

Vilanova Artigas and the Drawings of the Modern House

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Abstract

This research analyzes the unbuilt residential projects designed by Vilanova Artigas between 1941 and 1981. One of the stages of the research was the survey of the original drawings in the collection of the FAUUSP Library.

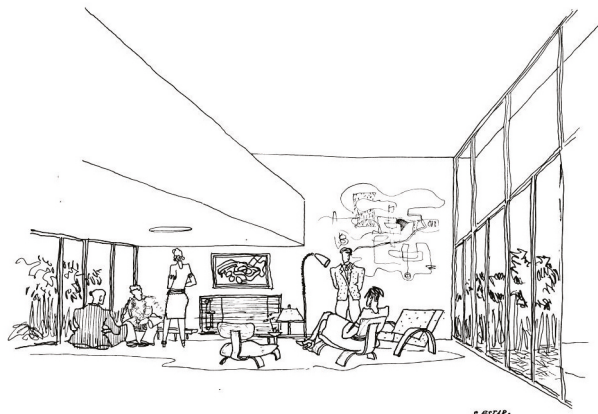
Artigas drawings represent concepts and ideas, not just an architectural project. One of the concepts, the architecture that promotes human relations establishes principles of an architecture in which people are protagonists. This architecture therefore presents spaces and forms planned to stimulate coexistence and encounters, to promote greater socialization between people. Through the analysis of handmade perspective drawings, we can identify the presentation of ideas contained in their theoretical and conceptual discourse.

The elements that define and compose the drawings are significant for the representation of his ideas: type of drawing; points of view from which the drawing was constructed; number of people interacting and their location; automobile; materiality and form; formal and structural conception; spatial organization.

The drawings of unbuilt projects are immaterial, but very powerful in communicating ideas. These drawings, the only records of these projects never built, present elements that encourage the imagination of how Artigas architectural concept of socialization could have been materialized in architecture.

Keywords

Representation, Concepts, Modern Architecture, Unbuilt Architecture, Perspective drawing.



Perspective drawing Leão
Machado house (1948) (Acervo
Digital Biblioteca, FAUUSP).

"Contrariamente al pittore, che nella rappresentazione grafica realizza il proprio messaggio, l'architetto utilizza il disegno come 'medium', come mezzo di approssimazione del pensiero, dell'idea, o della realtà del fatto architettonico".

Mario Botta 1997

Introduction

The Brazilian architect Vilanova Artigas (1915-1985) documented in his texts and drawings his vision of architecture, which reveals his concerns about the relationship between architecture, technique and construction.

The new spatial propositions and technical solutions produced an innovative character, especially in terms of structure as defining the architecture and the valorization of human and collective spaces.

Combining the reading of *A função social do arquiteto* [Artigas 1989] and *Caminhos da arquitetura* [Artigas 1981a] and the analysis of his architectural oeuvre, it was possible to identify important concepts present both in theoretical discourse and in his design practice:

- search for new forms and technical solutions in architecture;
- scientific, technical, and artistic experimentation;
- innovative character in the field of technique and science, especially in the exploration of reinforced concrete, with the structure as defining the architecture;
- nationalist spirit in the creation, development, and strengthening of an identity for an authentic national architecture;
- human environments that promote encounters and interaction or strengthen the collective and social character.

These concepts and assumptions could be implemented thanks to new constructive possibilities, especially reinforced concrete. The texts that were written by Artigas clearly show his attitude as an architect regarding the relationship between architecture, humanism, construction, and technique.

In his text *Arquitetura e Desenvolvimento Nacional*, Artigas [1981b] highlighting the fact that architects are initially builders. He emphasized that the architect should not build buildings that are only functional and technical but should base the construction on human sensitivity. Drawing for Artigas was also a topic of research. In the text *O Desenho*, Artigas discusses the meaning of this word. For the architect, the goal of a drawing, of a project, was in fact the construction itself, the built architecture. However, his text also shows the importance of the drawing as intention, plan, design, expression, language, and, especially, idea, similarly as Vittorio Gregotti observed "Qualunque vocabolario italiano assegna alla parola 'disegno' il doppio significato di proposta, intenzione o di Progetto" [2014, p. 13]. In his oeuvre Artigas has experimented with drawing as an instrument to investigate, think and present architecture.

The modern house designed by Artigas

"The house of Artigas, which a superficial observer can define as absurd, is the patient and courageous message of those who see the first glimmers of a new era: the era of human solidarity".

