

Modern Architecture and Interiors

Adam Štěch

**With Contributions by Matylda Kryzykowski
and Michael Webb**

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This publication surveys fourteen years of my travelling to explore modernist architecture around the world. Since 2006 I have visited 29 countries across Europe, North America, South America, Australia, Asia and North Africa to explore, visit and document exceptional and sometimes virtually unknown gems of twentieth-century architecture.

The project was driven by my passion for rediscovering forgotten or lesser-known architectural treasures and documenting them in their current condition. My research has not just culminated in this text and thousands of photographs, most of them never published before, but involved great adventures, exciting stories and the making of new friends along the way.

In this book, lesser-known examples of the modern movement sit alongside iconic edifices, captured in their details or from different and unusual perspectives. This sample of almost 900 buildings and interiors on the following pages demonstrates the richness and variety of the modern movement across the globe and how it was transformed over the years by the specific cultural, climatic, political, social and geographical conditions of different countries.

Over the last century, modern architecture extended across the continents into a surprising and exciting diversity of forms. By collecting these examples together I hope to create the ultimate survey of modernist buildings and interior design and to reveal both the breadth and specificity of the movement.

Modern Architecture and Interiors

Every guide to modern architecture celebrates the masters, and this anthology includes major works by numerous celebrated architects. But Adam Štěch's voyage of discovery is focused on architects who never received the attention they deserved or who have been unjustly forgotten. He has discovered treasures in the unlikeliest places or hidden in plain view in famous cities. As an architectural writer who has travelled the world, I am dazzled by his industry and powers of detection, finding so much in a mere fourteen years. I've been on the road for five times as long and have seen only a quarter of the buildings and interiors gathered here.

What makes Adam's selection so intriguing is the way it illustrates the extraordinary diversity of modern architecture as it migrated from Europe to the other continents. The rigour of rationalism in Germany and the Netherlands in the 1920s, and Czechoslovakia and Italy in the 1930s, mutated into exotic forms in mid-century Latin America, where building flourished even as the rest of the world embarked on an orgy of destruction. As a photographer, Adam is drawn to the work of mavericks, and especially the wild inventions of the 1960s and 1970s in France, Italy and Japan. By ending the story there, he gives his book a coherence it might otherwise have lacked.

Another good choice was to list the architects alphabetically, allowing him to group the varied output of famous and obscure names. The juxtapositions – of form, time and place – are sometimes surreal, and that sustains our curiosity to see what comes next. We leap from Art Deco to Brutalism, from a village house to an urban tower, from Melbourne to Montevideo with every turn of a page. I find it astonishing that Adam was able to identify so many of the buildings. It is easy to snap a striking structure; far harder to uncover its author and history. That requires research as well as fieldwork; I wish I had been as productive at his age.

This book challenges the misperception that modernism was chilly and uniform. And it should encourage others to be equally adventurous. As celebrated sites are submerged beneath the tide of mass tourism and may soon succumb to rising seas, there is an urgent need to explore and chronicle the overlooked or forgotten achievements of architecture.

Tree with Many Branches

Michael Webb

Architectural Historian
Los Angeles, USA

In the modern imagination, time travel requires a time machine: a device to allow you to travel purposely and selectively forward or backward through time. Images of such hardware abound, but time travel remains a vision rather than a realistic prospect.

Adam Štěch's approach to his work and method is driven by emotion, and this paves the way for his exploration of the relationship between human beings and their sublime surroundings. And there are no boundaries for him: he can be found in the most remote places, sometimes to visit a magnificent private estate, at others merely to eat a pastrami sandwich. He has a driver's licence but public transport is his friend. They say that when the will is ready the feet are light.

Adam has found a way to practise time travel without any special device, a way to move about through the world relatively untroubled by the notion that what was present is now past. In small, continuous bursts, he arrives in times past while at the same time considering here and now.

Time Traveller

Matylda Krzykowski
Design Curator
Berlin, Germany



Alvar Aalto
Hansaviertel Apartment
Building

Berlin, Germany
1957

The Finnish modernist Alvar Aalto was one of more than fifty internationally renowned architects invited to take part in the seminal Interbau building exhibition in West Berlin. Aalto's contribution was a twelve-storey block constructed of prefabricated concrete elements and containing 78 apartments. The entrance area with its rounded columns is decorated with curved lines and surfaces, revealing Aalto's mastery of organic architecture.



