

A RECEPÇÃO E A DIFUSÃO DA ARQUITETURA E URBANISMO MODERNOS BRASILEIROS NA PLENA AMPLITUDE DE SUA ABORDAGEM

MIES IN BRAZIL: BEYOND DIPLOMATIC ISSUES REGARDING THE US CONSULATE IN SÃO PAULO, 1957–62

Marcos Amado Petrolí

PhD Student at Illinois Institute of Technology

3410 S. State St., Room 216A

Chicago, IL 60616

P: +1 312.567.3930

F: +1 312.567.6816

mpetroli@hawk.iit.edu

RESUMO

Este trabalho analisa o projeto para o Consulado Americano em São Paulo (1957–62) primeiramente como edifício com conotações simbólicas e diplomáticas, em que arquitetura moderna associa-se a certo imperialismo americano; e posteriormente como um projeto arquitetônico elaborado por Mies e equipe, mas já com pequenas divergências formais que questionam até que ponto Mies estava a par do projeto.

Embora o Departamento de Estado americano tenha requisitado mais assimilação dos futuros projetos com arquiteturas nativas de outras nações, Mies e seu time propuseram outro pavilhão típico miesiano, um projeto que trata o ambiente urbano com tal descolamento que relembra tanto melancolia, como conquista de território através do olhar de um arquiteto imigrante. Território é ambivalente, portanto, entre ambiente construído e terreno primitivo, mas que também não negou a ambição de um caráter cívico monumental.

Assim, este trabalho busca cobrir certa marginalização nas historiografias da arquitetura moderna nos Estados Unidos sobre a produção brasileira no período pós-Brasília, uma época ainda circundado por níveis intelectuais de perversidade e miopia. Além disso, este trabalho enfatiza o perigo da reprodutibilidade da imagem (não do método de projeto) miesiana como formação acrítica, processo que vem a mistificar os protótipos originais do arquiteto-construtor alemão.

Palavras-chave: Mies van der Rohe no Brasil; Consulado dos Estados Unidos em São Paulo; período pós-Brasília.

ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the US Consulate in Sao Paulo (1957-62) design firstly as building with symbolic and diplomatic connotations, in which modern architecture associates itself to a kind of American imperialism; and later as an design by Mies and his team, but with slight formal divergences that question to what extent Mies was aware about the project.

Although the State Department had requested more assimilation between projects and native architectures from other nations, Mies and his team proposed another Miesian-like pavilion design, which treats the urban landscape in such detachment that reminds both melancholy and conquer through the eyes of an immigrant architect. Territory is ambivalent then in between built environment and primitive terrain, but something that also did not deny the ambition of a civic and monumental character.

Therefore, this paper also aims to cover a gap in historiographies about Brazilian modern architecture in America after Brasilia (1960), a period still surrounded by certain intellectual levels of pervasive and myopia. In addition, it alerts for the reproducibility of the Miesian image (not the design method) as a non-critic formation, process that comes to mystify the original prototypes of the German architect-builder.

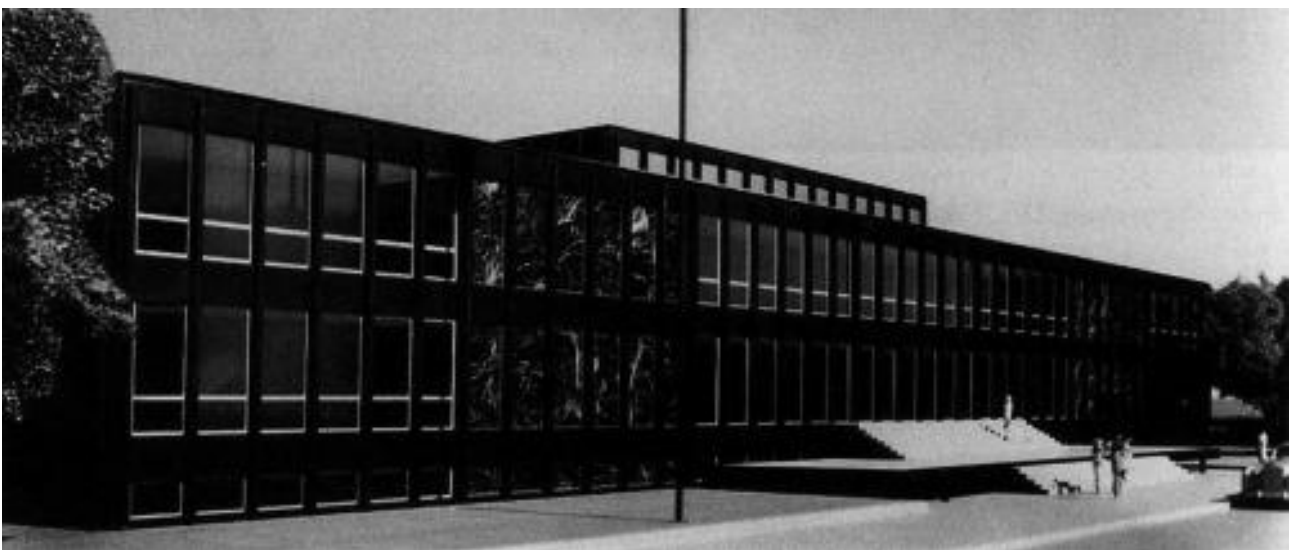
Keywords: Mies van der Rohe in Brazil; US Consulate in São Paulo; period after Brasília.

Mies in Brazil: Beyond Diplomatic Issues regarding the US Consulate in São Paulo, 1957–62

Introduction

Almost sixty years after his retirement at IIT, Mies still has gaps on architectural historiographies in the Americas. Mies formally retired in 1958 at age 72, although other teachers had alleged that he was not teaching anymore for some time ago. He was already in a wheelchair, unfortunately. He even did not go to the Seagram building's opening ceremony. Schulze considers this period in Mies's life (1958-69) as "recessional". This period also marks the emergence of the "second school of Chicago", headed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, Myron Goldsmith, Bertrand Goldberg, etc.; as well as the emergence of people like Phyllis Lambert, philanthropist and owner of the Canadian Centre for Architecture. Phyllis followed the reference of Mies through projects like the Saidye Bronfman Centre in Montreal, Canada, (now the Segal Centre for Performing Arts), opened exactly fifty years ago.

