

la historia y el territorio, destinada a ser un vehículo de intercambio cultural entre las distintas naciones que componen la región. Según su diagnóstico crítico, los países latinoamericanos debían forjar instituciones musicológicas que contrarrestaran el desconocimiento recíproco y la admiración por Europa y Estados Unidos. Y sus artistas debían a su vez mirar hacia sus adentros y al interior de América, “en contacto directo con las razas que todavía conservan parte de su propia vida” (159). El análisis de la trayectoria intelectual de Curt Lange por Palomino ilumina no solo las ideas sobre la música de este alemán que parafraseaba conspicuamente la doctrina Monroe (“Música americana para los americanos”), sino su labor militante como constructor de instituciones a escala regional y continental, y la medida en que los condicionantes económicos e institucionales pueden haberlo inducido a recalculer su proyecto regional hacia una escala hemisférica. El lugar de Estados Unidos como espejo de lo que los latinoamericanos unidos debían ser, pero también como imperio proveedor de recursos e insoslayable copartícipe de la conformación de una identidad regional latinoamericana, es una cuestión que planea sobre todo el libro.

Relacionado con lo anterior y para terminar este comentario, vale recordar que este es un libro escrito por un “latinoamericano” en Estados Unidos. Amén del itinerario biográfico, en la hechura de *La invención de la música latinoamericana...* se refleja el cruce de tradiciones disciplinares: la historia cultural latinoamericanista hecha en Estados Unidos, con su énfasis en el mercado y las políticas culturales estatales, y la historia intelectual latinoamericana cultivada en distintos países de la región, con su foco en las trayectorias, las revistas y los ámbitos de sociabilidad que nutren la intensa vida cultural de nuestra América.

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ANA MARÍA LEÓN, *Modernity for the Masses: Antonio Bonet's Dreams for Buenos Aires*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2021.

Does public architecture house people or dreams? You might say that planned housing, buildings, monuments, and infrastructure represent the fulfillment of shared architectural, societal, and political dreams. When left unbuilt, the proposals, sketches, posters, and promotional films for those public spaces remain powerful allegories of the oneiric potential of architecture in the realm of cultural politics. These are among the lessons that architectural historian Ana María León teaches us in her excellent and thought-provoking book. León unpacks the architecture of surrealism in three outsized social housing projects, spearheaded by the Catalan architect Antonio Bonet. Her book explores the

limits, possibilities, and failings of Bonet's architecture within the totalitarian political context of mid-twentieth-century Argentina.

Bonet was an almost-but-not-quite major architect, who worked under household names in the field like Le Corbusier and José Luis Sert, alongside major players in surrealist art like Roberto Matta and Grete Stern. This book is not about establishing Bonet as a forgotten architectural expert or progenitor of the avant-garde. More importantly, the "minor history" of Bonet's unfulfilled works in Argentina provides a productive avenue for reassessing traditional historiographies and canonical hierarchies of architectural modernism. Rather than staid monument cataloging and myths of modernism, León is interested in the politics inherent in the way that architects think about people, and how the desires and anxieties of the architect coincide with those of the neoliberal market forces and political regimes which they serve.

The book's structure follows different aspects of surrealism present in Bonet's architectural discourse. Each chapter deftly weaves together architectural and political histories with art-historical analysis, visual culture, material culture, and theories of space. The first chapter, "Wandering Ship," begins with a close reading of a photograph of a crouching man on a roof-top garden framed by a map of Buenos Aires. This is an image of a young Bonet after recently arriving from Catalonia. Placed on the back cover of an architectural trade magazine, Bonet is positioned like a reborn colonial explorer crouched on the prow of the first architectural monument he would complete in Argentina: The Artist's Ateliers of 1939. Here, the architect sets out on the waves of a new, promising, and ultimately deep and sometimes terrifying architectural scene. León analyzes Bonet's playful ateliers as the culmination of the architect's training in Europe, working under the direction of the powerful Catalan modernist José Luis Sert. Sert taught Bonet how to qualify revolutionary art through commerce and state patronage, but the young architect's relationship with his erstwhile master was strained. Bonet found a more productive partnership with fellow protégé Roberto Matta while working for the offices of Le Corbusier in Paris in the 1930s. The Chilean architect-turned-artist instilled in Bonet an appreciation for surrealism in architectural design. Bonet later worked with Argentine architects like Jorge Ferrari and Juan Kurchan to translate those lessons to the Americas. The Catalan architect was basically successful in that regard, but his revolutionary ideals were undermined by larger aspirations for government patronage.