Alvar Aalto
Maison Louis Carré

Bazoches-sur-Guyonne,
France
1959

In 1956 Louis Carré and his wife, Olga, dedicated art collectors, commissioned Alvar Aalto to build them a new home in a village southwest of Paris. The house became one of Aalto's most remarkable designs, offering his clients an organic structure nestled in the landscape. Inside, several unique, custom-made items of furnishing were also designed by the architect, including tables, lamps and built-in furniture. The house, which is today open to the public, is a perfect fusion of architecture and avant-garde art.



Mário de Abreu
Passos Manuel Garage

Porto, Portugal
1939

An important Portuguese example of the Streamline Moderne style of Art Deco architecture, this multi-storey car park on Passos Manuel in Porto was designed by Mário de Abreu. The dynamic facade features curving forms and an emphasis on horizontal lines, while a glass map lights up in neon to show the country's main roadways.



Marcos Acayaba
Residência Milan

São Paulo, Brazil
1972

An early project by the important Brazilian architect Marcos Acayaba, Residência Milan is one of the finest examples of the Brutalist style of the Paulista School. The vaulted ceiling, whose form sweeps over an open, multi-level living space, follows the contours of the house's huge reinforced concrete roof. Though Acayaba originally designed the house for his sister-in-law, he and his wife, the architecture historian Marlene Acayaba, later settled there and continue to live there today.



Wladimiro Acosta
Edificio Helios

Buenos Aires, Argentina
1942–43

Born in Odessa, Ukraine, Wladimiro Acosta was one of the pioneers of modern architecture in Argentina. He settled in Buenos Aires in 1928 and built a series of houses that featured geometric lines combined with natural stone surfaces. Helios is one of the city's finest apartment buildings of the era, with details such as the rounded windows of the lobby showcasing a beautiful organic sensibility.



**Buenaventura Addiego,
Conrado Pintos,
Victor Lorieto
and Luis Santellán**
El Yacht Playa Ramírez

El Yacht – today a McDonald's restaurant – is located on Ramírez Beach close to the Julio Vilamajó-designed Faculty of Engineering in Montevideo. This Streamline Moderne building features impressive horizontal lines, dynamic rounded corners and expansive glass windows.

Montevideo, Uruguay
1937



Georges Addor
Apartment Building

Geneva, Switzerland
1950s

Based in Geneva, the architect Georges Addor played a significant role in the post-war architectural development of this Swiss city. Before working on the enormous housing complexes and company headquarters for which he became known, he designed this small apartment building with elegant central stairwell.



Georges Adilon
Maison Adilon

Brindas, France
1960

Georges Adilon trained and worked as a painter before beginning to design houses. Born and based in Lyon, Adilon belonged to a post-war generation of French abstract artists who worked in large formats using performative painting techniques. His move to architecture came at the end of the 1950s when he started to design houses for his friends in and around Lyon. His own house and atelier, built in the nearby village of Brindas, was his first complete architectural project. Consisting of low white cubic volumes with non-traditional, naturalistic window openings and sculptural details, the house includes an underground studio and numerous custom-designed furniture pieces and other functional elements.



Georges Adilon
Maison H

Brindas, France
1972

Next door to his own home in Brindas, Adilon designed another private house. This sculptural structure with sharp corners and large circular windows is another excellent example of his distinctive architectural approach.



Georges Adilon

Maison B

Saint-Cyr-au-Mont-d'Or,
France
1978

Adilon built several houses around Lyon during his career, mostly for friends and artists who appreciated his radical approach. One such house is nestled in the hills of Saint-Cyr-au-Mont-d'Or. It is composed of converging cylindrical and curved volumes, with the highlight of the interior space being the circular library on the first floor.



Émile Aillaud
Tours Aillaud

Nanterre, France
1976

The Tours Aillaud housing scheme, comprising eighteen towers of varying heights and containing 1,607 apartments in total, is one of the most original French social housing projects of the post-war era. Designed by Émile Aillaud, the towers feature striking amorphous windows that vary in shape and colour. The camouflage-like mosaics that cover the exteriors were created by the architect's son-in-law, the painter Fabio Rieti, and lent the buildings the nickname Tours Nuages, or Cloud Towers. The site also includes a large outdoor snake sculpture designed by architect's daughter, Laurence Rieti.



Nobumichi Akashi
Yasuyo Building

Tokyo, Japan
1969

Situated next to Shinjuku Station's east exit, this unusual commercial building is composed of individual floors that appear stacked one upon the other and twisted out of alignment. The highly dynamic composition combines modern architecture with traditional details – seen for example in the rhythmic structure of the vertical screens that cover the windows. The building houses the famous family-run restaurant Kakiden, which was designed in a traditional style by the architect Yoshirō Taniguchi.



