RICHARD NEUTRA: Latin American Connections

Fernanda Critelli
Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie

Abstract: Current historiographical discourse on Richard Neutra's designs and professional trajectory constantly repeat assessments that express the strangeness regarding some aspects of his works. With that in mind, and after identifying those aspects, the purpose of this paper is to present an analysis on Neutra's designs from a different point of view: one that acknowledges his connections with Latin American architects and identifies in those strangeness the reflections of this relation.

The first step was to understand the historical background, Neutra's trip to South America and connections established there, and United States' political situation of the time. After that, the systematic reading of the main studies/books on Neutra revealed a gap in the understanding of his works, or even a lack of a more focused analysis in some aspects of his designs. By changing the point of view and, also, by looking to those strange aspects with a closer attention, new interpretations can be made that consider Neutra's trajectory in all its particularities, including the relationship established with Latin America. The result is a possibility for new discussions on the architect's legacy and a contribution to the historiographical discourse.

Keywords: Richard Neutra, Latin America, design, connections, historiographical discourse

INTRODUCTION

Richard Joseph Neutra (1892-1970) is a well-known Austrian-American architect. His pre and post Second World War designs are recognized by historiographical discourse throughout the world. In Latin America, for example, magazines from São Paulo (e.g. *Pilotis, Habitat, Acrópole*), Rio de Janeiro (e.g. *Módulo*), and Buenos Aires (e.g. *Nuestra Arquitectura*) constantly published his works, especially the Californian houses and the schools, hospitals, and health centers designed for Puerto Rico. Furthermore, four of his books were published in Latin America: The bilingual publications (Portuguese and English) *Arquitetura Social em Países de Clima Quente/ Architecture of Social Concern in Regions of Mild Climate* (São Paulo, 1948) and *Neutra: Residências/Residences* (São Paulo, 1951); the Spanish translations *Planificar para Sobrevivir* (Mexico, 1957) and *Vida y Forma* (Buenos Aires, 1972); and *Realismo Biologico*, and *Un Nuevo Renacimiento Humanístico en Arquitectura* (Buenos Aires, 1958), published only in Spanish.

Other important books, written by Neutra himself and by renowned researchers (like Willy Boesiger, Bruno Zevi, Manfred Sack, and Esther McCoy), were published while the architect was still alive and active, but all of them suffered from the imposing presence of Richard Neutra in their narrative. It was only with the compendium *Richard Neutra: Complete Works,* edited by Barbara Lamprecht, and with Thomas Hines' biography *Richard Neutra and the Search for Modern Architecture* that a wider and critical discussion of his designs and professional trajectory was initiated. From this point on, almost all research on Richard Neutra carries in its core the *truths* established by them, even the most recent work developed by David Leatherbarrow and Catherine Ettinger. There is also discussion, based on Neutra's theory, on a psychoanalytic architecture (in other words, the impact of architecture on the life and health of its inhabitants), like the studies by Sylvia Lavin and Todd Cronan. For the purposes established in this paper and in the author's dissertation research, however, the focus will be on the elements of the architecture developed by Richard Neutra.

At first glimpse, to base one's research on work done previously should not reflect a problem or matter for further discussion. As Marina Waisman once said, historiography is not a mere historical report. It has embedded in it-the historian's ideological point of view. Therefore, it is our job as researchers to question and to propose new interpretations of the historical fact, be it of a document or even a work of built architecture.

> The historical problems are solved by the research. Critical operation is performed to ensure data accuracy and relevance. They are technical problems. On the other hand, the historiographical problems are directly tied with the historian's ideology, because they delimit their object of study and critical instruments to define the historiographic text structure. Then, all these tools will lead to interpretation of facts and to the formulation of the chosen subject through their own point of view. (Waisman 2013, 5. Author's translation)[1]

With that assessment in mind, the goal of this paper, and by extension the author's doctoral research, is to enlighten some aspects of Richard Neutra's work and professional trajectory that were neglected or taken

as strange facts by the existent historiographical discourse. In other words, after having identified those aspects in the historians' speech, especially the ones concerning the architect's relations with Latin America, it becomes clear that new interpretations are needed. A similar document—being it a historical document, a written contribution (books, newspapers and magazine articles) or architecture (as a built document)—can give different answers depending on the new questions that are made (Zein 2019). In the specific case of this paper, new questions and new interpretations arise from a different point of view, one that originates in Latin America. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to collaborate with a critical discussion about an important twentieth-century architect and, with that, enrich the current historiographical discourse.

1. RICHARD NEUTRA AND LATIN AMERICA

1.1. THE 1945 VISIT OF SOUTH AMERICAN REPUBLICS

Richard Neutra's relation with Latin America strengthened in 1945 when he was designated by the Division of Cultural Cooperation of the U.S. Department of State to travel through the countries South of the Grande River.[2] As a part of the Good Neighbor Policy, established by President Franklin Roosevelt, Neutra's cultural mission was to give "Latin American architects a better understanding of architecture within the United States" ("Letter from Charles W. Collier" 1945, 2).

