

Mujeres, Prácticas  
Feministas y profesionales  
alternativos  
en la arquitectura

Women, Feminist Practices  
and Alternatives Practitioner  
in Architecture

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Expanding Agency:  
Women, Race and the  
Dissemination of Modern  
Architecture

Agenda expandida:  
Mujeres, raza y la difusión  
de la Arquitectura  
Moderna

### **Abstract**

Expanding Agency: Women, Race and the Dissemination of Modern Architecture is a five-year research project funded by a European Research Council Advanced Grant. It explores the role that women and members of ethnic minorities, primarily African Americans, played in transmitting modern architecture and design internationally between 1920 and 1970. Strands devoted to patronage, journalism, entrepreneurship, and institution building offer alternatives to accounts that focus primarily on architects. This approach expands our understanding of who had agency in this important story and more generally in shaping the built environment. Taking a global view that stresses comparisons across continents also helps build a more nuanced history of how architecture, landscape architecture, interior decoration, and the design of furnishing were transformed by new ideas that emanated from a multiplicity of sources. This in turn can help support a more diverse profession that, in the wake of #metoo and Black Lives Matter, is better prepared to engage with a broad public, including to address such social challenges as sustainability and the integration of migrants.

### **Keywords**

Women architects, Afro-American Communities, Global South, Matronage, Women Journalist

*Expanding Agency: Women, Race and the Dissemination of Modern Architecture*<sup>1</sup> is a five-year research project, running from 2021 through the end of 2026 that is being funded by a European Research Council Advanced Grant. It explores the role that women and members of ethnic minorities, primarily African Americans, played in transmitting modern architecture and design internationally, including within Europe, between 1920 and 1970. Strands devoted to patronage, journalism, entrepreneurship, and institution building offer alternatives to accounts that focus

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# Expanding Agency: Women, Race and the Dissemination of Modern Architecture

## Agenda expandida: Mujeres, raza y la difusión de la Arquitectura Moderna

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### Resumen

Expanding Agency: Women, Race and the Dissemination of Modern Architecture (Agenda expandida: mujeres, Raza y la difusión de la Arquitectura Moderna) es un proyecto de investigación de cinco años de duración financiado por el Consejo Europeo de Investigación (ERC) mediante una Advanced Grant. Este proyecto explora el papel que desempeñaron las mujeres y las minorías étnicas, especialmente las afroamericanas, en la transmisión a nivel internacional de la arquitectura y el diseño moderno entre 1920 y 1970. Las líneas de investigación dedicadas al mecenazgo, al periodismo, al espíritu emprendedor y a la construcción institucional ofrecen alternativas a los relatos centrados principalmente en arquitectos varones. Este enfoque amplía nuestra comprensión de quiénes tuvieron capacidad de acción en esta importante historia y, en general, en la configuración del entorno construido. La adopción de una visión global que ponga el énfasis en las comparaciones entre continentes ayuda a construir una historia con más matices de la transformación de la arquitectura, el paisajismo, la decoración de interiores y el diseño de mobiliario a través de nuevas ideas surgidas de diversas fuentes. Esto, a su vez, puede contribuir a la diversidad en una profesión que, tras la repercusión del #metoo y el Black Lives Matter, está más preparada para interactuar con un público mayor y enfrentarse a desafíos sociales como la sostenibilidad y la integración migratoria.

### Palabras clave

Mujeres arquitectas, Comunidad afroamericana, Sur Global, Matronazgo, Mujeres periodistas

*Expanding Agency: Women, Race and the Dissemination of Modern Architecture*<sup>1</sup> es un proyecto de investigación de cinco años de duración, de 2021 hasta finales de 2026, financiado por el Consejo Europeo de Investigación (ERC) mediante una *Advance Grant*. El proyecto explora el papel que desempeñaron las mujeres y las minorías étnicas, especialmente las afroamericanas, en la transmisión a nivel internacional, incluyendo Europa, de la arquitectura y el diseño moderno entre 1920 y 1970. Las líneas de investigación dedicadas al mecenazgo, al periodismo, al espíritu emprendedor y a la

1 Este proyecto ha recibido financiación del Consejo Europeo de Investigación (CEI) en el marco del programa de investigación e innovación Horizonte 2020 de la Unión Europea (concesión N° 101019419).

primarily on architects. This approach expands our understanding of who had agency in this important story and more generally in shaping the built environment. Taking a global view that stresses comparisons across continents also helps build a more nuanced history of how architecture, landscape architecture, interior decoration, and the design of furnishing were transformed by new ideas that emanated from a multiplicity of sources. This in turn can help support a more diverse profession that, in the wake of #metoo and Black Lives Matter, is better prepared to engage with a broad public, including to address such social challenges as sustainability and the integration of migrants.

This project contributes to a welcome shift in how architectural history is being written. Scholars have generally ascribed the transmission of modern architecture and design from the handful of European countries where it flourished in avant-garde circles in the 1920s to the rest of the world as the result above all of the travels of famous male architects, including of migrants who found refuge from the Third Reich in the Americas.<sup>2</sup> *Expanding Agency* challenges this story by drawing sustained attention to the contributions that women and members of minority communities made to this major shift in taste. It illustrates the creative ways in which women pushed at definitions of gender-appropriate activities to carve out successful careers while influencing the appearance of the world around them and in which architecture and design contributed to African American aspirations for economic and political advancement. Emphasizing the pull rather than the push factor, I aim to broaden the complex mix of considerations, including identity formation and social distinction as well as cost, that attracted what would now be termed influencers as well as consumers to modernism. Finally, I hope to provide a more nuanced understanding of how tastemakers made the modern local in Africa, Latin America, and Asia, as well as in Europe and the English-speaking world.