Franco Albini
Villa Pesarini

Milan, Italy
1938

Franco Albini was only 33 years old when he designed this example of late Italian interwar rationalism. Built for the Pesarini family in 1938, the simple white rectangular structure originally comprised two storeys; the third storey, also designed by Albini, was added ten years later. Inside, the architect designed several distinctive custom-made elements, including a pink glass screen, built-in cabinets and an impressive free-standing staircase. Today the house is owned by Modesta Sbaragli Ferretti, who restored it after purchasing it in the 1980s.



Franco Albini
Palazzo Rosso

Genova, Italy
1952–61

Albini was commissioned several times by the city of Genoa to restore or build public buildings. The most famous was his renovation of the art museum in the Palazzo Rosso, built in 1675 and now part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Albini designed refined exhibition displays, lamps and other new elements to complement the palazzo's rare historical interior. On the top floor, Caterina Marcenaro, an art historian and director of the city's museums, asked Albini to design a modern loft for her own use. Today the whole museum and the apartment are open to the public.



**Franco Albini, Franca Helg,
Antonio Piva and Bob Noorda**
Line M1, Milan Metro

Milan, Italy
1957–64

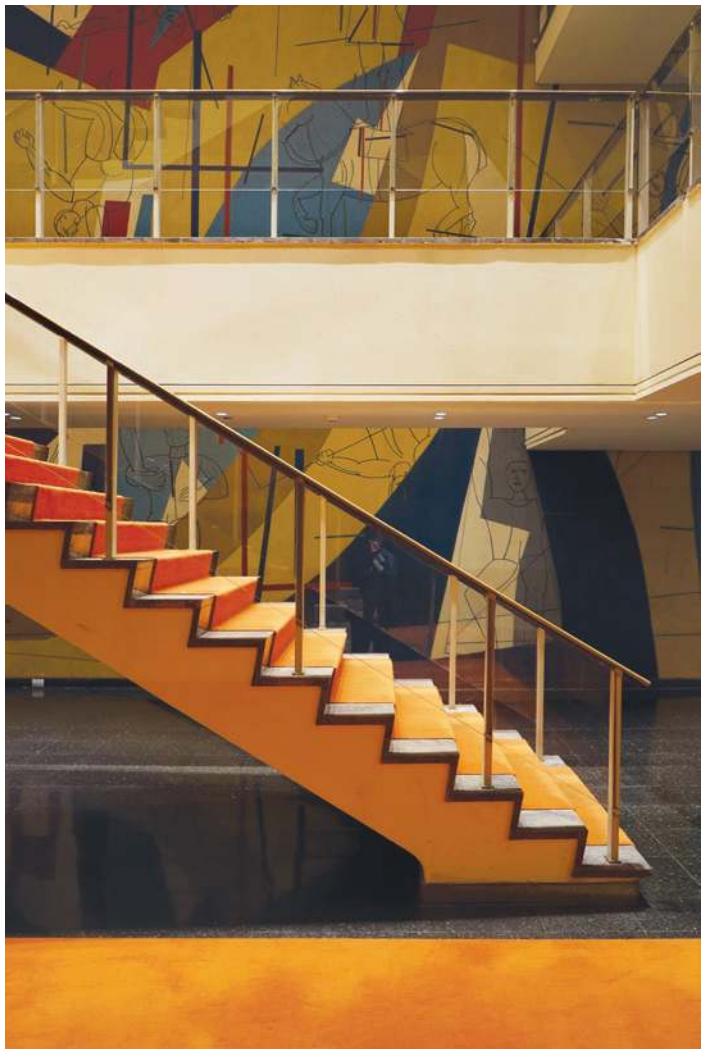
The stations along Line M1 of the Milan Metro system are celebrated as some of the most important examples of twentieth-century transportation architecture. Designed by Franco Albini and Franca Helg in collaboration with Antonio Piva and the graphic designer Bob Noorda, the architecture of M1 is a complex work of art fusing architecture, design and graphics into a seamless whole. The project won the 1964 Compasso d'Oro prize for industrial design and became an influential point of reference for many other metropolitan rail systems.



**Franco Albini, Franca Helg
and Antonio Piva**
Museo di Sant'Agostino

Genova, Italy
1977–92

The museum in the Church of Sant'Agostino, which was originally built around 1260 and enlarged in the sixteenth century, was renovated by Franco Albini, Franca Helg and Mario Piva after suffering bomb damage during the Second World War. Housed in the church's historic monastery, the museum was modernized using the refined display systems so typical of the work of Albini and his team, including these black steel frameworks.