Exactly sixty years ago, Mies and his team were starting the design for the United States Consulate in Sao Paulo, Brazil, unfortunately unbuilt even after years of work (Fig.1). Franz Schulze did not mention the Brazilian project in work about Mies's biography, although he was the main organizer of Mies van der Rohe archives at the Museum of Modern Architecture in New York. Chronologically, according to Schulze, Mies went on several trips with Lora Marx. In 1957, Miesville, Minnesota. In the same year, he won the commission for the Bacardi Headquarters in Cuba (abandoned after the Cuban Revolution and the exile of the Bacardi family from the country).¹

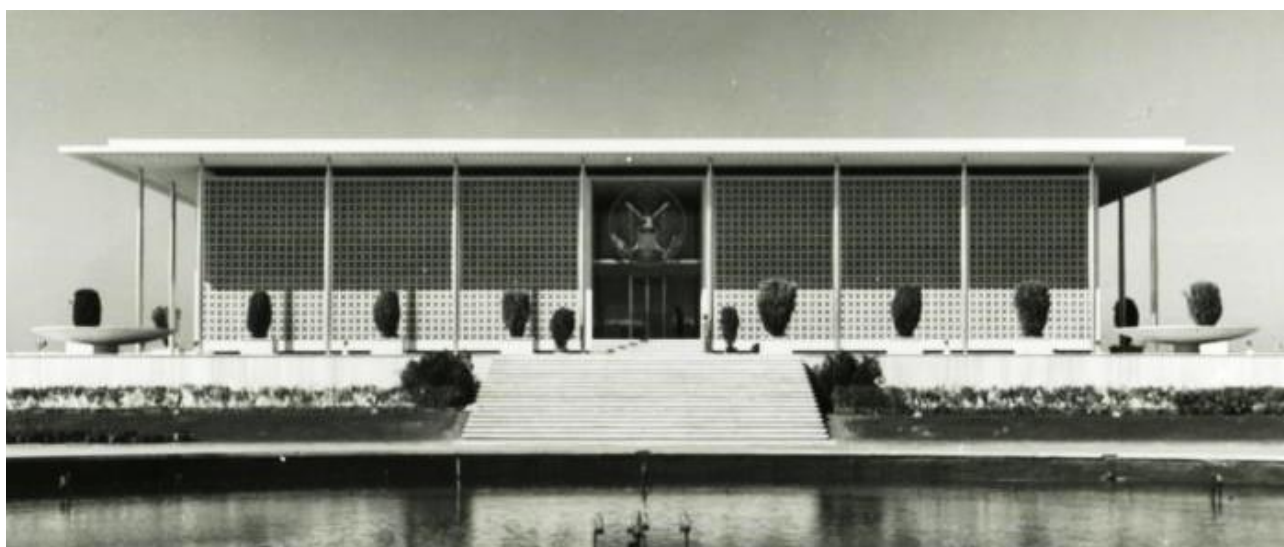


¹ Franz Schulze. *Mies van der Rohe. A Critical Biography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985.

Fig.1: Model for the U.S. Consulate in Sao Paulo, by Mies van der Rohe, Brazil, 1959. Source: Schulze, 1992.

In 1959, Mies visited Athens and other places in Europe. Nothing about his quick trip to South America. Mies came to Brazil indeed in December, 1957, for some days, mainly for visiting the US Consulate site, as well as visiting Lucio Costa in Rio, and giving some lectures during the IV Biennial in Sao Paulo (even if he did not participate of its jury, as initially planned).²

Jane Loeffler does the same. In her book *The Architecture of Diplomacy: Building America's Embassies*, the Mies's design for the U.S. Consulate in Brazil remains occult (It is important to mention that neither Corbusier's embassy in Brasilia [1962–64] was built). Jane, however, focuses to address how America presents itself abroad. According to her, new embassies have come to symbolize the openness of “public diplomacy”. Although, “the desire to design high-profile buildings was coupled with concern about negative impressions created by projects that were dramatic or ostentatious-looking”.³ In between 1946–58, the State of Department financed most of the construction overseas through postwar foreign credits. “No single factor is more important to an understanding of this turn of events than the extent to which architectural modernism became identified with democracy in the years following World War II”. However, by the early 1950s, the Foreign Buildings Operations (FBO) decided to abandon “its flirtation with modernism”. Surprisingly, that was *not* what happened. FBO then tried to encourage a new policy in the 1950s through a new design policy, which directed architects to carefully considered climate, site, and local customs and history in preparing their schemes. Edward Stone, considered an example on that afterwards, tried to follow the rule through the US Embassy in New Delhi, India, but other architects insisted on the challenge of adapting the glass box to the tropics (Fig.2). Mies's team, as an extreme opposite, did not consider that at all.



² Ricardo Macedo. *A Influência de Mies van der Rohe na Arquitetura Paulista: 1950-1970*. Sao Paulo, Sao Judas Tadeu Press, 2014. (master thesis). See also: Acrópole. São Paulo, IAB, ano 19, n. 227, 1957.

³ Jane Loeffler. *The Architecture of Diplomacy: Building America's Embassies*. New York: Princeton Architectural, 2011, p.7

Fig. 2: U.S. Embassy in New Delhi, India, 1959, by Edward D. Stone. Source: docomomo.us

The absence of US Consulate in São Paulo in modern historiographies has probably more to do with just lack of political or intellectual interest. Or not. Valerie Fraser's *Building the New World: Studies in the Modern Architecture of Latin America, 1930-1960*, points out that there was a kind of "perversity" and "myopia" that created such gap on historiography. According to her, it can be understandable if we consider that Le Corbusier was the single most influential figure of the period in Latin America, that Brasilia ended a period and started another, and mainly because from 1940s until 1960s, the USA was "extremely interested" in developments on Latin America, but not afterwards. Fraser implies that such seasonal interest over Latin American modern architecture (polarizing a few countries, and marginalizing others) was a political and intellectual interest to manipulate the other American in the South. However, when Latin American architects decided to create their own productions (highlighting the majestic Brasilia, its palaces, ambitions, and aphorisms) without any external consulting—especially after two decades of Brazilian notoriety—the "perversity" and the "envy" of a new generation of intellectuals and researches intentionally decided to marginalize the production post-Brasilia.