Lina Bo Bardi 1950

Artigas proposed conceptual and design innovations in the modern house involving the revision of the architectural program and its organization, that can be observed in his drawings.

The elements that define and compose the drawings are significant for the representation of his ideas: type of drawing; points of view from which the drawing was constructed; number of people interacting and their location; automobile; materiality and form; formal and structural conception; spatial organization.

We present a selection involving the elaborate handmade drawings of the selected projects, involving mainly vertical section, facade, sketches and perspectives (figs. 1-3).

The original drawings

"Disegnare è, tra le arti, quella che permette di avere un dialogo con se stessi. Disegnare è quasi sempre un'attività che si fa da soli. Una persona impegnata a disegnare sta, effettivamente, dialogando con se stessa, sta affrontando una conversazione sia sullo specifico soggetto del disegno, sull'idea progettuale che c'è dietro, sia su ciò che il disegno rappresenta. Disegnare, in effetti, è un linguaggio. Il linguaggio implica comunicazione".

James Horan 2009

In Artigas's proposal for a modern house, there is an emphasis on collective and social spaces, instead of private spaces (fig. 1).

In the drawing of Leão Machado house (cover image), we can see a social space with a double-height ceiling, establishing a connection with the upper floor on the balcony, and with the exterior space and the garden through the floor-to-ceiling glass enclosure.

Searching for the national identity

From Mendes André house elevation drawing, we can notice the inverted roof, a solution present in his architecture in the 1940s and 50s (fig. 4). A hollow element for natural light and ventilation.

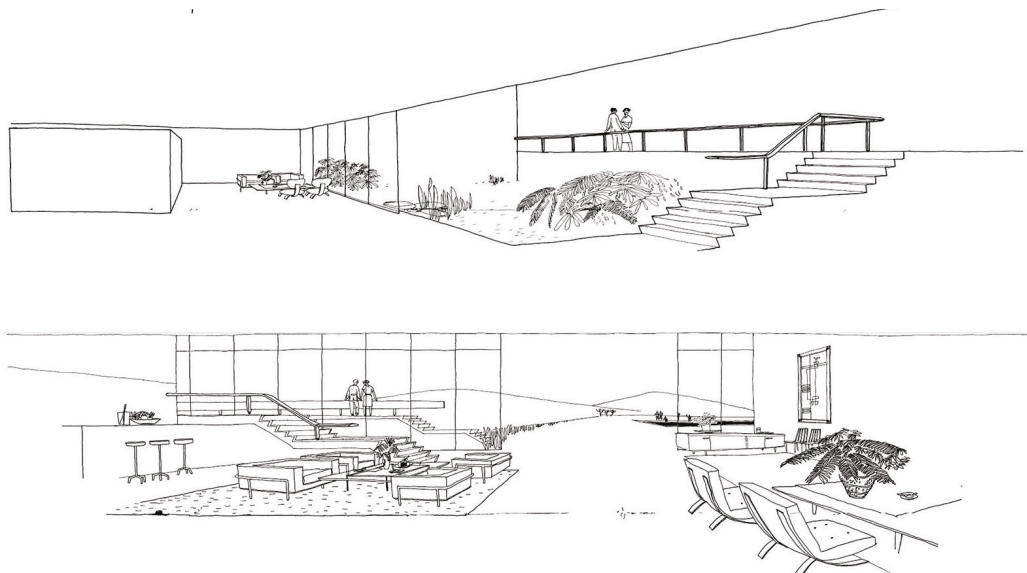


Fig. 1. Perspective drawing Governor de Goiás official house (GO, 1961) (Acervo Digital Biblioteca FAUUSP).



Fig. 2. 1. Perspective drawing João Molina house, Jundiá (1959, with Carlos Cascaldi); 2. Section João Beline Burza house (MG, 1979) (Acervo Digital Biblioteca FAUUSP).

People interact in the outdoor space next to the trees and vegetation, to establish a harmonious dialogue between architecture, people and nature.

