

Images

01. Model and picture of the Oakland Museum in the exhibition "Architecture of Museums" at the MoMA (1968). Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. IN867.5. Photograph by George Cserna.

02. Summary chart with the analyzed exhibitions, including KRJDA's works shown on them. By the author.

03. The Oakland Museum display, with the Neue Nationalgalerie (Berlin) by Mies van der Rohe and the Guggenheim Museum (NYC) by Frank Lloyd Wright in the background. From the exhibition "Architecture of Museums" at the MoMA. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. IN867.5. Photograph by George Cserna.

04. John Dinkeloo and Kevin Roche in front of the model of College Life Insurance building at the dinner organized by the MoMA before the opening of the exhibition "Work in Progress: Architecture by Philip Johnson, Kevin Roche, Paul Rudolph". Image from: The Museum of Modern Art Archives, NY. Collection: Pl. Series.Folder: II.B.829.

05. Models and pictures of KRJDA's works shown at the MoMA in 1970. The models highlight transparency and glass enclosures at UN Plaza and College Life Insurance buildings. Photographic Archive. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. IN940.2. Photograph by Alexandre Georges.

06. Arthur Drexler distributed KRJDA's works in four blocs of ideas that can be understood with this document of the exhibition preparation. The last one, pavilions, was finally dismissed. Image from: The Museum of Modern Art Archives. Collection: MoMA Exhs. Series.Folder: 940.18.

07. Photo mural in the exhibition "Transformation in Modern Architecture" (1979). In the middle

of the image can be seen the Knights of Columbus Office Building in New Haven, by KRJDA.

08. Summary chart with the concepts associated to KRJDA's work in every exhibition and the relationships that the curators established between the protagonists of this paper and other professionals or buildings. By the author.

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Building the "Archive" 856 Architecture Exhibitions in Barcelona Nuria Ortigosa

Building an "archive" of this kind involves compiling all the architecture exhibitions ever held in Barcelona throughout its history. This compilation or archive focuses on *what* has been seen and less on *how*, on the content rather than the medium, on the abstract behind the display, without overlooking the moments when both have an intentional relationship. This "archive" is approached from the perspective of the proactive architecture project, as an active and useful resource and not from a historical and conservationist perspective.



THE 'ARCHIVE'

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Between January 1939 and December 2018, at least 856 architecture exhibitions have taken place in Barcelona. These range from monographs about architects or important projects of a style or period to household fairs, local and international architecture, awards, contests, landscape, urban plans, criticism and even more experimental exhibitions somewhere between art and architecture. The 856 compiled exhibits could be visited in at least forty-five different exhibition spaces in the city –indoors and outdoors, public and private, cultural and educational, permanent, temporary or circumstantial. They vary from occasional locations, where an exhibit could only be seen one time owing to some special reason, such as the Diocesan Museum during the Year of Gaudí, to other venues such as Tinell Hall, which has housed twelve of these

exhibitions, especially in the early years –hence its importance– at a time when the current exhibition spaces did not yet exist and the exhibitions, due to their infrequency, often had more of an impact. Others include the Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art (MACBA), with twenty-three exhibitions, and the Barcelona Architects' College (COAC), which has housed at least 530 exhibitions, where the bulk of architecture exhibits in Barcelona during these years have taken place. And while it would be impossible and even undesirable² to mention all the sources consulted to complete the compilation, the most important contributions were made through the Activities Bulletin of the COAC historical collection, hundreds of catalogs of exhibitions held in Barcelona, records of exhibitions in different museums and halls in the city, press releases, digital databases and even private conversations with people in this field.

Different essential information was collected from each listed exhibition³: the opening and closing date of the exhibits as well as their duration, which was useful in obtaining a general idea of their average length; and the curator and organizing institution, if there is a catalog prepared exclusively for the exhibit, providing specifics in case of flyers, handbills or special editions of magazines or articles –generally in architecture and urban planning booklets and the official magazine of the COAC. Similarly, all the available publications of each exhibition regardless of their origin or medium as well as any relevant observations and data were collected.