Brasilia (...) marked the end of the love affair. This was one ambition too far, and the architectural establishment in the USA and Europe turned against it. Under the tutelage of the critic and historian Sigfried Giedion, the 1958 graduate seminar in Harvard studied the plans for Brasilia and found them wanting. They felt that Brazil should have called in international planning experts or commissioned Le Corbusier to help. So Brazil, which for twenty-five years had been admired for its achievements in architecture and town planning, was suddenly considered insufficiently experienced to design its own capital city.⁴

The true reason why the US Consulate was not built is due to lack of investments after 1958, when the funding used by the State Department started to be redirected to the military. FBO received no new funds from 1959 to 1962. The agency decided to cut back its operations and ceased all new constructions. They started to focus on a "more important diplomatic priority". Another reason for such unfinished enterprise is due to a revision on the design policy in 1961 in response to concern about security at posts abroad. Since the closure of the US Embassy in Cuba in 1961 designed by W. Harrison, the government condemned spending dollars in "unstable" places (Fig. 3). "The new result", according to Rep. Albert W. Watson (D.S.C.), "(...) the better part of wisdom for us to continue to lease our facilities in these foreign countries until such time as these nations indicate a greater degree of responsibility and permanence".⁵ In 1964, the military had claimed the executive power in Brazil, and exposed periods of domestic instability. In 1964, by the way, Mies was also

⁴ Valerie Fraser. *Op. cit.*, 2000, p. 3.

⁵ Albert W. Watson. *Congressional Record-House*, 1 May 1963, 7500.

recommended for the new projects in Buenos Aires, Argentina (Eduardo Catalano was another suggested candidate).

Lastly, beyond “how to represent America abroad” it is crucial to represent the *what* of America and by *who*, (i.e., by which architect) play a central question as well, specifically regarding principals, symbols, and images that America wanted to export (if truly wanted). Although one could argue that symbolic features conflict with pragmatic issues regarding architectural program, function, feasibility, etc., the result impacts in some measure the *character* of building.⁶ Then, one also might wonder why American government hired a German architect to represent its buildings on another country a bit more than a decade later after the WWII.



Figure 3: U.S. Embassy in Havana, Cuba, 1953, closed in 1961, by Harrison & Abramovitz. Source: docomomo.us

Transnational America

Although it might be a contradiction in terms of political values and a certain level of absence in speeches of nationalism, it seems that the decision for hiring Mies inside the public sector was more due to his success in the 1950s, already accepted and consolidated due to intellectual and

⁶ Like the project for the United Nations Headquarters (1947—48), where Niemeyer, Corbusier, Harrison, and others were frequently bombarded by the media about the *symbol* of such construction, the authors just answered that were more worried with programmatic issues and not with symbolisms at all.

economical patronage. MoMA exposition 1947–48; Farnsworth 1945–51; IIT 1939–56; Seagram in 1958... As Colomina states, Mies was very efficient on promoting his public persona, in a degree that was much more a manifesto than actually a rhetoric discourse.⁷ The end of 1950s is also when Frank Lloyd Wright passed away, which ultimately became a political opposition both in architectural discourse and in public relations. Nevertheless, the image of Mies was already related with Chicago land. Although it curiously sounds controversial, American democratic values recognizes a certain level of plurality in its own generations (although its identity is frequently related to gigantic stereotypes) that a big part of this country was built by immigrants.

While Colomina justifies the success of Mies as a strategic approach of image tied with a fixed hyper-reality to our modern mass and technocentric culture, Baudrillard on the other hand considers America's fast-paced with a slow-thinking *Gestalt* as a definite asset. Making a parallel with the advantages of primitive societies, he concludes that "America is the primitive society of the future, a society of complexity, hybridity, and the greatest intermingling, of a ritualism that is ferocious but whose superficial diversity lends it beauty".⁸ A country based on an extreme discourse of freedom, with maximums as if you could do whatever you want (!), but still bellicose-powered based with premises of gigantism in a vastness landscape.

Back to the question about by whom American embassies should be represented, it is important to address firstly a transnational content. Architectural histories in particular, with their primary objects seemingly so fixed in place, rarely come prepared to explicate the changeable contours of cultural exchanges, economic transactions, or political migrations. Technically, Embassies and Consulates are territorial bases (or safe havens in other words) in foreign countries. However, in the postwar period, the construction of a modern world necessitated strategies of both inclusion and exclusion—of what and who was modern—that created both physical spaces and mental maps subjected to cultural hierarchies. By identifying vague or fluid territories as its central matter, it is important to understand “transnational” as a crucial space of modernity. As Edward Said points out, cultural formations presume a world map that has been drawn by imperial power.⁹ As an ironic reciprocity, America have needed to deal with that.

On one hand, there was this idea of “Pan Americanism” that was reinforced during the Second World War. The so-called “Colossus of the North” wanted to preserve the idea of unified Americas. On the other hand, American imperialism in Latin America at the beginning of the twentieth century has been explained, in part, as a response to the threat ironically posed by Germany in the region. Nancy Mitchell explains that German actions raised American hackles then—and have been held up ever since as evidence that Germany aimed to challenge the Monroe Doctrine—but it proved to be, on close inspection of German, U.S., and British archives, a potent mix of “German bombast and American paranoia”. Simply put, says Mitchell, there was no German political threat in Latin

⁷ Beatriz Colomina. *Manifesto architecture the ghost of Mies*. Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014.

⁸ Jean Baudrillard, Geoff Dyer, and Chris Turner. *America*. London: Verso, 2010.

⁹ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vantage Books, 1993). p. 199.

America.¹⁰ It was a different context, different goals, public opinions, and policies compared with Europe.

