Vilanova Artigas and the Meanings of Concrete in Brazil

Felipe Contier and Renato Anelli

Brazil has a recognised modern architectural tradition, led by Oscar Niemeyer, whose work was distinguished since 1943 by his free forms enabled by reinforced concrete. Before that, however, the country already harboured important yet less known experiments with concrete, which were responsible for a wide process of modernisation of the productive relations in construction. The architect João Vilanova Artigas participated in these two moments bringing relevant theoretical and project-based positions to understand the meanings of reinforced concrete in Brazil. Finally, in 1956, different criticisms converged to make Artigas the leader of a radical school based on exposed reinforced concrete. The three moments that divide this text contemplate the changes in construction in Brazil, and point out inflections in Artigas’ production: his early ‘constructive moral’; his approximation to Niemeyer; and the displacement of monumental figurativeness to the very construction.

Biographies:

Felipe Contier is an architect (FAU USP, 2009), a PhD student in the history of architecture (IAU USP). He works on the relations between architecture and construction, focusing on the 1960s.

Renato Anelli is an architect and urbanist (PUC Campinas, 1982), Master in History (UNICAMP, 1990), Doctor in Architecture (FAU USP, 1995) and Professor of the Institute of Architecture and Urbanism, University of São Paulo in São Carlos (IAU USP). He was Municipal Secretary for Works, Transport and Public Services of São Carlos (2001-2004) and is Adviser to the Lina Bo Bardi Institute.