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Chile - Deep South



Essay:

A Good Moment in Time

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エッセイ:

最良の時——チリの建築

ファブリッツィオ・ガランティ、フランシスカ・インスルサ

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This page: Schmitz House, Calera de Tango by Felipe Assadi (2001). All photos on pp. 12-15 except as noted courtesy of the author.

本頁：フェリペ・アサディ設計、カレラ・デ・タンゴのシュミッツ・ハウス(2001年)。

Architecture in Chile finds itself at a good moment in time: new offices are thriving, public and private competitions are becoming less rare, a wider audience is becoming involved in local issues surrounding the city and its transformation, the general perception about architecture has changed positively, and international acknowledgement has not been scarce. The process has not been sudden. Although much of the contemporary architectural development rests on the solid bases that modern architecture in Chile and Latin America laid down during the mid 20th century, it is also part of a more recent and wider cultural change that has, during the past decade and a half, injected new energy, concepts, ideas and strategies into the discipline and created an intensity that has today reached a critical mass and high level of production.

The return to democracy at the beginning of the 90s was a landmark event that resulted in widespread optimism, reinsertion into the international arena and an unprecedented political and economic stability. Chilean architecture did not remain indifferent and quickly became part of the process of transformation that has marked the country's recent history. Already during the military regime, the state commissions that made modern architecture so powerful on a larger scale during the 50s and 60s, as in most of the neighboring Latin American countries, had significantly shrunk, leaving architectural commissions mainly tied to private initiatives that respond to particular whims yet also echo a society in change. During these past 15 years Chile has lived a tranquil and constant economic expansion, which has transformed it, at least superficially, into what is commonly known as a developing country. This growth is physically visible in all types of new infrastructure, buildings and housing developments, both single-family and high rise, that spring up at an incredible rate, having an enormous impact on the territory. Not only have cities largely mutated because of the relentless construction and real-estate speculation, but large portions of rural and suburban areas have also transformed, linked to booming new economic sectors that include export agriculture, tourism and tertiary services. All of these transformations have engaged architects, inflating project demand. As can be seen ad infinitum in analogous situations, a portion of their production has been good, and most of it has been quite dull, simply following the trends imposed by expanding markets. And yet although, as is true for most points of the globe, the mass of the new does not play up to the expected, at least within architectural circles, opportunities for truly worthwhile architecture have emerged amidst the large amount of recent building.

A large number of these valuable occasions are to be found either in private second houses (a beach, countryside or mountain getaway) or linked to the expanding new sectors of the economy. Now a part of mass culture, the second house, or weekend getaway, has always played an important role for the affluent sector of Chilean society and has often provided an ideal situation for architects to experiment and design with a larger freedom, detached from the traditional respect for stylistic convention typical of the architecture of urban primary residences. It is possible to trace a line from the 1930s

Le Corbusier project for the Errázuriz House designed for a Chilean aristocrat in the seaside town of Zapallar to the houses that many young architects have today had the opportunity to design. The results permit us to appreciate an extended array of formal, constructive and programmatic approaches. The reinterpretation of the language of the Californian residential architecture of the 50s, as in the series of designs of Mathias Klotz for Cantagua, the Müller House of TIDY Arquitectos and the Schmitz House of Felipe Assadi, includes a complex play of transparencies, a certain austere elegance and a clear distributive orthogonality, that evoke an atmosphere of controlled comfort. Subtle anamorphic deformations and alterations of the envelope of the house explore the possibility of imposing a stronger identity on the architectural object, almost treated in sculptural terms: in the works of Cecilia Puga, Guillermo Acuña and Smiljan Radic, geometry is almost violated, introducing an element of uncanny dissonance within the realm of domesticity. An interest in the logics of tectonics and construction as generators of the architectural language pervades the houses designed by Eduardo Castillo and Juan Agustin Soza Abadie. The building technique used for chicken farms in the Gallinero House of Castillo or the casing realized with used railway logs in the Feuerensein House of Soza denote a capacity for poetical innovation where materials and techniques migrate freely between crafts: roughness and simplicity are elevated towards a different aesthetical status through extremely controlled designs. At the same time, many of the companies related to new sectors of the economy, including wine producers, agricultural export businesses and tourist related infrastructure, now rely on architecture to give them a contemporary image, one that is fit for the transnational business world they integrate. It is thus that on a journey through Chile today one encounters, amidst the vastness of the territory, a landscape that is punctuated by the sudden appearance of alien objects, which deliberately insert a difference of scale, language and perception. Meanwhile millions of square meters of sleek and anonymous office spaces are instantly raised in the business districts of the city. In a system of pervasive private development and contemporaneous reduction of the public, education has become one of the largest expanding economic sectors. Seven new buildings for the Diego Portales University, coordinated by the dean of the Faculty of Architecture, Mathias Klotz, the new seat of the Economy Faculty of the Adolfo Ibañez University, designed by José Cruz Ovalle, and a vast sequence of different educational and administrative facilities projects commissioned by the Catholic University from its architectural design professors are all symptoms of a wise understanding of architecture as an element of marketing and communication. In addition to conventional design mandates, a new awareness of endeavors that touch upon the realm of architecture in a variety of ways has taken shape during the past decade. Thus it has become more common for architects to engage in the creation, organization and realization of a range of different activities, including innovative models of management, independent publications, debate platforms and exhibitions. Among the many initiatives, two that are worthy of mention are

