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LIGHTHOUSE IN SÃO PAULO: THE IMS PAULISTA AND CONTEMPORARY BRAZILIAN ARCHITECTURE

UN FARO DE SÃO PAULO: EL IMS PAULISTA Y LA ARQUITECTURA BRASILEÑA CONTEMPORÁNEA

FAROL PAULISTANO: O IMS PAULISTA E A ARQUITETURA CONTEMPORÂNEA BRASILEIRA



Figure 0. The IMS Paulista.
Source: Author's collection in
2023.

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RESUMO

O artigo investiga a genealogia da proposta vencedora do escritório Andrade Morettin para a nova sede do Instituto Moreira Salles (IMS) na Avenida Paulista, examinando sua inserção no contexto da produção arquitetônica brasileira – e, em particular, paulista – entre o final do século XX e o início do XXI. Para tanto, situa o projeto na trama de modos contemporâneos de pensar e produzir arquitetura, marcada pela coexistência produtiva de referências cruzadas, nacionais e estrangeiras. Tributário das lições da chamada “tradição brutalista” – considerada um norte para a geração de arquitetos formados na FAU-USP na década de 1990 –, o projeto do IMS Paulista distingue-se por transformações significativas no tratamento da forma e da lógica construtiva, com ênfase na envolvente, superfície e materialidade. Por meio do método histórico, apoiado em análise bibliográfica, documental e arquitetônica, identificaram-se as articulações entre influências nacionais e internacionais refletidas no caso de estudo. A produção do escritório Andrade Morettin revela-se, assim, nutrida pelos debates teóricos e projetuais da arquitetura contemporânea internacional, reinterpretados criticamente pelos arquitetos numa atitude de ruptura frente ao caráter autorreferente e fechado ao diálogo com a produção internacional que caracterizou a cultura arquitetônica moderna brasileira.

Palavras-chave: arquitetura contemporânea, crítica, arquitetura paulista, materialidade, teoria de projeto

ABSTRACT

The article investigates the genealogy of Andrade Morettin's winning proposal for the new headquarters of the Moreira Salles Institute (IMS) on Paulista Avenue, examining its insertion in the context of Brazilian architectural production – and, in particular, São Paulo architecture – between the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st. To this end, it situates the project within the framework of contemporary ways of thinking about and producing architecture, marked by the productive coexistence of cross-references, both national and foreign. Drawing on the lessons of the so-called 'brutalist tradition' – considered a guiding principle for the generation of architects trained at FAU-USP in the 1990s – the IMS Paulista project is distinguished by significant transformations in the treatment of form and constructive logic, with an emphasis on the envelope, surface, and materiality. Through the historical method, supported by bibliographic, documentary, and architectural analysis, the articulations between domestic and international influences reflected in the case study were identified. The work of the Andrade Morettin firm is thus nourished by theoretical and design debates in contemporary international architecture, critically reinterpreted by the architects in a break with the self-referential character and closed dialogue with international production that characterised modern Brazilian architectural culture.

Keywords: contemporary architecture, criticism, São Paulo architecture, materiality, design theory

RESUMEN

El artículo investiga la genealogía de la propuesta ganadora del estudio Andrade Morettin para la nueva sede del Instituto Moreira Salles (IMS) en la Avenida Paulista, examinando su inserción en el contexto de la producción arquitectónica brasileña —y, en particular, paulista— entre finales del siglo XX y principios del XXI. Para ello, sitúa el proyecto en el entramado de las formas contemporáneas de pensar y producir arquitectura, marcadas por la coexistencia productiva de referencias cruzadas, tanto nacionales como extranjeras. Influenciado por las lecciones de la llamada «tradición brutalista» — considerada un referente para la generación de arquitectos formados en la FAU-USP en la década de 1990—, el proyecto del IMS Paulista se distingue por transformaciones significativas en el tratamiento de la forma y la lógica constructiva, con énfasis en la envolvente, la superficie y la materialidad. Mediante el método histórico, apoyado en análisis bibliográficos, documentales y arquitectónicos, se identificaron las articulaciones entre las influencias nacionales e internacionales reflejadas en el caso de estudio. La producción del estudio Andrade Morettin se revela así alimentada por los debates teóricos y proyectuales de la arquitectura contemporánea internacional, reinterpretados críticamente por los arquitectos en una actitud de ruptura frente al carácter autorreferencial y cerrado al diálogo con la producción internacional que caracterizó la cultura arquitectónica moderna brasileña.

Palabras clave: arquitectura contemporánea, crítica, arquitectura paulista, materialidad, teoría del proyecto

INTRODUCTION

The winning project of the competition for the new São Paulo headquarters of Instituto Moreira Salles (IMS), conceived by Andrade Morettin, condenses in its formulation a bundle of meanings that expresses the state of Brazilian architectural production at the turn of the 21st century. Although some of its most visible attributes were already announced in projects and works of the generation of architects active from the 1990s – where the authors are recognized and with which they share training paths, professional backgrounds and a range of references –, the headquarters of IMS Paulista stands out for making explicit the negotiations underway, since then, between the architecture produced in the country and the directions of the international architectural debate. These negotiations were invariably mediated by the legacy of the sound modern architectural culture consolidated in Brazil in the second half of the 20th century, which subjected all approaches and dialogue with the erratic international architectural panorama at the turn of the century to discretionary cuts averse to simplistic adherence to the flavor of passing fads.

The exploration of new plastic and material possibilities, perceptible in the Brazilian architectural production of the period and resulting from contact with the most recent developments of International Architecture, raised questions about the vitality of the local modern tradition and its ability to sustain an unbroken renewal. In this context, the work of architects such as Paulo Mendes da Rocha, Oscar Niemeyer, and Lina Bo Bardi instigated new looks, serving as a reference in the definition of professional lineages and alignments. Inserted in this debate, the IMS Paulista project proposes productive reconciliations by articulating, with ease and without orthodoxy, its belonging to the Brazilian modern architectural culture. This posture is representative of the extension identified as a common attribute of the works gathered in the *Coletivo* (Collective) exhibition (Milheiro et al., 2006), dedicated to a profile of contemporary São Paulo production, in which the authors of IMS Paulista also participated.

As the critic Ana Luiza Nobre observes, in the Brazilian architectural environment – and, in particular, in the São Paulo context, the focus of the *Coletivo* exhibition - this extension manifested itself as a “replacement of the trend of reports against modern production with a less aggressive and more judicious posture” (Nobre, 2006, pp. 18-19). If until the 1990s “it made some sense to defend the exercise of freedom previously considered intangible”, the current trend was “progressively oriented towards a reassessment of modernist production that would have consequences, in one way or another, for a significant part of our younger architecture” (Nobre, 2006, p.19).

This article aims to investigate the genealogy of the winning proposal of the Andrade Morettin firm for the new headquarters of IMS Paulista, considering its insertion in the context of Brazilian architectural production – and, in particular, paulista or São Paulo production – between the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st. Such an investigation implies situating the project in the context of the extension highlighted by the *Coletivo* exhibition, and linking it to the dense web of contemporary ways of thinking



Figure 1. The IMS Paulista.
Source: Author's collection in
2023.

and producing architecture, marked by the productive coexistence of a set of domestic and foreign cross-references and the multiple commitments that articulate them. It is assumed that, at the same time that the project operates from the architectural knowledge associated with the so-called “brutalist tradition” of São Paulo Architecture – still considered as a guideline for architects trained in the 1990s at the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of the University of São Paulo (FAU-USP) –, the proposal of IMS Paulista, as well as the production of the Andrade Morettin firm in a broader sense, is nourished by the theoretical and design debates of international contemporary architecture, submitted, as it could not be otherwise, to rigorous critical screening.

