

POSSIBLE ROLES OF WOMEN ARCHITECTS IN THE MATERIALIZATION OF ARCHITECTURE IN CHILE

Keywords

Woman
Profession
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Despite having re-emerged strongly in 2018, the debate on the role of women in society is not new. Neither is in architecture. Based on a research work conducted 18 years ago, the following text reflects on the invisibility of women in ARQ's history and, from there, on the way we understand the discipline and the profession.

In the year 2000, before the #MeToo era and the so-called fourth-wave feminism, one of my jobs was to work in ARQ's editorial production. Although a woman directed the journal – Montserrat Palmer – it had scarcely published buildings by Chilean women architects.¹ In parallel, after five years of being an assistant and three more years collaborating in various classes, I had finally achieved my first independent course at the School of Architecture of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, the third year Research Studio, an optional studio. Its main goal was (and still is) to develop a controlled disciplinary research exercise, where the work is intended to acquire a collective dimension (usually by addressing a common topic



Jaime Besa, Hilda Carmona Low. Facultad de Ciencias Físicas y Matemáticas, Campus San Joaquín uc, Santiago, 1961. Fuente / Source: *Revista Auca* 6–7 (ago.1966). En la leyenda sólo se menciona a Besa como autor. / Captions only mention Besa as the author.



Abraham Schapira, Raquel Eskenazi, León Messina. Edificio Ultramar, Viña del Mar, 1965. Fotografía / Photo Eduardo Waissbluth.



Santiago Aguirre, Inés Frey. Edificio Pecchi, Concepción, 1944. Fotografía / Photo Patricia Silva.

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developed from exemplary cases) while taking part in a collaborative research effort focused on Chilean architecture, urban planning, and landscape.

At that time I already had an incipient – and precarious – interest in landscape studies, but I resisted delving into them because of the prejudice concerning its supposed connotation as an area of knowledge of plants and flowers and, therefore, belonging to the female field. In the same terms, I was disturbed by the fact that, when going through publications aimed at reviewing the causes – i.e. characters and buildings – behind the materialization of architecture in Chile, the presence of women architects appeared as diminished, even when at first glance the access to professional studies already approached a ratio of 1:1 between men and women.

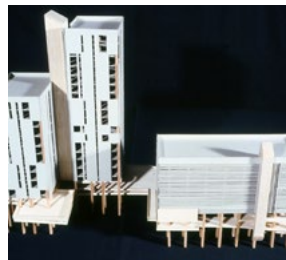
Without going any further, in what constitutes in my opinion the most comprehensive review on national architectural production written so far, at least between 1925 and 1965, Humberto Eliash and Manuel Moreno only name seven practicing women professionals: Inés Frey Bruggemann, Montserrat Palmer Trias, Yolanda Schwartz Apfel, Angela Schweitzer Lopetegui, Margarita Pisano Fisher, Iris Valenzuela Alarcón and Ana María Barrenechea.² Against this background, I suggested a studio that systematically studied and unveiled the work of a group of women during the above-indicated period of time. This, from the belief – or stubbornness



Gabriela González, Edmundo Buddemberg.
Escuela de Medicina de la Universidad de
Concepción, Concepción, 1946. Fotografía /
Photo Arturo Lyon.



Luz Sobrino. Edificio San Martín 728,
Concepción, 1966. Fotografía / Photo
Camila Martin.



Yolanda Schwartz. Anteproyecto
Concurso. Remodelación Bellavista
(mención honrosa), Valparaíso, 1969.
Reconstrucción / model by Ariel Chiang.



Hugo Gaggero, Margarita Pisano.
Casa Gaggero Pisano, Santiago, 1962.
Fotografía / Photo Ronald Ruiz.

– that such production had somewhat contributed to the development of modern architecture in Chile, thus responding to the demands of urban transformation based on new architectural-institutional / housing / recreational parameters and experiments.