Anyway, the important is that such political issues brought an American expedition to Brazil, which also led to the first modern American Embassy designed by Wallace Harrison in 1945 in Rio (Fig. 4). In this case, the *precedent* case upon Mies in Brazil. Harrison traveled to the Latin America between 1941 and 1944, especially with the multi-millionaire entrepreneur and the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs Nelson Aldrich Rockefeller (1908–1979), let's say, one of the main private sponsors of Art and Architecture in United States.



Figure 4: U.S. Embassy in Rio, Brazil, 1952-54, by Harrison & Abramovitz. Source: docomomo.us

¹⁰ Nancy Mitchell, "The Danger of Dreams: German and American Imperialism in Latin America" (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999)

The first trip was due to a design for the Hotel Avila in Caracas, Venezuela (1940–42), in which the result could be characterized as an hybrid modern–colonial revival. The other ones happened because both, architect and entrepreneur, started to work for the US government as a link to promote peace and alliance between the Americas through culture exchange.¹¹

According to Patricio Del Real, such enterprise actually created a metonymic web that surrounded Brazilian architecture in the 1940s. It was fueled by this architecture’s postwar utopian promise. Del Real argues that the image of Latin America in United States originally was created under a specific progressive appearance that could perfectly fit North-American expectations in the end of the Second World War context. The idea of associating Latin America with *modernity*, specially in a period of economic recovery, and with a valuable and strategical ally against the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis, made the rise of “Latin America” feasible.¹² The point is that such process had created new forms of subjugation and enabled experimentation in social forms, which potentially allowed a kind of transgression (or transfiguration maybe in “modernity” itself). This is the moment when coexists the exacerbation of the individual and the national institutions in parallel realities. It means an interference or migration of the custom places, habits, and mores—the *ethos* of modern societies.¹³

However, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Del Real sees this promise of a Brazilian avant-gardism revealed itself as a “mannerist lack of vitality”. The architecture once displayed in the Brazil Builds exhibition (1943) was an evidence of the possibilities of modernization, of the success of a single path of development, and of the recovery of the Western idea of progress. “The incapacity of Latin America to step beyond this threshold was the fundamental reason for the exclusion of its architecture from later histories of modernism”.¹⁴

If Del Real precisely describes the disappearance of Brazilian modernism in North American historiographies, however, when Mies arrived in Brazil in December, 1957, it was not lack of vitality that he found “down there”.

US Consulate in Sao Paulo (1957–62)

In January 2005, Italo Galeazzi published an article about the US Consulate designed by Mies in Sao Paulo (*Mies van der Rohe no Brasil: Projeto para o Consulado dos Estados Unidos em São Paulo, 1957–1962*). In this work, Galeazzi brings primary sources regarding the US Consulate from “The Mies van der Rohe archive” at Moma and evaluates (according to his own organization of the sketches and drawings) its evolution and methodology. Galeazzi also criticizes Schulze about such

¹¹ the so-called “Good Neighbor” programs (at the behest of President Franklin D. Roosevelt) and fellow Overseer John F. Kennedy’s Alliance for Progress

¹² Patricio Del Real. *Building a Continent: The Idea of Latin American Architecture in the Early Postwar*. New York: ProQuest Press, 2012.

¹³ For a rhetoric modern interpretation of *ethos* as the appeal residing in the tension between the speaker’s private and public self, see, Kate Ronald “A Reexamination of Personal and Public Discourse in Classical Rhetoric”. In: *Rhetoric Review*, *Rhetoric Review*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Taylor & Francis Ltd., Autumn, 1990), pp. 36-48

¹⁴ Patricio Del Real. *Op. Cit.*, p. 24.

organization of the material, which apparently did not followed a chronological sequence of its elaboration. Nevertheless, the design finally achieved its final steps.

Two main questions might raise regarding Galeazzi's work, although not addressed by the author. First, how the old-man-in-a-wheelchair Mies held this enterprise? Some architectural details show that actually Gene Summers, head of his design firm, was upon the decision-makings of the project. The second question regards how the US Consulate design relates itself with the environment that surrounds it. More specifically (and it relates with other designs by Mies in American soil), how the architect-builder immigrant places a building in alien lands.

However, what certainly can be a contribution from Galeazzi's work is another critic of the design, especially in terms of parallels with IIT and other key buildings by Mies, which frequently by the way are based on similar arguments about technological philosophies, decorative I-bens, or other already ventilated details. More can be said about the decisions behind the design for the US Consulate in Brazil.

Miesian-like

One year before Mies got the commission for the US Consulate, Gene Summers have started to head the designs in his firm, a work that lasted until 1966. Although the so-called glass-box is also one typical Miesian solution, both spatial and formal configurations present dissonances. Based on the drawings, it is possible to infer that the evolutionary process of design was no more over the German's hands, but just a bit over his control in some specific consulting moments.

In the first sketches, the formal solution of the US Consulate in São Paulo suggested a similar configuration if compared with Crown Hall at IIT in Chicago, built one year before, although with differences like its lateral cantilevers. It is a horizontal all glassed pavilion, symmetrical, industrial, universal, spatially and structurally reticulated, qualities that commonly describe Mies's works in America (Fig. 5). Maybe, a way that Mies found out for not making distinction between the Americas, without boundaries; or just a way to show that an ideal architectural prototype could be replicated elsewhere. Both hypotheses do not necessarily refute each other.