Interest in the subject does not lie exclusively in the large number of exhibitions held in Barcelona. It also has to do with discovering what we can learn about the city through the exhibitions as a whole, with being able to determine what models it has looked to shape its architectural identity and address its primary concerns. The archive can be approached from the perspective of a proactive architecture project, as an active and usable resource and not from an historical and conservationist perspective. Also, the "archive" is not intended to be a passive collection of the past but an active system of statements. It is conceived along the lines of thought of Michel Foucault, where the word "archive" refers neither to the series of documents, records or data that a culture preserves as a memory and testament to its past nor to the institutions charged with preserving them. Rather the archive is what enables establishing the law about what can be said, the system that governs appearance as unique events⁴. In addition, the archive, as opposed to the intentional collection or gathering of documents, functions as a muted repository in which documents are organized and stored. It is only through the use of this material that we will be able to reconfigure the past, with the understanding that the present and the future are contained in it and form part of it. In the words of Manuel Borja-Villel, director of the Queen Sophia Museum, "archives are the museums of the future". And at a time when we are celebrating the one hundredth anniversary of the first modern Spanish architects of consequence who reached professional maturity in post-war Spain such as Alejandro de la Sota, Miguel Fisac, Josep Maria Sostres and José Antonio Coderech, it makes sense that the role of the archive is more crucial today than ever.

This archive of Barcelona architecture exhibitions is not merely a digital compilation of documents consisting of catalogs, articles and press releases. It is also entails the physical gathering⁵ of these documents, as well as different and necessary graphic materials that enable bringing these exhibitions together. Added to this is a series of panels that extract the information stored in each of the compiled exhibits and serve as a kind of thought machine. On the one hand, the simultaneous compilation and observation as a whole of the exhibitions they contain place value and encourage us to reflect on the importance of the act of the exhibition itself. Ultimately, this unconsciously shapes part of our collective ideation and as a result our critical and design faculties. In this way, the archive situates the exhibitions as a valid medium for studying the city and its architecture, its architectural currents and the influence they have

had over the course of its history. Furthermore, if it is assumed that magazines exert influence over the construction of architecture (as evidenced by such research as *La arquitectura en España a través de las revistas especializadas (1950-1970): El caso hogar y arquitectura* by Candelaria Alarcón and *Domus 1948-1978. La conformación del espacio interior doméstico a través del mobiliario* by Julia Capomaggi), architecture exhibitions, which among other things are a means of dissemination, should also share this hypothesis regarding this same influence. Moreover, the evolution of art and architecture during the 20th century cannot be understood without considering the important contribution that exhibitions have made, for, despite their ephemeral nature, they have helped promote pivotal and experimental shows⁶. Architecture does not travel but magazines, photographs and models do. The large number of exhibitions held in Barcelona over the last eighty years, along with the extensive variety of exhibition spaces in the city, indicates that architecture exhibits form an equally significant part of contemporary culture as other artistic disciplines more traditionally associated with exhibition visits.

A DISTANT READING

Collecting or creating an "archive" is, according to Hans-Ulrich Obrist⁷, a way of generating knowledge and ineluctably a way of thinking in the world. And, while this "archive" is not based on a chronological compilation but on the commonalities of all the exhibitions held in the city from the end of the Spanish Civil War up to the present day, it is undoubtedly true that initially it was necessary to organize them chronologically, to date them to know what they entailed, and to speculate and visualize the cultural activity of the city situated in time. For this, as stated above, it was necessary to prepare a graphic chronology (fig. 01) in which several very basic but not for this reason unimportant or unnecessary elements can be observed at first glance, ones which otherwise would be inaccessible today.

On the one hand, architecture exhibitions in Barcelona, despite certain ups and downs coinciding primarily with some notable moments –such as, for example, the low cultural production in the years prior to the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games– have been on the rise. At the same time, in the first decades after the Spanish Civil War, the number of architecture exhibitions was very low, between one and seven a year. In fact, it is precisely for this reason that they acquired more importance and had such an impact at the time when they took place, even setting the course to be followed in later years. Contrary to what has occurred more recently, exhibitions in the city have increased to such a point –between thirty-eight and thirty-three in 2006 and 2007, respectively– that some architecture exhibitions have appeared that are of more questionable and dispensable interest.