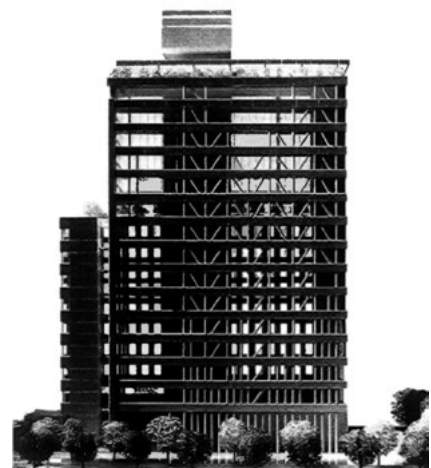
With the purpose of ordering and limiting the work, I established three constraints as a starting point for background search: first, to use the book *Arquitectura y modernidad en Chile 1925/1965: una realidad múltiple* (1989) as a source on the different moments that characterized the implementation of modern architecture in our country; second, to reduce the selection of possible case studies to the same period of time proposed by Eliash and Moreno; and, third, to limit the field of study to those women graduated from the Universidad de Chile and the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, considering that they already provided 89 and 18 names respectively.

Although gender issues were not part of my repertoire back then, I must admit that it was not easy to approach the studio, as there was a certain initial reluctance from the students to develop the exercise, given the difficulty of acknowledging any female leader among Chilean architects. And, objectively speaking, it was a valid concern facing the inability to establish whether women were capable of producing a work that allows any of them to become a sort of ‘master’ for its peers, who, undoubtedly, need certain accessible and measurable parameters to develop a profession based on the intuition of design, and that is taught by attributing to that act the same degree of relevance – even when whoever has

EDIFICIO MANANTIALES

Luis Izquierdo, Antonia Lehmann,
José Domingo Peñafiel, Raimundo Lira
1999

Publicado en / *Published in*
ARQ 45 (julio, 2000): 17-20



established a professional practice knows how many other tools are needed in order to survive in the field. To vindicate the female genre within a 'Star System' based on what was defined by consensus as good architecture could not be further from my initial statement – to identify, objectively, possible roles of women architects by recognizing a work that had persisted in time. In other words, my question was, simply and paraphrasing Eliash and Moreno, whether Chilean architecture between 1925 and 1965 had actually constituted a 'multiple reality' in terms of those who built that modernity.

Methodologically, 27 architects were first identified from the original list of 107 women, considering whether their biographical or documentary background was accessible.³ Then, the students Fabiola Carreño, Ariel Chiang, Gonzalo Claro Riesco, Carolina Contreras, Arturo Lyon Gottlieb, Camila Martín, Ismael Rengifo Streeter, Pablo Ropert, Daniel Rosenberg, Ronald Ruiz, Patricia Silva, Macarena Vergara, Eduardo Waissbluth and Angélica Zabala Núñez selected from that initial group those professionals with more than two built works and devoted themselves to establish a professional-biographical account of them – including education, influences, travels, publications, works, and projects; placing them within the historical context of Chilean modern architecture development and thus, in turn, in a larger context.⁴

As a result of a task that ultimately became extremely enthusiastic, it was possible to identify Raquel Eskenazi Rodrich, working within the Schapira-

GALERÍA PATRICIA READY

Luis Izquierdo, Antonia Lehmann,
Mirene Elton, Mauricio Léniz
2008

Publicado en / *Published in*
ARQ 70 (diciembre, 2008): 50-55



Eskenazi-Messina office, as a key agent in the definition of a modern coastline in Viña del Mar and in incorporating the balcony as an intermediate space in the district of Providencia. Margarita Pisano Fisher, who together with Hugo Gaggero built a local version of the 'Wrightian' proposal in the house in Pedro de Valdivia Norte. Inés Frey Bruggemann (acting independently or with her husband, Santiago Aguirre) and her modern interior designs in two houses in Santiago, or the new structural architectures in Concepción after the 1939 earthquake. Luz Sobrino Sáenz, operating in that same city, with an operation of infilling the urban grid through over 80 buildings. The scope of formalization of modern social postulates in the design of Inés de Suárez Park, by Ana María Barrenechea and team; the technological innovation of the School of Medicine at the Universidad de Concepción by Gabriela González de Groote and Edmundo Buddemberg; and the experimentation with the language of metabolism in the competitions of the late 60s developed by Yolanda Schwartz Apfel. Or the role of the latter in the furniture-structure symbiosis at her home in the district of La Reina. Victoria Maier Mayer's late transfer of modern ideas to the local scene, two decades after her trip to Vienna in 1930. Or the possibilities of understanding the landscape project as a synthesis of urbanization processes and natural systems in the proposals of Hilda Carmona Low and Jaime Besa for the Faculty of Engineering in San Joaquín and two developments in the district of Vitacura, both in Santiago.