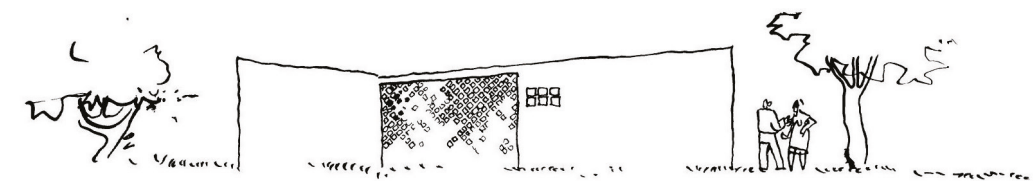
The Khury House (1946) perspective reveals the same solution of the inverted roof. The drawing suggests an extroverted house with large openings to the social terrace on the upper floor (fig. 4). The large terrace that is created on the upper floor connects the sectors and the upper floor with the ground floor. The house is suspended by pilotis.

Inverted roof, open-hollow elements for ventilation and natural lighting and an open staircase are elements that characterize Artigas' architecture in this period, in his search for national identity in modern architecture.

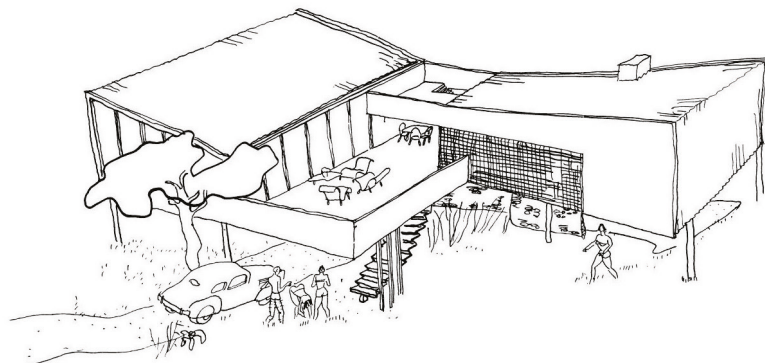
The decade of Brasilia construction. A significant reference

The sketch for Abud House (1969) indicates the architectural solution by defining the structure, with four light supports at the edges and a large roof that shelters the glazed building (fig. 5). The ramp leads people along an external path, passing through a large terrace visually integrated with the internal areas of the house. At the back of the lot is the house's leisure area. The perspective reveals more details of the project that presents elements of Artigas' discourse, such as exploring the technique to solve the architecture and the creation of social spaces that promote interaction between people. The section drawing highlights people interacting and Artigas' intentions in creating social environments, in addition to the construction technique.

Fig. 3. Perspective Leão Machado house (1948) (Acervo Digital Biblioteca FAUUSP).



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Fig. 4. 1. Elevation Mendes André house; 2. Perspective Jency Khury house (1946) (Acervo Digital Biblioteca FAUUSP).

Given the date of the project, we cannot fail to mention the reference to the palaces in Brasília designed by Oscar Niemeyer, which were present in the imagination of architects during this period.

The sketches for Newton Bernardes House project (1969, with Carlos Cascaldi) present a distinctive structural proposal. The large structure that draws arches on the facades provides ample and fluid interior space without internal support, defining the structure and architecture (fig. 6). The studies demonstrate Artigas' interest in exploring the use of arches to create large distances and adopt glass enclosures, including on the roof with a supposed dome indicated by the drawing. The small volume present in the composition would be the studio, located on the intermediate level, all floors connected by ramps, a solution widely explored by Artigas in his houses since 1940s.

Consolidation of Artigas' language. Spaces that promote socialization

Artigas' research on modern architecture demands the use of the vertical section. The instrumented drawing of the section of this version of the unbuilt project for the Waldemar Cordeiro house (1970) presents the program distributed across three intermediate-levels connected by ramps inserted into the internal courtyard lit by zeniths, emphasizing spatial,