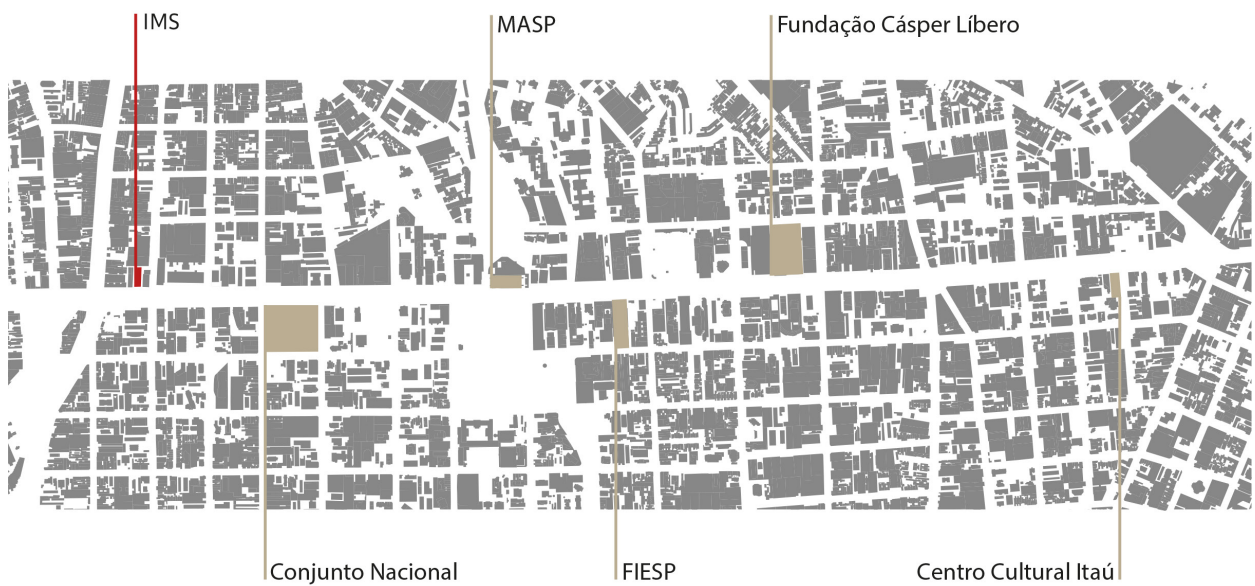
To this end, the article adopts the historical method and seeks to convey a sense of continuity and interweaving among the events. As proposed by Groat and Wang (2013), the result of historical research in architecture consists of the construction of a narrative, the final product of a process that involves the search for facts (identification), the organization of evidence, its evaluation, and analysis. The bibliographic research used sources dedicated to the topic in the disciplinary field of architecture at the turn of the century – that is, from the 1990s until the competition period –, which allowed delimiting both the timeframe and the theoretical framework from texts by Moneo (Moneo, 2004; Moneo, 2008), Koolhaas (2000) and Heathcote (2016), in the international context, and by Nobre (2006) and Wisnik (2018), in the domestic context, which support this research. As part of the process of identifying the facts, interviews with the architects, published in specialized journals, were used to consolidate the relationships and assumptions of this article within the proposed case study. The *Light Construction* (Museum of Modern Art [MoMA], 1995) and *Coletivo* exhibitions (Milheiro et al., 2006) serve as references for the connection between theory and projects. A comparison was made between the theoretical approaches and the IMS Paulista project (Figure 1), examining the design discourse, design strategies, the use of materials – with emphasis on the surface and the surroundings –, construction techniques, and the references that directly affect the analyzed work.

CASE STUDIES

The Search for a New Space

The holding of the competition for the new headquarters of IMS Paulista, at the end of 2011, was one of the decisive moments in the search for an adequate space in São Paulo to house collections and promote events of the institution, founded in the late 1980s by diplomat and banker, Walther Moreira Salles (1912-2001). Dedicated to the conservation, preservation, and dissemination of collections of photography, music, literature, and iconography, the project to create a building specifically designed to function as a cultural center also represented a departure from the current practice of adapting pre-existing buildings for institutional purposes. Examples of this practice are the cases of the IMS in Poços de Caldas (MG), installed in the historic Cristiano Osório Chalet, and the IMS of Rio de Janeiro (RJ), where the family residence, located in the Gávea neighborhood and designed in 1948 by Olavo Redig de Campos, with landscaping by Burle Marx, was transformed into the Institute's Rio headquarters in 1999; in addition to the unit located in the Higienópolis neighborhood, in the capital of São Paulo, which housed the IMS between 1996 and 2016.

The choice of land for the implementation of the IMS Paulista preceded the contest by some years, culminating in the selection of the lot on Avenida Paulista, between the streets of Consolação and Bela Cintra. This location (Figure 2) ensured the São Paulo headquarters' remarkable visibility, in addition to placing it close to important cultural facilities of public interest,



such as Conjunto Nacional, MASP, Parque Trianon, Centro Cultural FIESP, Fundação Cásper Líbero, Casa das Rosas, and Itaú Cultural. The gradual conversion of Avenida Paulista into a true cultural and leisure corridor would be reinforced, in turn, by the implementation of the *Japan House* in 2017, designed by the Japanese architect Kengo Kuma in partnership with the firm, FG+M, and SESC Paulista in 2018, with the firm, Königsberger + Vannucchi, in addition to the new IMS, opened at the other end of the Avenue in September 2017.

Figura 2. Location of the new IMS headquarters in relation to the iconic Paulista buildings.
Source: Andrade Morettin Arquitetos Associados collection (Moretti et al., 2023).

Before deciding to hold a competition, the possibility of hiring international architects for the task was considered. Fernando Serapião, who was involved in organizing the competition from the start, invited Japanese architect Ryue Nishizawa, Kazuyo Sejima's partner at the SANAA office, to see the lot on Avenida Paulista, for which Nishizawa even made some sketches. The suggestion of the SANAA team was undoubtedly due to the recent notoriety gained from the New Art Museum project, built in New York City between 2002 and 2007. The presence of the SANAA team in this context reveals not only the promoters' expectations regarding the project for the São Paulo headquarters, but also confirms the approximations to contemporary international architecture observed in Brazil since the 1990s. The treatment of volumes, transparencies, and material explorations that characterize the works of the Japanese firm – producing visual overlay effects through the use of sandblasted or silkscreen glazed planes, among other combinations – is present both in the New York museum and in works such as the Museum of Contemporary Art of the 21st Century, in 1999, The Glass Pavilion in 2001-2006 and the *Louvre Lens* in 2005.