The plan as well is Miesian-like, organized in three main areas: a central one, and two adjacent areas with similar architectural programs. Basically, the center of symmetry from where the program irradiates. However, the divergences start on the preliminary drafts, which do not have one central attic, but actually *two* symmetrical ones in both sides of the building. It might be a simple question of functional organization, but if we know Mies well, we actually can realize that the main role of the attic used by him highlights the center of the composition (the main *space* of building) the entrance, the public frankly-opened space that welcomes the masses to a monumental space. The solution with two attics are highlighting courtyards. There is this transition of hierarchy between spaces. As

Colin Rowe points out, the spatial experimentations that happened after the dissolution of an apparent aesthetic and structural order, now in the late 1950s (more than half of a century later) it seems that Mies added another layer of spatial values, not related with experimentation anymore, but reproduction. The Chicago frame that once resulted from economics (mainly real estate conditions) and lack of program, now is consolidated as iconographic, or at least as a symbol of neutral grid of space enclosed by steel.¹⁵

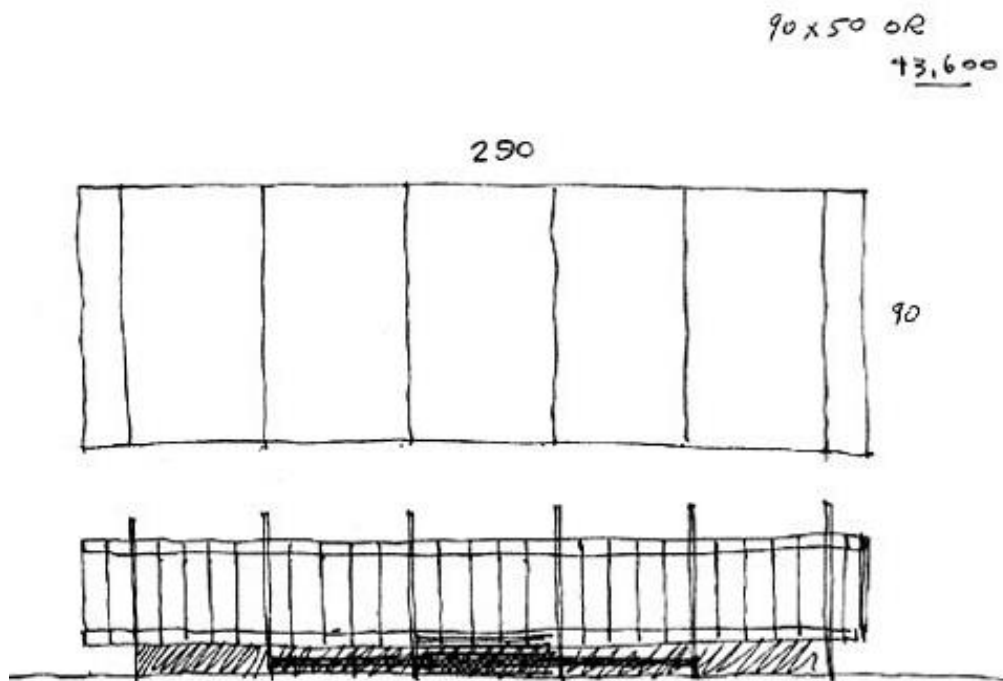


Figure 5: Sketches for U.S. Consulate in Sao Paulo (before corruption and probably designed by Mies). Source: Galeazzi, 2005.

Back to the US Consulate building, the incongruities continue. A wall surrounding the building simulates a fake base, one volume upon a plateau. A mezzanine appears and changes the spatial perception of the universal space, hierarchizing it. Two main and symmetrical stairs are positioned close to the facades, instead of the middle (as usual), compromising then the free main elevation and polarizing the flux of people to the edges of the building. The accesses change from one monumental central to two private ones. This is due to pragmatic requirements of the program. Very likely, Mies would fight back for a central entrance.

One of the worse decisions happened in the 1958 and 1959 drafts. The monumental character of the undivided internal space (structurally porticated) had turned out into a simple configuration of column-beam. We can see such solution in some buildings at IIT as well, but these constructions play a secondary role in the whole urban composition of the IIT campus, which highlights places like Crown Hall, Herman Hall, and Galvin Library as well) as main pieces. Such hierarchy is highlighted by the monumental character: mainly the avant-garde technology of the structure, the undivided civic

¹⁵ Colin Rowe. *Chicago Frame*. In: *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa and other Essays*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2009, pp.89–118.

space, and the refined and (semi or distortive) transparent materialities. The US Consulate, however, is already the only piece of the composition. It would be more coherent, according to Miesian standards, to keep the monumental character of the building—because it is about *character* after all.

The crucial not Miesian-like solution is the auditorium, completely out of the plate. Surprisingly, it took some time for the designers to realize that the structural grid column-beam was incompatible with the size of an auditorium. Some trials later (changing the grid modules and everything) the auditorium goes to a pragmatic position on the right side of the plan. Such non-monumental approach of the auditorium—celebre momentum of the civic monumentality in this case—does not look like Mies. It also compromises the central access of the building (moving to the right side), of course, because civic monumentality requires frank access *a la* “general admission” (Fig. 6).