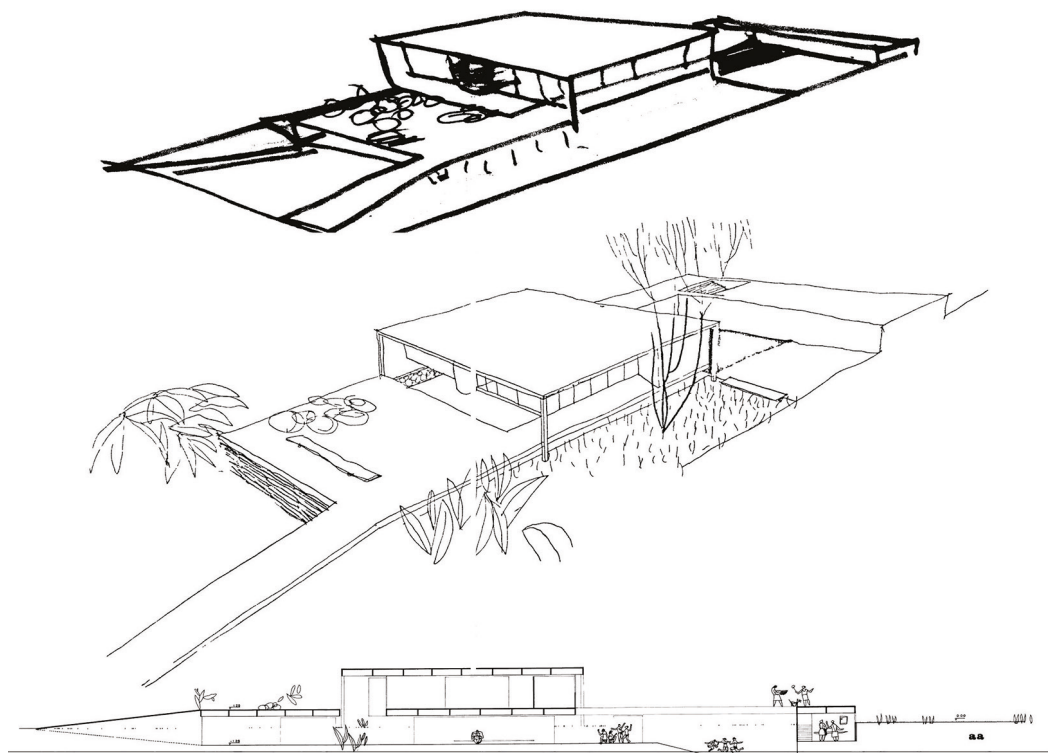


Fig. 5. Sketch, perspective and vertical section of Antenor Mansur Abud house (1969) (Acervo Digital Biblioteca FAUUSP).



Fig. 6. Sketches of Newton Bernardes house (1969) (Acervo Digital Biblioteca FAUUSP).

formal and visual continuity (fig. 7). The parking space would be in this void, revealing the important presence of the automobile in urban life in São Paulo at this time.

Through this section, it is possible to identify the structural intentions defining the architecture of the house. A cantilevered roof marks the access, the ribbed slabs spanning large spans, flat roof and ramps. The human dimension of its architecture can be observed by the human figures interacting represented in the house's social areas. The design explores architectural expression as a technical and human fact when observing the solution to structural problems related to family routine and urban life.

The sloping terrain of the Antônio Salim Curiati house (1978) created the conditions for distributing the program across three floors interconnected by ramps perpendicular to the street. The private area is on the upper level, the social area and studio are on the intermediate level, and the service area is on the lower level. The void created by the cantilever houses the garage, and the leisure area with a swimming pool, where we can see people interacting.

In the section of the José Luiz Magnani house project (1981), we can see a synthesis of Artigas' thinking with architectural, design and technical solutions for the modern house in São Paulo (fig. 7). The program is organized in intermediate levels connected by ramps, integrated spaces, an internal courtyard illuminated by zeniths and different ceiling heights. The open ramps integrated into the courtyard contribute to the integration of the social sector, studio and private sector environments, enhancing the path and views, while the studio on the intermediate level articulates and integrates the continuity of the spaces. All these elements are fundamental to the materialization of the concepts intended by the architect, such as stimulating human relationships and the use of the house's social spaces.

Continuity (spatial, visual and formal), movement, interaction and life. People interacting in different integrated social spaces, prominent places in Artigas' residential design. Sketches of trees and vegetation appear to create an environment that dialogues with nature. The materiality of the proposal appears in the independent structural solution and with large spans and pergolas enriching the design formed by the natural lighting in the space of the internal courtyard, as well as in the front part of the house.