This increase in the number of exhibitions in Barcelona along with the wide variety of exhibit spaces mentioned above only highlights the ever-increasing quantity of institutions that believe in the necessity of transmitting knowledge about architecture. Architecture exhibitions are now not only significant thanks to biennales and triennales. Today, we also find them in museums with different connotations –educational, political, critical, existential– beyond the mere presentation of architecture projects. Currently, other types of shows are becoming more common, from installations to architecture festivals such as the 48h Open House architecture festival, which tend to experiment more with the space and, in a certain sense, force us to ask ourselves where, in this case, should the evolution of architecture exhibitions be heading.

Studying a city by compiling all of its exhibitions, in spite of what was mentioned above, does not mean doing so through an inflexible chronology or that the "archive" presented here is one with a rigid classification and specific order. To the contrary, studying the city through the lens of the entirety of its exhibitions means paying

attention to the different arguments expressed in regard to these exhibits as a whole. It means examining the city in a way similar to what Franco Moretti does in *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for Literature History*. Here, instead of focusing on very specific works repeatedly studied by other authors, Moretti even dares to represent the history of literature graphically and carry out a cross-sectional reading of this history and the published volumes as a whole. Or as the writer himself describes it, to engage in "a distant reading" where instead of being an obstacle, distance represents another form of knowledge.

GOOD NEIGHBORLY RELATIONS

Cultural memory is not inert. Rather it is active, capable of recovering the footprints or enneagrams of the past. Because of its evocative capacity, cultural memory is able to define, as occurred during the Renaissance, the art and literature of the present⁸,

in our case the exhibitions and architecture of today. *Atlas Mnemosyne* by Aby Warburg serves as a good reference point. It consists of the compilation of images –under what Warburg called the "law of good neighborly relations"– in independent panels (**fig. 02**) that map a network of relations that enabled him to study his subject. The ones shown here are two of a series of panels that reveal some of the different but not the only arguments or possible project trigger factors that can be extracted from the "archive". Specifically, the next two panels as opposed to others are presented –although only the second one is examined in depth– because they represent two very distinctive examples of the possibilities of the "archive". Seeing them as a whole also enables exemplifying the work methodology of the collection. This "archive", visual and beyond the interpretation of the linear history of the architecture exhibitions in Barcelona, is by definition incomplete, entailing an open system of crisscrossing associations always receptive to the inclusion of new information. In fact, if someone with other interests consulted the same compilation of exhibitions, she would probably find other equally valid projects according to her own interests⁹. These panels always contain crosscutting themes that allow for bringing exhibitions from different periods together.

The panels are, as Warburg explains, "a machine for thinking about the images, an artifact designed to make correspondences jump out, to evoke analogies". They are a gathering of different types of images, thereby creating an ensemble of relationships outside of any chronological or thematic order –though not without meaning– that responds to "subjective" historical thought activated from the present¹⁰. In some cases they are representative of the exhibitions they bring together –in general, and as noted above they do not analyze the *assembly* but rather the content. For this reason there is a place both for images of the exhibited material and other textual or more "theoretical" documents, articles, press releases and catalogs. In other cases, they contain evocative images and could correspond to the same discourse behind the expository display. The panels also indicate, always in the upper right corner, the identifying number of the exhibitions they contain.

This first one (**fig. 03**), through an initial selection and subsequent filter of exhibitions whose original central theme was national architecture independent of its period or country, shows the change of course not only in terms of exhibitions but also in the political orientation that the country underwent after World War II. While the national panorama was on the whole out of step with the international exhibition trends of this period, the clearly catalytic nature of the moments in which they occurred is perhaps one of the most interesting features of the exhibitions that took place in Barcelona. Internationally, contrary to what occurred in this city, after World War II architecture exhibitions became more political and existential, seeking to communicate to the general public the challenge of resisting the rapid change that the world was experiencing.

