve the one from Baghdad. This was one of the most difficult programs, together with Dakar and New Delhi, among all assignments of this time. The Congress complained because the plot's place could make the embassy a ghetto for Americans, isolated from local life, but the SD kept its decision for economic and security reasons³¹.

Belluschi's discourse may seem incoherent with the chosen architects list, but that is just an appearance. Why were Gropius, Neutra or Mies in the list? Had this Italian-American chosen the architects because of their famous names and not for being able to unite East and West? What were the criteria to assign the project's place? Why, for instance, was Sert the first in the list to solve the embassy in Asuncion? Why was it necessary to have a tender for London's embassy and not for other places? How to articulate the idea of a "modest" architecture as the convenient one for democracy?

Big names were chosen to make a great impression on the world. America offered her best, given that the country had received the best of Europe with open arms. Now they were "its own" architects and to give them as a tamed present to the

world was the way to show an infinite power over architectonic modernity. But the inner questions were not so "brilliant". The AAC was examining the architects and their work before it was presented to the Congress by the FBO. Control filters were made under Belluschi's ideology who made retouches to the plans on and on until they got adapted to his directives. Some architects, like Rudolph or Gropius had extremely bad times³².

JOSÉ LUIS SERT

Surely, Sert found the West-East debate very entertaining. It reminded him of his own beginnings in architecture when he first took interest in this discipline. His peripheral position in the thirties and how he turned this situation together with his friends Torres Clavé and Rodríguez Arias probably came to his mind. Or his text on Gaudí written in 1946, not published yet. Now he had other things in mind and he was studying the relationship between architecture and the city³³, the form in architecture from experimental or visual criteria and the historical importance to find this relationship³⁴. This is why he strove for contracting artists such as Gabo and Nivola, historians like Giedion or architects like E. N. Rogers to give lectures in the GSD.

His work in South America, with the limits that local conditions imposed on the architecture, and his particular professional career, probably was more than enough to make Belluschi decide to rely on Sert. The thing is that, in April 1955, the building of the USA embassy in London was proposed to the students in the projects class that Sert conducted together with Gourley and Coates in the GSD. The first sketches of Baghdad's embassy date from this same year, although the project took a long time in Sert's studio until it was finally built³⁵.

The main conditions of the Baghdad embassy are a complex program, a very long plot of ground on the banks of Tigris and an extreme climate. Sert felt really comfortable with them, because there were not so many formal conditions nor such big expectations as in London's project. On the first lines of a memoir accompanying the project, Sert wrote, "The architectural design of the new US Embassy in Baghdad was determined by the site, the sun, the river and the trees³⁶". In another version, the beginning is different but it is also coherent with the ideological context we have talked about; "The program employs American architects to prepare designs which will utilize as fully as possible the resources of the respective countries. It is a program of cultural exchange and mutual practical benefit. As a preliminary to each design, the State Department sends the architect to the country in question to

examine the site, to learn local materials, resources and craftsmanship, and to gain an acquaintanceship with the culture, climate and people"³⁷. Belluschi's discourse (or CIA's) had also pervaded Sert. No one is safe here.

With this preliminary analysis, Sert justifies the occupation of the plot and the language he is going to use for the complex. He displays the buildings demanded by the program one after one, divided by courtyards with water and palm trees, in a plot delimited by Al Mansur street and river Tigris, so, in progression from the street, we can see first a big pool in which the chancellor's house is reflected, as a formal doorway to the whole. Thereafter, there is a long service building perpendicular to it, to which the *Staff Housing Building* is added orthogonally, forming a courtyard crossed by a river's canal with a garden and palms. Behind this building, the three residences are placed, and also the servant's building, delimited by another couple of courtyards where recreational and social activities for the staff members and their families can be concentrated. A levee separates those activities from the Ambassador's residence, which looks to the river from two garden terraces. Like a village in an oasis, the buildings' dispersion makes it possible to keep a low height and not to be presented as an excessive mass, alien to the environment and to the presence of the city where it is hosted. Sandy Isenstadt has made a very incisive and essential interpretation of this project³⁸.

Water from the Tigris is pumped to the canals crossing the whole, thus giving it unity, providing irrigation for the vegetative areas in the extremely hot summer. Sert displayed special shelter systems with ventilated roofs and lattices which configure the first façade, and behind it, quite far, the carpentry. Taking advantage of his previous works for extreme climates such as the churches in Tumaco and Puerto Ordaz, and simply using plastic references which he liked since his work in Miró's atelier in Palma, Sert offers a repertory of different solutions to similar problems which show his willingness for showing qualities in every point. Diversity, plurality, kindness, the winners' strategy: those tall blond guys who give chewing gum to the kids.

The Chancellor's House is set back in order to get the necessary shadow. Their façades show a concrete structure filled in different ways with colored ceramics, lattices or basic-color painted carpentry. Residential buildings have three apartments each and they leave the ground floor open. They have ceramic lattices as well, displayed in various ways from a strict modulation delimited by a concrete structure, and they vary their depth according to the heights where they are placed,

something we can observe when we analyze the cross-section. The roof is also ventilated here but this time it is finished in an arch-shape to conclude the whole.