**Mario Roberto Álvarez
and Macedonio Ruiz**
Teatro General San Martín

Buenos Aires, Argentina
1954–60

Teatro General San Martín was the masterwork of Argentinian modernist architect Mario Roberto Álvarez. The country's largest cultural project of the 1950s, this multifunctional building, with huge glass facade, thirteen floors and four basements, includes three performance stages, several exhibition halls and a cinema. Álvarez collaborated on the project with several important Argentinian artists, including José Fioravanti, Pablo Curatella Manes, Luís Seoane, Enio Iommi and Carlos de la Cárcova, who designed sculptures and murals for the building's interior.



**Mario Roberto Álvarez,
Victor Satow and
Miguel Angel Rivanera**
Torre IBM

Buenos Aires, Argentina
1979–83

Located in Catalinas Norte, the business district of central Buenos Aires, the IBM building is an exceptional late modernist tower designed by one of Argentina's most prolific architects, Mario Roberto Álvarez. The tower is supported by two large concrete structural cores on a plinth.



**Augusto Harold
Álvarez García**
Torre Latinoamericana

Mexico City, Mexico
1949–56

For almost 27 years, the Torre Latinoamericana was Mexico City's tallest completed building. Including its antenna the tower stretches 204 metres into the air and represents Mexican modernism at its best. Designed by the architect August H. Álvarez, the building was commissioned by La Latinoamericana Seguros SA, an insurance company. The glass and steel structure follows the tendencies typical of corporate architecture of the period, pioneered in the USA by architects such as Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and firms like Skidmore, Owings & Merrill.



Artur Andrade
Cinema Batalha

Porto, Portugal
1944–47

Cinema Batalha was designed and built by the architect Artur Andrade between 1944 and 1947. A massive, undulating concrete facade forms a dynamic curve that sweeps around this corner building. Also featuring nautical elements, the building blends the aesthetics of Art Deco with the new optimism characteristic of post-war organic modernism. The building, which has unfortunately been closed for several years, conceals an elegant interior of wooden panels, polished stone floors and brass details and an all-green auditorium.



**Jacques André
and Michel André**
Musée des Beaux-Arts
de Nancy Extension

Nancy, France
1929–33

The prominent architecture studio founded in Nancy by the brothers Jacques and Michel André built several important public buildings in the city during the 1930s. Their fine Art Deco addition to the Museum of Fine Arts includes a flamboyant staircase with an organic, curvilinear morphology.



**Jacques André
and Michel André**
Muséum-Aquarium de Nancy

Nancy, France
1930

Another project by the brothers Jacques and Michel André was the natural history museum and aquarium of Nancy. The large rectangular volume is constructed of prefabricated decorative concrete elements, resembling Frank Lloyd Wright's textile block houses. Jean Prouvé collaborated on the design, creating the metal main entrance door, among other features.



**Jacques André
and Michel André**
Maisons Majorelle

Nancy, France
1933

The Maisons Majorelle in Nancy are a pair of modern houses by the André brothers, again constructed of prefabricated concrete modules. As well as the residences themselves, the architects designed these elegant streetlamps.



**Roger Anger,
Pierre Puccinelli
and Lilianne Véder**
Apartment Building

Paris, France
1960

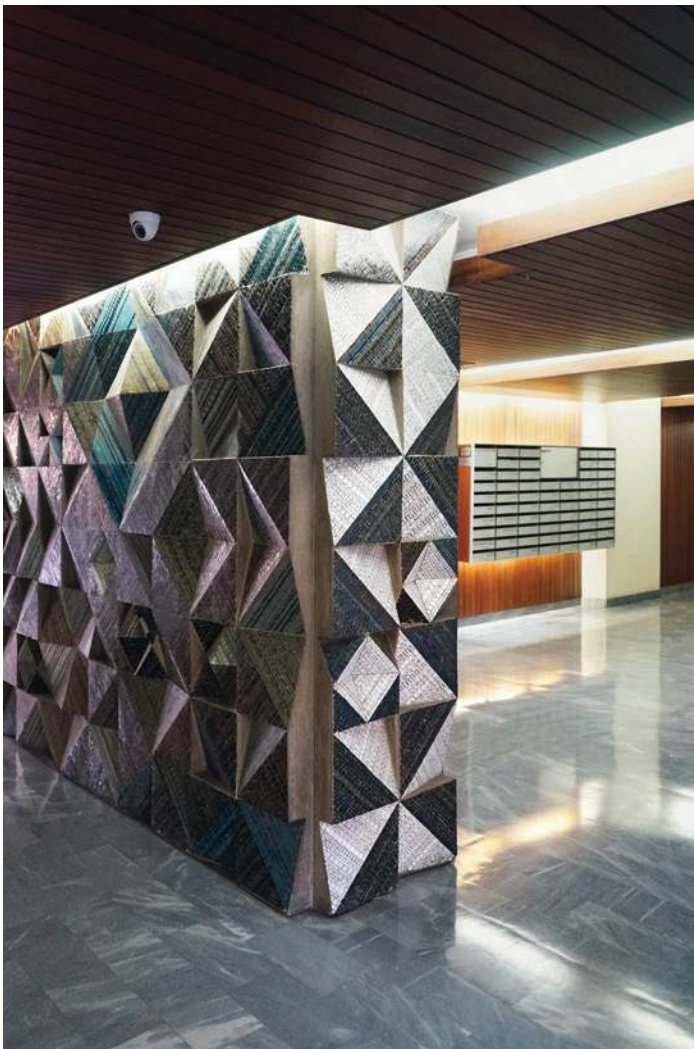
The architect Roger Anger built several experimental apartment buildings in Paris during the 1960s. They are characterized by strong, structural forms composed of cubic volumes and splendid entrance areas, usually decorated with expressive mosaics and other artworks. This corner building on avenue Paul-Doumer features a dramatic lobby with ceramic totems created by the mosaicist and sculptor Charles Gianferrari.