Also, Mexican architect Ricardo Legorreta was consulted to conceive a project. His proposal addressed expectations for the public use of the ground floor and the importance of spaces dedicated to research

and teaching. João Moreira Salles synthesized the vision that IMS São Paulo should be “an open and democratic space”, reflecting the inclusive character of the new headquarters (Serapião, 2012, p.39).

Although an international project competition was also considered – a financially viable option that would undoubtedly bring great visibility to the IMS – this alternative lost strength in the face of the “IMS’ decision [to] support Brazilian culture” (Serapião, 2012, p.37). Thus, the final decision was guided by the idea of promoting young Brazilian firms through a competition, as a way to value and encourage local architecture, as highlighted by João Moreira Salles in his opening speech of the new Paulista headquarters. Initially, fifteen teams of architects were selected. After interviews, the following teams were invited to participate in the competition: Andrade Morettin Arquitetos, Una Arquitetos, SPBR Arquitetos, Bernardes + Jacobsen, Márcio Kogan (Studio MK27), and Arquitetos Associados. Among the six teams, four were from São Paulo, and the first three had participated in the *Coletivo: Arquitetura Paulista Contemporânea* exhibition (Milheiro et al., 2006), presenting recent and expressive trajectories.

Chaired by Pedro Moreira Salles, the jury included André Corrêa do Lago, diplomat, architecture critic, member of the Architecture and Design Council of MoMA, and advisor to the *Monolith* journal; Fernando Serapião, architecture critic and editor of the same journal, who had participated in the entire contest process; and Flávio Pinheiro, executive superintendent of the Moreira Salles Institute. In addition to these, four foreign representatives were invited: Karen Stein, co-chair of the Architecture and Design Council of the Museum of Modern Art in New York and a jury member of the Pritzker Prize; Richard Koshalek, Director of the *Hirshhorn Museum* in Washington (USA) and member of the selection committees of the *Tate Modern*, in London, and the *Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles*; Jean-Louis Cohen, architectural historian, professor at *New York University* and director of *Institut Français d’architecture*; and the aforementioned Ricardo Legorreta, who went from potential author of the project to member of the jury, having also been a Pritzker Prize juror and winner of the AIA Gold medal in 2000. The composition of the jury reinforced the IMS’s commitment to promoting Brazilian architecture and, at the same time, to legitimizing the competition in the international architectural landscape – a role played by foreign representatives.

At the suggestion of jury member Karen Stein, 33x60x60 boxes were provided, inspired by the practice of MoMA competitions, so that competitors could include all the necessary materials to understand their projects (Serapião, 2012). The submission included two mandatory items: a 1:200-scale model and four photomontages. The program, as stated in the notice, included exhibition spaces with an area between 1000 and 1200 m², galleries with 4 to 5 meter high ceilings and different levels of artificial lighting; two classrooms for 30 people or a single room with the equivalent

capacity; multiple-use foyer; multimedia area with controlled access; cinema/auditorium; library with capacity for approximately 3000 volumes; administrative areas; about 115 parking spaces; and space for loading and unloading in the basement. It also included the request that the reception have the welcoming character typical of cultural institutions, with a restaurant and shop around which the building's spatial organization would be structured (Serapião, 2017). Thus, it was anticipated that the ground floor would assume importance in the project, with the access to the exhibition rooms organized from that level.

It was also evident that, for IMS, it was essential to understand how the new museum would be inserted into Avenida Paulista, especially in front of the cultural axis that had been consolidated there, aligning itself with the guidelines that provided for an open and democratic space. This strategic character of the site, in light of the institution's goals, did not go unnoticed by the winning architects of the competition. In his report, Andrade Morettin recognizes the centrality gained by Avenida Paulista in recent decades, describing it as "one of the most interesting and lively spaces in São Paulo," where the image of "a mixed, plural and more Democratic city" seemed to acquire full adherence (Andrade & Morettin, 2016, p.131).

Modern traditions and contemporary affiliations

Seen from the educational and performance perspective of the Andrade Morettin duo of architects, the most common affiliation built is with what is generically identified as a "Paulista tradition" in contemporary Brazilian architecture, associated with preparation at the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of the University of São Paulo (FAU-USP), a reason that explains their participation in the *Coletivo (Milheiro, Nobre, Wisnik, 2006)* exhibition. However, many of the elements mobilized by the architects in their presentation shed light on references, architectural aspects, and ways of treating materials and surfaces that escape this strict profile and stress, requiring a more detailed reading to understand the nature of the IMS Paulista project and its genealogy. This is clear in an interview with the *AU* journal, two years after the competition, where the architects were asked about their influences and how they deal with international and national references, as seen in the words of Vinicius Andrade:

Marcelo and I were bookworms, and FAUUSP has a fantastic library. We saw a lot of things: international journals, L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, and a lot of national and international architecture. Since before working together, we had this curiosity and a comprehensive palette of references, carefree from an ideological point of view. The FAUUSP was quite restrictive in its official references, but the library was not (Andrade & Morettin, 2014, p. 59).

Moreover, as Marcelo Morettin adds:

We always like to see what is being done both here and outside, without restriction. This speculative attitude is a characteristic of us. Here in Brazil, we have always liked Rino Levi, Vilanova Artigas, and Paulo Mendes da Rocha; from outside, we like Morphosis, Koolhaas, and Herzog & de Meuron. It is a characteristic of the firm to be aware of what is happening at all times, such as Lacaton & Vassal, Sanaa, Yoshio Taniguchi, Riken Yamamoto, and Belgian and Austrian light architecture with wood. However, when the reference is taken very seriously and becomes idolatry, it gets boring because criticism is lost, and we love to criticize. It is not because this or that architect is good that he does everything right. There is a somewhat dogmatic attitude in São Paulo of thinking that if an architect is important, he cannot make mistakes. At the same time, we have a lot of self-criticism (Andrade & Morettin, 2014, p.59).

The passages highlight a critical, comprehensive stance by the duo of architects toward the repertoire of references, free of ideological restrictions. This approach favored the creation of a broad repertoire, with direct counterarguments in the firm's work, allowing Brazilian modern references, such as Rino Levi, Vilanova Artigas, and Paulo Mendes da Rocha, to dialogue with international exponents, including Koolhaas, Herzog & de Meuron, SSNAA, and others. Influences, however, do not become dogmas: they are filtered through a critical attitude towards references, without becoming idolatries. This critical and experimental orientation permeated the firm's work, which soon moved away from the brutalism characteristic of the graduates at the time at FAU-USP, adopting more open and dynamic architectural solutions.

For Heathcote (2016, p.7), although the firm emerged within a "system full of nostalgia and modernist tribute, it found its own way to escape expectations and the weight of tradition", marked by the genius of masters such as Niemeyer, Lúcio Costa, Paulo Mendes, Lina Bo Bardi, and Vilanova Artigas. This path led to an architecture that was "light, of industrial components and rational and delicate surfaces, as opposed to the raw and sculptural mass of concrete." This formal lightness, although anchored in references ranging from Mies to Koolhaas, configures a clearly Brazilian architecture, with elements of transparency and amplitude.

