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CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE AND AWARDS IN THE AMERICAS

ARQUITECTURA CONTEMPORÁNEA Y LOS PREMIOS EN LAS AMÉRICAS

A ARQUITETURA CONTEMPORÂNEA E AS PREMIAÇÕES NAS AMÉRICAS



Figure 0. Unidad Común, Rozana Montiel, 2018 MCHAP.emerge award. Source: Adapted using ChatGPT.

Proyecto de investigación posdoctoral «La divergencia latina de la arquitectura contemporánea», desarrollado en la Universidad Presbiteriana Mackenzie (2023-2025). Agradecemos a la Universidad Federal de Alagoas por concedernos una licencia para capacitación docente.

RESUMEN

A través de los ganadores del Premio Latinoamericano de Arquitectura Rogelio Salmona (PLARS) y del Mies Crown Hall American Prize (MCHAP), este artículo pretende reflexionar sobre la arquitectura contemporánea, respondiendo a lo que las obras ganadoras dicen sobre ambos premios, pero también señalar cuestiones subyacentes que revelan la naturaleza de los premios, especialmente del MCHAP. Se utilizó un protocolo de observación, las obras fueron analizadas individualmente y los resultados revelaron cinco principios recurrentes que estructuran los proyectos y que, por parte de las obras, demuestran una exención de la distinción ideológica de los premios, que destaca el predominio de los espacios abiertos como característica cualitativa de la latinidad arquitectónica. Esta distinción de los premios es la antesala de la reflexión latinoamericana, realizada tras el análisis de las obras, que evidenció una contradicción inicial y posterior giro latino en el MCHAP y una coherencia continuada del PLARS, poco valorada. Desde la credibilidad del MCHAP, la reflexión vislumbró una ambigüedad arriesgada en los premios, donde el reconocimiento viene disfrazado de mérito para ser usurpado por la geopolítica del conocimiento que la contemporaneidad necesita desvelar.

Palabras clave: arquitectura contemporánea, premios, análisis, cultura, proyecto

ABSTRACT

Through the winners of the Rogelio Salmona Latin American Architecture Prize (RSLAP) and the Mies Crown Hall American Prize (MCHAP), this article aims to reflect on contemporary architecture regarding what the winning works say about the two awards, but also to point out underlying issues that reveal the nature of the latter, especially the MCHAP. Using an observation protocol, the works were analyzed individually, and the results revealed five recurring principles that structure the projects, demonstrating an exemption from the ideological distinctions of the awards and highlighting the dominance of open spaces as a qualitative characteristic in architectural Latinity. This distinction between the awards is the antechamber to the Latin American reflection, conducted after analyzing the works, which revealed an initial contradiction and a subsequent Latin twist in the MCHAP, and a continued coherence in the RSLAP, which is little valued. From MCHAP's credibility, the reflection glimpsed a risky ambiguity in the awards, where recognition is disguised as merit, to be usurped by the geopolitics of knowledge that contemporaneity needs to unveil.

Keywords: contemporary architecture, awards, analysis, culture, project

RESUMO

Este artigo pretende refletir sobre a arquitetura contemporânea a partir dos vencedores do Prêmio Latino-Americano de Arquitetura Rogelio Salmona (PLARS) e do Prêmio Mies Crown Hall American Prize (MCHAP), respondendo ao que as obras vencedoras dizem sobre esses prêmios, mas também apontando questões subjacentes que revelam a natureza dos prêmios, especialmente do MCHAP. Utilizou-se um protocolo de observação, as obras foram analisadas individualmente e os resultados revelaram cinco princípios recorrentes que estruturam os projetos e que, em relação às obras, demonstram uma isenção da distinção ideológica dos prêmios, destacando o predomínio dos espaços abertos como característica qualitativa da latinidade arquitetônica. Essa distinção entre os prêmios é a antesala de uma reflexão latino-americana, realizada após a análise das obras, que evidenciou uma contradição inicial e uma subsequente inflexão latino-americana no MCHAP, bem como a coerência contínua do PLARS, pouco valorizada. Apesar da credibilidade do MCHAP, a reflexão apontou uma ambigüidade arriscada nos prêmios, pois o reconhecimento vem disfarçado de mérito para ser usurpado pela geopolítica do conhecimento que a contemporaneidade precisa revelar.

Palavras-chave: arquitetura contemporânea, prêmios, análise, cultura, projeto

INTRODUCTION

The center-periphery geographical relationship is undoubtedly a factor that distinguishes two of the most important awards in the Americas, whether in economic or linguistic terms. The Rogelio Salmona Latin American Architecture Prize ¹ (PLARS) is limited to Latin America, divided into four regions: the Southern Cone, Brazil, the Andean region and Mexico, and Central America and the Caribbean. On the other hand, the Mies Crown Hall Americas Prize ² (MCHAP) considers all the Americas, without distinguishing between North, Central, or Latin America. However, it would be naive to believe this makes no difference.

The PLARS Prize is based on the thinking of the architect Rogelio Salmona, who believed that open and collective spaces were “the most important structuring element of a city, capable of encouraging participation and strengthening the construction of the social fabric.” In line with this position, Fernández Cox (1988) characterized suitable architecture for Latin America as proprietary because it responds to the peculiarities of its conditioning factors, fits the reality of each situation, so that the community and the context are the material and formal inspiration, and adapts to the Latin context where the selectivity of globalized information is convenient for each region. To these attitudes, the debate on the relationship between center and periphery is added, amplified by Waisman (1990), which introduces the notion of region as a possible site of change in how architecture is qualified. This is clear in the PLARS Prize, where delegates are selected by region to select works. “The idea of region, contrary to that of periphery, situates each culture in a system that is based precisely on the plurality of regions, a system where none of them exercises hegemony, nor can they, therefore, be erected as a model of universal validity” (Waisman, 1990, p. 96).

The MCHAP Prize defines the excellence of the works awarded for a holistic stance, in which “works that integrate natural, built, and human ecologies to improve the quality of the places where we live” are valued. This generic position is close to the historiographical term “critical regionalism”, popularized by Frampton in the 1980’s, who was the president of the jury of the first cycle. Associated with the “clash between the pressure of modern civilization and the previous strong presence of a prior culture/civilization” (Bastos & Verde Zein, 2010, p. 243), critical regionalism indicates the belief in the hegemony of one dominant architectural culture over another, which moves towards having a “gap of freedom” to world recognition. The possibility of presenting works in “peripheral” situations, which represent “cultural gaps that more unexpectedly articulate Europe with the Americas” (Frampton, 2006), is sanctioned by the prize, although not explicitly, and will be better outlined in the reflection that follows.