**EDIFICIO PLAZA
PEDRO MONTT**

Cecilia Puga
2005

Publicado en / *Published in*
ARQ 61 (diciembre, 2005): 68-73



It seems to me that this brief description is an actual evidence of the roles played by Barrenechea, Carmona, Frey, González, Maier, Pisano, Schapira, Schwartz and Sobrino in building modern architecture in Chile, characterizing areas of professional expertise that until now are characteristic of the discipline: teaching or research activities and public positions – although scarcely within the head ones – together with a practice in the private sphere, most of the time within a non-autonomous system, that is, associated to a relative or as part of a larger team.

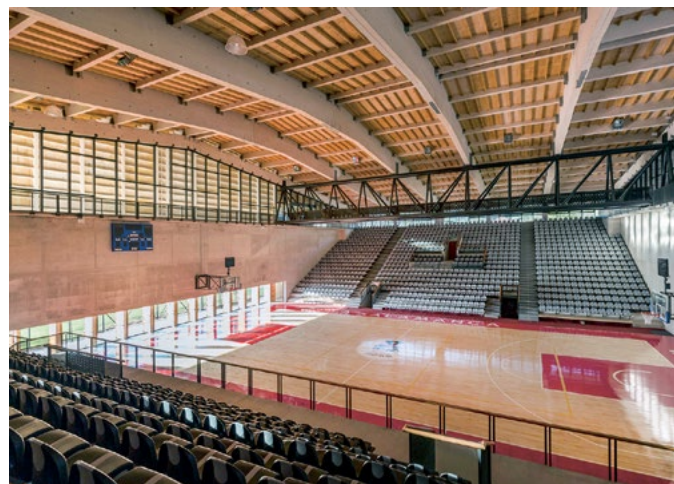
Eighteen years after the completion of the research studio, and faced with the self-imposed exercise of reviewing the first 99 issues of *ARQ* with the same criteria used in 2000, I believe that you – male or female reader – would be surprised. While it seems that the new century has brought with it new possibilities regarding the necessary recognition of female participation in the professional sphere, my review shows quite the opposite. If we exclude the publication of final degree projects and/or studio results, works outside Chile, participation in montages and/or ephemeral exhibitions, essays, interviews and/or critical analyzes (and works by the former editor of the magazine until 2010), it is only possible to identify seven names with more than two different works built locally.⁵

The first reference under these parameters appears in 1994 with Paulina Courard, who through the proposal of parks and urban walks developed within the office Teodoro Fernández Arquitectos, has become a silent