**Roger Anger,
Pierre Puccinelli
and Mario Heymann**
Apartment Building

Paris, France
1961

Another of Roger Anger's modernist gems, this Paris apartment block on boulevard Vincent-Auriol can be entered through a spectacular garden with pebble-coated walls, mosaic-covered pillars and an ingenious water feature with concrete channels.



**Roger Anger
and Mario Heymann**
Apartment Building

Paris, France
1969

This large apartment building on rue Saint-Ambroise features a striking three-dimensional mosaic work by Charles Gianferrari in the entrance area. The angular, faceted panels contrast with the otherwise minimalist design of the space. The courtyard features ceramic-covered seats designed by Anger.



Ivan Antić
25 May Sports Centre

Belgrade, Serbia
1973–75

One of the symbols of Belgrade's Danube river promenade is the 25 May Sports Centre, designed and constructed between 1973 and 1975 by Serbian architect Ivan Antić. Located on the sloping banks of the river, the complex is a variable low-rise structure connecting different sports facilities and public spaces, including indoor swimming pools, a restaurant with bowling hall, a sauna and outdoor sports grounds. Perhaps the most impressive parts of the complex are the swimming pools and cantilevered restaurant, shown here.



Julio César Aranda
Edificio Vanguardia

Punta del Este, Uruguay
1960

This massive ocean-facing apartment block is one of dozens of prestigious modernist buildings erected in the fashionable resort of Punta del Este during Uruguay's golden post-war period. Edificio Vanguardia was among several such buildings that Julio César Aranda designed, working with refined brickwork in all of them.



Armét & Davis
Norms La Cienega

Los Angeles, CA, USA
1957

The sharp lines of the Norms La Cienega restaurant make it a prime example of the futuristic Google style of architecture that originated in Southern California in the late 1940s and which was used particularly for coffee houses, eateries, gas stations and other roadside establishments.



**Armét & Davis
and Helen Fong
Pann's**

Los Angeles, CA, USA
1958

Since starting their practice in 1947, Louis Armét and Eldon Davis had become the leaders of Los Angeles restaurant and entertainment architecture. Their firm also contributed substantially to Googie, a flamboyant, dynamic style of mid-century architecture associated mostly with the car culture of Southern California. The famous Pann's coffee shop, with its triangular, shell-like roof, is one of their most iconic works.



Louis Arretche
Église Sainte-Jeanne-d'Arc

Rouen, France
1979

The French modernist architect Louis Arretche built the Church of St Joan of Arc in the historic centre of Rouen with a striking combination of angular, jagged roof forms and a twisted hyperbolic paraboloid roof over its main volume. Inside, Arretche reused stained-glass panels from the former Church of Saint Vincent, which had been destroyed in bombings in 1944. The building's ribbed wooden ceiling gives the interior the character of an old wooden ship.



João Batista Vilanova Artigas
Casa Vilanova Artigas I

São Paulo, Brazil
1942–43

João Batista Vilanova Artigas was born in 1915 in Curitiba in the state of Paraná. He trained as an engineer but in 1937 graduated in architecture from the Polytechnic of the University of São Paulo. Artigas went on to work with two pioneers of the Brazilian modern movement: Oswaldo Bratke and Gregori Warchavchik, the latter of whom is often credited with designing the first modernist house in Brazil. In his early domestic projects Artigas was heavily influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright; the first house he built for himself, as well as the Casa Rio Branco Paranhos completed a year later, show the formal vocabulary he borrowed from Wright's organic architecture.