¹ This text is restricted to the editions from 2014 to 2018.

² The cycles from 2014 to 2022 will be considered.

The importance of knowing and recognizing the architectures produced in the Americas is the point of intersection among the

awards. However, the awareness noted these points as a persistent, hidden understanding that colonial architectural sovereignty persists, colonizing the underdeveloped, either by restricting it to the Global South in PLARS or by encompassing the Americas in MCHAP. The central question is, how are the ideological dynamics presented through the observation of the architectures that received the two awards?

The analysis is based on a procedure called observation protocol (Andrade, 2020), whose implementation summarizes two actions: (1) carefully studying the published images of the design solution together with the photographic images of the built work, visualizing the physical-environmental context and the shape-spatial configuration; (2) the analytical action will replicate a line of reasoning following a “review of the work in its essentially architectural conception, as a result of a design process” (Verde Zein, 2023, p. 211). The aim is to identify arguments that justify the work’s configuration by examining the interrelations among its elements (Andrade, 2018). The act of reading about the works follows this first approximation and responds to questions the data cannot answer.

The analysis of these factors was systematized into five recurring principles, comprising the set of values and priorities that drive a project through the interpretation and reflection on situated and contingent variables (Lawson, 2004). This set essentially derives from the appreciation of the site (physical-environmental context), on the one hand, and the project (form-spatial configuration), on the other (Porter, 1988). Based on this structured dialogue, the result of the analyses highlighted five principles that shaped the projects: (1) the recognition and respect of cultural and social pre-existences; (2) the participation of the community/users; (3) the inseparable relationship between structure-form-space; (4) the specificity of place and materiality, and (5) the reflective and distinctive use of pre-existences as architectural references.

The presentation of the analysis of the cases studied, through the five principles proposed, aims to demonstrate that the relationships among the principles are more significant for understanding contemporary architecture in the Americas than the awards’ chronology or grouping by awards. This position allowed us to infer what the works say about the prizes, but also to reflect on the prizes, pointing out an initial antagonism between the winners that culminates in an equivalence that obliterates the incompatibilities, revealing a harmonious, non-homogeneous diversity that exposes the cultural differences in the Americas.

THE PRINCIPLES AND THE WORKS

The *recognition and respect for cultural and social pre-existences* demonstrate a reflective and contingent architecture in response to vital circumstances, which addresses poverty as an ethical and moral issue (Torrent, 2015). Social awareness focused on intervention and small-scale

METHODOLOGY

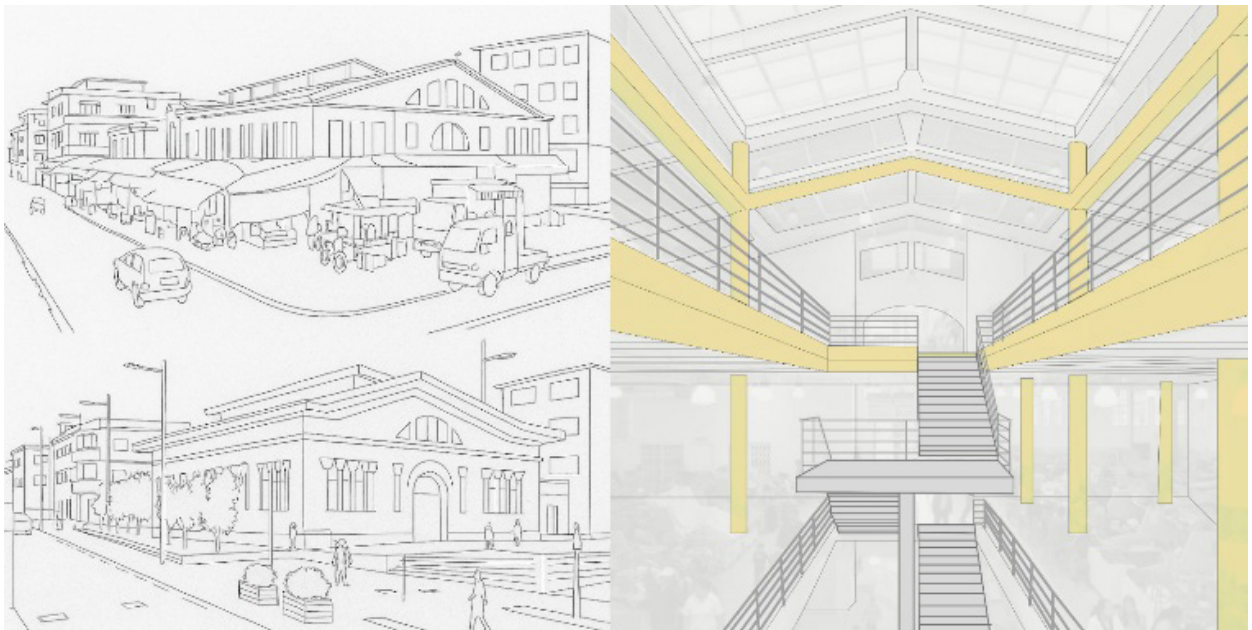
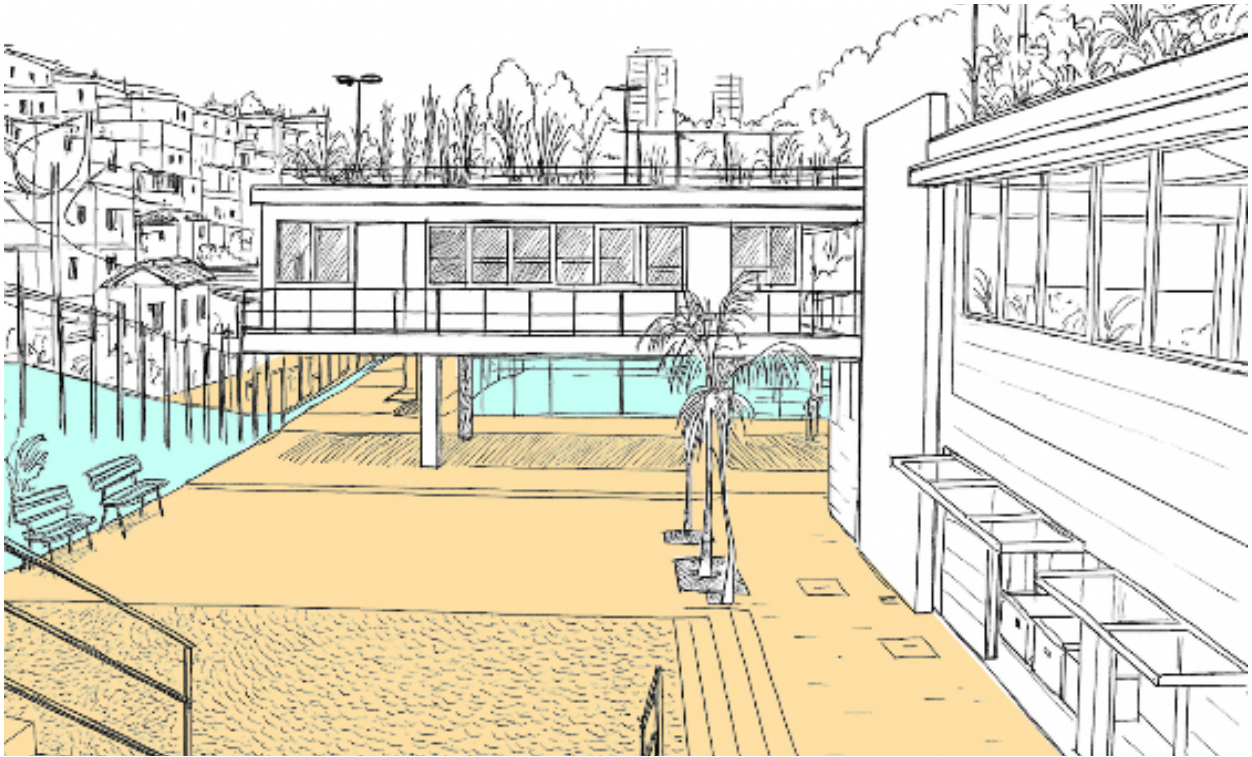