In the two month period that he travelled through South America, Neutra visited Guayaquil, Ecuador; Lima, Callao, San Miguel, Madalena, San Isidro, Miraflores, Rimac, and Arequipa, in Peru; La Paz, Bolivia; Buenos Aires, Argentina; Montevideo, Uruguay; Porto Alegre, São Paulo, Guarujá, Santos, Rio de Janeiro, Niterói, Petrópolis, Belo Horizonte, Ouro Preto, Barreiras, Carolina, and Belém, in Brazil.[3] In each one of these cities, he met with government authorities, intellectuals, and local architects. He also gave lectures at universities and institutes of architects and attended dinners at United States ambassadors' homes. More importantly, he visited iconic Latin American projects (Guerra and Critelli 2013; Critelli 2015).

> In summing my experiences, I believe that apart from the customary social meetings, considered useful to make for good will, my procedure to make the problems of the visited city itself the subject of formal lectures, round table discussions and broadcasts, proved very satisfactory and was well received. It naturally requires a speedy way of gathering the necessary information, but in many cases, it yielded, according to my local friends, truly constructive publicity and appreciation of the State Department's cultural cooperation effort. ("Report on visit South American Republics" 1946, 1)

Despite fulfilling a diplomatic mission, Neutra found in Latin America interlocutors for his quest in architecture, its relation to climate, landscape, and local construction technology. Not only did he connect with his fellow architects, but he also studied and admired their designs and projects. In October 1946, Richard Neutra wrote an article, published by the magazine *Progressive Architecture*, entitled "Sun Control Devices" (Neutra 1946b). In it, he presented North American readers a study of the answers given in architecture for sunlight control, based primarily on South American examples he had visited and photographed. He states, "No other single feature of South American architecture has excited as much attention as the conspicuous means of controlling sunlight which characterize the buildings. Vertical, movable louvers are particularly intriguing to me because a decade ago I experimented with this type of device, although I did not pursue my ideas to an ultimate conclusion" (88).

However, it was not only the photographs and sketches made during his trip that Neutra brought back to the United States with him. The friendships and professional connections established there were extremely important and would last for years to come. That is the case, for example, of his relationship with Brazilian landscape designer Roberto Burle Marx.[4] They met for the first time in November 1945 and then, again, in 1952 at the Aspen Conference, which Raymond Neutra, the youngest son of Richard Neutra, also attended, as well as a picnic that his family had along with Burle Marx. After those two encounters, a series of letters, archived at UCLA, connected them both-between August 1954 and September 1956, eighteen letters were exchanged. By reading them, one can acknowledge an important historical fact: Neutra offered Burle Marx a partnership in four projects: the Richard Hammerman House (West Los Angeles, 1954, artistic panel, never built), Sidney and Sonja Brown House (Bel Air, 1955, landscape, never built), Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America Building (Los Angeles, 1956, artistic panel and landscape, built), and Alfred De Schulthess House (La Habana, 1956, landscape, built) (Critelli 2015, 173-271). In fact, analyzing these documents makes clear that Neutra not only offered his colleague the partnerships, but insisted to his clients that they hire the Brazilian landscaper.

1.2. THE ARCHITECTURE ROLE IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

> America began as an empire during the nineteenth century, but it was in the second half of the twentieth, after the decolonization of the British and French empires, that it directly followed its two great predecessors. (Said 1994, xxii-xxiii)

The U.S. diplomatic policy and its cultural approximation efforts are subjects of academic discussion from North to South. To cite just a few researchers: Gerson Moura (1984 and 2013), Antonio Pedro Tota (2000 and 2014), Luis Alberto Bandeira (1973), Fernando Atique (2010), Lauro Cavalcanti (2006), and Carlos Minchillo (2015), in Brazil; Jorge Francisco Liernur (1998 and 2010), in Argentina; Anaioly Glinkin (1990), in Russia; Michael Blumenthal (1968), Patrício Del Real (2012), Thomas Leonard (1999), Justin Hart (2013), Jenifer Van Vleck (2013), Gisela Cramer and Ursula Prutsch (2012), in the United States. However, most of these researchers focus on the efforts of continental approximation through the arts (e.g. cinema and literature) and economic cooperation. It is only Patrício Del Real who studied the consequences of U.S. foreign policy on Latin American architecture.

As pointed out by Edward Said, in the previous epigraph, the United States of America's project for becoming an empire initiated in the nineteenth century with the Monroe Doctrine, as it was latter known President James Monroe's protectionist policy toward the American continent, and was consolidated after the Second World War, with the devastation of Europe. During the first half of the twentieth century—amidst the economic, territorial, and ideological impacts of the war—President Franklin Roosevelt realized the necessity for a softer, more diplomatic foreign policy (Hart 2013). Therefore, instead of adopting policies of direct intervention (like the Big Stick or the Dollar Diplomacy), he opted to unify and protect the American continent using subtle forms of domination and ideological influence over Latin America (Lübken 2012, 63).

