

The Geopolitics of Baroque

UNESCO and the Invention of Latin American Architecture as a Political and Aesthetic Project

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Dear reader, I should warn you that this paper does not aim to provide conclusive statements and results. Rather, I consider it more constructive and perhaps more appropriate to share with you a few reflections from a work in progress. Allow me to begin with some questions from sociologist Christian Topalov's preface to *L'aventure des mots de la ville*: "What language should the historian use? Should he use the vocabulary of his sources, which protects him from anachronism . . . or that of his own time, which only allows generalizations?"¹

Topalov's words are not a merely invitation to reflect on how architectural and urban historians speak and write. They also constitute a call to consider the terms and expressions anchored in the architectural tradition even more urgently, treating this very language as an object of research. I would like to suggest a similar path: to conduct a collective examination of the transatlantic history of architecture, while carefully considering from where we speak, to whom we speak, and with which tools we learn. When discussing a *lieu d'énonciation*, I have in mind the writings of philosopher Paul Ricoeur.² Putting it very generally, this means making evident what the circumstances

1 Christian Topalov, "Ceci n'est pas un dictionnaire," in *L'aventure des mots de la ville*: à travers le temps, les langues, les sociétés, ed. Christian Topalov, Laurent Coudroy de Lille, Jean-Charles Depaule, and Brigitte Marin (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2010), XXIII, my translation.

2 See Paul Ricoeur, *Temps et récit*, 3 vols. (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1983–1985). The trilogy comprises: *Temps et récit I: L'intrigue et le récit historique* (1983); *Temps et récit II: La*

of speech are. With this in mind, allow me to share a post I recently came across on Twitter: “Whose histories, languages, knowledge systems are being taught, normalized, & valued? Who is benefiting? Who is not? How do we know?”³

Despite not being active on social media, I believe posts like this represent a phenomenon that cannot be ignored. Social media culture has become a mediator of discourses on architecture and the built environment, as well as on education, that directly affect architectural history teaching. This post’s capacity for synthesis in conveying a message, as well as its call for social justice in writing, research, and teaching practice, is indeed powerful. The post, of course, does elaborate on these pointed questions, yet it serves as a useful tool for reflecting on how we should approach architecture, its history, and its categories. It does not seek to alienate us from the world, but recognizes that knowledge construction runs deep within our experience. Knowledge is subjective and situated, resulting from negotiations and conventions embedded in political, cultural, social, and economic contexts.

Although these thoughts may sound obvious to anyone reading this publication, what we still encounter in the libraries and archives of architecture and art schools is a massive number of books and documents that normalize certain values and ideas, and whose theoretical frameworks remain connected to specific groups at the expense of others. Furthermore, while buildings, objects, and practices designated as having universal value by international organizations like UNESCO become vehicles for aesthetic contemplation and tourism, these values appear far more fragile when we witness scenes like those that occurred in Brasília in January 2023, when five thousand Brazilians invaded the Congress building and destroyed the very objects we had naively assumed commanded collective consensus regarding their meaning and value.

Another illustrative yet critical reflection comes from Pedro Erber’s article “Contemporaneity and its Discontents,”⁴ in which a game of both questioning and reconstructing notions of contemporaneity offers a useful strategy for challenging the inevitable hierarchies created by the objectification

configuration du temps dans le récit de fiction (1984); and Temps et récit III: Le temps raconté (1985).

3 DP MATH (@DP_math), Twitter post, June 7, 2022, 4:11 PM, https://x.com/dp_math.

4 Pedro Erber, “Contemporaneity and Its Discontents,” in *Diacritics* 41, no. 1 (2013), 28–48.

of the “other and of other cultures” that is inherent in processes of reporting, narrating, and writing art and architectural history. Erber’s insights are useful for considering the idea of Latin America, and particularly the concept of Latin American architecture, which has occupied my thinking for several years.⁵ This story began in Europe, the continent I came to call home after moving from Brazil, when I was then asked to teach about Latin American architecture. My first reaction was to ask myself: What does “Latin American architecture” actually mean? And even more challenging: What could “Latin American architecture” mean to my colleagues at the school where I was teaching?