Figure 1. Viver Project, FGMF, PLARS 2014. Source: Adapted using ChatGPT.

Figure 2. Mercado 9 de Octubre, Boriz Albornoz, PLARS 2016. Source: Adapted using ChatGPT.

transformation, without claiming the power to change social problems (Carranza & Lara, 2014), is significant, especially among winners of the PLARS between 2014 and 2016 and of the MCHAP.emerge award between 2018 and 2022.

The winner of the 2014 PLARS, the FGMF's Viver Project (Figure 1), occupies land that served as access to the Jardim Colombo community. The pre-existing social dynamics are supported by the project's free space,



Figure 3. Unidad Común, Rozana Montiel, 2018 MCHAP. emerge award. Source: Adapted using ChatGPT.

which opens to the community's urban fabric, promoting social and sports coexistence. In 2016, the winner, the 9 de Octubre Market in Cuenca (Figure 2), from the Boriz Albornoz studio, relocated, improved conditions, and organized merchants by sector based on the social and cultural understanding of their activities, providing a new spatiality to showcase their products. The success of the community/users' participation, together with the municipality's subsidy for the proposal, undoubtedly helped align the project for the 9 de Octubre Market with reality (Quito Architecture Biennial [BAQ], 2025).

The winner of the 2018 MCHAP. emerge award, Unidad Común (Figure 3) by Rozana Montiel, recognizes that any social or cultural pre-existence was eliminated in the housing complex project. The rescue of social values and public coexistence, achieved by understanding what had become invisible, was made possible by the community/users' participation in the project process (Montiel, 2016). Meanwhile, Barrera Colosio (Figure 4), a project by Loreta Castro and José Pablo Ambrosi together with UNAM, winner of the 2022 MCHAP. emerge award, pointed to the recognition of social and cultural pre-existence regarding how the community understands water as a value for the region (Capital Workshop, 2025), which makes the project impose itself as a water containment infrastructure.

The *inseparable relationship among structure, form, and space* is explored in the 21st century using weight and structural efforts (Carranza & Lara, 2014). All the winners of both awards start from this principle, like in a simple way, the Viver Project, where the reinforced concrete structure, a pillar/slab system with concrete block closure, forms two rectangular prisms installed perpendicular to the west face of the land. The cross-



Figure 4. Colosio Dam, Taller Capital, 2022 MCHAP.emerge award. Source: Adapted using ChatGPT.

sectional prism is set on pilotis, which enlarge the free space, with a set of stairs serving as stands on the east face and the sports court on the south face. Or in an intricate way, by caring for the historical building of the 9 de Octubre Market that, by inserting a metal structure of circular pillars and steel deck slab supported on I-profile metal beams, the location of pre-existing pillars was taken into account, establishing the alignment of the new structural system, which borders the building and allows extending the mezzanine and modifying the roof's height. The concrete containment in the basement configures the basement.

The Valparaíso Cultural Center (Figure 5), winner of the 2018 PLARS, reflects this inherent relationship in two ways. In the old cell building, the strategy of maintaining the prison's external faces defines the form driven by the first principle. It integrates a mixed concrete-metal structure, providing open spaces and corridors that lead to the rooms. In the new building, embedded in the topography, the site is recognized as the driver of the exposed parallelepiped concrete, which stands out for the different arrangement of the V-pillars, forming a single vertical plane with the gable that delimits the internal spaces and protects the open space. The way structural stresses and weight are exploited differently in the two buildings shows the extent to which mastery of materiality interferes with the second principle.

At the 2014 MCHAP and MCHAP.emerge awards, the Iberê Camargo Museum (Figure 6) by Álvaro Siza, and the Poli House (Figure 7) by Pezo von Ellrichshausen exemplified this indissociability, as expressed in