In order to achieve North American goals, the U.S. State Department (especially the Cultural Cooperation Division) and the Office of the Coordinator of inter-American Affairs–OCIAA (coordinated by Nelson Rockefeller throughout most of its existence) organized a series of cultural exchange and aid programs. Among them: the 1940 MoMA exhibition of Brazilian painter and muralist Cândido Portinari; the 1942 trip through South America of Walt Disney and his crew of artists; that resulted in the creation of the characters Zé Carioca (representing Brazil) and Panchito (representing Mexico); the City of Motors, designed in 1942 by Josep Luis Sert and Paul Lester Wiener; the participation of Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer on the team led by Wallace Harrison for the design of UN headquarters; and also the 1945 diplomatic mission through South America undertaken by Richard Neutra (Critelli 2015, 47-114).

In addition to cultural programs, in that period of international conflicts modern architecture became a symbol of prosperity and possibility for a better future. This *appropriation* was designated by historian Ron Robin as "political architecture".

> Political architecture, a symbolic illustration of American power and willingness to intervene forcefully in the theater of international relations, played a significant role in the complex mission of orchestrating world affairs while refraining from an enduring and large physical presence abroad. Thus, an analysis of the symbolism of American architecture abroad reveals the crystallization of fundamental American goals in the international arena. (Robin 1992, 5)

In this sense, the constructions of embassies and consular buildings abroad—always a way of imposing one country's presence over another—was considered by President Roosevelt as essential for implementing the foreign policy he intended (Robin 1992, 92-93). By 1946, after Congress had approved the use of *frozen assets* for construction of new embassies and consular buildings, the Foreign Building Operation (FBO) established headquarters in Paris, Haia, London, Bonn, Tokyo and Rio de Janeiro (in addition to the original in Washington), and designated supervisors for East Europe, North Africa and Middle East (Loeffler 2011, 37). Leland W. King Jr., architect and director of FBO, began to invite famous architects to develop embassy-designs. With that initiative, between 1948 and 1958, the program gained the reputation as a showcase of modern architecture (Loeffler 2011, 57).

For the embassies in Rio de Janeiro (1948-52) and La Habana (1950-52), King hired Harrison & Abramovitz, a well-known architecture office that was responsible for, among other projects, the construction of the UN headquarters in New York. The choice of Wallace Harrison for these two designs does not seem to be coincidental. The architect was deeply embedded with United States' foreign policy and already had the experience of working in Latin America. He was the architect, for example, of the Avila Hotel (1941), in Caracas, and U.S. Air Base (1942), in Panama. Furthermore, in 1945, he was named Chief of the Cultural Affairs Division of the OCIAA, were he worked under Nelson Rockefeller's leadership. In spite of Jane Loeffler's affirmation in her book *The Architecture of Diplomacy* that the architect was chosen only for his merit and architecture ability, it is impossible to ignore the importance of personal relations between Harrison and Rockefeller in this case. As Garry Stevens would say, upper class individuals have a broader network of acquaintances that can be helpful in business (Stevens 2003, 77).

In 1955, the United States Congress approved a budget of three million dollars to be spent for embassy construction, half of which was for the "construction of an impressive new chancery in Karachi" (Loeffler 2011, 41). For that job, the FBO hired the office of Neutra

& Alexander. According to Thomas Hines, this was the third most-important project of the partnership, alongside the Lincoln Memorial Museum Visitor Center and the Los Angeles County Hall of Records (Hines 2005, 88). Completed in 1959, the U.S. Embassy in Karachi was designed to attend to the local needs of climate, materials, and labor conditions (Lamprecht 2012; Loeffler 2011, 174). Even though Hines referred to it as an important design of the Neutra and Alexander partnership, the historian also described it with strangeness as a result of the disagreements between the two men.

2. THE *STRANGE* IN THE WORK OF RICHARD NEUTRA

2.1. THE HISTORIOGRAPHICAL DISCOURSE

After reviewing Richard Neutra's trajectory (graduation, moving to the United States, his designs, and, especially, his relationship with Latin America) and the historical background of the time (political, economic, and cultural relations between United States and Latin America and the war in Europe)—i.e. the micro and macro histories—it is possible to launch new interpretations of Neutra's works and of the historiographical discourse available about him. When one does that, it become clear that some aspects were dismissed as *strange* by historians–starting with Hines and Lamprecht, up to the more recent José Vela Castillo and Catherine Ettinger.

The first step here is to understand the meaning of the term *strange*.[5] To help with that, we will take under consideration a definition elaborated by Sigmund Freud, when studying psychoanalysis through literature examples:

> The German word unheimlich4 is obviously the opposite of heimlich, heimisch, meaning "familiar," "native," "belonging to the home"; and we are tempted to conclude that what is "uncanny" is frightening precisely because it is not known and familiar. Naturally not everything which is new and unfamiliar is frightening, however; the relation cannot be inverted. We can only say that what is novel can easily become frightening and uncanny; some new things are frightening but not by any means all. Something has to be added to what is novel and unfamiliar to make it uncanny.. (Freud 1919, 2)

Relating this concept to the discussion established here about Richard Neutra, the *new* proposed by the architect in some designs brought *something* that made his projects *strange* and *unfamiliar* to these historians. If we change the point of view in the historiographical discourse, (i.e. from South to North) then it might be possible to realize that this *something* would be the relation between Neutra and Latin America. A manifestation that bothered some historians, causing them to react against it with strangeness. According to Freud, *unheimlich* is everything "that ought to have remained hidden and secret, and yet comes to light." (Freud 1919, 4).