Taking this into account, it is significant that architects have resorted to a work that has long been marginal in the history of modern architecture – *Maison de Verre* by Pierre Chareau and Bernard Bijvoet (1928-1932)- as the opening image in the presentation of the proposal (Figure 3). As Terence Riley, curator of the *Light Construction* exhibition at the New York Museum of Modern Art (MoMA, 1995-1996) recalls, *Maison de Verre* appeared as a work that, for a long time, remained "disappeared and undervalued, which completely departs from the assumptions of modern rationalist thought" and the parameters of the International Style (Riley & García, 1996, p.14). Recovered historiographically by Kenneth Frampton, the work stood out in its "cinematic sense of space, a description that recalls many of the images used here to describe the synergy of contemporary architecture" (Riley & García, 1996, p.27).

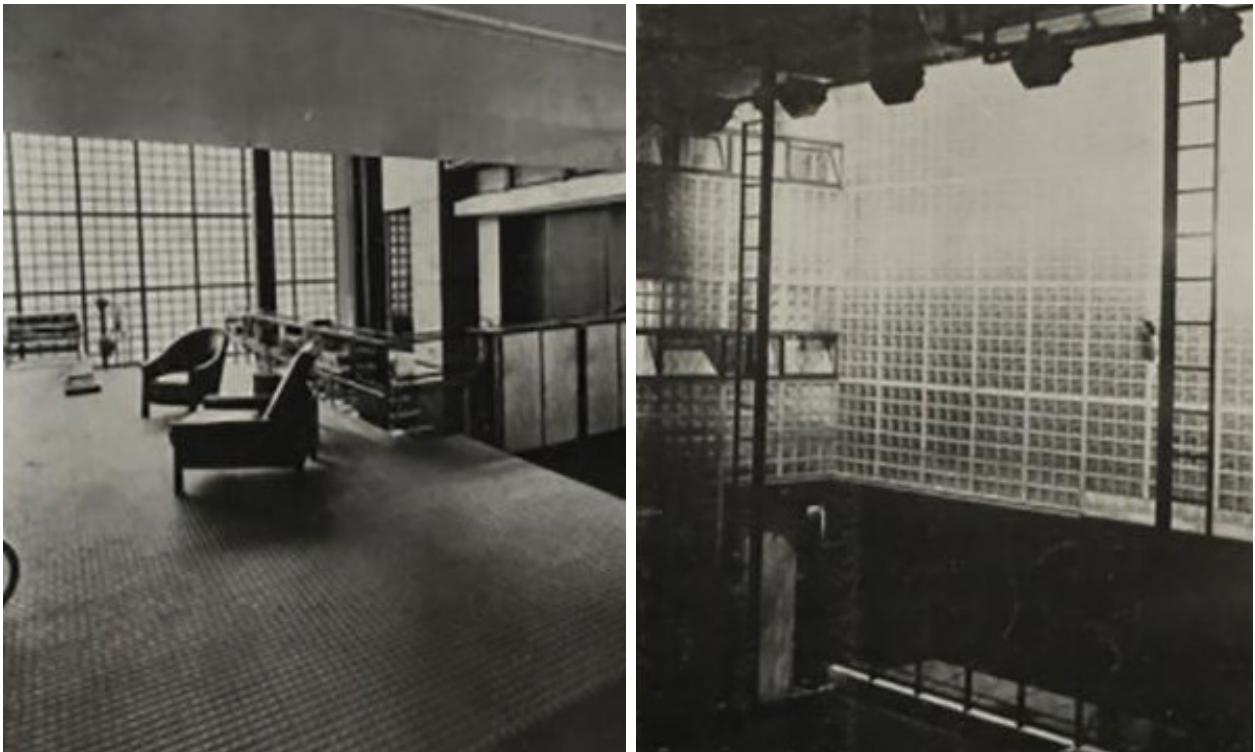


Figura 3. *Maison de Verre* by Pierre Chareau and Bernard Bijvoet (1928-1932). Source: Chareau (1933).

Combining in its program domestic functions and spaces intended for a gynecological clinic, the translucent character and “light “ materiality of *Maison de Verre* - path for the extensive use of milky glass blocks and slender, delicate metal structures- articulated perfectly with the *Light Construction* (MoMA, 1995) exhibition’s intentions, conducted by MoMA, to explore lightness as an attribute of contemporary architectural production. Filled with seemingly intangible buildings, dematerialized and ambiguous in their display of volumes and facades, the exhibition emphasized aspects already rehearsed in visionary works of modern architecture from the 1920s and 1930s, of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe to Pierre Chareau.

At the outset, the invocation of a work like this by architects, often classified schematically as aligned with the brutalist legacy of Brazilian architecture, undoubtedly distorts and allows its authors to be associated with other lines and lineages of modern architectural culture, whose repercussion is evident in the proposal presented to the competition. For Andrade (2012), in the presentation of the proposal to the jury, the image of *Maison de Verre* contained something like the essence of the space they intended to create. Without any reference to the material dimension or the constructive technology of the work, it was the atmosphere – emanated insufficiently in the photographs, in the form of a homogeneous light that dilutes in space – that captured the attention of the architects.

The absence of any noise between the mention of *Maison de Verre* and a formation under the sieve of the ideology of Artigas and Mendes da

Rocha says a lot about the idea of extension previously enunciated in *Coletivo*, in which the interest and exploration of the legacy of canonical figures of Brazilian architecture coexisted, without hindrance, with an equally attentive look at other modern and contemporary traditions and practices. On more than one occasion, IMS Paulista architects articulate diverse references as a substrate of their way of thinking about architecture, citing from Chareau to the Australian architect Glenn Murcutt, passing through the architects of the *Case Study House* program and the practice of the French architects, Lacaton & Vassal, interspersing them with specific mentions of vernacular forms, such as stilts, and other ways of building in tropical regions, such as the metallic prototypes of *maison tropicale*, developed by Jean Prouvé for French colonial possessions in Africa.

Impossible to be understood from a formal or stylistic point of view, what brings this set of references closer is the tendency to production logics based on the handling of light elements – industrial or not – according to assembly processes, with the use of materials and constructive solutions that exploit varying degrees of transparency and translucency of surfaces, both in environmental and phenomenological terms. An example of how these references permeate Andrade Morettin's production appears in the project for the R. R. residence in Itamambuca (2006-2007) and in the Living Steel competition for sustainable housing in 2007, which the team won.

In line with these theories, Vinicius Andrade and Marcelo Morettin report, in an interview published in the book *Cadernos de Arquitetura*, that they began adopting lightweight roofs as a solution to the team's architecture. The Pavilion of the Viva O Centro Association, built for the 3rd São Paulo Architecture Biennial in 1997, "served as a laboratory for the concept of light structures." Implemented on a wooden base with raw and translucent cotton canvas, Vinicius comments that "from then on, [they] experimented with various degrees of translucency in other projects" (Andrade & Morettin, 2016, p.17).

This assembly procedure, recurrent in the team's work, seems to have reached its fullest expression in the project for the Paulista museum, given its urban scale and its direct relationship with the city's environment. The use of industrialized materials, integrated into a construction system that favors assembly, establishes a counterpoint to the artisanal work on the construction site, contributing to organizing it in a more efficient and socially responsible way. It is noticeable how architects extend the construction system beyond the modern tradition of cast-in-place concrete, through significant changes in the handling of construction shape and logic, using combinations of materials and techniques that reflect contemporary conditions of thinking about the architectural object.