The second (**fig. 04**), more "inspired" panel contains images of exhibitions that enable the free circulation of association of ideas. These, in contrast to the first, reflect exhibitions that do not follow a single theme or unique format. Instead they present an important common characteristic: uncommon exhibitions characterized by a departure from the canonical architecture exhibition where in one form or another "classic" projects appear in the form of panels or models¹¹. These are exhibitions that frequently attribute value to other aspects of already known elements, inviting us to question the meaning of the things around us. They are often capable of relating concepts or objects that otherwise would not be intertwined or imposing order on a preexisting collection of things.

The second panel brings together images from such exhibitions as *Zenithal Light 9m² (+ 0 -)* by Elías Torres, held in the Urania Gallery in 2000, *Requiem for the Staircase* curated by Óscar Tusquets and held in the Barcelona Center for Contemporary Culture (CCCB) in 2001, and *Species of Spaces*¹² curated by Frederic Montornés and held at MACBA in 2015. These exhibitions force us to reflect on very specific and common elements in architecture such as the ceiling, stairs and room. In the case of Elías Torres, the exhibition invites us on a journey through the possibilities of illumination with a series of ordinary objects that have no apparent connection to light. The exhibition consisted of eleven customized cardboard boxes with a series of openings in which, as seen in the images in the panel, the following instruments are embedded: colanders, punctured egg cartons, lids, funnels and grilles. The result is a kind of array of skyscrapers filled with skylights and light contraptions. The lights inside the boxes and the exterior of the projectors turned on alternately in such a way that when the exterior light came on, as if it were daytime, and the interior of the boxes was seen through the viewfinders, the effect of the zenithal light could be observed crossing the collection of objects. However, when the interior lights came on, as if it were night, and the exterior of the boxes was seen, the effects produced by these little pseudo theaters crossing the artifacts of the zenithal light could be seen. To be able to see the covers of the boxes (filled with objects) better, a staircase was attached to one of the walls that allowed visitors to go up, one at a time, to see the rooftops. In the words of Elías Torres, this exhibition offers "suggestions so that whoever observes it can discover other –multitudes– possibilities of having light enter from above in the interiors of the buildings" and how to handle this.

Meanwhile, *Requiem for the Staircase* explores the fifteen different existing types of stairs, according to Tusquets –in-line stairs, three-section stairs, stairs that emerge from the wall, for instance. It includes in an interesting catalog that contains such diverse examples as stairs painted by Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael, the well-known instructions for climbing up a staircase by Julio Cortázar, stairs in cinema such as in famous shots by Hitchcock, architecture projects such as the Malaparte house and stairs by Carlos Scarpa. This exhibition draws a parallel with the twenty-five books devoted to the study of stairs published by Friedrich Mielke, to which Rem Koolhaas under the title *Stairs* dedicated part of the main pavilion of the 2014 Architecture Biennale of Venice, which focused on the basic elements (*Elements*) used daily by architects and the general public anywhere and at any time.

The more complex discourse of *Species of Spaces* is divided into two parts: one open and another compartmentalized. This, in turn, encourages the viewer to reflect on the neutrality and homogeneity required in an exhibition space. *Species of Spaces* achieves this through the opposite of what is usually imagined: through a space subdivided into a series of rooms of the same scale, more domestic setting than museum, thus calling into question the open white museum hall to which we have grown accustomed. This subdivided part entails intrinsically, even without taking into consideration the exhibited works, an architecture exhibition in itself. On the one hand it is a reinterpretation of the book by Georges Perec

on which it is based. And on the other it forces us to think about the extensive versatility of homes with the same rooms without pre-established uses.

Requiem for the Staircase, based on the chapter devoted to stairs in the previous book by Tusquets entitled *Todos es comparable* (Everything is Comparable), comprises along with *Zenithal Light 9m² (+ o -)* and *Species of Spaces* a manifesto in favor of these architectural elements in exhibition form. What is truly interesting here is that it is precisely our paying attention to these elements, despite their mundane quality, that allows us to talk about architecture.