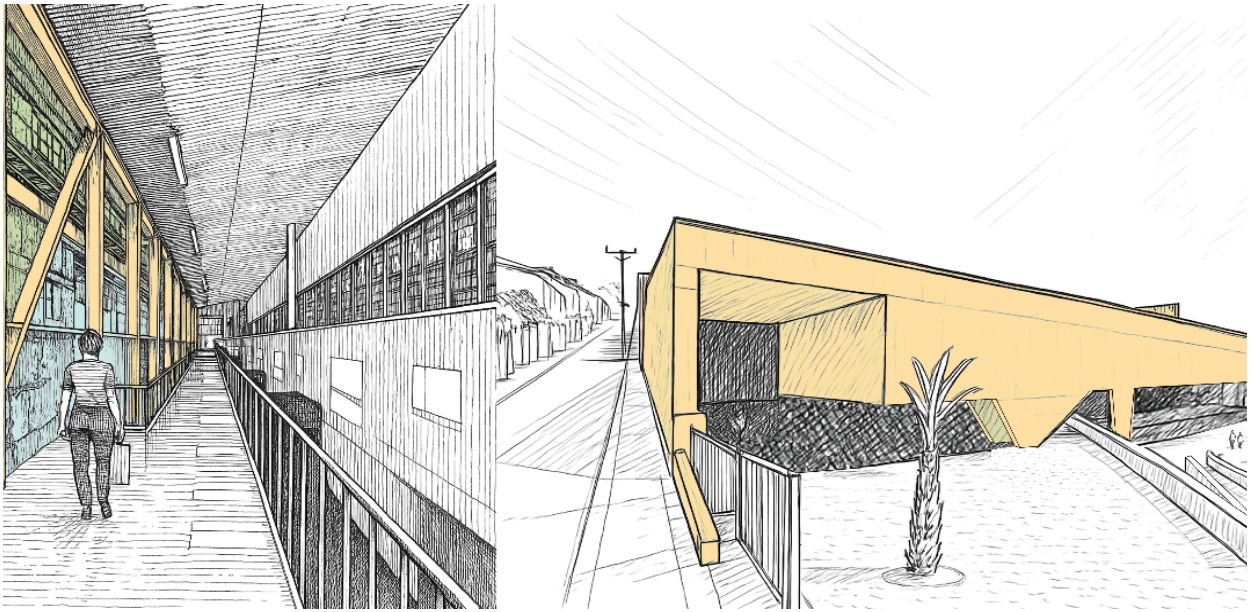


Figure 5. Valparaíso Cultural Center, HLPS, PLARS 2018. Source: Adapted using ChatGPT.

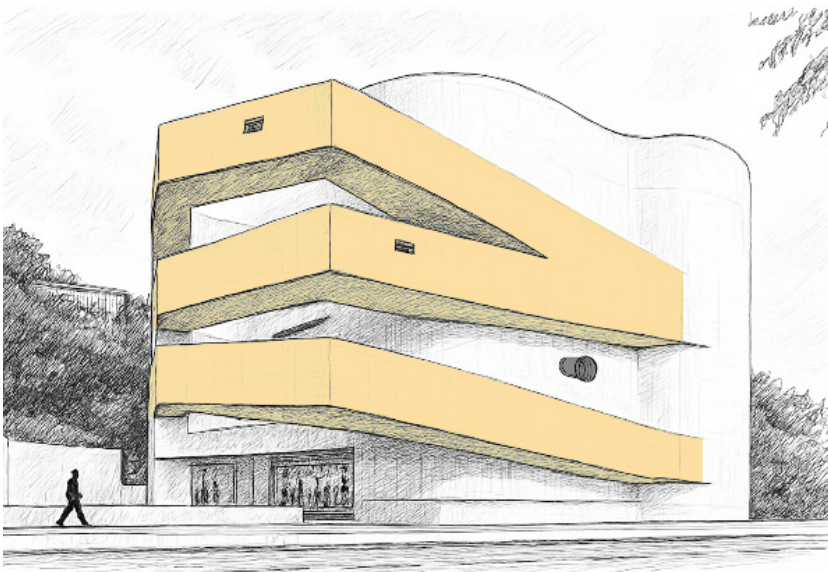


Figure 6. Museo Iberoamericano Camargo, Álvaro Siza, MCHAP 2014. Source: Adapted using ChatGPT.

the second principle through weight. The main block of the museum is a volume with curved and orthogonal walls, where the linear, prismatic geometry of three zigzag external walkways stands out. The Poli House, on the other hand, is a cubic monolith with windows that frame the landscape, located in the circulation area outside the interior void that organizes and interconnects the space across three levels. In both works, the weight of the museum's white concrete block or the house's natural concrete is, in itself, a form and structure that configures an interiority governed by empty space.

The winner of MCHAP 2016, the Grace Farm (Figure 8), a work by SANAA, consists of a concrete base that adapts to the topography and