In contrast, the runner-up project in the IMS Paulista competition,

authored by the architect Angelo Bucci, who was also on the list of participants at the *Coletivo* exhibition, is based on a construction system using pre-stressed concrete slabs. In this case, the structure combines cast-in-place reinforced concrete and precast concrete slabs, with an evident emphasis on design and structure, clearly reflected in its articulation with the architectural program.

Architectures of the city and its floor

Similarly, the architects' view of buildings along the Avenida Paulista axis evidences a design rationale in which the dialogue with the city – in its proper urban dimension and in its multiple architectural configurations – feeds productive reflections on the definition of the proposal. To do this, the architects used a map of the full and empty spaces of Avenida Paulista (Figure 2), marking several iconic buildings along its route. Here again, the profile does not follow a formal criterion, but seeks to capture the spatial qualities of different buildings in their relationship with the city, particularly in the way their ground floors articulate with the immediate urban space.

That is, the focus falls on the urban quality of these architectures and on the public character of their ground spaces, regardless of the nature of the buildings – whether institutional, residential, commercial, or mixed. One of the most emblematic buildings, in this sense, in view of the continuity that it provides between the public space of the street and the private space, is the Conjunto Nacional (1954-1962), by David Libeskind, located two blocks from the lot on which the IMS Paulista would be built. With the lot fully occupied and the permeability of its ground floor, the spatial fluidity between the street and the lot is ensured by free movement. It is this presence of the continuous floor that fascinated the architects, the “tremendous asset” of this work:

The Conjunto Nacional is undeniable in saying that it establishes a new paradigm in the Paulista occupation, because it faces and places itself on the Avenue in a way in which its great asset is the ground, the ground floor level, unlike 99% of the buildings on Paulista Avenue. The great asset of this building is the public enjoyment that extends across its internal floor; it is an offshoot of the public sidewalk. So, there was an understanding here that the floor is the most important place on the avenue (Andrade, 2017).

It is the variations in the treatment of this “floor” that guide the selection of buildings on the Avenida Paulista intersection. Observed together, these buildings seem to compose a kind of urban grammar, rich in suggestions about the relationships between building/city and built volume/floor, each of which stands out for a particular trait in the links with public space. In the case of Lina Bo Bardi's MASP (1958-1969), the elevation of the museum's main volume provides the city with extensive public space in a high-cost urban land zone. Another

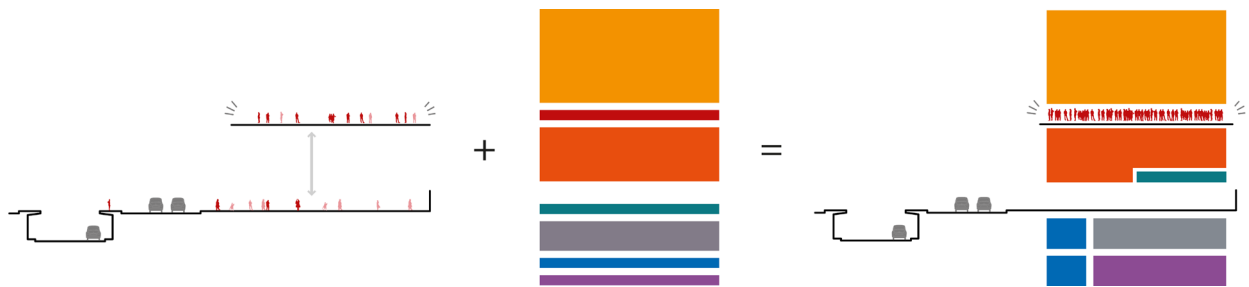


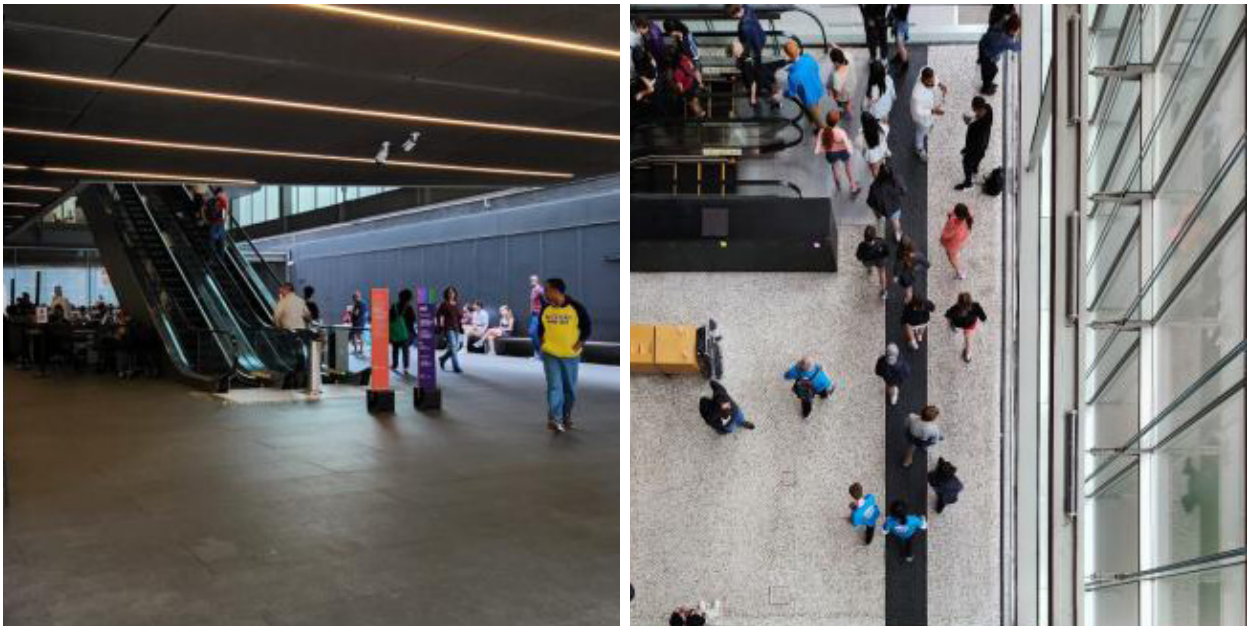
Figure 4. The ground floor and strategy for IMS Paulista. Source: Andrade Morettin Arquitetos Associados collection (Moretti et al., 2023).

grammatical variation resulted from the renovation of the FIESP building (1970-1979) and the Rino Levi office, carried out by Paulo Mendes da Rocha and the MMBB firm (1996-1998), which created a double ground floor and new half-floors. Particularly singular, among the buildings highlighted by the architects in their reading of the city, is the Gazeta building, headquarters of the Cásper Líbero Foundation (1958-1966), by engineer José Carlos De Figueiredo Ferraz, where the interest falls on a specific element: the wide staircase on the facade, converted into a meeting point and viewpoint for the observation of the street and its flows.