GIMNASIO MUNICIPAL DE SALAMANCA

Mario Carreño, Piera Sartori
2016

Publicado en / *Published in*
ARQ 95 (abril, 2017): 118-125



SALA DE DEGUSTACIÓN

Paulina Courard
2002

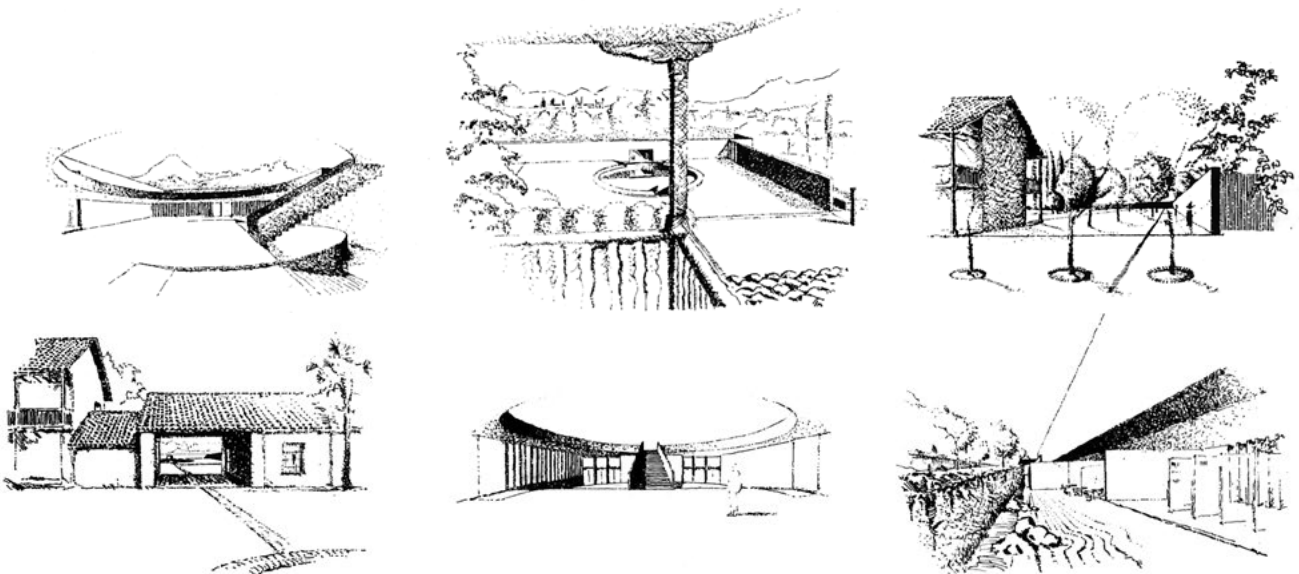
Publicado en / *Published in*
ARQ 54 (julio, 2003): 34-35



CASAS MUSEO DE LO MATTA
(CONCURSO, PRIMER PREMIO)

Luis Izquierdo, Antonia Lehmann
1994

Publicado en / *Published in*
ARQ 28 (diciembre, 1994): 32-33



TRES PARQUES

Alberto Montealegre,
Myriam Beach
1995

Publicado en / *Published in*
ARQ 34 (diciembre, 1996): 36-38



PARQUE INÉS DE SUÁREZ

Teodoro Fernández,
Paulina Courard
1993

Publicado en / *Published in*
ARQ 26 (mayo, 1994): 11-15
ARQ 34 (diciembre, 1996): 44-45



agent in the construction of landscape architecture in Chile⁶. Something similar happens with Myriam Beach in the work developed with her husband Alberto Montealegre; however, their contributions to the debate on the role of landscape projects are synthetically captured in a single 1996 issue⁷, analogous to that of Margarita Murtinho and María José Castillo in the experiments on housing developed at the beginning of the 1990s with Francisco Vergara⁸. These are followed by Antonia Lehmann Scasi-Buffa, the only one to receive along with her husband, Luis Izquierdo Wachholtz, the National Architecture Award and who has been exceptionally recognized as an operative individual within an over 30-years joint practice thanks to the construction of multiple institutional and housing buildings, in addition to a hundred single-family houses⁹. Cecilia Puga Larrain, on the other hand, is reflected in her persistent ability to reveal the solidity of structures and materials in buildings as part of an unusual practice, at least according to *ARQ* standards: mostly working independently or, sometimes, leading teams.¹⁰ Finally emerges Piera Sartori del Campo, who along with her husband Mario Carreño Zunino has developed over the last decade a consistent practice, linking location, budget, and construction of a continuous relationship between interior and exterior space.¹¹ Interestingly enough, Sartori has not needed an action re-affirmative of her role, undoubtedly due to the renowned performance in the field of design that both had during their time in Lo Contador.

EDIFICIO LOFT PLAZA BRASIL

Francisco Vergara, María José Castillo,
Margarita Murtinho
1997

EDIFICIO PLAZA YUNGAY

Francisco Vergara, María José Castillo,
Margarita Murtinho
1999

Publicado en / *Published in*
ARQ 42 (julio, 1999): 39-40



It is true that every publication has an editorial bias, specifically in the case of a journal that has sought to position itself as 'the' organism of dissemination of Chilean architecture. Through the publishing of a certain range of ideological debates associated, for example, with class inequality in urban distribution, gentrification, and housing policies, over the last years *ARQ* has tried to redefine architectural practice. It has also sought to influence a redistribution of design's influence over education by discussing, for example, the social responsibilities of Chilean professionals and by proposing an alignment of practice with new technologies.