the Elemental Chile project coordinated by Andrés Iacobelli and Alejandro Aravena (www.elementalchile.org/) and the recently launched SPAM_arq project (www.spam-arq.cl) edited by Pablo Brugnoli and Manuel Peralta. Elemental Chile, a set of parallel international competitions for seven social housing projects to be built along the length of Chile, created a novel scheme whose main objective is to design social housing of quality. The venture, a partnership between the Catholic University of Santiago, the David Rockefeller Center at Harvard University, and a series of governmental agencies and private companies, attracted the participation of over 500 teams, both professional and student, from different parts of the world. A first prototype that served as model for the competition and its successive implementation was inaugurated in December 2004 in Iquique, a city in the north of Chile.

SPAM_arq is on the other hand an autonomous non-profit platform that has as its object the stimulation of debate and production of ideas on the new conditions that configure the contemporary city. Independent from all institutions, the project is a bi-fold initiative that combining a quarterly magazine with exhibitions, workshops and montages, it aims to create an interdisciplinary realm of intellectual speculation, becoming at the same time part of an international network of similar initiatives. Both initiatives, although deeply based in the local context, affirm the possibility of launching ideas and original proposals from a remote location.

Looking closer at specific projects, it is possible to find common ground within the production of Chile's contemporary architects. At a first glance the stereometric volumes, search for formal abstraction and simplicity in detail fit snugly into the panorama of the contemporary international architectural scene. And yet it is also possible to identify features that are specific to the local condition.

A first aspect can be discovered in the seemingly easy, pragmatic, experimental and yet highly professional attitude with which Chilean architects engage in specific projects. The discipline, having shied away from any type of fixed discourse, given ideology or stale rhetoric has assumed free reign to play upon the restrictions of each specific case, many times with directness that is almost candid. Implementations in the personal language and aesthetics of each architect occur through successive processes of trial and error, tested through real buildings. An analogous transmission of knowledge is achieved within the academic world, where, according to statistics, half of the Chilean professionals are teaching: architectural design studios are central to the formation, determining a continuous feedback between teaching and work.

The often stunning backdrop to a great many examples of architecture in Chile is an aspect that has also made it well known internationally. With a length of 4,300 km, an expanse that is approximately equal to the distance from Scandinavia to Northern Africa, Chile is renowned for its diverse and spectacular landscapes and accompanying variety of climates. It is easy to recognize the special attention that is given to the emplacement on the site (unconsciously reiterating Alberti's or Palladio's instructions) as the initial step of the project as sun,

views and the relation with the terrain and vegetation are crucial in the definition of the design. At the same time, however, the difficulty, and in many cases impossibility, of competing with the spectacle of the landscape may account for recurring features of an architecture which, rather than assimilating nature, plays boldly against it, highlighting the difference instead of indulging in any organicist mannerisms. The dry geometrical abstraction of the projects of Pezo von Ellrichshausen Architects marks clearly the impossibility of any compromise between artificial and natural.

The recurrent perception of a neo-modernist aspect in Chilean architecture has its roots in an interaction between the way contemporary society wishes to project itself as, and has in fact in many ways become, progressive, and its deeply conservative history. This duality, specifically linked to the solidification of a free market system and the permanence of a traditionally affluent class that has grown economically stronger during the last decade, has an evident effect on architecture, since there is a clear longing for the new and contemporary while remaining classic and sober. It is thus that, although the recent preference for simplicity and austerity can probably be traced back as a formal backlash to postmodern formalism and regional criticism still present at the end of the 80s, the sharp, well defined, synthetic forms also find ample resonance in the particularly sober taste that has always been characteristic of the ruling elites in the country.

