



02.03. - 22.05.2006

**THE UNKNOWN LOOS: WALTER
Paraíso Latinoamericano**

Opening: Wednesday, 1.03.2006, 7pm. Press conference: Wednesday, 1.03.2006, 11am

Whenever somebody talks about Loos in an architecture context the immediate presumption is that they are talking about Adolf Loos. However this exhibition is dedicated to one of his younger colleagues and namesake, Walter Loos (1905 – 1974), whose estate was entrusted to the Az W in 2003. Walter Loos, although no relation to the great Loos, was also an architect and a furniture designer, a Bohemian... and emigrated. Although this Loos' oeuvre as an architect is not very extensive his buildings in Austria and The Argentine are among the most interesting of their time. He has been forgotten, among other reasons, because he did not complete any public buildings, there is a lack of theoretical writings relating to his work, and from 1940 onwards he moved off the Austrian radar, so to speak, to the distant Argentine.

Unfortunately his was a fate typical of architects who had to flee or who chose to live in exile. There is no architecture historical appraisal of those protagonists in particular whose host lands were in the 'Paraíso Latinoamericano'. In this context, the exhibition *The Unknown Loos: Walter* presents the life and work of one of the region's most prominent architects. Supplemented by an overview of architecture in The Argentine in the 1940s and a survey of Austrian architects in South America, the exhibition approaches a previously neglected field of research and highlights the cultural transfer between the two continents.

Walter Loos – Modernity and Exile

Born in Vienna in 1905, Loos studied at the Kunstgewerbeschule and the Technische Hochschule in Vienna under, among others, Josef Frank and Josef Hoffmann. Like Frank, he found his orientation in the formal canon of Modernist architecture without being dogmatic. His buildings are distinguished by their elegance, lightness and comfort. The two houses on the smallest of floor plans that he completed in 1932 for the Vienna Werkbundsiedlung are due to their "very efficient use of space, among the most successful contributions" (Otto Kapfinger). The house in Kritzendorf (built 1930-32) was called by the visiting Roland Rainer, the "second most beautiful house in Austria." In 1932 Walter Loos was voted onto the board of the Austrian Werkbund, and in 1937 he was named as the Austrian delegate to the CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne). According to his own records, in 1938 the NAZI mayor of Vienna Hermann Neubacher offered him the leadership of the town planning department. However Loos turned down the post and turned his back on what was then known as 'Ostmark' altogether in the same year. He had not exposed his own political convictions but he still did not want to accept the new regime.



Loos and Fridl Steining, a very successful fashion designer who later became his wife, moved to The Argentine via England and the USA. While in exile Walter Loos established a reputation primarily as a furniture designer. However he also completed some key buildings, such as the Patio House in Mar del Plata and the pair of semi-detached houses at Chapadmalal. These holiday homes, one cube with a continuous glass facade is the most uncompromising building completed in The Argentine by Loos. Among his most important works are a number of interiors as well as a studio for his wife, the fashion designer Fridl.

"It's worth taking a careful look at his houses, fittings and interiors, his furniture and design objects. They tell us more about the then dissolving and soon decapitated avant-garde than some of the commentaries written in their own lifetime." Friedrich Achleitner

Fridl Loos – Fashion and Lifestyle

A section of the exhibition is dedicated to Fridl Loos (1905 – 2000). She had an open relationship and a lifelong friendship with Walter as well as being his artistic partner; they married in the USA. The couple's work is closely connected – by a shared clientele, but also because they both strived to achieve a symbiosis of modernity coupled with tradition. Fridl earned a reputation that went well beyond Buenos Aires by linking European dressmaking skills with Argentine folklore to create models of timeless elegance. Among her clients were the actresses Hedy Lamarr and Lana Turner as well as the New York cosmetics producer Helena Rubinstein. Another section of the exhibition is dedicated to Hermann Loos (1921 – 2004), who followed his brother to The Argentine in 1950 to embark on a career as an architect and furniture designer. His designs reflect the spirit of the 1950s and '60s, while his most successful work is of lasting quality.

The Exhibition

The exhibition has a focus on the affects caused by the rift of emigration on the life and work of Walter Loos. To show something of the cultural context of the time there is a presentation of the pulsating metropolis of Buenos Aires, which was known as the 'Paris of South America', and a brief foray into the architecture of The Argentine in the 1940s. The exhibition is divided into two main chronological/geographic islands: before and after his emigration – Vienna (and Germany) and Buenos Aires. The presentation covers plans, photographs, sketches, buildings, furniture and fashion. The broad thematic spectrum provides an approach that goes well beyond an interest solely in architecture history.

Curator: Sonja Pisarik

Assistance: Ute Waditschatka

Exhibition architecture: ARTEC Architekten

Graphic design: Gabriele Lenz



The exhibition *The Unknown Loos/Der Unbekannte Loos* is to be accompanied by a publication: 128 pages and approx. 200 illustrations. Authors: Friedrich Achleitner, Oliver Kühnschelm, Sonja Pisarik (available only in German). Published by: Architekturzentrum Wien, Verlag Holzhausen.

Austrians as Architects in Latin America

The exhibition *The Unknown Loos: Walter* at the Architekturzentrum Wien is to be supplemented by a presentation with a focus on Austrians who worked as architects following their emigration to the various states in South America. The compilation covers the period from the 19th century to the present day. Information is provided on the first careers following independence from Spanish sovereignty in the region in the 19th century (Franz Wiesner von Morgenstern or Albert Siegel), through the major wave of immigration at the start of the 20th century and the years preceding the Second World War (the Kalnay brothers, Karl Brunner, Jonas Mond and others) to Austrian architects who are currently working in Latin America (Hubert Klumpner, Bernhard Rehn, Wolfgang Timmer and others).

The continuity of the cultural exchange between the two continents, the second 'discovery' of the Americas by Europeans, is documented for the first time with the focus on the region's architectural heritage and culture. The exhibition is to be accompanied by a catalogue (text in German and Spanish).

This section of the exhibition, specially compiled by Michael Bier, reflects the spread of interest in Europe for the Paraíso Latinoamericano, and provides a point of topical relevance for the EU-LAC summit scheduled to take place in Vienna this May under the Austrian EU Presidency.

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