The residence of the Ambassador, oriented through the river toward the old city, with a more complex design because of the representative, diplomatic, and domestic functions it must host, is developed with enlargeable spaces through sliding elements, around a courtyard and with different heights. This time, the ventilated roof, acting as a parasol formed by concrete hyperbolic paraboloids, resembles a tree-like structure and is related to the palm trees of the environment. A hand-sketch by Sert testifies to this. The ceramics of the façade's lattices and the strong-dimensioned painted carpentries allow this building to dialogue with the rest of the whole and also with some details from Iraqi tradition.

An obsessive *varietas* is infused in the project and, at the same time, the result offers a unitary whole. The capability to alternate the materials and the elements is strictly calculated and controlled by the order imposed by the structure, something which was correctly interpreted in the *Foreign Service Journal* in February, 1959, when they understood Sert's proposal to "...draw up plans that would reflect an artistic combination of Eastern and Western motifs... modern yet conservative"³⁹. West and East met in Sert's proposal. The prize that should be paid is clear: to make a conservative architecture. Is not every architecture that way, as Loos announced? Sert exemplifies what was at the root of the CIA's psychological war, its most effective propaganda, that in which "the subject moves in the direction we want by reasons he thinks are his own"⁴⁰. I warned you from the beginning: fruit salad always lies. It is not even a "dish". It is served in a cup. Cold.

Notes

- 1 MOCK, E. "If you want to build a house" MOMA, 1946, P.5
- 2 STONOR SAUNDERS, F. "La CIA y la guerra fría cultural". Debate, Madrid, 2001.
- 3 GUILBAUT, S. "How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art". The University of Chicago Press. Chicago and London, 1983.
- 4 STONOR, Cit. p. 13.
- 5 Id. p. 42.
- 6 Id. p. 314.
- 7 Id. p. 352.
- 8 BARR, A. "Cubism and Abstract Art" MOMA, April 1936. "Fantastic Art Dada Surrealism". MOMA, December 1936.
- 9 STONOR. ID. p. 371.
- 10 ROBIN, R. "Enclaves of America" Princeton University Press. Princeton, 1992. LOEFFLER, J. "The architecture of the Diplomacy". Princeton Architectural Press. New York, 1998.
- 11 ROBIN, R. Id. p. 140.
- 12 Id. p. 145.

- 13 BROADWATER, J. "Eisenhower and the anticommunist crusade". University of North Carolina Press. Chapel Hill and London, 1992. pp. 79-80.
- 14 Id. pp.117-118.
- 15 Id. pp. 118-120.
- 16 ANDREWS, J. y ZAREFSKY, D. "Contemporary American Voices". Longman, New York, London, 1992. pp.49-54.
- 17 LOEFFLER. Cit. p. VII.
- 18 "U.S. Architecture Abroad. Modern Design at Its Best Now Represents This Country in Foreign Lands". AF, March, 1953.
- 19 LOEFFLER, Id. P.107.
- 20 Id. p. 108.
- 21 Id. p. 114.
- 22 Id. p. 120.
- 23 CLAUSEN, M. "Pietro Belluschi, Modern American Architect". MIT Press Cambridge, 1994.
- 24 Id. p. 186.
- 25 Id. p. 188.
- 26 The thoughts and the power of Lewis Mumford are collected in: HUGHES, T, HUGHES, A. "Lewis Mumford. Public Intellectual". Oxford University Press. New York, 1990. BLAKE, C. "Beloved Community". The University of North Carolina Press. Chapel Hill, 1990.
- 27 Id. pp.190-206.
- 28 Bruno Zevi published "Towards an organic architecture" and Sigfried Giedion wrote "The Regional Approach" in *Architectural Record*, January 1954.
- 29 CLAUSEN, Cit. p. 209.
- 30 Id. p. 212.
- 31 ROVIRA, J. "José Luis Sert" Electa 2000, Phaidon 2003. pp. 323-325.
- 32 LOEFFLER, Cit. pp.271-272.
- 33 Id., p. 174-182.
- 34 Among these subjects, something which especially worried him was the relation between architecture, the city and the environment, which he would soon start to verify in his actions in Cambridge. "You are too young, but I know that we all know that the last 50 years have produced more changes in architecture, if you measure in terms of the past, than the previous 500. They have transformed our cities, and architecture today is more closely tied to the urban setting than it ever was before. None of our buildings really stand alone today. It is very rare when you will be asked to design a building that stands completely alone, unrelated to other buildings or to its environment. Thus, what we are doing today in architecture is mainly urban architecture by definition and by nature... All architectural schools should try to emphasize the relation of architecture to the improvement of our physical environment, an environment that would result in a better way of living". See also: "On Architectural Education". Sert Collection D 47
- 35 Obviously, the following words should speak about something we also know, that is, the visual weight of architecture, through the possibility of integrating the other arts in it, once the machine, functionalism and the objectivity of architectonic concerns are put aside. "The world of the architect, like that of the painter or sculptor, is basically a world of form, forms in space, the shaping of space, the relationship of color, texture, light, etc.", something that demonstrates the "...plastic and emotional side of architecture. This means that you consider that the work you are doing has a certain quality that is above the purely functional or practical". Id. Previous note.
- 36 In another text with identical subject and redacted in the same