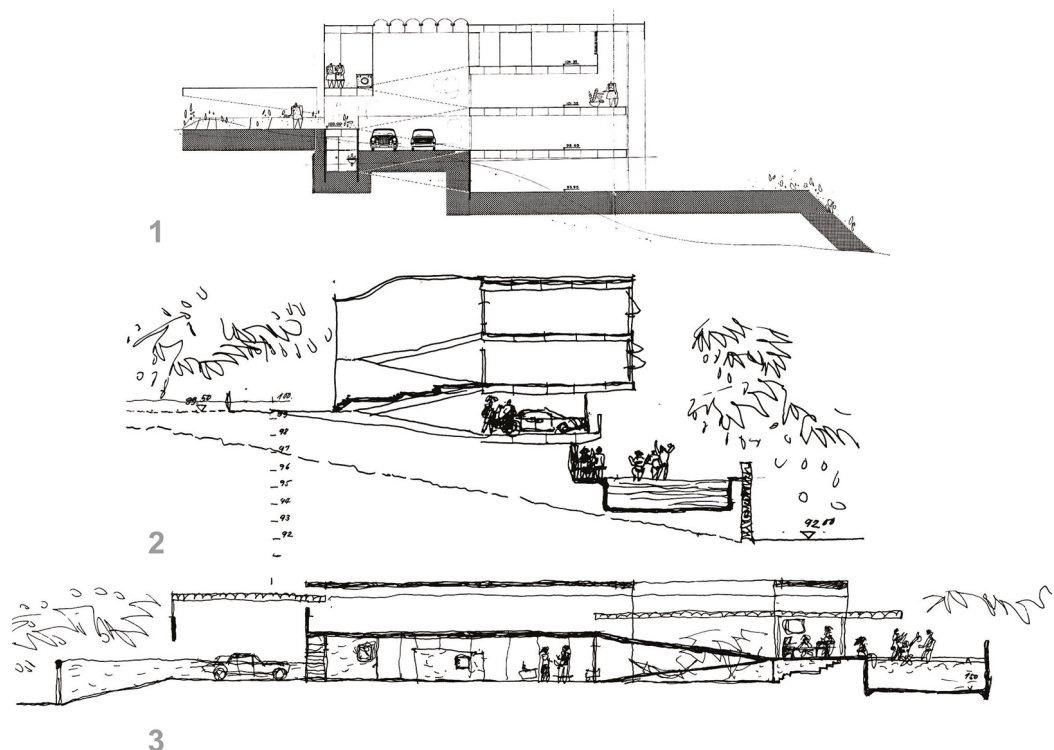


Fig. 7. 1. Vertical section of one of the unbuilt projects for Waldemar Cordeiro house (São Paulo, 1970); 2. Vertical section of one of the projects for Curiati house (1978); 3. Vertical section of Magnani house project (1981) (Acervo Digital Biblioteca FAUUSP).

Structure as Architecture

In the drawings of the Maná house (1981), we can notice two structural walls, each sustained by a single trapezoidal support, defining the architecture (fig. 8). Artigas created the space with a double-height ceiling in the social sector, integrating it with the private circulation on the upper floor. This social space expands to the back of the lot, where the swimming pool and the leisure area are located, which is diluted between the internal and external space of the house. There are people interacting in these social spaces that also visually integrate with the private sector on the upper floor is an indication that these spaces had this function. The volume is characterized by the gable roof and blind gable on the sides, reinforcing the relationship between form and structure, single volumetry and blind walls on opposite facades.

Final Remarks

"Il disegno di architettura é proprio il luogo nel quale il pensiero formale si rende manifesto, é quindi il luogo esclusivo della sua esistenza".

Franco Purini 1994

Mario de Andrade states in his text *On Drawing*: "What I like most about the complex nature of drawing is its infinitely subtle character; of being both transience and wisdom. Drawing speaks, it is even more a kind of writing, a calligraphy, than a visual art" [1975, p. 2]. Rosa Artigas in the text *Caligrafias - Desenhos de Vilanova Artigas* [2013] mentions Mario de Andrade's text and suggests steps for understanding Artigas designs, such as following each writing, each drawing to discover the influences, the contributions of Brazilian architecture, the house from Paraná, the dwelling from São Paulo, the schools, clubs, unions, the technique, the cities, the Brazilian people, the history and the art. Artigas patiently recorded his ideas and concepts that lie beneath his architecture through drawings. His drawings preserve the memory and research present in his architectural oeuvre. His relentless search for an architecture with a relevant language that expresses the identity of national culture is also recorded in his unbuilt projects. These drawings reveal a significant part of Artigas's research and imagination. It's possible to observe his preference for the vertical section, not only just like a graphical representation of the design, but also as a valuable tool in spatial definition and design organization (fig. 9). In this kind of drawing, it is possible to observe the whole atmosphere of the building, we can notice the human scale and the idea of the architecture that promotes human relations, as well as questions of materiality, natural lighting, and

