

Modern Architecture and Culture in the Mid-Twentieth Century: From Exporting to Importing the New



Kavanagh Building Buenos Aires

The aim of this research project is to question some of the ways in which relations between mainstream Western and supposedly peripheral cultures have been dominated by a one-way model of innovation and exportation, flowing irreversibly from Western Europe and North America outwards towards other regions. The main focus is an alternative reading of the history of modern architecture in its relationship not to the 'core' Western nations in which it initially developed but rather to the 'outlying' regions (such as Scandinavia, South Asia and South America) that protected and promoted an international style when it fell out of favour at 'home'. In importing the new, the patronage of ostensibly peripheral cultures changed the forms and meanings of modern architecture, which ceased to be a passively consumed export with a monopoly on innovation and became instead the material for the forging of new local meanings and functions. This focus on building style will be complemented by an investigation of a broader context within which cultural artefacts are produced through the circulation of ideas and representations between places in terms of an ongoing, two-way process of translation and re-appropriation. An emphasis on local patrons, especially women such as Marie Gullichsen, Corina Kavanagh, and Phyllis Lakofski, will challenge the previous one on émigré architects. The project will involve bringing into dialogue researchers engaged in the disciplines of architecture, art history, languages and literatures in the first instance but with a view to widening the conversation to relevant fields with overlapping concerns.

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