Without necessarily falling into the easy way out (such as an eventual quota of pages according to gender), I look forward to the possibility of making an approach to a group scarcely represented in the hundred published issues. If we go back to my students' issues in the year 2000, perhaps one could reflect not so much on the causes behind invisibility, but rather on the consequences of a silent participation in the materialization of Chilean architecture.¹² Such absence has triggered, for instance, prejudices within the female genre itself, convinced at times that leadership can only be found in the management of professional offices, in the production of the domestic sphere or in the so-called landscape work (without going any further, consider the early opinion of this author). And if we assess our own evolution and actions within the local context, we will undoubtedly find painful discriminatory experiences caused by those who are unable to handle their hypothetical power or respect those who have not been praised as gurus by their peers. Perhaps, then, one of the following hundred issues of the magazine could risk producing high-level critique on the work of women architects, regardless of their professional links, and thus open a discussion on the interest of the work that's done and its contribution, modest but real, to the transformation of Chilean architecture. **ARQ**

- 1 Up to issue 43 (Nov. 1999) there are 26 published works by female authors, either independently or associated. See "ARQ Magazine Historical Archive 1980-2000" (2015), *Ediciones ARQ* (Sept. 2018) <<http://www.edicionesarq.cl/seccion/archivo-historico/>>
- 2 Mentions can be found in the following chapters: "Los escenarios del cambio" [Scenarios of Change] (1989:38-40), in which a review of important buildings in the 1940s, mentions "the houses in Sánchez Fontecilla by Santiago Aguirre and Frey [Inés]"; "Causas y efectos" [Causes and Effects] (1989:46), where in relation to the mechanisms of contact with foreign models, the text indicates the opportunity that architects had to study or work with international modern masters, among them, "M[ontserrat]. Palmer with Coderch y Martorell, Bohigas, Mackay"; and in "Le Corbusier: una influencia aparentemente dominante" [Le Corbusier: An Apparently Dominant Influence] (1989:66), where it is indicated that: "[...] subsequent generations – although they never completely abandoned the purely iconographic references – eased the contradictions between image and content, or between form and structure. A second moment of influence was thus configured, in which the transcription of images is followed by a reworking of architectural, urban and constructive types. Exposed concrete appears, together with seismic calculation, new urban proposals, as new opportunities to deploy the Corbusian ideas in all of their dimensions and for better understanding the own problems. It is the moment of singular works by Jorge Aguirre, Enrique Gerbhard, Waldo Parraguéz, Costabal and Garafulic, Zacarelli and Gacitúa, S. Aguirre and Inés Frey, etc. [...] At the end of the 1950s and during the '60s, the most significant and mature works of Corbusian pattern are found [...]. These successful examples encourage younger generations within architectural circles to insist on the Corbusian path. This is the case of [...] Yolanda Schwartz (Schwartz House), Angela Schweitzer (Municipality of Valdivia [...])" (1989:67-68). In the chapter "Estados Unidos y la modernización integral" [The United States and the Integral Modernization] the influence of Wright is indicated through "Horacio Borgheresi's first houses, Hugo Gaggero and Margarita Pisano's house [...]" (1989:76). In "Chillán o el racionalismo pragmático" [Chillán or the Pragmatic Rationalism], two documents appear (1989:101): one is the press release "Arquitectos chilenos se dirigen al urbanista señor Le Corbusier," signed among others by Inés Frey, supporting his visit for the city's reconstruction. The other (1989:102) is the list of professionals prepared in 1939 by the Intendancy of Santiago to support the same effort. The list includes Frey (No. 2) and Inés Floto (No. 25). The book also shows two photographs of the Municipality of Valdivia, by Schweitzer (1989:68,157), another one of the Cerrillos Airport in Santiago, by Iris Valenzuela (1989: 132), the plan (1989:143) and a photograph (1989:164) of Merino House, by Aguirre y Frey, and Universidad de Chile headquarters' in Temuco by Ana María Barrenechea, Osvaldo Cáceres, F. Ehijo, A. Rodríguez and Yolanda Schwartz (1989:183). To the above-mentioned references, it is interesting to add what's indicated by Felicitas Klimpel (1962): "The Architects Association has 99 women enrolled, a large part of them work as architects in state agencies. This is a career that attracts women. Many start these studies and even finish them, but cannot get their diplomas given the elevated cost of the projects they must submit before obtaining such degree. The following work as architects at the Works Department in the Municipality of Santiago: Ester Durán, Violeta del Campo, Mariana Valverde, Aída Ramírez, Graciela Espinoza, Alicia Henot, and María T. Rojas M. In the Ministry of Public Works, are: María Luisa Montecinos, Sara Poldesch, and Iris Valenzuela. At the Housing Corporation work the architects Elena Macho, Victoria Mayer, and María Schuman. An architect of the Municipal Works Department in Arica is María Luisa Barrios. The architects María Silva, Inés Araya, Esmeralda Rojas, and Antonieta Motta work for the Railway Association. At the Public Workers Association are: Graciela Marcos, Sofía Peralta in Ancud; Luz Sobrino in Concepción, Angela Schweitzer in Valdivia. In Santiago, the names of the architects Inés Frey, Aída Rivera, Inés Floto, María Vergara, Amanda Godoy, Ana María Barrenechea, Elsa Fuentes, and Marta Martínez are well known. María Rojas González has designed and coordinated plenty of works. She is an assistant in the course Descriptive Geometry at Universidad Católica and surveyor at the Public Workers Association. Johanna Zeppelin de Herrera was the head of Individual Construction at the State Railways Association Fund until 1947" (Klimpel, 1962:173). To this