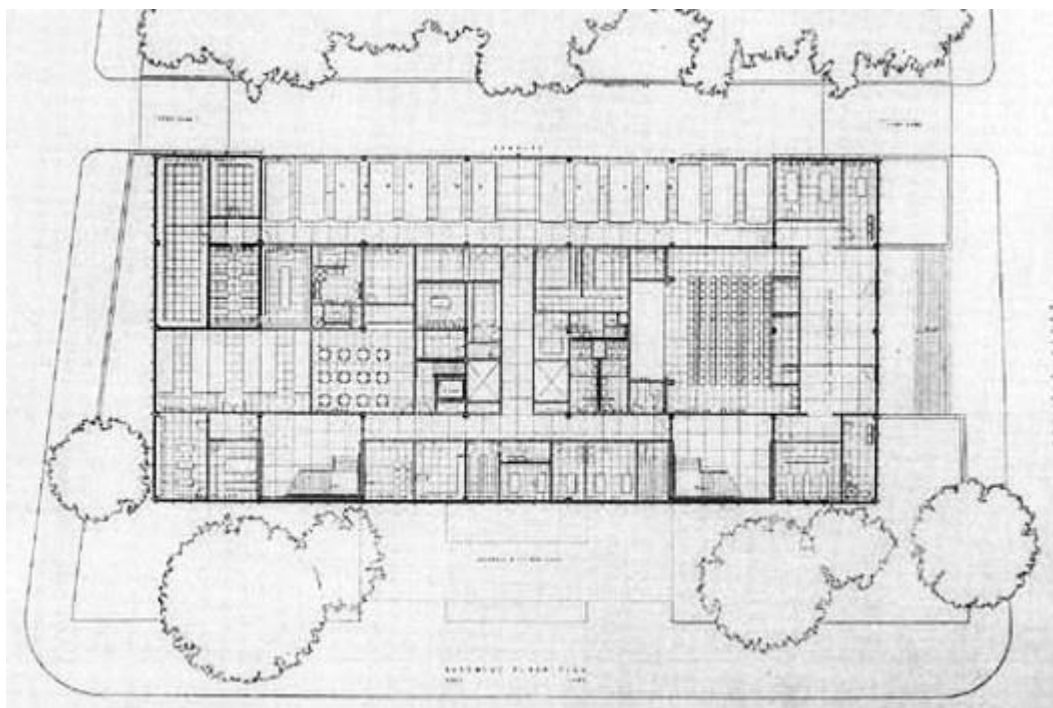


Fig. 6: One of the final plans for the U.S. Consulate in Sao Paulo (auditorium on the right). Source: Galeazzi, 2005.

At some point, Mies had took over the design and pushed one attic to the center (excludes the other one) and brings the two stairs to the middle of the plan. It ennobles the plan. However, when we see one of the final drawings of 1961 or 1962, we see that the details of the columns (“I”section) are using concrete as cover (Fig. 7). This is a Chicago requisite according to its urban plan, which is very cautious on preventing fire due to past issues. Such indifference also happen when other two floors were added to the *parti* to fill out the whole program (four flours in total). One could actually reconsider the *parti*, maybe as a tower-plus-plaza configuration, although the pavilion is able to embrace greater diversity in terms of architectural program.

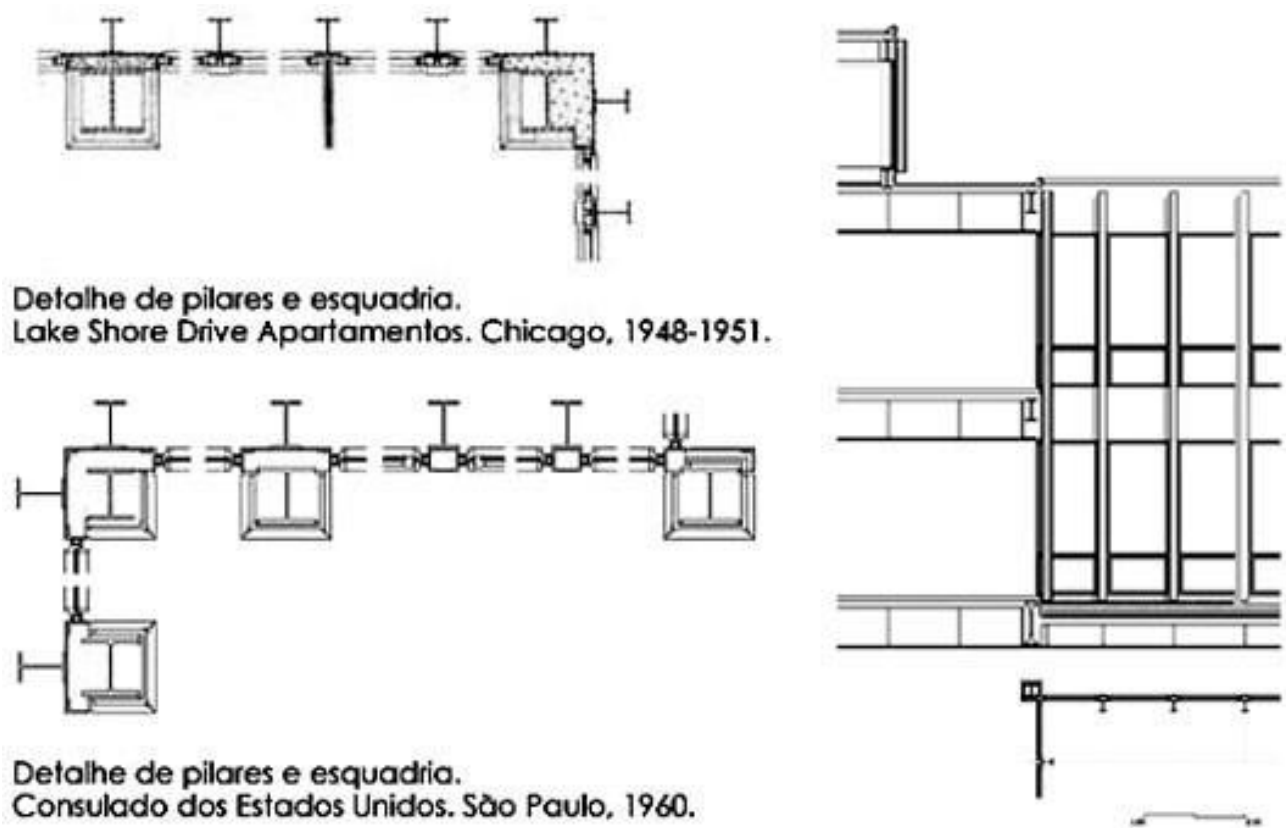


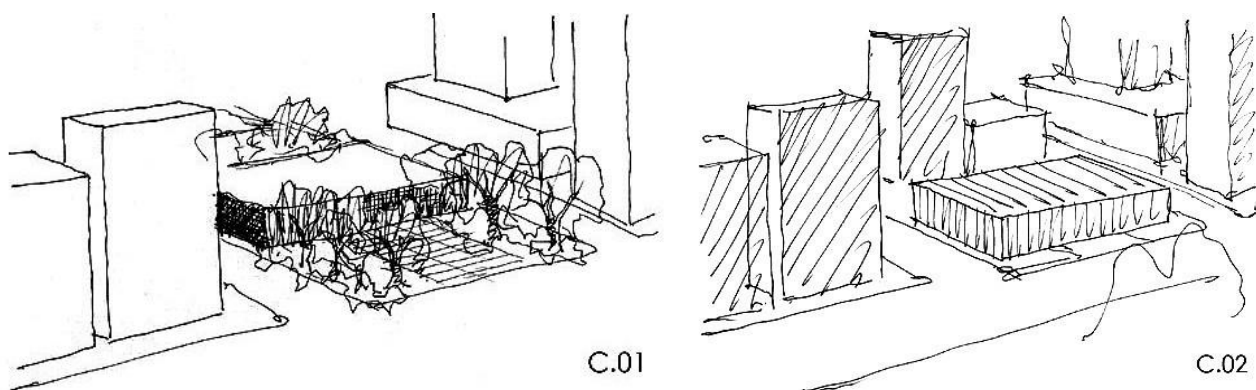
Fig. 7: Steel columns covered by concrete. Detail for U.S. Consulate in Sao Paulo. Source: Galeazzi, 2005.