This experience of both strangeness and a kind of familiarity had a significant impact on my scholarly work, and I began to develop a more careful understanding of Latin American architecture as an invention—a contradictory and unstable historical construct whose history is deeply linked to the histories of internationalism and the transatlantic diaspora. In the turbulent years of the 1960s and ’70s, the term “Latin America” acquired new complexity. Not only was it popularized and adopted by a growing number of artists, architects, and writers from the region, but international and transnational organizations also began to cultivate—through their conventions and structures—practices that strengthened the institutional and legal framework sustaining a Latin American integration movement.

The notion of culture promoted by UNESCO⁶ in the first decades after its foundation in 1945 was widely disseminated and popularized through its

5 The intersection of international organizations and intellectual migration has informed an ongoing project that explores Latin America as a category and the architectural historiography of the region during the Cold War era. Some of the reflections presented here derive from investigations carried out at the Center for Critical Studies in Architecture at the Goethe University Frankfurt. See, for example, Daniela Ortiz dos Santos, “Italian Roots in Latin American Architectural History,” in *Italian Imprints on Twentieth-century Architecture*, ed. Denise Costanzo and Andrew Leach (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2022), 265–78.

6 During the Cold War (1947–1991), the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was involved in various studies on Latin American built cultures, from vernacular architecture to urban modernist projects. While UNESCO is recognized for having led, financed, and implemented a vast number of projects promoting cultural regional integration whose impact still resonates today, these actions have not been scrutinized in the context of how colonial power structures intersect with diasporic experiences in architectural history. See, for example, Kerry Bystrom, Monica

bulletins, books, radio programs, and photographic and media productions. Yet this notion was not established without dispute.⁷ Such disputes are at the core of this paper, which analyzes a 1980 exhibition and conference as a critical case study for examining UNESCO's multifaceted and contested practices regarding built and heritage cultural affairs from the late 1960s to the early 1980s. In doing so, it aims to shed light on the overlooked collaborations UNESCO maintained not only with international professional associations and cultural organizations, but also with far more complex and less visible groups of displaced people.

In the following pages, I would like to draw attention to the complex use of the baroque, particularly the idea of Latin American baroque during the Cold War era. The symposium and exhibition *Barocco Latinoamericano* that took place in Rome in 1980 serves as an exemplary case study. Funded by UNESCO and the *Istituto Italo-Latinoamericano* (the Italian–Latin American Institute, or IILA), and curated by Italian architect Paolo Portoghesi⁸ with significant assistance from his countryman Graziano Gasparini,⁹ who was based in Venezuela, both the symposium and exhibition unfolded a series of conversations, consensuses, and disputes around the category “baroque” in the Latin American context. While examining documents and positions

Popescu, and Katherine Zien, eds., *The Cultural Cold War and the Global South: Sites of Contest and Communitas* (New York: Routledge, 2021); José Vicente Tavares dos Santos and Maira Baumgarten, “Latin American Sociology’s Contribution to Sociological Imagination: Analysis, Criticism, and Social Commitment,” trans. Beatriz Viégas-Faria, in *Sociologías*, no. 14 (July/December 2005), 178–243, http://socialsciences.scielo.org/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1517-45222006000100003, accessed June 20, 2023.

- 7 Daniela Ortiz dos Santos, “América latina en su arquitectura: Culture, Criticism and Consensus,” in *Architectural Criticism, Media and Memory (1930–1970)*, ed. Priscilla Alves Peixoto, Rute Figueiredo, Daniela Ortiz dos Santos, Joana Mello, and Elane Peixoto (Rio de Janeiro: RIOBOOKS, forthcoming).
- 8 Paolo Portoghesi (1931–2023) was an Italian architect, writer, professor, and specialist in baroque and postmodern architecture. Born in Rome, he served as president of the architectural section of the Venice Biennale (1979–1992), editor-in-chief of the journal *Controspazio* (1969–1983), dean of the Architectural School at the Politecnico di Milano (1968–1978), and professor at the Sapienza – Università di Roma.
- 9 Graziano Gasparini (1924–2019), born in Gorizia, studied in Venice and collaborated with Carlo Scarpa before moving to Caracas in 1948. He was a scholar of baroque architecture and its historiography, and an architect specializing in the preservation and conservation of historic buildings.

promoted by IILA and UNESCO, this paper seeks to illuminate the complex status of reference and contemporaneity in architectural discourse about this region. Before exploring the relationship between IILA and UNESCO, however, let me take a brief detour to examine UNESCO's connection with the region defined as Latin America.