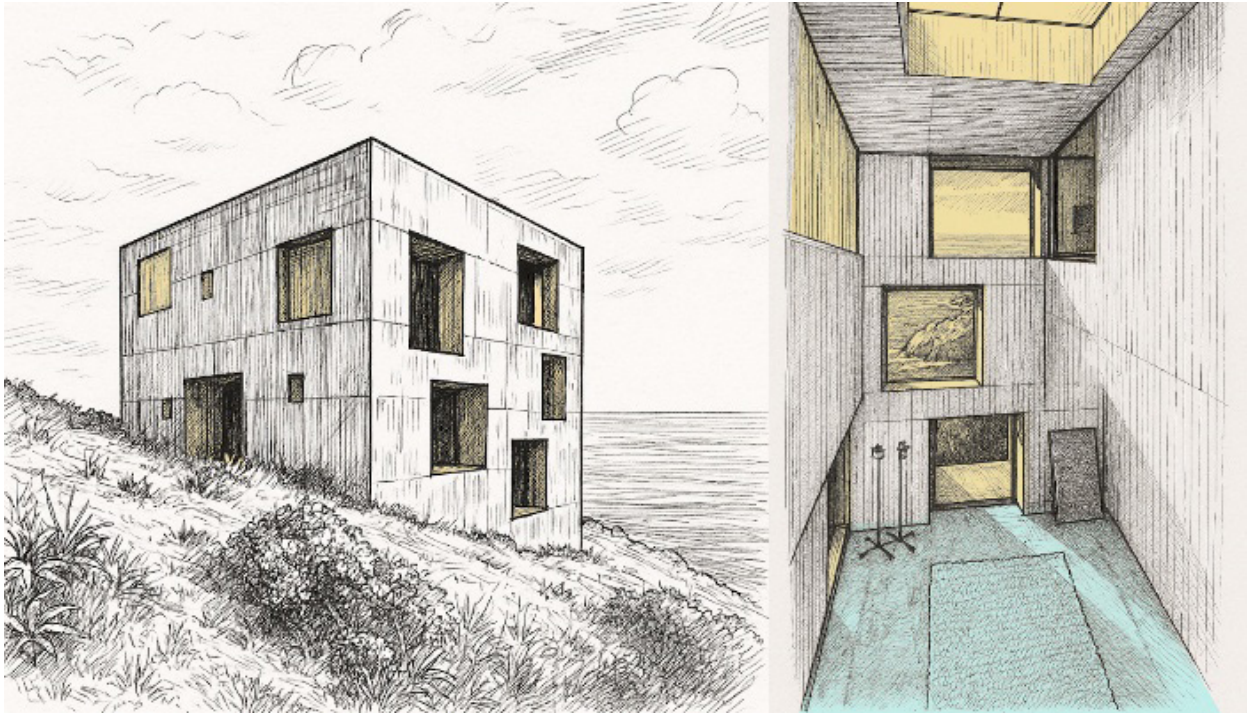


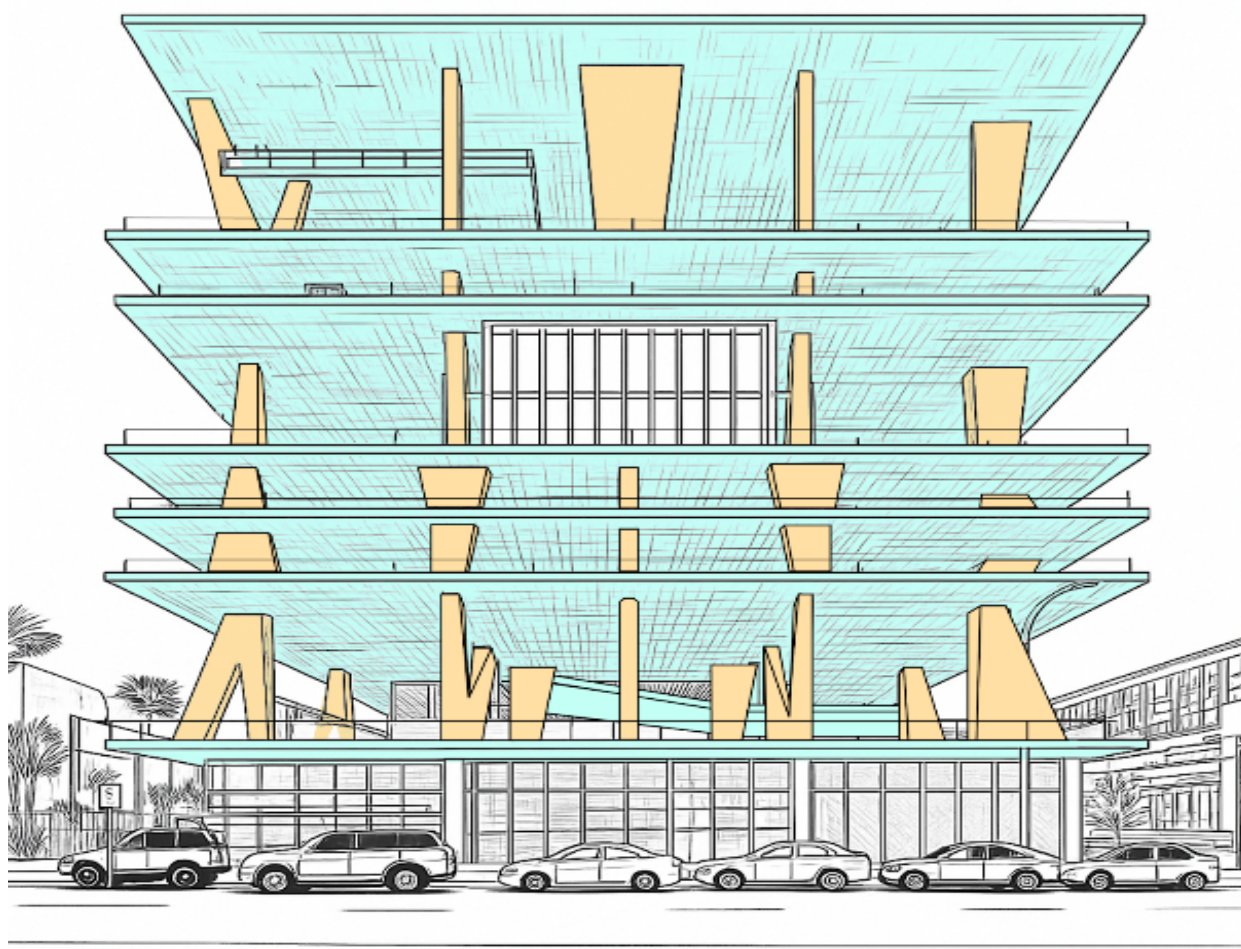
Figure 7. Casa Poli, Pezo von Elrichshausen, MCHAP.emerge 2014. Source: Adapted using ChatGPT.

Figure 8. Grace Farm, SANAA, MCHAP 2016. Source: Adapted using ChatGPT.



draws a serpentine shape, enclosed with curved glass at five points to meet internal spatial needs, such as a restaurant, a library, and a sports court. The wooden cover is supported by a metal structure with thin circular pillars and curved beams at the ends of the work. Their relationship to the place defines the shape and space, and the structure is conditioned by advanced construction technology and materials from different localities (Baldwin, 2025).

To this second principle is added what Torrent (2015) proposes as experimentation of new strategies for space production, as in 1111



Lincoln Road (Figure 9), winner of MCHAP 2014. Herzog de Meuron's work consists of a system of irregular slabs and pillars that create a spatial arrangement that essentially houses a parking lot, a restaurant, shops, and a rooftop residence. The structural complexity of the three different types of levels is interspersed in an unpredictable verticality, where disparate pillars mark rhythms without order between them. The spatial production is the void protected by the exposed concrete structure, the result of a strategy that questions the standard configuration of parking buildings and proposes a viewpoint building with different uses, where the levels descend from the interpretation of the existing neighboring building, that is, from the fifth principle.

Another winner of the MCHAP 2018, Building E (Figure 10) of the University of Piura, a project by Barclay & Crousse, points to a spatial production strategy where the different volumes are connected at the ends that configure internal voids as a system of passage and permanence, shaded and characterized by courtyards, ramps, and corridors. The prismatic result of exteriority presents four facades suited to the climate, unified yet distinct.

Figure 9. 1111 Lincoln Road, Herzog de Meuron, MCHAP 2014. Source: Adapted using ChatGPT.