It is interesting to observe how these analyses of the land along Paulista Ave. are reversed in the proposed IMS design. In continuity with a design practice identified in the projects they mentioned, such analyses endowed the proposal with historical depth and connected it to the ethics of the “Paulista school,” marked by the appreciation of the collective and public dimensions of urban space. In the architects’ vision, the ground floor would function “as a large urban hall,” becoming an “extension of the sidewalk, leading the visitor through escalators and elevators to the heart of the building” (Andrade & Morettin, 2016, p.134). This sought an architecture that takes place in the city, is intensely committed to urban space, invites the visitor to enter through the ground floor, and culminates in the elevated square, thereby translating the aspirations outlined by the analysis of the iconic buildings on Paulista Ave.

The consideration of the program and the analysis of the urban context determined the design strategy that led to the option to raise the ground floor and transform it into a square, 17 meters above the level of Paulista Ave., “creating a totally new and open relationship between the museum, the city and its inhabitants” (Andrade & Morettin, 2016, p.134). This displacement resolved the “claustrophobic” situation imposed by the lot’s boundaries on the ground floor. It established a new relationship with the Avenue, in addition to connecting the program’s diagram with the distribution hall between the exhibition spaces and the media library (Figure 4).

For the elevated square, and with the intention of “reinforcing the idea that it is still in a public space” (Andrade, 2014), the architects chose to rescue the original Portuguese stone floor of Paulista’s pavement, a



project by Rosa Kliass in the early 1970s, which remains intact only on the block of the Conjunto Nacional. On the ground floor, at sidewalk level, basalt was used, establishing a direct relationship with the cement on the sidewalks and creating continuity in the public space, without interference or clear boundaries (Figure 5).

The transfer from the ground floor to the center of the building reorganizes circulation and the program, bringing the museum's main sectors closer together (Figure 6). In short, with the media library located below the elevated ground floor, housing spaces dedicated to cinema, literature, research, and the production of knowledge, the inclined cut resulting from the escalator helps organize the necessary slope for the auditorium. In the remaining space, the library and study rooms are inserted, fully visible to those who walk up and down the escalator. Like the raised square, the exhibition spaces above it are free of any support, the result of the structural reasoning made possible by the metal trusses, which rest on the longitudinal concrete gables of the ground, where vertical circulations (elevators and stairs) and toilets are found.

Skins, envelopes, and materials

Referring to the use of *Maison de Verre* during the proposal's presentation, the message that the architects intended to give to the jury was clear: the institute would be translucent, wrapped by a second double-layer skin that would define the four facades. The spatiality of IMS Paulista is structured by a sequence of voids resulting from circulation spaces, with the fully enclosed ones constituting the programmatic content in well-defined volumes, articulated as boxes within a large translucent prismatic box. Thus, the translucent surface

Figure 5. Portuguese stone (raised ground floor) and Basalt (ground level of the sidewalk).
Source: Author's collection in 2023.

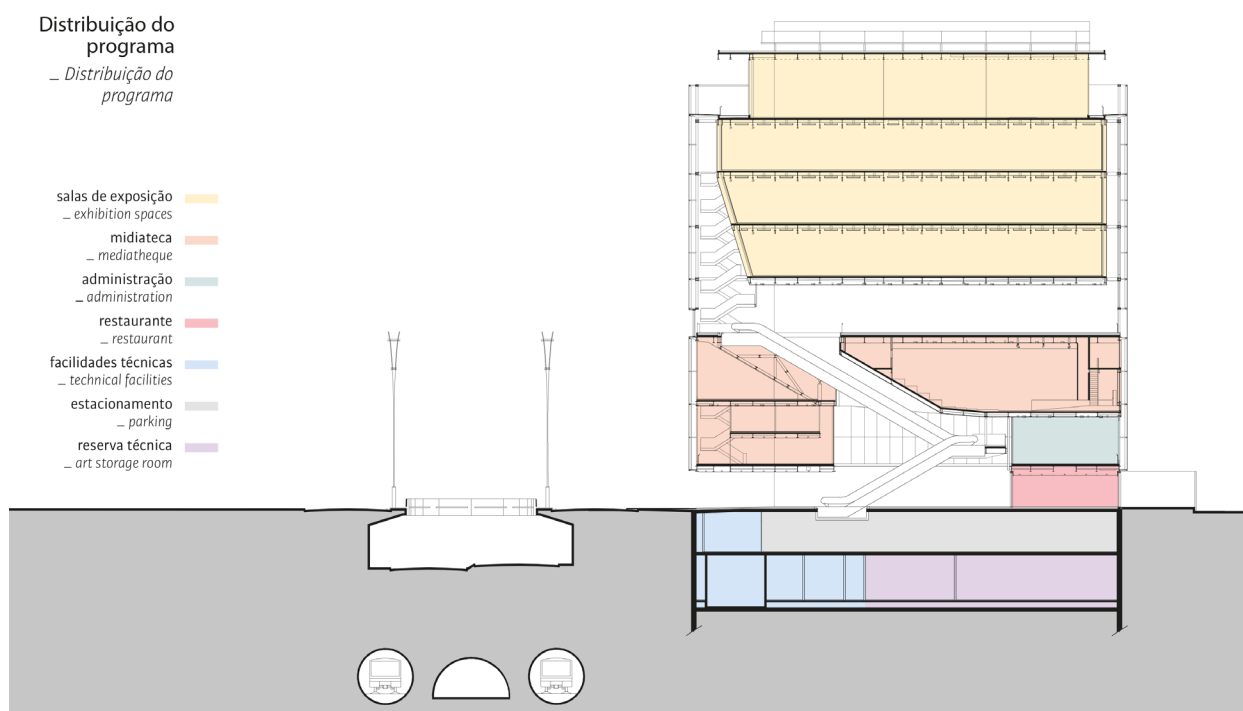


Figure 6. Cross-section of the program's distribution. Source: Andrade Morettin Arquitetos Associados collection (Moretti et al., 2023).

offered two qualities to the proposed space. First, its materiality enabled a mediated dialogue between the city and the institute; and second, it responded to the need, as the architects pointed out, for a materiality capable of incorporating the program, organized as a set of boxes.

The relationship between the building and its surroundings, marked by the translucent coating, allows the subtle silhouettes of people and the building's internal lights to be perceived from the outside. On the other hand, those inside experience the city in an almost filtered way, with gently blurred images, maintaining a visual dialogue with the urban environment while creating the necessary distance to preserve the museum's introspective character. The translucent skin provides a soft and diffused light, but with "traits of the city," which does not completely dissociate itself from the urban space:

The use of translucent glass as a second skin makes the museum appear as a well-defined, integral volume, with the necessary strength to establish its place among the neighbors and other buildings on Avenida Paulista. At the same time, its light and translucency properties create a second register for the building, changeable depending on the nature of the environment and the position of the observer. As a result, the interior of the building subtly manifests itself in the urban space (Andrade & Morettin, 2016, p. 139)

As stated by Vinicius Andrade in a lecture, the use of the skin by the duo of architects gave the IMS a unique presence in the urban environment of São Paulo, with a poetic and subtle character, marked by its prismatic volumetry. The environment allowed "neutralizing" the building's volume in the context of the avenue, its translucency letting us glimpse people, activities, lights, and movements (Figure 7), without resorting to "crazy"