UNESCO and the Construction of a Latin American Visual and Heritage Culture

A few years after its creation, UNESCO established a new policy that deployed culture as soft power¹⁰ and a created Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean. The first three decades after World War II are considered critical, as these were the foundational years of the UNESCO's bureau of cultural affairs and the period in which a series of projects and collaborations were initiated. As a number of authors have noted, the extensive networks that French-speaking bureaucrats maintained with scholars, politicians, missionaries, and professionals based in the Americas facilitated pioneering educational and cultural programs in Latin America.¹¹ The region was used as a laboratory and testing ground for implementing these projects. Moreover, the second director-general of UNESCO was Jaime Torres Bodet, the former minister of culture in Mexico whose agenda as head of the organization enhanced the region's visibility.¹²

As part of Cold War cultural diplomacy, UNESCO made a deliberate choice to implement and sponsor Latin American artistic and architectural cultures, as demonstrated by extensive visual documentation. This effort was facilitated by existing infrastructure in terms of human and technical resources—conditions that were crucial because they accelerated both the creation and implementation of numerous projects, some dating from the mid-1950s. By successfully implementing and promoting these projects on

10 Paul Betts, "Humanity's New Heritage: UNESCO and the Rewriting of World History," in *Past & Present*, no. 228 (2015), 249–85.

11 See Leslie Bethell, ed., *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, 12 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985–2008).

12 See Nuria Sanz and Carlos Tejada, *México y la UNESCO, la UNESCO y México: Historia de una relación* (Paris: UNESCO, 2016).

a global scale, UNESCO was able to use them strategically to secure funding for future initiatives.

Archival records preserved in UNESCO's collections reveal significant interest in Latin America.¹³ In the areas of arts, architecture, heritage, and urban design, UNESCO cooperated with national and international associations of architects and architecture critics, produced extensive audiovisual materials and media (photographs, videos, magazines, and books), and created categorization systems for assessing the cultural values of the built environment. Concrete examples include collaborations with the International Union of Architects for congresses in Havana (1963) and Buenos Aires (1969), and with the International Association of Art Critics for congresses in Brasília (1959) and Mexico City (1962). UNESCO *Courier* issues on Brasília (1961) (Fig. 50) and "Latin America's Cultural Explosion" (1972), as well as a special issue on the museums in contemporary Latin America (1973), further demonstrate UNESCO's promotion of the region's artistic and architectural cultural values. A third example consists in the fact that, following the 1972 World Heritage Convention, numerous Latin American sites were among the first recognized as having "outstanding universal value," including not only state-sponsored modernist buildings connected to nationalistic agendas (the City of Brasília, listed in 1987), but also buildings and sites rooted in the region's colonial history (Quito, 1978; Ouro Preto, 1980 (Fig. 51 and Fig. 52); Olinda Historic Center, 1982; Jesuit Mission Ruins, 1983; Cuzco, 1983; Salvador da Bahia Historic Center, 1985; Congonhas Sanctuary, 1985; Potosí, 1987; Lima Historic Center, 1988).

UNESCO's Bureau of Cultural Affairs, in particular, played a significant role in this process, taking responsibility for initiating the production of new visual, oral, and textual material about the Latin American region. On the

13 One important example is the 1970 report of the director-general on UNESCO activities and programs, listing a study of contemporary Latin American cultures. This report further mentions that a "meeting of experts was held in Buenos Aires in October [1969, during the UIA congress] in connexion with the study on architecture and town planning in Latin America and the preparation of the work 'América Latina en su arquitectura,' and fourteen specialists were offered contracts to contribute to it." UNESCO, Report of the Director-General on the Activities of the Organization in 1969, communicated to the Member States and the Executive Board in accordance with Article VI.3.b of the Constitution, 103, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000160942.locale=en>, accessed June 30, 2021.

one hand, projects carried out by the bureau helped legitimize ideas of artistic and built cultures from Latin America on a global scale; on the other, they were products of a period when the idea of “culture” in these regions was contradictory, ideologically charged, and contested. While questions of coloniality,¹⁴ bureaucracy, and diplomacy are recognized as intrinsic to various sectors and departments within UNESCO—and while the area of education has been subject to extensive discussion¹⁵—the Bureau of Cultural Affairs has received considerably less scholarly attention. My proposal is to focus on this bureau in particular as an analytical lens through which to examine broader questions of how UNESCO shaped people’s understanding and perception of so-called “other” cultures through a series of names, practices, documents, and events.