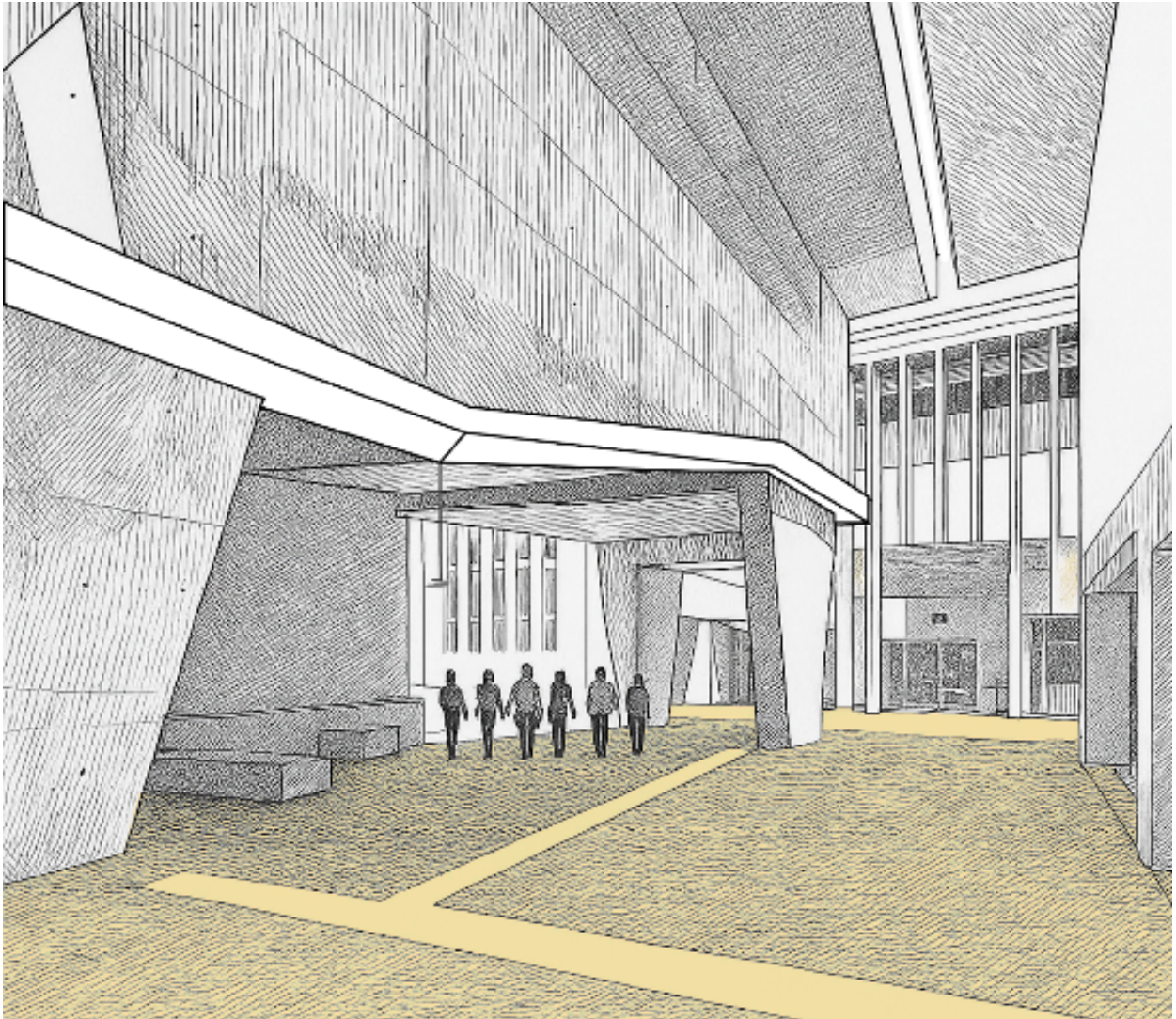
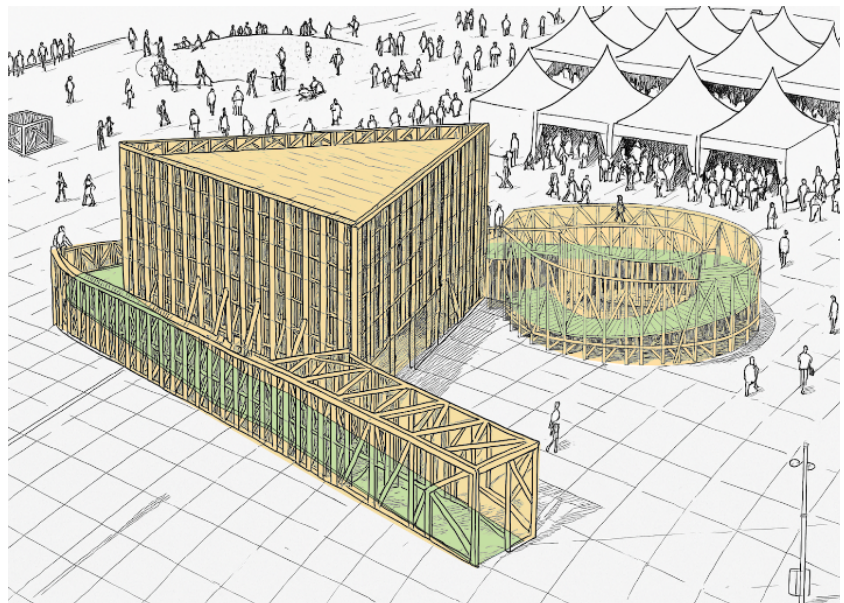


Figure 10. Building E, Barclay & Crousse, MCHAP 2018. Source: Adapted using ChatGPT.

Figure 11. Pavillion in the Basement, PRODUCTORA, MCHAP.emerge, 2016. Source: Adapted using ChatGPT.



The specific and possible tectonic materiality in each context (Carranza & Lara, 2014) considers “the cultural condition of each place, [which] is much more divergent than it seems, although the conditions of architectural and constructive production are quite similar” (Torrent, 2015, p. 289). Even though concrete is the primary material used in the works, its expressiveness varies and characterizes each work differently. This principle, *the specificity of the place and the materiality*, is directly related to the structure-form-space relationship. Among the works, two winners of MCHAP emerge, the Pavilion in the Basement from 2016 (Figure 11), and the Colosio Dam in 2022, are presented differently from the rest.

The Pavilion in the Basement is a temporary structure in the form of an equilateral triangle, externally flanked by a straight ramp that leads visitors to the square's contemplation terrace, followed by a descending curved ramp. Access to the exhibition area is directly from the square. The triangle is itself the shape, and the minor components of the wooden structure are conditioned by the execution time and the duration of the work. In Colosio, the stone dam's structure contains water through a system of floodable platforms that serve as a sports and leisure area during drought periods. The only constructed volume, with a triangular geometry, has a metallic structure and a programmatic spatiality of a multi-sports court. In these two works, the specificity of place and materiality are prominent in the relationship among structure, form, and space, yet they are also brought together.