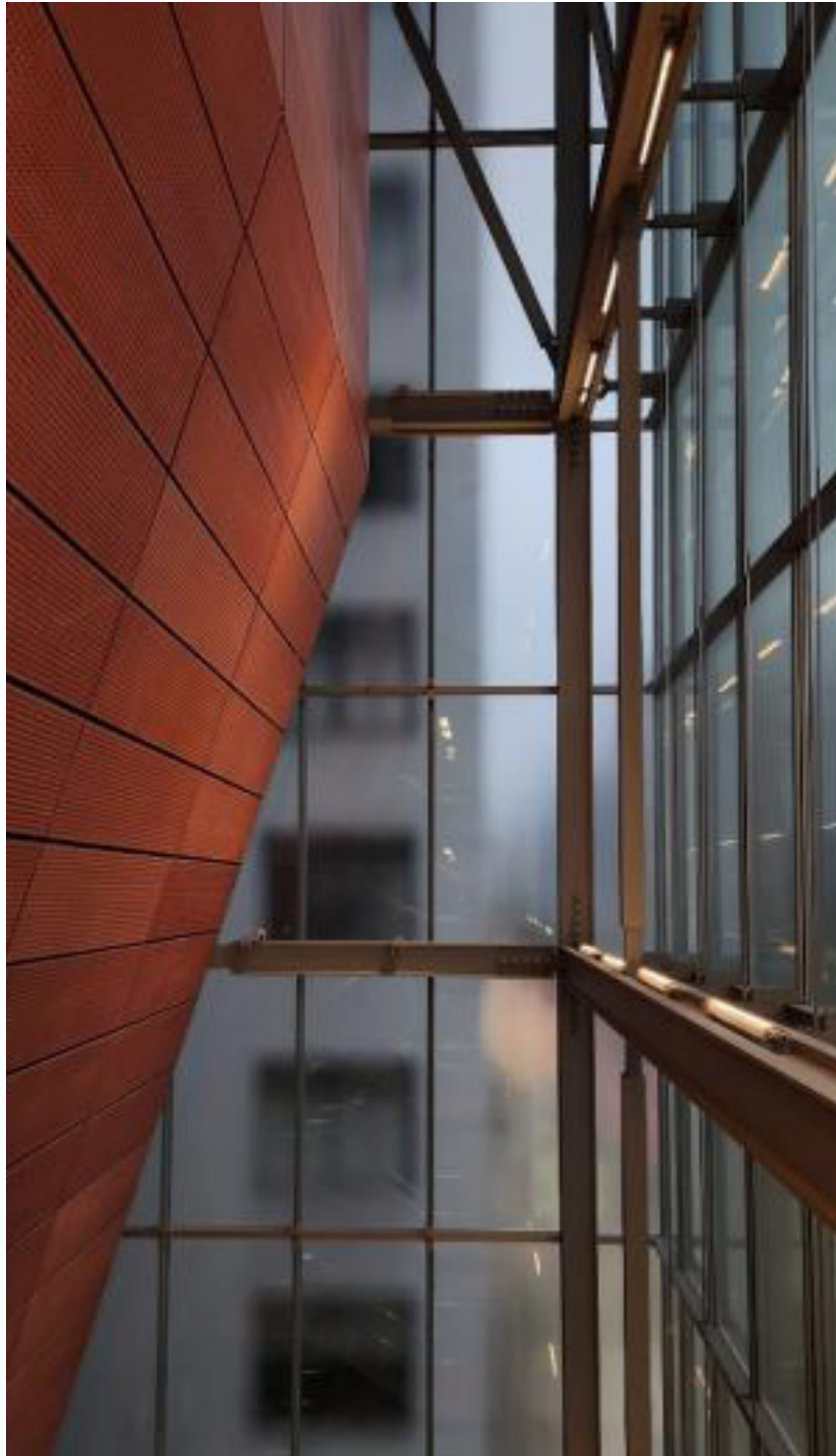


Figure 7. The Paulistano Lighthouse. Source: Author's collection in 2023.

volumetries (Andrade, 2014). Morettin complements that the facade, at night, acquires a lit-up aspect, like a lighthouse that illuminates the beginning/end of the avenue (Andrade & Morettin, 2013). In the judges' view, the materiality worked reaffirmed a language dear to the duo's architecture, using translucent and opaque skins. In this way, the skin produces a mixture of ambiguity and reflections, an almost sublime aura that hovers over the avenue.

The materiality of the envelope, in addition to ensuring a subtle insertion into the urban environment through a quota of translucency, also responded to the need to envelope the program's volumes, organized into "boxes." Thus, the envelope creates a feeling of "a box within a box", a configuration that, since the first conceptual model developed by the architects, already evidenced the intention to create a closed exhibition

Figure 8. Translucent outer box and the inner box in a reddish perforated sheet. Source: Author's collection in 2023.



volume and visually separated from the rest of the program, which the skin would then wrap. Therefore, the external envelope contrasts sharply with the exhibition rooms' volume, demarcated by a perforated wooden sheet in reddish tones (Figure 8).

This smokiness of the structural frame – generated from the tension between the materiality of the architectural object and other immaterialities, such as light, movement, and reflections – makes the

perception of the whole impose itself to the detriment of the volumes that make up the internal blocks (Wisnik, 2018). When approaching the glass facade, the moiré effect is present due to the glass's material constitution: with the perforated patterns, the optical interference between internal and external reflections is intensified.

What is behind the IMS' envelope?

The chain of references in the IMS Paulista shows that, in more than one design decision, the resonances of Koolhaas' work are present. Directly linked to the program and manipulated diffusely, with no direct connection to the final form, Koolhaas's architecture is conceived from the "free cut," according to which buildings are thought vertically, from the cut, and the architectural form emerges from the relationship between the scale and the function of the building within the city. In the project not built for the *Très Grande Bibliothèque* (TGB) from 1989, the architecture is conceived as a translucent cubic solid, inside which the programmatic spaces are inserted as "bubbles", independent volumes that do not affect the building's external volumetry (Moneo, 2008).

These volumes excavated inside the solid cube only touch the outer block, manipulating the full and empty spaces, as well as the surface texture in relation to the program. Wisnik suggests that the project for TGB breaks doubly with the post-modern paradigm of the time, both by the refusal of a formal contortionism of the volumes practiced in the process of developing the project, and by the exterior image of their skins, now translucent and ambiguous" (Wisnik, 2018, p.219).

Something like the manipulation of the program is carried out at IMS Paulista: articulated in vertical diagrams and conceived from the cut, the spaces resulting from this manipulation form independent volumes, and what remains is the void – the "negative" spaces –, evidenced by the model in its juxtaposition of light and shadow, manifesting themselves as essential elements and articulators of the museum's design space. The solution of wrapping the box continues the line of reasoning developed, where the volumes do not touch the envelope, remaining flexible for programmatic adaptations.

This solution is also directly related to what Moneo proposes about the changes identified in contemporary architecture from the 1990s. Prismatic volumes accentuate the material dimension of the architectural object, while the program solution becomes an effort independent of the specific form. For the author, the cubic volumes wrapped by a translucent skin make the concept of compactness an attribute of the architectural object: the construction remains in its regular perimeter, mediated by the urban fabric in which it is inserted, and creates a totally autonomous interior world (Moneo, 2004). To exemplify this concept, Moneo turns to the *Kursaal* project (1990), in which the clarity of the contours of pure geometry elevates compactness to a fundamental attribute of architectural design.