It is not the intention of this paper to point out mere influence or mimicry of the Latin American designs in Neutra's works. After all, he was already a mature and established architect long before his first visit of 1945. However, as an architect that "empirically observed all his life" (Lamprecht 2012), it would be wrong to assume that his several visits, the connections established there and the projects that he not only saw, but also photographed and studied, did not have an effect on his latter designs. As it happens in poetry and in paintings, to observe, to read and to interpret another artform gives the person in question the power of an acting agent that chooses its influences and generates a distorted interpretation of it (Bloom 1997; Baxandall 1985).

Thomas Hines' biography on Richard Neutra was the first dense, critical, and prolific study published about the architect. Therefore, it is a reference quoted in the research conducted thereafter. However, as any historiographical discourse, it is not exempt from ideological positioning and should not be repeated without judgement or critical review (Waisman 2013). Therefore, this paper seeks to decipher aspects of Neutra's works that were described as strange and not in tune with what historians considered Neutra's designs in their pure form. This phenomenon happens not only with Hines, but with other historians as well. Another phenomenon this paper intends to highlight is the indiscriminate repetition of conclusions, made first by Hines and/or Lamprecht, without any kind of review, not even by Latin American researchers.

Not only the *strangeness* was repeated. There are a couple of projects that Neutra considered important in his professional trajectory, that were—deliberated or unconsciously—neglected by Hines and Lamprecht, and consequently by recent researchers. In all those cases, new interpretations are possible. However, for the purposes of this paper, we will focus only on two examples where we detect the strangeness in the historian's discourse. Keeping in mind the impact and importance that the connections with Latin America had in Neutra's designs—an importance shamelessness admitted by him—it is possible to interpret the strangeness detected in a different manner.

2.2. THE *STRANGE* DESIGNS

Los Angeles Hall of Records

> Alexander's penchant for warming Neutra's stark modernity with *colorful, organic* artwork led to cacophony on the building's North façade and to mixtures of too many competing and incompatible materials elsewhere. (Hines 2005, 268)

In his brief analysis of the Los Angeles Hall of Records, Thomas Hines blamed the building's final aesthetics on the constant disagreements the partners were having, as if each one of them could be responsible for a minor part of the design. Moreover, he based his assumption on the interviews that Robert Alexander gave after Neutra's passing.[6] However, earlier in his book, Hines points out that a clear division of functions was established between them: Neutra was in charge of the final decisions in architecture design, and Alexander of the urban designs (Hines 2005, 255). If there is truth in-what Alexander said regarding Neutra being a tyrant in his own office, always seeking ways to make himself immortal (Hines 2005, 268), is it possible to say that a design could be approved and built against Neutra's wishes?

Furthermore, there is another aspect that is missing from Hines' discourse: Neutra's intense transit and relation with Latin American architecture of the time. As ~~it~~ was briefly discussed earlier in this paper, the United States fear of European control over the American continent led them to increase efforts for continental unification and assistance. Within this foreign policy, programs of cultural exchange introduced to North Americans the works of such artist and muralists as Brazilian Cândido Portinari and Mexican Diego Rivera,[7] both of them whom Neutra met in person.

For a better understanding of the use of artistic panels in Brazilian modern architecture, a parenthesis with architecture historian Roberto Segre's assessment is necessary, "the *Brazilian* expression of European rationalism heritage […] is the presence of chromatic or figurative panels on building's ground floor walls: They appear on Cândido Portinari's azulejos for MES [Ministry of Education and Health]; or on the persistent collaboration of Athos Bulcão in the designs of national capital's initial construction: e.g. Brasília Palace Hotel (1957)" (Segre 2009, 168. Author's translation).[8]

It is also important to recall the professional relationship between Richard Neutra and Roberto Burle Marx. As evidenced in the author's master thesis. Of the four proposed designs in the partnership, two of them were landscape designs—Brown House (1955, not built) and De Schulthess House (1956, built)—while the other two were artistic panels—Hammerman House (1954, not built) and Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America building (1956, built) (Critelli 2015). There could be many reasons for not executing-the house panel, but the documents make clear that Neutra was insistent with his clients about the importance of building such panels and, especially, about the importance of hiring Burle Marx to design them (Critelli 2015). If these situations really happened, then one can imagine that the same thing happened in the process of designing the panel on Los Angeles Hall of Records. In other words, Neutra's interest and effort in integrating the arts in his works can be a clue to understanding that the 80-foot glass mosaic, designed by Joseph Young, was integral to his plans for the building.