The next chapters look at Bonet's unfinished housing projects in Buenos Aires, designed between 1943 and 1956. These designs and their ephemera navigate a remarkably dramatic and shifting political environment. In little over a decade, Argentina's government had transformed from a conservative military dictatorship to progressive but authoritarian populism led by Juan Perón

and back to a violent military regime responsible for Perón's ouster. All three regimes used architecture to respond to very similar needs: internal immigration, rapid industrialization, and public opinion. The historic roots of those social issues are outlined in León's second chapter "The Machine in the Pampas." The chapter begins by examining social anxieties over accelerating growth in Buenos Aires in the 1930s. The city's edges blurred as it expanded seemingly infinitely (and without plan) into the surrounding and iconic plains, known as the Pampas. As it did, migrants from the Pampas transformed Buenos Aires. For the city's established artistic and literary circles, including distinguished writers like Jorge Luis Borges, the ever-expanding plains and immigrant communities became a stand-in for a sublime and terrifying future. In response, Bonet led a team to design Casa Amarilla, an unfinished housing development inspired by Corbusian design (floating outdoor streets, balconies, and interlocking units) and Argentinian geographies. Bonet's surrealist aspirations were to uplift the masses, but his designs ultimately echoed the anxieties of the local elites who hoped to control and contain them.

Casa Amarilla remained unrealized, but its designs had established Bonet in Argentina's architectural scene. This placed him at the forefront of a growing field when the military leader turned populist president Juan Perón seized power in a landslide election in 1946. Chapter 3, "The Peronist Unconscious," explores Bonet's part in a much larger effort by artists and architects who were tasked with constructing a cult of personality for Juan and Eva (Evita) Perón for the adoring eyes of the nation's working-class poor. The housing project for Bajo Belgrano tried to do just that by evoking a "pastoral modernity." Designers walked a tight rope between nostalgia for the nation's agrarian past and aspirations for a highly modern future that mirrored the fascistic and kitschy propaganda of Peronism. The plan was a series of monoblocks, large apartment buildings dispersed orthogonally across a large park. Bonet focused on the site's promotion. This included printed material (featuring incredible photomontages by the artist Grete Stern), and a film, directed by the Italian filmmaker, and self-proclaimed surrealist, Enrico Gras. Created at the height of a craze for psychoanalysis in Argentina, León diagnoses the still and moving images used to promote the site as symptoms of the Peronist unconscious. The site was presented as a paradoxical collective imaginary that drew on a fantastical past to concretize the elusive dream of a modern city and its imagined residents. This project, too, was cut short by lack of funds, political will, and a military coup.

Chapter 4, "Eternal Returns," starts with tragedy on June 16, 1955: The murder of hundreds of Argentine citizens in the emblematic Plaza de Mayo of Buenos Aires, a space then associated with the Peronist collective. The massacre occurred in the very spot where Perón had risen to power after a populist protest

undid his illegal arrest ten years earlier. The symbolism of gory violence in a place of celebration was a deliberate attempt to erase Perón's legacy. Less than a year after the tragedy, Bonet was already busy at work for the new regime on a housing project called Barrio Sur, located in San Telmo. Through photomontage and perspective drawings, we see an ambitious plan to replace a historic neighborhood of working-class Perón supporters with a gridded array of large towers, central plazas, and retail shops dedicated to commerce, and reoccupied by orderly middle-class citizens. Several factors led to the site's failure (professional, political, and conceptual). Yet, Bonet successfully parlayed his work on the project—reified in a heavily photographed scale model—to legitimize his return to Europe. Bonet spent his final days in the last residence he ever designed: the Pedrables I apartments in Barcelona. In front of that building, Bonet planted a symbolic palm tree. The gesture repeated Spanish colonial traditions of *indianos* (men who went to the Americas in search of riches and glory). Colonists who returned to Europe would plant a palm tree as a signifier of their ill-begotten wealth. Perhaps, as León suggests following historian Fernando Álvarez Prozorovich, we could say Bonet was the last of these. A colonial elite who reconstructed its racial and class status through geographic trajectory.

All told, León's book offers us a profound history of the illusory promises entwined in political and architectural histories in Argentina and globally. It is a narrative of shared and unrealized dreams. Those of the modern architect, their state sponsors, and the people that both architects and politicians claimed to serve. The stakes of those unrealized visions are by no means inconsequential. They represent the anxieties and desires at the root of modernist art and architecture, which at certain points and places in history become indistinguishable from the origins of totalitarianism.

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