The Caracas-Paris-Rome Routes: (Re)inventing Latin American Baroque

1966 was pivotal: UNESCO initiated a major interdisciplinary study on Latin American cultures and the IILA was created. Based in Rome, this institute connected the Italian government to those of Latin American republics to facilitate “collaboration in the cultural, scientific, economic, technical and social” sectors. While the primary aim of the IILA was to promote integration to help the region counterbalance US influence, it also fostered academic and intellectual communities that generated heated debates through events and publications on the nature of Latin America and its cultures.

Between the late 1960s and the 1980s, reports from UNESCO and IILA, as well as correspondence between Paris and Rome, reveal interests aligned in

14 See Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality and Colonization* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995); and Aníbal Quijano, “Colonialidad del poder, eurocentrismo y América Latina,” in *La colonialidad del saber: eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales: perspectivas latinoamericanas*, ed. Edgardo Lander (Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2000).

15 See Ning de Coninck-Smith, “Transnational Architectural Meetings: UNESCO and School Construction in Asia 1960–1972” (paper presented at the workshop “Exploring UNESCO and UIA – Histories of Architecture and Bureaucracy in Development Contexts,” organized by Frederike Lausch and Andreas Kalpakci, ETH Zurich, November 2024; publication forthcoming).

cooperation. According to a UNESCO program and meeting document dated April 22, 1983 (Fig. 53):

Unesco [*sic*] has had working relations with the IILA for many years, in particular since 26 July 1975, when, in response to a Letter dated 21 March of that year from the Secretary-General of the Institute, the Directeur-General of Unesco agreed to the establishment of relations of co-operation through the exchange of information and documents and participation in meetings of common interest. These co-operative ties have been quite strong and collaboration has been fruitful, developing steadily in the fields of culture and science, particularly as regards the cultural heritage and scientific research in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean.¹⁶

Among the most successful collaborations between these two institutions was a major cultural project on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century artistic and architectural phenomena from the Latin American region. The discussions initiated in the 1970s involved extensive communication efforts to reach all state representatives from Latin America, the Caribbean, the Iberian Peninsula, and Italy to secure funding and support. These efforts appear to have succeeded, as an ambitious exhibition accompanied by a symposium and three publications became reality in the early 1980s. Before discussing the exhibition and symposium that took place in Rome, however, a brief detour may be instructive. A series of events prior to the gathering—events that included many of the same scholars who would attend the 1980 symposium—had already energized networks and debates concerning Latin American architecture and Latin American baroque. These were organized by the *Centro de Investigaciones Históricas y Estéticas* (CIHE), a research cluster based at the School of Architecture of the Central University of Venezuela, founded in 1964 by Graziano Gasparini and Venezuelan architect Carlos Raúl Villanueva.

Caracas was in the spotlight during these years because of Villanueva's design for the university campus, which was widely circulated in books and magazines (including a monograph by Sibyl Moholy-Nagy). A resident of Ca-

16 UNESCO Executive Board, "Relations with the Italian–Latin American Institute," 116th session, Paris, April 22, 1983, 1, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000054948.locale=en>, accessed May 25, 2019.

racas since 1948, a professor there since 1958, and a regular contributor to UNESCO since the early 1960s, Gasparini transformed the school's research and education programs (Fig. 54). Besides teaching modern architecture, the school became a place to explore research methods in architectural history. Under Gasparini's editorship, from 1964 until 1980 the *Boletín del CIHE* featured experimental research, conference proceedings, and debates, with over one hundred contributors from institutions across the Americas and Europe. It served as an important channel for Italian-, Portuguese-, English-, and Spanish-language discussion and for the dissemination of studies on Latin American architectural and urban history, with particular emphasis on the baroque (Gasparini's own interest).