Deploying Sigmund Freud's concept, the artistic panel caused strangeness in Hines. For him, it was unfamiliar in the overall designs of the architect, not for being new—as it was not—but because it manifested something that Hines preferred would stay hidden. This manifestation was in fact the expression of a close relationship with Latin American architecture that was deemed strange by Hines. To explain the *new* and *strange* in Neutra's work, Hines blamed Robert Alexander and the constant disagreements between the partners.

There is another interesting aspect of the Los Angeles Hall of Records project that is not matter of discussion for Hines, but, when it appeared on another design, caused strangeness: the 125-foot-high movable aluminum louvers used to protect the South-West façade. The element was extensively studied by Richard Neutra for this project in particular, and also for his post-1945 designs. Over all, there are twenty designs where Neutra used this element for solar protection—in its fixed, movable, vertical, and horizontal versions. Despite the recurrence, José Vela Castillo called it a "technological exhibitionism" when analyzing the VDL II House (Castillo 2003, 95). The movable louvers are, in fact, a striking element in the design. However, they are-far from being exhibitionism of any kind, but rather-represent the architect's ability to work with external influences—Neutra's article "Sun Control Devices," written in 1946 for the magazine *Progressive Architecture,* stands as proof. It is exactly the fact of presenting an influence and connection with Latin American architecture that elicited the reference to-strangeness in Castillo's discourse.

United States Embassy in Karachi

> In the new American Embassy in Karachi, West Pakistan, monumental modernism seemed the order of the day. Commissioned as one of a series of new embassies by distinguished American architects, the Karachi building was to take its place in the parade of monuments that would ultimately include Edward Stone's building for New Delhi, John Warneke's for Bangkok, Walter Gropius' for Athens, and Eero Saarinen's for London. […] Alexander learned while visiting Karachi of the ready availability of cylindrical molds for casting concrete vault forms, and was determined to utilize such forms in an effort to counter what he believed to be Neutra's overly stark design of the main administration wing. The result was a meaningless series of equally bland *vaults* used to decorate the façade of the rear warehouse storage wing. Though it was no better or worse than most of its sister embassies in the fifties, the lack of resolution in the Karachi building illustrated sadly the unresolved tensions of fifties modernism in general and of the Neutra & Alexander partnership in particular. (Hines 2005, 266-267)

There are many aspects of Hines' statement that deserve attention. The first is related to the program of building embassies abroad. Recalling the brief discussion established earlier in this paper, that program was part of United States' effort to project America as a world power.[9] For that purpose, the new embassies should be evidence of American goodwill and commitment to the new world era, and its modern architecture "introduced in the late 1940s, has come to symbolize the openness of public diplomacy" (Loeffler 2011, 3). In other words, these new buildings should express prosperity, technical innovation, generosity, and goodwill—in this case, through open and accessible spaces. The monumentality that Thomas Hines opposed (such as in the Karachi embassy, as in all embassies of the period) was not just the architects' will, but a requirement from the Office of Foreign Building Operations.

The second aspect is related to the final design that Hines, once again, based primarily on Robert Alexander's testimony to justify why certain aesthetic decisions were strange to him. An isolated analysis of this building, without considering Neutra's professional trajectory and works, could even lead one to understand that Hines is, in fact, correct in his assessment. However, the purpose here is to clarify that this design is not an unfortunate result of the partners' disagreement. Much to the contrary, it demonstrates the method of a mature architect that studied and understood the solutions of his fellow colleagues, in this case from Latin America. He was able to adapt their solutions to the specific conditions of the regions in which he worked.

Regardless of who found the vault molds, Neutra was-responsible for the architectural decisions, and used this opportunity to experiment with an aesthetic that was new for him. His relations with Brazilian architects were essential in this matter. According to Roberto Segre, reinforced concrete molded shapes, typical of Brazil and internationally known, were part of the national initiative to define the country's future parameters of modern construction (Segre 2009, 171).

> From the beginning of his professional activity, [Oscar] Niemeyer assumed the reinforced concrete as the basic material for his architectonical production. His enthusiasm based on cement's availability and low cost in Brazil, and on construction creative tradition forged by local engineers that persistently defied the rigid European and North American structure norms. Their innovations allowed unseen technical solutions. The goal was to explore the possibilities of this new material by reducing the system pillar-beam, commonly used in wood and steel structures. But, as demonstrated by 1920s German expressionist architects—at Rudolf Steiner's Gotheanum—the material plasticity motivated the exploration of new ways. And, at the same time, with the use of vaults and domes, it was possible to cover up spaces of wide dimensions. (Segre 2009, 169, author's translation)[10]

As in Brazil, Pakistan's industrialization and constructive possibilities did not allow the use of wood or steel structures, common for Neutra. So, the answer was the use of reinforced concrete, such as in the designs for Puerto Rico and for the Tremaine and Alfred De Schulthess houses. However, the concrete *vaults* for the embassy's warehouse were more than a simple response to the availability of the material. They allow extensive areas with very little support—ideal for such use—and give character to the design. In other words, they are more than "a meaningless series of equally bland vaults used to decorate the façade" (Hines 2005, 267). Just like the artistic panels of Los Angeles Hall of Records, they demonstrate the ability of a mature architect who studied with genuine attention his colleagues' designs and recognized aspects of their work that interested him.