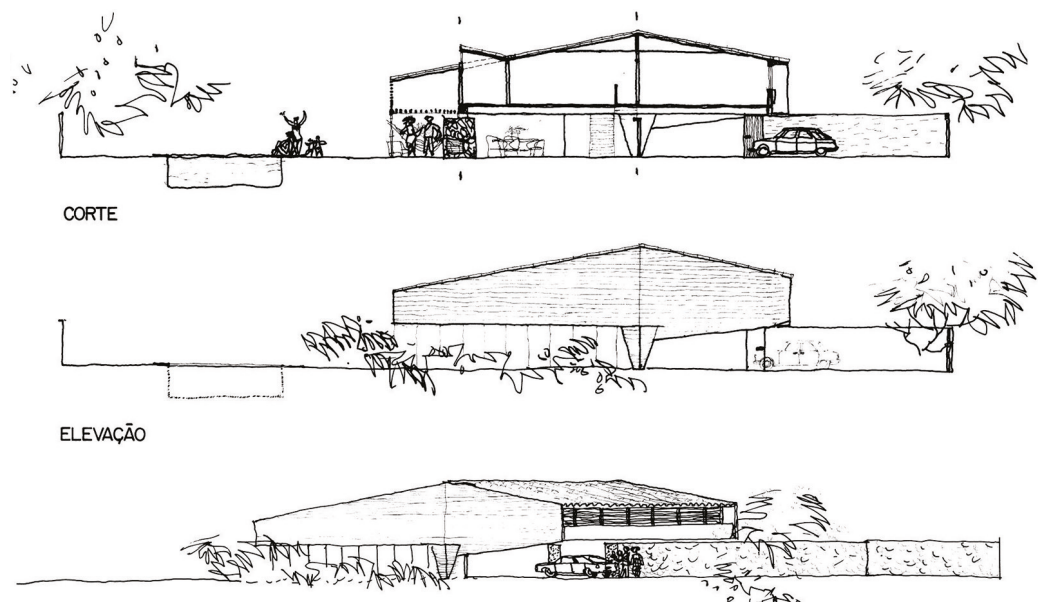
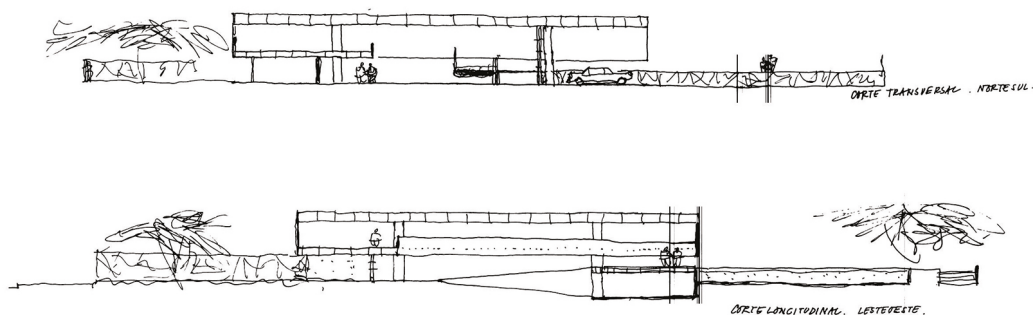


Fig. 8. Vertical section, elevation and perspective of Elias e Dona Maná house (1981) (Acervo Digital Biblioteca FAUUSP).

Fig. 9. Vertical section
Renato Faucz house
(Curitiba, 1975) (Acervo
Digital Biblioteca
FAUUSP).



the relation with the city. Artigas dissolves the boundaries between public and private, establishes visual and spatial continuity with ramps, voids and intermediate levels, which we can observe and understand by analyzing vertical sections in his architecture. In Artigas' drawings, we observe a preference for representing social and living environments, whether indoor or outdoor. There is no interest in representing private areas. Perspectives, normally constructed from an observer's point of view, or elevations also appear frequently, to represent the building and its architectural and construction solutions, from a human perspective of the construction. These drawings are a testimony of a time and the representation of a thought. Representation assumes a significant characterization of an era as a living testimony of a taste and a period affirmed Luigi Vagnetti in his book *Disegno e Architettura* [1958, p. 26]. The drawings of unbuilt projects are immaterial, but powerful in communicating ideas. By studying Artigas' drawings, we can understand his intentions and ideas of modern architecture. An architecture for human socialization.

Acknowledgments

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