The journal's first issue presented the results of a survey among a dozen academics on the significance of "Spanish-American" baroque architecture, including established scholars such as Diego Iñíguez of Spain and George Kubler from Yale University. Gasparini's analysis highlighted a "disparity in orientation, focus and [critical] interpretation."¹⁷ Some contributors, like architect Carlos Maldonado from the Universidad Central de Ecuador, equated baroque architecture in the Spanish Americas with its expressions elsewhere,¹⁸ while others argued the opposite. Kubler, for example, did not believe in the "existence of a Latin American baroque architecture,"¹⁹ and insisted that with the exception of the Brazilian province of Minas Gerais, „none [of

17 "Aunque vários de los Docentes que participaron en ella [encuesta] coinciden en algunos puntos, se destaca sin embargo una marcada disparidade en la orientación, enfoque e interpretación del problema crítico," in Graziano Gasparini, conclusions to the survey "Encuesta sobre la significación de la arquitectura barroca hispano-americana," in *Boletín del CIHE* 1 (January 1964), 42, my translation.

18 "En mi opinión, la significación valorativa de la Arquitectura Barroca Hispano-Americana es la misma que la de la Arquitectura Barroca en general, es decir, comprende un Arte destinado a hacer alardes técnicos y estéticos con el objeto de impresionar al público en sus tendencias políticas y religiosas," in Carlos Maldonado, response to the survey "Encuesta sobre la significación de la arquitectura barroca hispano-americana," in *Boletín del CIHE* 1 (January 1964), 11, my translation.

19 Kubler continues: "There are perhaps light distinct regional expressions during the 17th and 18th centuries. None of them (with the exception of Minas Gerais [in Brazil]) should be confused with the baroque architecture we know in Italy and central Europe," in George Kubler, response to the survey "Encuesta sobre la significación de la arquitectura barroca hispano-americana," in *Boletín del CIHE* 1 (January 1964), 12.

its regional examples] should be confused with the baroque architecture we know in Italy and central Europe.”²⁰

This debate permeated the two dozen issues edited by Gasparini. While many of these conversations took place in print only, others began at conferences. One symposium hosted by the CIHE in October 1967 to discuss the “situation” of Latin American architectural historiography was featured in a special issue in April 1968. Its participants included Kubler, along with architectural scholars Paolo Portoghesi and Leonardo Benevolo, as well as US-based art critic Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, the only woman who spoke. Memorable images by Gasparini and his brother Paolo²¹ suggest an intense yet friendly gathering. More significant than the specific details of the conference is its connection to debates that took place in Rome thirteen years later. The Caracas event’s main themes (baroque architecture in Latin America), methods (contesting nationalist and stylistic labeling), and driving questions were equally central to the discussions that took place in 1980 in the Italian capital—the same year as the first Venice Architecture Biennale, curated by Paolo Portoghesi.²²

In April of that year, Rome followed Caracas as stage for the *Simposio Internazionale sul Barocco Latinoamericano*. Organized and promoted by the IILA, the symposium saw six dozen scholars gather for a four-day discussion and attend the opening of an exhibition that included a film screening session and a special light and music installation.²³ This extraordinary event—both the exhibition and symposium—received funding from the IILA and UNESCO, as well as institutional support and cooperation from the twenty-one nati-

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ One of the most important photographers of architecture in Latin America, Paolo Gasparini (born 1934 in Gorizia) moved to Venezuela in 1954 and was commissioned by UNESCO in 1970 to conduct photographic projects in the region.

²² See Léa-Catherine Szacka, *Exhibiting the Postmodern: The 1980 Venice Architecture Biennale* (Venice: Marsilio, 2016); Silvia Micheli, “Between History and Design: The Baroque Legacy in the Work of Paolo Portoghesi,” in *The Baroque in Architectural Culture, 1880–1980*, ed. Andrew Leach, John Macarthur, and Maarten Delbeke (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 195–210; and Rute Figueiredo, *Exhibiting Disciplinarity: The Venice Biennale of Architecture 1980–2012* (PhD diss., ETH Zurich, 2018).

²³ See José de Nordenflycht Concha, “Roma 1980: barroco local en contexto global,” *Quaderni Culturali IILA* 1, *La otra dirección: Percezione dell’arte latinoamericana in Italia* (November 2018): 61–70.

ons represented. Its opening was a political and cultural event attended by Italian President Sandro Pertini, ambassadors and other representatives of IILA member countries, and the Italian community of baroque scholars.