CONCLUSION

> To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are. (Berman 1988, 15)

In his essay on society and culture of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Marshall Berman says that being modern is to be in a constant search for growth, self-transformation, and transformation of the world around us. Richard Neutra is a testimony of that. In his many trips, publications, and connections established around the world, he clearly expressed his belief in transforming others and himself. He constantly sought to incorporate in his architecture technological innovations, his appreciation for landscape, art, and even his restlessness to the challenges afforded by climate and local conditions. Also, he never hid his admiration for the work of his colleagues—regardless of where they were from—nor his desire to always keep in touch with them. The immense archive of letters held by UCLA and the various books and articles written and published in many different countries are proof of that.

Even so, the historiographical discourse insists on denying the transformative process that Neutra underwent throughout his professional life, especially in relation to Latin America. The 1945 trip through South America is not described with the same enthusiasm as the 1930 tour to Europe and Asia, perhaps because the first was financed by the United States government, or maybe because the Bauhaus is more significant to historians than Latin America. Regardless of the motives, the fact is that current discussions on the architect's trajectory constantly repeat Thomas Hines and Barbara Lamprecht's assessments, without given them any critical review; even Latin American researchers are guilty on this score.

Latin American architecture in general is being repositioned by important researchers who-dare to discuss history through different points of view. However, in the specific case of Richard Neutra, this process is still weak and lacking effort. Therefore, assuming the role of the noisy researcher—a character created by Ruth Verde Zein in her tale about the documentation of architecture historiography (Zein 2019, 102-125)—the Ph.D. research at the origin of this paper throws itself into the difficult task of bringing a new interpretation of Richard Neutra's work, one that originates from Latin America.

The focus on the existing historiography on Neutra means more than a simple design analysis—even though it is never simple. The designs are, in fact, motivation for studying the impact of Latin American architecture-on Neutra's works. The reverse is easier to identify: as revealed in just a few glances at the numerous publications of his designs in Latin American magazines; the books published in Portuguese and in Spanish; and the testimony of many Latin American architects. How-can one understand the inverse if the existent discourse always denies it?

Starting from apparently insignificant identifications, it is possible to highlight an unknown aspect of Richard Neutra. His intense relation with Latin American architects, landscape designers and intellectuals had an actual impact on his designs after 1945, and not only during the period he designed the hospitals, schools and health centers for Puerto Rico—as the historiographical discourse insists on stressing—, but because he encountered in Latin America interlocutors that shared his desire to explore climate and local constructive conditions. Even more importantly, they shared the architectonic-solutions that he constantly sought.

ENDNOTES

1 Original Portuguese book excerpt: "Os problemas históricos são resolvidos por meio da pesquisa. Exerce-se a operação crítica para garantir a exatidão dos dados e sua pertinência. Trata-se de problemas de ordem técnica. Os problemas historiográficos, pelo contrário, estão comprometidos diretamente com a ideologia do historiador, pois realizam o recorte de seu objeto de estudo e de seus instrumentos críticos, para a definição da estrutura do texto historiográfico; tudo aquilo, enfim, que o levará à interpretação do significado dos fatos e, por fim, à formulação de sua própria versão do tema escolhido."

2 As it is known, the Grande River's headspring is located at South of Colorado and it has its river mouth near the Gulf of Mexico. In its route, Grande River defines almost the entire U.S.-Mexican border.

3 All this information was collected in local newspapers and on the *Neutra Collection* archive held by UCLA. In the author's master thesis, this trip was carefully described (Critelli 2015).

4 Raymond Richard Neutra, in discussion with the author, July 2014.

5 Although the English version available uses the term "uncanny" as a translation of "unheimlich", for the purpose of this paper it was opted to use the Spanish translation, "lo siniestro," that seemed more appropriate.

6 Both on Alexander's memories held at the archives of Cornell University (Alexander, Robert E. "Unpublished memoirs." Alexander Papers, Cornell University) and on Hines interview with Alexander, December 1978 (Hines 2005).

7 Both at the Museum of Modern Art – MoMA at New York: "Portinari of Brazil," October 9 to November 17, 1940; and "Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art," May 15 to September 30, 1940.

8 Original Portuguese book excerpt: "a expressão *brasileira* da herança do racionalismo europeu [...] é a presença dos painéis cromáticos ou figurativos nos muros dos embasamentos dos edifícios: eles aparecem nos azulejos de Cândido Portinari no MES; o una persistente colaboração do Athos Bulcão nos projetos realizados no início da construção da capital: por exemplo, no Brasília Palace Hotel (1957)."

9 The term "project America" is a direct reference to Justin Hart's book *Empire of Ideas: The Origins of Public Diplomacy and the Transformation of U.S. Foreign Policy* (Hart 2013).