reference – where, although no specific production is explicitly stated, at least a considerable number of architects working in Chile (36) are enumerated – it should also be added that between 1910 and 1960, 67 architects from the Universidad de Chile and 12 from UC graduated.

- 3 See the lists in “Materialización de la Arquitectura Moderna en Chile (1925-1965): Posibles roles de los arquitectos,” Research Studio School of Architecture UC, Prof. Romy Hecht, Asistant Pedro Alonso (2nd Term, 2000): 11-13.
- 4 The papers are available at General Collection Lo Contador UC Library, Ref. 720.983 T147 (2^o Sem. 2000).
- 5 I do not intend for the readers to agree with my criteria, but I remind you that the exercise was to repeat the process of selecting names according to the parameters deployed in the studio during the year 2000.
- 6 See ARQ 26 (May 1994):11-15 [reappears en ARQ 34 (Dec. 1996):44-45]; ARQ 52 (Dec. 2002):30-33; ARQ 54 (Jul. 2003):34-35; and ARQ 99 (Aug. 2018):70-82.
- 7 See ARQ 34 (Dec. 1996):36-38.
- 8 See ARQ 42 (Jul. 1999):39-40. It is worth noting that Margarita appears a third time, in ARQ 24 (Sept. 1993):2-5.
- 9 See ARQ 28 (Dec. 1994):32; ARQ 31 (Dec. 1995):31-33; ARQ 42 (Jul. 1999):41; ARQ 45 (Jul. 2000):17-21; ARQ 58 (Dec. 2004):31; and ARQ 70 (Dec. 2008):50-55.
- 10 See ARQ 51 (Jul. 2002): 47-53, ARQ 61 (Dec. 2005): 60-73, ARQ 67 (Dec. 2007): 52-59, ARQ 84 (Aug. 2013): 28-33.
- 11 See ARQ 50 (Mar. 2002): 64, ARQ 60 (Jul. 2005): 24-27, ARQ 66 (Aug. 2007): 76-81, ARQ 71 (Apr. 2009): 72-75, ARQ 93 (Aug. 2016): 62-67, ARQ 95 (Apr. 2017): 118-125.
- 12 Speaking from her own experience, Denise Scott Brown has already produced an extensive debate on the possible reasons for female invisibility in the profession. I suggest her first published piece on the subject, “Room at the Top? Sexism and the Star System in Architecture,” (Berkeley and McQuaid, 1989: 237-246). See also the historiographical reconstruction of Margarita Pisano’s trajectory by Alejandra Celedón and Gabriela García de Cortázar, ARQ 95 (Mar. 2017):126-139.

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