The resulting catalogue (1980) and conference proceedings (published in two volumes, in 1982 and 1984) are products of institutional, political, and intellectual efforts to assert the relevance of the region's artistic and built cultures of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but also to process their Italian "origins."²⁴ The catalogue's introduction by IILA General Secretary Carlo Perrone Capano calls the Rome event "unprecedented,"²⁵ while Portoghesi's essay restates much of his argument from the 1967 symposium in Caracas (Fig. 55).

In general, the essays offer a great variety of architectural and artistic examples, largely unknown to the general European public. The volume begins with seven brief essays followed by abundant (mostly unpublished) photographs of sculptures, church facades, gates, window frames, monastery patios, and frescoes on vaulted ceilings, primarily drawn from the contributors' personal collections. In other words, it constitutes an extensive and curated representation of knowledge through visual and aesthetic contemplation. The idea of a Latin American baroque thus appears to be an undisputed fact.

Gasparini's Ideas of a Latin American Baroque as a (Geo) Political Project and an Alternative Aesthetic Category

Although beautifully illustrated, the catalogue lacks detailed descriptions or contextual analysis of what it shows. It instead offers an accessible and commemorative narrative about both the baroque and the concept of Latin America. In doing so, it embraces a kind of aesthetization of the other, "patrimonializing" buildings and objects from the region as examples

24 *Barocco Latino Americano* (Rome: Istituto Italo-Latinoamericano, 1980); Vittorio Minardi, ed., *Atti Simposio Internazionale sul Barocco Latino Americano*, organizzato dall'IILA sotto gli auspici dell'UNESCO, 2 vols. (Rome: IILA, 1982–1984).

25 Carlo Perrone Capano, preface to *Barocco Latino Americano*, 9. In the same volume, see Paolo Portoghesi, "Il contributo Americano allo sviluppo dell'architettura barocca," 11–13. See also Paolo Portoghesi, "La contribución Americana al desarrollo de la arquitectura barroca," in *Boletín del CIHE* 9 (April 1968), 137–46.

of outstanding universal value—to follow Choay’s analysis of UNESCO.²⁶ As for the symposium proceedings, things become more complicated. With the first volume, produced two years later, considerable effort was made to go beyond the comparison and description of multiple national cases. Instead, various authors presented opposing views concerning the use and rejection of transnational aestheticized categories, although no definitive solutions were reached.

The massive, two-volume proceedings of more than five hundred pages each collect seventy-three speeches delivered in Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Italian. The need to investigate, discuss, and disseminate the artistic and architectural expressions of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Americas appears to have been uncontroversial. Yet participants like Ramón Gutiérrez believed that an “interpretative crisis” around the idea of a baroque in Latin America had been exposed.²⁷ From the outset, the essays reveal a fundamental disagreement: Which Latin American baroque are scholars actually discussing? Should the focus encompass the Americas as a whole? Would it be more appropriate to study only the Spanish Americas? Or perhaps the “Iberian Americas”? Graziano Gasparini, Argentine art critic Damian Bayón,²⁸ and Mexican philosopher Leopoldo Zea Aguilar²⁹ emphasize Latin America in their titles, while Portoghesi describes an “American” contribution to the baroque, adopting “American baroque” as an analytic category.³⁰ By contrast, German art historian Erwin Walter Palm, exiled in the Dominican Republic, argued that it was impossible to define an “urban baroque” in Latin America.³¹ In short, while the baroque served as a lens for

26 Françoise Choay, *L'allégorie du patrimoine* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1996).

27 Ramón Gutiérrez, “Repensando o Barroco americano,” in *Vitruvius* 2 (December 2001), <https://vitruvius.com.br/revistas/read/arquitextos/02.019/819>, accessed April 15, 2020.

28 Damián Bayón, “Las artes aplicadas barrocas en Latinoamérica,” in *Atti Simposio Internazionale sul Barocco Latino Americano*, vol. 1, 157–65.

29 Leopoldo Zea Aguilar, “Ideología y filosofía de la cultura barroca latinoamericana,” in *Atti Simposio Internazionale sul Barocco Latino Americano*, vol. 1, 65–73.

30 Paolo Portoghesi, “Il contributo Americano allo sviluppo dell’architettura barocca,” in *Atti Simposio Internazionale sul Barocco Latino Americano*, vol. 1, 275–83.