10 Original Portuguese book excerpt: "Desde o começo da sua atividade profissional, Niemeyer assumiu o concreto armado como o material básico da sua produção arquitetônica. O seu entusiasmo se baseava na disponibilidade e o baixo custo do cimento no Brasil, e na criativa tradição construtiva forjada pelos engenheiros locais, que persistentemente questionaram as rígidas normas estruturais provenientes da Europa e dos Estados Unidos, e cujas inovações permitiriam soluções técnicas inéditas. O objetivo era explorar as possibilidades construtivas do novo material que se iniciou reproduzindo o sistema trilítico de coluna e viga, utilizado nas estruturas de madeira e de aço. Mas como bem demonstraram os arquitetos expressionistas alemães nos anos vinte–no Gothe-anum de Rudolf Steiner–, a plasticidade do material motivava explorar novos caminhos formais. E ao mesmo tempo, com o uso de arcos e abóbadas, era possível cobrir espaços de grandes dimensões".

REFERENCES

Atique, F. 2010. Arquitetando a "Boa Vizinhança." *Arquitetura, Cidade e Cultura nas Relações Brasil-Estados Unidos 1876-1945.* São Paulo: Pontes.

Bandeira, L. A. M. 1973. *Presença dos Estados Unidos no Brasil.* Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira.

Baxandall, M. 1985. *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures.* New Haven, London: Yale University Press.

Berman, M. 1988. *All that is Solid Melts into Air*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Bloom, H. 1997. *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Blumenthal, M. D. 1968. "The Economic Good Neighbor Aspects of United States Economic Policy Toward Latin America in the Early 1940s As Revealed by the Activities of the Office of Inter-American Affairs." PhD diss., Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin.

Boesiger, W. 1951. *Buildings and Projects: Richard Neutra, 1927-1950*. Zurick: Girsberger.

Boesiger, W. 1959. *Buildings and Projects: Richard Neutra, 1950-1960*. Zurick: Girsberger.

Boesiger, W. 1969. *Buildings and Projects: Richard Neutra, 1961-1966*. Zurick: Girsberger.

Castillo, J. V. 2003. *Richard Neutra: Un Lugar para el Orden. Un Estudio Sobre la Arquitectura Natural*. Sevilla: Editora Universidad de Sevilla, Consejería de Obras Públicas y Transportes.

Cavalcanti, L. 2006. *Moderno e Brasileiro: A História de uma nova Linguagem na Arquitetura* (1930-60). Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar.

Cramer, G., Prutsch, U. 2012. *¡Américas Unidas! Nelson A. Rockefeller's Office of Inter-American Affairs (1940-46)*. Madrid/Frankfurt: Iberoamericana/Vervuert.

Critelli, F. 2015. "Richard Neutra e o Brasil." Master thesis, São Paulo: FAU-Mackenzie.

Cronan, T. 2011. "Danger in the Smallest Dose: Richard Neutra's Design Theory." *Design and Culture*, 3 (2): 165-192.

Del Real, P. 2012. "Building a Continent: The Idea of Latin American Architecture in the Early Postwar." PhD diss., New York: Columbia University.

Ettinger, C. R. 2018. *Richard Neutra en América Latina: Una Mirada Desde el Sur.* Guadalaraja: Arquitetônica.

Freud, S. 1919. "Lo Siniestro," in: *Sigmund Freud – Obras Completas.* 2017. Madrid: Biblioteca Nuova.

Freud, S. 1919. "The Uncanny." Available in: https://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/freud1.pdf.

Ginzburg, C. 1993. "Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know About It." *Critical Inquiry* 20 (March-June): 10-35.

Glinkin, A. 1990. *Inter-American Relations: From Bolívar to the Present.* Moscow: Pregress Publishers.

Guerra, A., and Fernanda Critelli. 2013. "Richard Neutra e o Brasil." *Arquitextos* 14, no. 159.00, http://www.vitruvius.com.br/revistas/read/arquitextos/14.159/4837.

Hart, J. 2013. *Empire of Ideas. The origins of Public Diplomacy and the Transformation of U.S. Foreign Policy.* New York: Oxford University Press [e-book].

Hines, T. S. 2005. *Richard Neutra and the Search for Modern Architecture.* New York: Rizzoli.

Hines, T. S., DREXLER, A. 1982. *The Architecture of Richard Neutra: From International Style to California Modern.* New York: The Museum of Modern Art.

Lamprecht, B. M. 2010. *Richard Neutra: Complete Works*. Colonia: Taschen.

Lamprecht, B. M. 2012. "The Obsolescence of Optimism? Neutra and Alexander's U.S. Embassy, Karachi, Pakistan." Available in: https://barbaralamprecht.com/2012/06/23/the-obsolescence-of-optimism-neutra-and-alexanders-u-s-embassy-karachi-pakistan/

Lavin, S. 2004. *Form Follows Libido: Architecture and Richard Neutra in a Psychoanalytic Culture.* Cambridge: MIT Press.

Leatherbarrow, D. 2002. *Uncommon Ground: Architecture, Technology, and Topography.* Cambridge: MIT Press.

Leonard, T. 1999. *United States-Latin American Relations, 1850-1903*. Tuscaloosa, London: The University of Alabama Press.