The last principle, the *reflective and distinctive use of pre-existing structures as architectural references*, composes the conceptual scheme of the works, which comes from the interpretation, understanding, and formulation of an appropriate judgment based on knowledge and reflection on previous solutions of other architects or their own (Lawson & Dorst, 2009). The conceptual density of specific projects and practices stems from this coherent, reflective action and is attentive to plurality and diversity (Carranza & Lara, 2014). The Anahuacalli Museum (Figure 12), the work of Maurício Rocha, winner of MCHAP 2022, exposes the inseparable relationship among structure, form, and space, derived from both local and material specificity and from the reflective use of architectural pre-existence. The work starts from the location of the existing volumes to propose both the linearity integrated into the north face volume and the free spaces and the courtyard, based on the parallelism with the existing blocks. The understanding of the site and the volcanic materiality of the stones in place define the elevated layout, which preserves the continuity of access level and the natural terrain's configuration while also providing access to the site. Because concrete and basalt are the primary materials (Rocha, 2025), they are handled and presented in ways that distinguish the old from the new.



Figure 12. Anahuacalli Museum, Maurício Rocha, MCHAP 2022. Source: Adapted using ChatGPT.

Among the other winners already presented, the Valparaiso Cultural Center considers the pre-existing structure of the old prison to be the basis for a new building, while maintaining the old powder magazine. It uses vestiges of antiquity to establish the gardens and preserves the walls and the historical building of the access square as a prison memory. The rehabilitation of the 9 de Octubre Market is the very embodiment of respect for the pre-existing building, achieved through direct intervention in the old structure while maintaining a balance between the old and the new. 1111 Lincoln Road, although different from the built environment, considered the adjacent building when determining the heights of its parking slabs. Even knowing the study's processual dynamics, it is interesting to perceive, by analogy, how the various column configurations recall the columns in modern works by Latino architects. The same analogy can be made to SANAA's project for Grace Farm, which recalls the serpentine marquee of the Pampulha ballroom and their own works, such as the Serpentine Pavilion of 2009.

The Poli House connects with the Rivo House, which precedes it, so that the cubic exploration will lead to reflection in Pezo von Ellrichshausen's production, just as the deconstruction of the cube led to Eisenman's reflection. The Álvaro Siza Museum is a theft of its own language, already attributed to the architect. However, it also does not steal the possibility of correlating it with a contemporary approach to Frank Lloyd Wright's MoMA using the continuous gallery. The Viver Project considers the dense, conjugated construction of overlapping prisms in an apparent perforated brick-and-slab/pillar structure in concrete, which dialogues with prisms that approach the pre-existing-built form and materiality, while also being distinguished by a more polished presentation.

The MCHAP:emerge winners, the Colosio dam, the Common Unit (*Unidad Común*), and the Pavilion in the Basement are the only ones

in which the dialogue with architectural pre-existence does not occur directly in the configuration of form, spatiality, or materiality. The cultural and social problems, in the specificity of each work, led to reflection on the different uses of geometry in shapes and planes, as guided by professional practice itself.

The presentation of the winners, through the project principles, demonstrated the impartiality of the works with respect to the ideological distinctions between the prizes. The principles qualify the works without classifying them, indicating the relevance of the relationships among location, built material, conceived empty space, and cultural and social capital. The reflection does not intend to disparage any of the awarded professionals, but rather to point out underlying issues related to the awards and to invite a critical look at contemporary architecture.

Of the seven MCHAP 2014 finalists, four are renowned architects (three European and one American). The double prize clearly demonstrates how critical regionalism, rooted in the center/periphery condition, has acted. The Portuguese winner exemplified Frampton's category (2006) for being "resistance to the reductionist approaches that characterized the modern mainstream" (Zein & Alves dos Santos Neto, 2023, p. 25) even in an intrinsically European relationship, where Portugal was a "peripheral situation" (Junqueira Bastos & Verde Zein, 2010). However, in the 21st century, the Portuguese "colonizing" naturalness embeds in the colonized lands another architectural cultural form, not peculiar to the Latin American reality, and sanctions as more relevant the internationally recognized European one in Tupiniquines lands than the Latinos themselves.

The Swiss, when handling columns, approaches, without making it explicit, the recognized attributes of the modern Latino architecture, "improving" by assimilation and reinterpretation, an architectural culture that does not belong to him. The work of a European who supposedly knew how to manipulate Latino architectural culture is recognized, but the main prize is not awarded to Latino architects, "whose works boast architectural languages clearly differentiated from the rest of Latin American production and an undeniable consistency" (Quintana, 2021) based on waiving European modernity and through "alternative modes of relationship between architecture and the city, mediated by new perceptions of time, by reflection on one's identity, by the historical memory of the city and the conception of heritage (...)" (Quintana, 2021).

This double political and ideological recognition underlines the European "supremacy" in the supposed ability to improve architecture in "peripheral" places, as well as the American "supremacy" as an

LATIN AMERICAN REFLECTIONS

economic center for a peripheral Latin America, in addition to reinforcing a historiographical construction that attributes to Brazil also a "supremacy" in relation to other Latinos, "periphery" of architecture. Alternatively, it even reinforces a historiographical construction that attributes to Brazil also a "supremacy" regarding other Latinos, "periphery" of architecture. The contradiction in this position was perhaps, for ethical reasons, eclipsed by Steven Holl, whom Frampton recognized as one of the five most promising American architects. It should be noted that Holl's work, the extension of the Nelson-Atkins Art Museum, contrasts with the existing neoclassical building, but maintains a respectful dialogue in the implantation and height of the volumes, conditioned by a subsoil that connects the buildings. The prize could have been more from the Americas if Steven Holl had won the 2014 MCHAP.

The "consolation" came in the form of the MCHAP. *emerge* award winner, the Poli house. Very well integrated into the landscape, the house is, for Montaner (2016), an "icon of stereotomic architecture", but its architecture goes beyond the domesticity associated with myths and foreign architects. The reinterpretation and new conditions of modern principles bring about the condition of contemporaneity. Among the *emerge* finalists, the OMS Station of the Canadian studio 5468796 Arquitectura should have been the rival. The work also presents a spatial reflection of the cube, configuring a mutable spatiality for public use. However, hardly a Canadian work would be awarded before an American one.