31 Erwin Walter Palm, “¿Urbanismo barroco en América Latina?” in *Atti Simposio Internazionale sul Barocco Latino Americano*, vol. 1, 215–20.

reexamining Latin American art and architecture, both remained highly contested.

Gasparini's position deserves attention, as he seems to cultivate the idea of Latin America less for its historical accuracy than for ideological reasons: to promote the production of a Latin American history from within. In his contribution, written in Spanish, Gasparini notes:

When colonial architecture is analyzed from the perspective of Spain, it is considered a provincial extension of the Peninsula because it is still believed that "political geography determines artistic geography." The reality is quite different: Artistic geography follows different rules of association. The effect of a design that was successful in Brussels resonated in Lima before it did in Madrid or Rome.³²

For Gasparini, artistic references took different routes that transcended the colonial relationship between the Iberian Empire and its territories. Indeed, not only in this paper, but also in a number of writings from these years, Gasparini consistently rejected the idea that baroque architecture from the region was linked to the baroque experience of Spain and the Iberian Peninsula. The issue, for him, was that the dominant narratives produced in Spain excluded alternative explanations based on other modes of communication, circulation of people, and knowledge exchange. Instead, he insisted on revisiting the subject's historiography and incorporating new sources. Gasparini thereby linked baroque architecture in the Latin American region with Italian treaties, techniques, and construction knowledge brought to the Americas by Jesuits, whose specialized education came from Venice. For Gasparini, Venice, Brussels, and Paris were the "real" centers of "knowledge transfer,"³³

32 "Cuando la arquitectura colonial es analizada desde España es considerada como una extensión provincial de la Península porque se sigue creyendo que la "geografía política determina a la geografía artística. La realidad es bastante diferente: la geografía artística sigue reglas de asociación diferentes. El efecto de un diseño que ha tenido éxito en Bruselas repercutía en Lima antes que en Madrid o en Roma." Graziano Gasparini, "La arquitectura barroca latinoamericana: una persuasiva retórica provincial," in *Atti Simposio Internazionale sul Barocco Latino Americano*, vol. 1, 391, my translation.

33 See Graziano Gasparini, "Análisis crítico de la historiografía arquitectónica del barroco en América," in *Boletín del CIHE* 7 (April 1967), 9-29; América, barroco y arquitectura (Caracas: Ernesto Armitano, 1972); "The Present Significance of the Architecture of

leaving Madrid as a secondary source. His thesis conflicted with established views about the Spanish colonial history. It was not easily accepted by the scholarly world, as he himself recognized, and remains a minority position.

Conclusions

While scholarship today generally identifies Latin America and its related categories as relatively coherent, we should keep in mind the embedded theoretical conflicts, ideological frictions, and competing visions they contain. The articulation, circulation, and consumption of Latin America in both popular and scholarly literature involved numerous authors with complex histories and agendas. Between 1950 and 1980, a growing number of intellectuals based in the region began to identify themselves with an idea of Latin America and adopted it as an analytic category, including figures like Bayón, Zea, and Gasparini (discussed here). Not uncommonly, publications, exhibitions, and materials created by artists, writers, architects, and photographers who claimed to be producing a Latin American discourse from within received generous funding and support from UNESCO and partner institutions. Moreover, the more we study the biographical narratives of authors who created this extensive production, the more complex the picture becomes. This complexity stems from the fact that many of them had personal histories of migration and exile, as in the cases of the brothers Paolo and Graziano Gasparini, as well as Erwin Walter Palm.

The baroque, like various other stylistic categories, has often been contested, and debates among art and architecture critics continue.³⁴ The involvement of organizations, scholars, photographers, and events with direct ties to migration highlights both the ambiguities of these categories and their in-

the Past," in *Latin America in Its Architecture*, trans. Edith Grossman Holmes, ed. Roberto Segre and Fernando Kusnetzoff (Paris: UNESCO; New York: Holmes & Meier, 1980), 77–103; and the above-quoted "La arquitectura barroca latinoamericana: una persuasiva retórica provincial."