In conclusion, it seems that the Miesian method of design institutionalizes itself in the US Consulate in Sao Paulo, with his team headed by Gene Summers. It seems that Mies's advanced age, as well his absence of the firm and IIT during the period, opened space for pragmatic solutions based on past master pieces of the architect, but still Miesian-like.

Reverse Cartesian Axes

There is something curious on the first sketches by Mies, and regards to the opposition of volumes. The region that surrounds the US Consulate building had a considerable high density, which suggests the appearance of tall buildings nearby. The first formal solution by Mies is a longitudinal volume, a building two or three stories high.

Once, the design of an urban monument generally would be landmark, a vertical monolith that contrasts with the urban context and get hierarchy through its height—tower-like, column, spear—verticality as a synonymous of loftiness. As we know about Mies, it is the opposite: the monument is longitudinal. The challenge now is not to get taller, but support a large span (Figs. 8 and 9). The character of a monument is, at least, its extraordinary content.



Figs. 8 and 9: Sketches for U.S. Consulate in Sao Paulo. Source: Galeazzi, 2005.

The constructive philosophy by Mies about creating monumental objects is not new, and actually well ventilated. Although, one might wonder about the relationship between Miesian buildings and the landscape that it stands on. The contrast through opposition is clear, but does it deny the site somehow? Recently, Carlos Eduardo Comas, analyzing works like the Farnsworth House, realized that the separation from nature might be intentional. "As a ship in the harbor, the house does not belong specifically to its site"¹⁶. The contact between architecture and nature is reduced to the bare minimum. states that Mies conceives his building as "almost nothing", the "high-tech" version of a primitive hut. A glass cage on stilts, it is as horizontal and almost as abstract as the swampy terrain over which it lands. Architecture and nature are as emphatically separated as in the Mies's house, although a partial accommodation of borders establishes an empathic correspondence and mediation; it should not be forgotten that the rear border is absolutely straight.

"The separation from nature that his work depicts can be taken as estrangement, and imbued with all the melancholy that accompanies a situation of exile and uprooting and disorientation, the original condition of Europeans, Africans and Asians in America. But it can also be taken as a power statement, and imbued with all the arrogance that an occasion of conquest requires, as well as the fascination and fear that feed that arrogance".¹⁷

Reverse Cartesian axes might be Mies's way to detach from the urban landscape. Although the glass box pavilion-like is a feasible solution for the consulate program, as well as Mies was not reverse to the idea of a tower-parti, such ambiguous relationship of both conquest and melancholy can also exist in the built environment maybe, especially towards a characterization of the monumental.¹⁸ Who ever lived abroad know about the feelings that surrounds such personal

¹⁶ Carlos Eduardo Comas. *Niemeyer Reconsidered: Architecture As Man-Made Nature*. In: Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians. Vol. 73, No. 3 (September 2014), p. 452.

¹⁷ Idem, p. 455.

¹⁸ Although well settled in Chicago, Mies as a foreign citizen also need to work with issues of belonging to a place. For some, he was not welcome. Elizabeth Gordon, for example, in her article "The Threat to the Next America", extended argument against the Farnsworth House beyond its owner's objections and into a broadside attack on the International Style and the Bauhaus in particular.

experience. Mies himself never lived in one of his buildings, even when offered by Greenwald for living in the *Promontory Apartments* (1946–49) or the *860-880 Lake Shore Drive* (1948–51).

Other Influences of Mies in Brazil

As Mahfuz understood in 2005, the influence of Mies van der Rohe is more difficult to identify, since it works fundamentally in an abstract mode, in a level of formal principles and structures.¹⁹ In 2006, Mahfuz highlighted the efficiency of the *horizontal plane* (or flat slab), that had appeared in the National Gallery in Berlin (1962–68), is as a way to favor the transparency and thermal comfort, especially in tropical climates. Such planar roof(s) exceeded the facades and could create deep shades on these elevations, which ultimately discarded the use of any kind of devices to control the sunlight.²⁰ The columns also used to be internalized as well, reinforcing thus the horizontality of the upper slab. Such Miesian formal composition actually did not appear at the US Consulate in Sao Paulo. The horizontality in this case was not highlighted as a plan, but as an entire volume. Horizontality was, one way or another, very well adapted by the second school of modern architecture in Brazil.

On the other side, Luccas in 2013, analyzing the influence of Mies upon the Paulista School, argued that verticality was also a way to organize the façade through structural regency, and its abrupt cut on the top of the building, in the manner of Mies, transformed it into a segment of “infinite pattern”.²¹ It can be seen at the I-beams and columns of the US Consulate in Sao Paulo. Also in 2013, through an article published at Docomomo-Brasil, and in 2014, through a master thesis defended at Propar-Ufrgs, I argued that Miesian compositions as the “cruciform pillar” (for example, Barcelona Pavilion, 1929), similar treatment for the all the facades of the building, and the “horizontal mass under a few columns” (Bacardi Building, 1958) were already a part of the vocabulary of architects in Porto Alegre in the 1960s.²² These connections actually go beyond and triangularize with brutalist masters in Sao Paulo. The horizontal mass supported by a few pillars/columns had already been observed in several works, as for example the *Nadir Zacarias House* (1970) by the architect Ruy Ohtake. It's also well known that few points of support were frequent in Paulo Mendes da Rocha and Vilanova Artigas's works. According to Fracalossi, for example, in his article *Classico da Arquiteturas: Casa de Vidro / Lina Bo Bardi*, the author mentions that the influence of Mies van der Rohe in her work is the house-

¹⁹ Edson da Cunha Mahfuz. *Ordem, Estrutura e Perfeição no Tropic—Mies van der Rohe e a arquitetura paulistana na segunda metade do século XX*. Arqtextos 057.02 (Romano Guerra Ed. Ltda). São Paulo: Portal Vitruvius, ano 05, fevereiro 2005.