A last aspect that has also become apparent as of late is an interesting take on local materials. Many times subject to budget restrictions and usually tied to a limited market of construction supplies, architects have begun to innovate with up until now unused materials and techniques. This skillful and inventive approach is neither nostalgic nor in search of the exotic but rather a comprehension that in utilizing the available know-how, the final quality can be better guaranteed and costs lowered while maintaining a high level of design and originality. At the Termas Geométricas designed by German del Sol in Coñaripe, red painted wood, local hand-cut stones, recycled car tires and tin cans used as lamps are the everyday elements that in combination creates a refined thermal complex within a mountainous canyon.

If up until five or six years ago it was still common to repeatedly hear the critique that contemporary architecture in Chile was all very similar or looked all the same, this is under no circumstances possible to state today. A seemingly incessant appearance of new talents, the rapid dynamism of change of the Chilean society, and the expanding maturity of both architects and audience have given shape to a constellation of different approaches that possess similarities in their logic but that have ripened into an articulated multiplicity of architectural expressions.

る大地を発見することができる。一見すると、容易に体積を予測できるヴォリュームがあり、形態上の抽象性と簡素なディテールの探求があり、現代の国際建築の背景のパノラマの中に心地よく収まっている。それでいて辺境地という状況特有の要素をその特徴としてもっていることがわかる。

第1の観点は、チリの建築家たちが特定のプロジェクトで用いている外見的にゆったりとした実用的で実験的な、それでいて高度に職人的な姿勢に見いだすことができるだろう。この訓練は、どんな固定した論理、与えられたイデオロギー、古びた修辞をも排除し、それぞれの特種な場面の制約のうえで何度となくほとんどそのまま率直に演じる自由な力を手に入れた。それぞれの建築家の個人的な表現と美学は、試行錯誤を繰り返し、実際の建物の中で試みることによって完成される。学問の世界でも同様の知識の伝達が行われる。統計によると、チリの専門職人の半数が教師として教えている。建築の研究室はこうした機構の要であり、教育と実践との間で絶え間なくフィードバックを促している。

チリの建築の大量の実例の素晴らしい背景としてよく使われるのは国際的にも周知されるようになった1つの観点である。長さ4,300kmというスカンジナビアからアフリカ北部までの距離に匹敵するほど延び、チリはその多様で壮大な自然景観に気候の変化をともなっており有名となっている。敷地上の建物の配置に向けられた特別な配慮(アルベルティやパラディオの指示に無意識に従っている)を認識することは容易く、太陽、視界、そしてこの地形や植生との関係を計画の第一歩とすることはデザインの定義において重要であるからだ。しかし同時に、自然の壮大さに対抗することの困難さ、多くの場合不可能さ、は建築の特徴を再興させる理由となりうる、それは自然に同化するのではなく、果敢に対抗するのであり、誰かの有機主義者の手法に委ねるのではなく差異を際立たせるのである。ペソ・フォン・エルリッヒスハウゼン・アーキテクトゥのプロジェクトの無味乾燥した幾何学的抽象性は人工のものと自然のものとのどんな妥協も不可能であることを明快に示している。

チリの建築にネオ・モダニストの要素への回帰を見てとれるのは、現代社会がそれ自体、そしてあらゆる面で実際に進歩することを望む手段と、その極度に保守的な歴史との間の相互作用にその淵源を置く。この二重性は本質的に自由市場システムの結末と、この10年の間に経済的な強者として成長した伝統的な富裕層の永続性につながり、古典的で簡素なものを残しながら新しく現代的なものへのはっきりとした渴望がそこにあるため、建築に明らかな影響をもたらす。それはこのようにして、近年の素朴さと質素さへの好みは80年代の最後にまだ存在するポストモダンの形式主義と地域的な批判にたいするかたちの跳ね返りとしておそらく遡ることができるとしても、研ぎ澄まされ、明快になった合成のかたちもまた常にこの国の支配的なエリートの特徴であったとりわけ地味な趣に十分に共鳴する。

やはり最近になって顕著になった最後の要素は地方の素材を採用する面白さである。何度も予算の制約に屈し、常に工事の供給に限られた市場を強いられ、建築家は今日に至るまで用いられたことのない材料や技術の刷新をするようになった。この熟練した発明をともなうアプローチは、郷愁でもなく、また風変わりな