- 34 See, for example, Tristan Weddigen, "Hispano-Incaic Fusions: Ángel Guido and the Latin American Reception of Heinrich Wölfflin," in *Art in Translation* 9, supp. 1 (2017), 92–120; Andrew Leach, John Macarthur, and Maarten Delbeke, eds., *The Baroque in Architectural Culture, 1880–1980* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015); Giulio Carlo Argan, *L'âge baroque* (Geneva: Skira, 1994).

tense political and cultural significance, particularly amid perennial calls for Latin American integration operating within Cold War geopolitical tensions and competing left-wing and reactionary interests on both sides of the Atlantic. While these projects throughout the long 1970s helped legitimize the phrase “Latin America” on a global scale, they were also products of a period when the idea of Latin America in the arts and architecture—whether recent or historical—was contradictory, ideologically charged, and in dispute. On the one hand, institutions from outside the region helped to bring studies of these areas—including contested perspectives—to international attention. On the other, these institutions could not escape being instrumentalized by the very regimes within which they operated. UNESCO’s deployment of these contested narratives about Latin American design history became one of its most significant strategies for maintaining legitimacy on the global stage during the Cold War.



Fig. 50.
 “Latin America. 150 years of independence.”
 Cover of the UNESCO Courier, June 1961.
 Source: UNESCO Archives,
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000064074.locale=en>.



Fig. 51.
 Image of the baroque Saint Francis Church in the
 historic town of Ouro Preto in Brazil, listed since
 1980 in the UNESCO World Heritage List
 Source: Photographer Meindert Versteeg, 2012,
 author's collection.



Fig. 52.

Image of the historic town of Ouro Preto in Brazil, listed since 1980 as a UNESCO World Heritage Site

Source: Photographer Meindert Versteeg, 2012, author's collection.

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RELATIONS WITH THE ITALIAN-LATIN AMERICAN INSTITUTE (ILAI)

SUMMARY

The Italian-Latin American Institute (ILAI) has expressed the desire to establish official relations with Unesco. In accordance with Article XI.1 of Unesco's Constitution, the Director-General submits the question to the Executive Board and requests its authorization to proceed with negotiations with the ILAI, with a view to the conclusion of an agreement between it and Unesco.

1. By letter dated 16 July 1982 addressed to the Director-General of Unesco, the Secretary-General of the Italian-Latin American Institute, pursuant to a resolution by the Executive Committee of the Institute, proposed the conclusion of a co-operation agreement enabling the two organizations to strengthen and expand their co-operation in the cultural, scientific, technological and social fields.
2. Unesco has had working relations with the ILAI for many years, in particular since 26 July 1975, when in response to a letter dated 21 March of that year from the Secretary-General of the Institute, the Director-General of Unesco agreed to the establishment of relations of co-operation through the exchange of information and documents and participation in meetings of common interest. These co-operative ties have been quite strong and collaboration has been fruitful, developing steadily in the fields of culture and science, particularly as regards the cultural heritage and scientific research in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean.
3. In view of the foregoing, the Director-General believes that negotiations may be undertaken with this intergovernmental organisation for the preparation of a draft agreement which will then be submitted to the competent organs of the two organizations for approval.

Fig. 53.

First Page of the Draft Agreement
between UNESCO and the Italian-Latin
American Institute, date 22 April 1983
Source: UNESCO Archives.

Fig. 54.

Graziano Gasparini (1924-2019), Italian born Venezuelan architect.

Source: By Armando Planchart - Archivo Gio

Ponti Caracas. Fundación Anala y Armando

Planchart: <https://www.elnacional.com/papel-literario/voluntad-artistica-voluntad-historica/>, Public Domain,

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=110890111>.

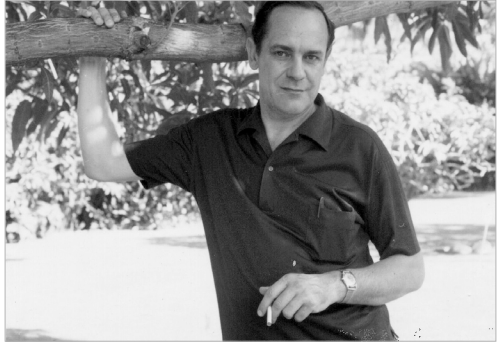


Fig. 55.

Opening of the Exhibition Barocco Latinoamericano in Rome, 1980, displaying architect Paolo Portoghesi and Sandro Pertini, President of the Italian republic. Source: IILA Archive.