²⁰ Edson da Cunha Mahfuz. *Transparência e Sombra: o plano horizontal na arquitetura paulista*. (Romano Guerra Ed. Ltda). São Paulo: Arqtextos 079.01. dezembro 2006.

²¹ Luis H. H. Luccas. *Da integração das artes ao desenho integral: interfaces da arquitetura no Brasil moderno*. Arqtextos 160.02 (Romano Guerra Ed. Ltda). São Paulo: Portal Vitruvius, ano 14, setembro 2014.

²² Please see: Marcos Amado Petrolí. *A aviz rare do Arquiteto Jorge Debiagi: Uma Análise sobre a Influência Brutalista em duas de suas Obras Bancárias*. X SEMINÁRIO DO COMOMO BRASIL ARQUITETURA MODERNA E INTERNACIONAL: conexões brutalistas 1955-75 Curitiba. 15-18.out.2013 – PUCPR. Also: *Arquitetura bancária gaúcha nos anos 70 : a influência brutalista*. Porto Alegre: PROPARG-UFGRS, 2014. Finally: Marcos A. Petrolí; Luis H.H. Luccas. *Vedações em tijolos aparentes, estrutura em concreto: o caso do centro municipal de cultura de Porto Alegre*. In. IV Seminário Docomomo Sul: Pedra, barro e metal. Porto Alegre: PROPARG/UFGRS, 2013.

and-courtyard format.²³ The courtyard is an intelligent way to breathe and to illuminate the large span and/or the internalized universal program.

Although some of these Miesian characteristics were not completely admitted by Brazilian architects of the period (and some solutions maybe converged independently, instead of being paraphrased), there are in fact similar Miesian compositions following the “glass-box” composition, the structure that generates the form, the dialogue between spaces and materials, the so-called “democratic” spaces, monumental character and large spans, few columns toward the universal space, and the horizontal plane that allows deep shading. Some of these characteristics appear at the US Consulate in Sao Paulo, but instead of being applied for the tropics, it was dealt mostly as an extension of Chicagoan practice.

As Macedo states in his theses, the analogies are not only formal, but also involve material and constructive instances: the materials used by the Brazilian architects at the time can be compared with the choice of similar materials in several iconic works of Mies.²⁴ It is also important to mention that the international journals *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* (1958), *Architectural Record* (1955) and the national *Acropolis* (1957) and *Habitat* (1957) widely publicized the works of Mies van der Rohe, often exposing his works.

Finally, as Comas understands, Mies in Brazil was more a question about influence on the natives, which actually were “aware of the sources of European pioneers, they paraphrased and expanded rather than copied”.²⁵ Maybe, that is the reason why the German architect is still so respected at the Brazilian academia. However, as the US Consulate in Sao Paulo, Brazilian modern architecture after Brasilia still needs to be documented abroad. “If the Brazilian modern architecture before Brasilia is a myth, after [the city] it is a mystery”.²⁶ The fact is that such production created a recognized tradition, which still survives nowadays on the criticism of the academy due to its inherent architectural values—and in this place relies the validity of a contemporary review to demystified a metonymic image of Brazilian Modern Architecture in United States.

Conclusion

Approximately sixty years ago, Mies was getting old. His recessional period open space for a second generation to raise and continue the already Miesian tradition in Chicago. This slight transition in the end of the 1950s overlapped also the design for the US Consulate in Sao Paulo in some measure. As this paper tried to prove, Mies has his signature in the project, but there are inconsistencies indeed in the design that create questions about authorship. Far from being a bad design—it is a

²³ Igor Fracalossi. *Clássicos da Arquitetura: Casa de Vidro / Lina Bo Bardi*. Recuperado em Outubro/2016: <http://www.archdaily.com.br>

²⁴ Ricardo Macedo. *A influência de Mies van der Rohe na arquitetura paulista: 1950 a 1970*. Dissertação de Mestrado, Universidade São Judas Tadeu, São Paulo, Brasil, 2014.

²⁵ Lecture at IIT held on September 12th, 2017.

²⁶ Comment of the Brazilian architect and historian Ruth Verde Zein in.: Brillembourg, Carlos. *Latin American architecture 1929-1960: Contemporary reflections*. New York: The Monacelli Press, 2004, p. 207.

good one. The U.S. Consulate in Sao Paulo brings additional details that help to understand the Miesian method of design. Although, this paper alerts for the reproducibility of the Miesian image (not the design method) as a non-critic formation, process that comes to mystify the original prototypes developed by the German architect-builder.

In 1936, Walter Benjamin (1892–1940), dealing with the concept of “work of art”, stated that technical reproduction have caused the most profound change in the impact of art upon the public. Each original work has an aura, which identifies a unique work of art that has been lost to reproducibility.

An analysis of art in the age of mechanical reproduction must do justice to these relationships, for they lead us to an all-important insight: for the first time in world history, mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual. To an ever greater degree the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility. From a photographic negative, for example, one can make any number of prints; to ask for the ‘authentic’ print makes no sense. But the instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice – politics.²⁷

Politics is also a purpose of embassies abroad, but the US Consulate in São Paulo was not meant to be. If the State Department required for an architecture mixed with local cultures, Miesian-like was not exactly what they were looking for. In addition, the US Consulate shows the transition from Mies to his students, in which the levels of authorship, copy, and reference are not very clear. An author's name is not simply an element in a discourse. He performs a certain role with regard to narrative discourse, assuring a “classificatory function”. It shows a status and filiation in advance related with non-ordinary ideas. Mies usually related with the pedigree of an artist, opened space to his students through its signature and its original architypes.

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²⁷ Walter Benjamin. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. Lexington, KY: Prism Key Press, 2010, p. 220.

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