Similarly, other exhibitions appear that are more the result of architecture criticism such as *Nonument* held at the CCCB in 2014, the installation in the German Pavilion entitled *Phantom: Mies as Rendered Society* (2013) by Andrés Jaque and *Moving* by Lydia Zimmerman. In the case of *Nonument* it is not a simple exhibition of the monuments that make up a city in the aesthetic sense but a reflection on the role these monuments currently play and if it makes sense to continue creating these artifacts in today's cities. Andrés Jaque, meanwhile, finds in the pavilion an important role in relation to the emergence of its architecture as a social construction. The basement and, consequently, this exhibition –consisting in broadly showing everything in the basement of the pavilion– expresses the reflective perspective its curator gives to societal structures. Yet also makes clear the impossibility of the existence of the commonly known pavilion without its underground level, emphasizing the totality of the architecture –both the functional and the aesthetic. Alongside this installation is the floor design of the Lisbon rabo-de-bacalhau type dwelling. In this construction while the “main” part consists of a series of rooms more related to representation and the street than domestic life, the supposedly “secondary” entrance through the kitchen is sometimes more interesting than the one previously established as the primary access.

The most interesting aspect of *Moving/Metaphor*, a video exhibition by Lydia Zimmerman that examines the moving of the Cerle Artistic Sant Lluç, is being able to convey and interpret moving as something more than the mere fact of changing the scenery of things. A move speaks to us about the city, the changes taking place in it and the times associated with these changes. It is a scenario in which the free association of ideas tends to operate forcefully, to the point of being able to change our perception of the space we inhabit, constituting an entire world of boxes, without anything standing out above the rest. During a move our perception of things is disrupted. Moving therefore is a metaphor for what happens when our perception is displaced to an unknown location outside of our daily routine.

These panels are not the only ones nor are they the most valid. They are simply inspiring. They are powerful and enrich our critical capacity and our ability to carry out projects. They make images apparently unrelated to them appear: rabos-de-bacalhau, encyclopedias of stairs, colanders. Most importantly, they fulfill several of the objectives of this “archive”: they confirm that it can be viewed from the proactive stance of an architecture project and that studying it will facilitate proposing interesting practices in architecture exhibitions. The archive, we come to realize, is not a matter of the past. Rather it generates a machine of creativity based on the past, with the assumption that the present and the future are its most important products. It is no accident that in Greek “moving” means “metaphor”.

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Notes

01. The concept of archive is conceived following the thought of M. Foucault explained below.

02. SILVESTRE, Federico L., 2013. *Recorridos y paseos de papel* en: Gottlob Schelle, Karl. *El arte de pasear*. Madrid: Díaz&Pons.

03. According to the *Real Diccionario de la Lengua Española*, Catalogue: 1. Register in a catalog books, documents, species or other elements.

04. GUASCH, Anna Maria, 2015. *Arte y Archivo*. Madrid: AKAL, p. 47.

05. The acquisition of the physical material of the Archive of Architecture Exhibitions held in Barcelona is currently in process.

06. ÁBALOS, Ana, 2015. *Alison and Peter Smithson: The Transient and the Permanent*. Valencia: Universitat Politècnica de València, p. 33.

07. OBRIST, Hans-Ulrich, 2014. *Ways of curating*. Nueva York: FSG.

08. RAMPLEY, Matthew, 2000. *The Remembrance of Things Past. On Aby Warburg and Walter Benjamin*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, p. 88.

09. This article is based on a research that, rather than a conclusive topic, is a starting point for future research that opts for the exhibition system as the basis of its work and possible application to other cities with a strong expository nature.

10. GUASCH, Anna Maria. op.cit. p. 25.

11. Classical architecture projects are understood generally as material and constructive projects. Its development is carried out by means of plans, being the most usual form of representation, the floor plans, sections and elevations.

12. *Species of Spaces* was designed by MAIO Architects (Alfredo Lérda, Maria Charneco, Guillermo López and Anna Puigjaner) in 2015.

Images

01. Chronology of the Architecture Exhibitions held in Barcelona, 1939-2017.

02. Detail of the panel number 79 of the Mnemosyne Atlas of Aby Warburg, 1925-1929.

03. Detail of the first panel of the Archive of Architecture Exhibitions held in Barcelona.

04. Detail of the second panel of the Archive of Architecture Exhibitions held in Barcelona.