"Letter from Charles W. Collier to Richard Neutra," September 14, 1945. Folder 8. Box 1429. Office Records, Correspondence. Neutra Collection. UCLA Library of Special Collections.

Liernur, J. F. 1998. "Latin America: The Places of the "Other."" In *At the End of the Century: One Hundred Years of Architecture*, edited by R. Koshalek, E.A.T. Smith, and C. Zeynep, 276-320. New York: Abrams.

Liernur, J. F. 2010. "'The South American Way'. O Milagre Brasileiro, os Estados Unidos e a Segunda Guerra Mundial – 1939-1943." In *Textos Fundamentais Sobre História da Arquitetura Moderna Brasileira – Parte 2,* edited by A. Guerra, 169-217. São Paulo: Romano Guerra.

Loeffler, J. C. 2011. *The Architecture of Diplomacy: Building America's Embassies.* New York: Princeton Architectural Press.

Lübken, U. 2012. "Playing the Cultural Game: The United States and the Nazi Threat to Latin America," in *¡Américas Unidas! Nelson A. Rockefeller's Office of Inter-American Affairs (1940-46)*, edited by G. Cramer, U. Prutsch, 53-76. Madrid/Frankfurt: Iberoamericana/Vervuert.

Minchillo, C. Cortez. 2015. *Erico Verissimo, Escritor do Mundo: Circulação Literária, Cosmopolitismo e Relações Interamericanas.* São Paulo: EDUSP.

Moura, G. 1984. *Tio Sam Chega ao Brasil: A Penetração Cultural Americana.* São Paulo: Brasiliense.

Moura, G. 2013. *Brazilian Foreign Relations 1939-1950: The Changing Nature of Brazil-United States Relations During and After the Second World War.* Brasília: Fundação Alexandre Gusmão.

Neutra, R. J. 1937. "Arquitetura Funcional." *Revista de Engenharia Mackenzie* 67 (October): 132-3.

Neutra, R. J. 1946a. "Observations on Latin America." *Progressive Architecture* 5 (May): 67-72.

Neutra, R. J. 1946b. "Sun Control Devices." *Progressive Architecture* 10 (October): 88-91.

Neutra, R. J. 1948. *Arquitetura Social em Países de Clima Quente/Architecture of Social Concern in Regions of Mild Climate.* São Paulo: Todtmann.

Neutra, R. J. 1950. "Uma Casa Inédita de Neutra." *Pilotis* 4 (February): 4-9.

Neutra, R. J. 1954. *Survival Through Design.* New York, Oxford University Press.

Neutra, R. J. 1957. *Planificar para Sobrevivir.* Mexico, Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica.

Neutra, R. J. 1958. *Realismo Biológico: Um Nuevo Renacimiento Humanístico en Arquitectura.* Buenos Aires: Nueva Visión.

Neutra, R. J. 1959a. "Dos Aspectos Formais Não Visuais do Plano da Cidade e seu Contexto Urbanístico." *Habitat* 57 (November): 16-17.

Neutra, R. J. 1959b. "Planejamento: um Problema Humano, com Base no Indivíduo." *Módulo* 15: 14-17.

Neutra, R. J. 1962a. *El Mundo y la Vivienda.* Barcelona: Gustavo Gili.

Neutra, R. J. 1962b. *Life and Shape.* New York: Appleton Century Crofts.

Neutra, R. J. 1972. *Vida y Forma*. Buenos Aires: Marymar.

Radford, A., Selen Morkoç, and Amit Srivastava. 2014. *The Elements of Modern Architecture: Understanding Contemporary Buildings.* London: Thames and Hudson.

"Report on visit South American Republics, by Richard Neutra, architect and President, U.S. Chapter of Congres Internationeaux d'Architecture Moderne," 1946. Folder 8. Box 1429. Office Records, Correspondence. Neutra Collection. UCLA Library of Special Collections.

Robin, R. 1992. *Enclaves of America: The Rhetoric of American Political Architecture Abroad, 1900-1965.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Said, E. W. 1994. *Culture and Imperialism.* New York: Vintage Books.

Segre, R. 2009. "Oscar Niemeyer: Tipologias e Liberdade Plástica," in *Tributo a Niemeyer,* edited by A. Petrina, 163-175. Rio de Janeiro: Viana&Mosley.

Stevens, G. 2003. *O Círculo Privilegiado: Fundamentos Sociais da Distinção Arquitetônica.* Brasília: Editora UnB.

Tota, A. P. 2000. *O Imperialismo Sedutor: A Americanização do Brasil na Época da Segunda Guerra.* São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.

Tota, A. P. 2014. *O Amigo Americano: Nelson Rockefeller e o Brasil.* São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.

Vleck, J. V. 2013. *Empire of the Air: Aviation and the American Ascendancy.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press. E-book.

Waisman, M. 2013. *O Interior da História: Historiografia Arquitetônica para Uso de Latino-Americanos.* São Paulo: Perspectiva.

Zein, R. V. 2019. *Critical Readings*. São Paulo; Austin: Romano Guerra; Nhamerica Platform.