period, after repeating the things we have seeing, he adds the need for Historical studies in the architecture faculties. "One of the problems we are faced with today is how to teach history courses to the architect, many schools practically abolished these courses from their curriculums when Beaux Arts methods of teaching were replaced by our modern programs, as a result there is a generation of young architects that lack the essential knowledge of our architecture heritage, and I have heard many young architects tell how bad they feel about this. See: "The philosophy of architectural education" Handwritten lecture. Sert Collection D 106. 1957

- 35 The chronology of Baghdad Embassy is in the Sert Collection, Folder B 19 A, until Folder B 19 U. The first sketches date from 1955 and the last consulted plans are dated in March 1961.
- 36 Sert Collection. Dactilographed. Dated on 25.I.1961. It looks like a memoir for a possible publication.
- 37 Sert Collection. Dactilographed without date.
- 38 ISENSTADT, S. "Embajada de los EE.UU." In Josep M. Rovira (ed). "Sert medio siglo de arquitectura, 1928-1979". Actar. Barcelona, 2005. p. 207-217.
- 39 ROBIN, R. Cit. p. 162.
- 40 *National Security Council Directive*, 10th July 1950. Quoted by STONOR. Cit. p. 17.

BAGHDAD, FROM INTERNATIONAL STYLE TO POST-MODERNITY: ARCHITECTURE ÇAND REPRESENTATION

Juan Puebla

A series of urban and architectural projects of Western origin, assigned to a few masters of the modern movement as well as other renowned professionals, helped instigate a planned development of Baghdad in the 1950's and 1980's. One of these projects would link both periods: a work from Le Corbusier whose design was begun in the first decade, in 1953, and was constructed in the second, being finished in 1981.

These projects varied from urban planning to the building of housing and institutional, cultural, religious, commercial, sporting, and recreational facilities. Due to political changes and the recent wars that devastated Iraq, only a few have been built.

The proposals can be ordered and grouped according to two simultaneous criteria with regards to the assignment of the projects: the chronology, paying attention to the date of the design and the time period for its completion, and the typology, according to what type of urban approach- either those plans from which housing projects or public spaces were derived, versus those that became buildings, strictly speaking. From all of these, only a few were ever built, and those that were, at different times.

In the first place we have the projects commissioned by King Faisal II, some to the great masters of the modern movement, who could be classified as belonging to the so-called international method or style, though in slightly different ways.

The urban projects of this period consist of: The National Housing Plan and the residential zone of West Baghdad (1955-1959), entrusted to Constantinos Doxiadis; the University City and its Mosque (1957-1971) to Walter Gropius and TAC (The Architects' Collaborative); and the Plan for Greater Baghdad (1957-1958) of Frank Lloyd Wright, in which the architect included an opera house, a museum, an art gallery, a casino, commercial structures, a botanic garden, parks and a university city (although the latter had already been assigned to Gropius, as previously mentioned, and in the same location). Of all these, only the first two were partially constructed. Wright's project was never built, although since then the idea of building it now was suggested.

As for the public spaces, the American Embassy hired José Luis Sert in 1955; the Museum of Fine Arts and the post and telegraph office were given to Alvar Aalto (Wright also would present another proposal for this last project), all in 1957 and not built; the Ministry of Planning was given to Gio Ponti in 1958, and the gymnasium and sports complex (1953-1981) to Le Corbusier.

Secondly, beginning in 1982, and under Saddam Hussein's rule, are the proposals that form a part of the post-modernity, and are marked by a clear characteristic of historical reinterpretation due to the requirements of the commissions, in some cases, and by the actual architectural philosophy of some of the designers in addressing this issue: Ricardo Bofill and the *Taller de Arquitectura*, and the team of Robert Venturi, John Rauch and Denise Scott-Brown.

These last studios provided the proposal for the competition for the grand National Mosque and another for a residential district for each: one for Bab Al Sheik (1982-1987), from Bofill, and the building for Khulafa Street (1982), from Venturi, Rauch and Scott-Brown. Only the last one persevered and was constructed.

This traveling exhibition was conceived with the goal of spreading word of these Western architectural projects in Baghdad, which are little known and rarely studied in their whole. The exposition includes models built from the proposals and projects previously mentioned (Sert, whose project already had a model, and the postal building of Aalto and Wright, of which we have no documentation), as well as from drawings, maps, texts etc. and complementary activities such as conferences, interviews and plans.