ANALYSIS

The concept of compactness proposed by Moneo (2004) can be observed in the IMS Paulista project, the TGB project by Koolhaas, and the unbuilt project for the Orthodox Church in Zurich (1989) by Herzog & de Meuron. In these cases, compactness operates directly with materiality, in an architecture of clean and compact volumes that extend to the edge of the terrain, with the envelope folding and enveloping the architectural program. Representative of these issues is the interweaving between the projects of Koolhaas and Herzog & de Meuron, cited in the book by Riley and García (1996) on *Light Construction* (MoMA, 1995), and *Maison de Verre*, which was used as a reference by São Paulo architects for the museum.

Resuming Andrade Morettin's interviews, the citation to the works of the Swiss architects Herzog & de Meuron resonates in the architectural design as a capacity to operate on the surface. Regarding Swiss architects, Moneo (2008) highlights the importance they attach to materials and how they reveal themselves, usually in sober, prismatic volumes, as a celebration of matter through surface design, with materials that help define the structure itself. At IMS Paulista, this attitude manifests itself in the way the architects work the surroundings around the architectural program, but also in the way it opens, at a specific moment, to the avenue, establishing a more direct relationship with the city, alongside the veiled relationships that occur along the entire surface.

Riley and García (1996) point out that the tension between the observer and the object, caused by the use of the facade as a veiled membrane, generates a visual and ambiguous complexity resulting from the materiality of its surfaces, as seen in design lines such as those in the *Light Construction* exhibition. By flirting with an architecture of lightness, from the materiality of the surroundings, new constructive techniques, and the manipulation of the program, the project for IMS Paulista highlights how materiality has become a central issue in contemporary architectural production. Authors such as González de Canales (2001), Löschke (2016), and Leatherbarrow and Mostafavi (2007) demonstrate how the relationship between structure and skin has become an important concern in much of architectural production since the 1990s.

This centrality acquired by materiality is directly related to the assembly system present in both the IMS Paulista and the repertoire of works by Andrade Morettin, which can dialogue with the concept of Junkspace proposed by Koolhaas (2000). In this context, Koolhaas (2000, p.108) states that "all materialization is provisional: cutting, bending, tearing, coating; the construction has acquired a new softness, like a piece of tailoring." Verbs that would have been unthinkable in the history of architecture become indispensable today, and each constructive element acts in isolation, like an assembly, "waiting to be undone, unscrewed," through building materials that become increasingly modular, unitary, and standardized. Since the walls ceased to exist, only partitions and membranes are resorted to, with transparencies that reveal what could not be shared before (Koolhaas, 2000).

As you walk through the Paulista Museum, Koolhaas' theory resonates: from the screws exposed on the facade, which fix the vertical and horizontal uprights of the metal structure, to the envelope's transparency, to the mounting system for these elements, to the fold that surrounds the architectural program. Attitudes like these show significant changes in the treatment of form and constructive logic, marking a clear departure from the orthodoxy of the apparent concrete of the "Paulista school," since the structural tonic of the apparent concrete predominated in this school's projects.

The attitude of thinking beyond the possibilities of concrete, from more contemporary conditions, makes architects relate to the São Paulo School more broadly, through ethical and social commitment rather than aesthetics. Without shying away from a tradition from which they emerge in their formation, they continue to cite in their repertoire Brazilian and São Paulo architects, such as Rino Levi, Artigas, and Paulo Mendes da Rocha. These citations materialize in the IMS Paulista project, such as the attention dedicated to the ground floor, which unfolds in a recurring social and political character in the agenda of the Paulista School, thought of as a device that acts as urban infrastructure, as a covered square.

This character unfolds on the ground floor level, with an urban hall that seems to operate from an expansion of the sidewalk boundary to culminate in the escalators, sustained by the emphasis on material continuity seen in projects they cited along Avenida Paulista, connecting to the ethics of the "Paulista school" and ensuring historical charge. However, this enjoyment is partially interrupted by the restaurant located at the back of the lot. In addition to the restaurant, a garden was included at the bottom of the lot, which soon housed *Echo*, a work by Richard Serra (1938-2024). The inclusion of the restaurant was a response to the museum's request after the competition, to give the reception a character familiar to cultural institutions. Such an interruption of this permeability ultimately delimits the space's fruition and extension.

The material reference, also present in the solution for the elevated ground floor, reflects aspirations derived from analyses of the buildings along the Avenue. The solution of doubling the ground floor, directly related to the renovation of the FIESP building, allows the public to experience Avenida Paulista as a landscape, framed by the opening, in a more distant way than occurs in the MASP span, for example. The stairs that lead to the interior of the building, as well as the reflections of the surroundings in the environment, ensure that the arrival at the elevated ground floor produces a transition and a distancing of the public in relation to the avenue, ensuring a more introspective and singular space, compared to the examples observed along Paulista Ave.

In this sense, the collective space of the IMS is related to the São Paulo School, sharing an ethical affinity with the urban space. Milheiro (2006) notes that the generation of São Paulo architects trained under

FAU – in which Andrade and Morettin are included – presents a “strong political consciousness with reflections in the maintenance of social discourses around the practice, and that is reflected in the approach”. For Heathcote, although Andrade Morettin’s architecture possesses an almost ephemeral material lightness, it does not entirely break with the Brazilian modernist tradition. The tradition is resumed in the elevation of floor volumes, in the elimination of barriers between public and private spaces, in the refusal of rigid separations between environments, and it is still possible to “resort to the ideas present in the design of the building of the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of São Paulo (FAU-USP), by Vilanova Artigas” (Heathcote, 2016, p.11).

CONCLUSION

Between experimentation, ruptures, and tradition, the genealogy of the project for the IMS Paulista considered its insertion into the context of Brazilian and São Paulo architectural production, seeking to situate it through the articulation of the references that converge in it. Marked by significant changes in architectural production, the project seeks a rearticulation between the modern São Paulo heritage and the design strategies of contemporary architecture, characteristics of the field’s international reflection in the late 20th century, filtered through a critical view of architects toward the mobilized references.

Awarded in several instances, the project for IMS Paulista reveals, without a doubt, an open posture in the face of a modern architectural culture like the Brazilian one, deeply self-referent and, for a long time, skeptical and averse to transit with international production. It is noted how the surroundings, the surface, and the materiality begin to acquire relevance for the understanding of the architectural object and, allied to the constructive method that prioritizes the assembly, signal changes in the treatment of the form and the constructive logic. This approach, seen and related to projects by architects of the 1990s – such as Herzog & de Meuron, Koolhaas, and Moneo - is discussed throughout the work. The stages foreseen in the methodology of identification, organization, and analysis enabled a reading of the project that evidenced the context of its insertion into contemporary production, aiming to identify the references that emerge from it. The maintenance of an ethics associated with the Paulista School, together with references that point to changes in the treatment of the architectural object, constitutes a plot that allows thinking the project contemporaneously.

With an architecture of lightness and translucency, in contrast to the massive, impermeable concrete of Brutalist production and its contemporary affiliates, among the tangle of references, IMS Paulista reveals possible resonances of an architecture that tensions and finds a broader path in contemporary Brazilian and Paulista production.

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