The "Framptonian symphony" was maintained at the MCHAP 2016. A work by foreigners was awarded again: the Grace Farm, by the Pritzker Prize winners in 2010, Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa. It would not be acceptable to award a work in the country of origin of the award with less importance. Among the finalists, the Star Apartments project by the Michael Maltizan FAIA studio exemplifies American production. However, there seems to be internal resistance to the postmodern persistence evident in American production. This assumption will need further investigation in the future. The winner of 2016 *emerge* is still Latino, but the ephemeral work is fading away, and neither of the two winners so far is an expression of Latino social challenges. Until this cycle, the winners of this category have exemplified how Latino production dialogues with the contemporary condition of global architecture.

The first two MCHAP are presented masked, and the last two reveal a Latino twist, quantitatively and qualitatively apprehended by the winners presented above. Table 1 shows the growing number of works from the Global South nominated, with the increase in the *emerge* category in the 2022 cycle, standing out. This distinction announces a Latino twist in the MCHAP, an "invasion" of architecture

		2014 Cycle		2016 Cycle		2018 Cycle		2022 Cycle	
MCHAP Prize	Nominees	101	55	153	59	148	52	201	44
			46				94		
	Nom. Emerge	27	11	56	11	36	9	51	7
			16				45		
	Outstanding	17	9	34	15	30	9	30	6
			8				19		
Outs. Emerge	5	2	11	4	4	1	50	5	
		3				7			3
Finalists	7	3	6	2	6	2	6	2	
		4				4			4
Final. Emerge	4	2	5	2	4	1	4	-	
		2				3			3
LARS Award	Recognition	17		18		20		-	
	Mentions	3		5		3		-	

* The numbers highlighted in gray are for works of the Global South.

produced in the "periphery" in an economic "center" award. There may be several reasons for this change, from the increase in the number of invited Latino experts who identify works that reach the nominee list, to the increased production, dissemination, and recognition of Latino architecture by other media, including the 2016 Pritzker Prize awarded to Alejandro Aravena. The variables for this twist may be diverse, but it is a fact.

Focused on the finalists, this round introduces, through the works, the distinctive Latino architectural expression and the current concern and commitment to social problems. This distinction should not be understood as "exotic" or "rustic", but as specific, coherent, and, to use an already recognized term, appropriate to their reality that, however much they may seem, are different. There is no denying that social concerns are limited to the MCHAP finalists and winners, while cultural themes predominate among them. Regardless of that, it is important to highlight here Montaner's lucidity in stating that "critical regionalism — a paternalistic invention of mainstream criticism to appropriate the progress of architecture on the American and Asian continents - has become obsolete for interpreting contemporaneity" (2016, p. 08). In this sense, the emerging Latino works are closer to Waisman's (1990) divergent interpretation, where divergence means embarking on new directions based on what is and what can become.

Another fact worth highlighting is the credibility the award brings to competitors at the nomination stage. This relationship attributes a veiled hegemony to the American institution compared to the Rogelio Salmons Foundation. However, does the Global South need this to be relevant? Is this seal of quality necessary? To this Latin American reflection is added the database that is built and, to a certain extent, shared, since publications, research, and what happens and is developed in the MCHAP Chair at the

Table 1. Number of works in the MCHAP and LARS Awards. Source: Prepared by the authors (2024).

IIT CoA are not freely available online. The winners become objects of knowledge production. This confirms what Mignolo and Brussolo Veiga (2021, p. 25) say: "The first world has knowledge, the third world has culture; Native Americans have wisdom, Anglo-Americans have science." To paraphrase Mignolo and Brussolo Veiga (2021), the Latino winners provide information, knowledge, and cultures to be systematized, analyzed, and transformed into knowledge for one year, with a financial contribution to "support teaching and a publication on an agreed research topic" at the IIT CoA. Recognition comes disguised as merit to be usurped by/in the power of the geopolitics of knowledge.

Realizing that the PLARS award is diametrically opposed to the MCHAP in every way could be reason enough to value it more. All those recognized, awarded, or who received honorable mentions do not raise doubts or political questions. They are expressions of a quality Latino production, without owing anything to any European or even to any North American. The idea of open spaces, which governs the PLARS prize, is given in the works awarded by the MCHAP, except for the Iberê Camargo Museum, the Poli House, and the Grace Farm, the latter two because they are not works inserted in the urban space. However, the same cannot be said of critical regionalism, which is limited to the winners of MCHAP, emerge in 2014 and 2016, since European architects won those two cycles. As of the MCHAP 2018, this regionalism seems to be weakening, and a growing awareness of the Americas has led to an increase in the number of Latinos on the jury since the 2022 cycle.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

It was necessary to use the analytical view and recognize the finalists to demonstrate the idiosyncrasies of MCHAP, since the ideological thinking in PLARS is less harmful, given that the idea of open space, guided by the relationship between location, materiality, the empty urban or architectural connector, and cultural and social capital, is inherent to the architectural object itself. From this perspective, the works say little about the awards and a lot about contemporary architecture in the Americas. The Latino awardees point out that the set of values and priorities that reflect the principles is more compelling than the creation or revival of an exogenous category, such as critical, restrictive, personified, and outdated regionalism.

The dominance of open spaces as a qualitative characteristic among almost all the awardees, stemming from a reflective, appropriate, and contingent practice, is evidence that architectural Latinity knows how to address not only its specific problems, but also present itself to the universal architectural culture with prominence. The conjunction of analytical principles is evidence of this. However, the practices and works from this Latin expression constitute a distinct condition from the political duality between the awards. While the PLARS awards a

“divergent architecture” (Waisman, 1990), the MCHAP embraces works by renowned European architects in the Americas. This antagonism disappears as the winning works become more closely aligned, indicating a Latino twist, specifically in the MCHAP from the third cycle.

However, it may be generalizing (but necessary) to say that the Global South lacks recognizing that we strengthen each other much more, even by loving and relating to others. There is more strength in our “ethos” as common, although less pronounced, social characteristics (Quintana-Guerrero, 2024, free translation). It would be interesting to more strongly adopt an endogenous valuation of the PLARS, with greater adherence to the award among architecture practitioners, given that the current cycle has only obtained forty-seven registrations. There is no indication of abandonment or devaluation of the MCHAP, but to rewrite the matrix of the coloniality of knowledge (Quijano, 2019; Mignolo & Brussolo Veiga, 2021), it is necessary to recognize the usury of the prize in borrowing our culture and knowledge. A question remains: what impact do the practices and architectures of America's Global South have on America's Global North?

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CONTRIBUTION OF AUTHORS CRediT

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