Buildings matter. They matter not only because of their potential aesthetic power, but because even humble ones profoundly affect human experience, not least through the (typically unstable) messages they communicate about identity. This is accomplished both through the choice of style and through the shaping of space. Buildings also offer those who have the power to shape their own environments a degree of wish fulfillment as well as the ability to impose their taste upon those who inhabit these spaces or simply travel down the streets they line. To be and to feel empowered women and members of ethnic minorities need not only to have the ability to share in the creation of the places where they live, work, shop and relax, but to be aware of the degree to which they have had that power in the past. The history of modern architecture needs to transition from being a narrative that too often supports masculinist professional authority and autonomy to acknowledging the range of agents who have always been responsible for the appearance of not just buildings but also the landscapes in which they are embedded and the objects with which they are furnished.

There has been a welcome explosion in interest recently in women architects, sparked unfortunately to a large degree by anger that even in many supposedly advanced countries women continue to face such hurdles in the profession.<sup>3</sup> Two generations of feminist scholarship have too seldom

2 For an early and influential statement of this view see William Jordy, "The Aftermath of the Bauhaus in America: Gropius, Mies, and Breuer," *Perspectives in American History* 2 (1968): 485-543. It is repeated with less nuance and detail throughout the latest edition of Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2021).

3 A partial list of recent books includes Sarah Allaback, *The First American Women Architects* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2008); James Benedict Brown, Harriet Harris and Ruth Morrow, *A Gendered Profession* (London: Routledge, 2019); Christian Budde and Mary Pepchinski, eds., *Frau Architekt: Over 100 Years of Women in Architecture* (Berlin: Wasmuth, 2017); Madhavi Desai, *Women Architects and Modernism in India: Narratives and Contemporary Practices* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2016); Sonia Dümpelmann and John Beardsley, eds., *Women, Modernity, and Landscape Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2015); Carmen Espergel, *Women Architects in the Modern Movement* (London: Routledge, 2018); Katia Frey and Eliana Perotti, eds., *Theoretikerinnen des Städtebaus: Texte und Projekte für die Stadt* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 2015); Jane Hall, *Breaking Ground: Architecture by Women* (London: Phaidon, 2019); Mary Pepchinski and Mariann Simon, eds., *Ideological Equals: Women Architects in Socialist Europe, 1945-1989* (London: Routledge, 2016); D. Fairchild Ruggles, *Women's Eye, Woman's Hand: Making Art and Architecture in Modern India* (Delhi: Zubaan, 2014); Libby Sellers, *Women Design: Pioneers in architecture, industrial, graphic and digital design from the twentieth century to the present day* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2018); Anna Sokolina, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Women in Architecture* (New York/London: Routledge, 2021); Despina Statigakos, *Where are the Women Architects?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016); Agata Toromanoff, *Raising the Roof: Women Architects who Broke through the Glass Ceiling* (Munich: Prestel, 2021); Lynne Walker and Elizabeth Darling, *AA Women in Architec-*

construcción institucional ofrecen alternativas a los relatos centrados principalmente en arquitectos varones. Este enfoque amplía nuestra comprensión de quiénes tuvieron capacidad de acción en esta importante historia y, en general, en la configuración del entorno construido. La adopción de una visión global que ponga el énfasis en las comparaciones entre continentes ayuda a construir una historia con más matices de la transformación de la arquitectura, el paisajismo, la decoración de interiores y el diseño de mobiliario a través de nuevas ideas surgidas de diversas fuentes. Esto, a su vez, puede contribuir a la diversidad en una profesión que, tras la repercusión del #metoo y el Black Lives Matter, está más preparada para interactuar con un público mayor y enfrentarse a desafíos sociales como la sostenibilidad y la integración migratoria.

Este proyecto contribuye a generar un cambio positivo en la forma de escribir la historia de la arquitectura. En general, los académicos han atribuido la transmisión de la arquitectura y el diseño moderno —desde el puñado de países europeos en los que florecieron en los círculos vanguardistas de la década de 1920 hacia el resto del mundo— a los viajes de famosos arquitectos varones, incluyendo a aquellos que emigraron a las Américas para refugiarse del Tercer Reich.<sup>2</sup> *Expanding Agency* desafía esta versión y visibiliza las contribuciones de las mujeres y las comunidades minoritarias a este cambio significativo en los gustos. Ilustra los originales métodos que utilizaron las mujeres para enfrentarse a las definiciones de actividades consideradas apropiadas para su género y así forjarse carreras de éxito e influir en la apariencia del mundo que las rodeaba. El proyecto también examina las contribuciones de la arquitectura y el diseño a las aspiraciones afroamericanas de progreso económico y político. Destacando el factor de atracción sobre el de expulsión, pretendo ampliar la compleja mezcla de consideraciones, incluyendo la formación de identidad, la distinción social y el coste, que atrajeron hacia la modernidad a consumidores a lo que actualmente denominaríamos *influencers*. Por último, espero proporcionar una comprensión con más matices del proceso mediante el cual los ‘creadores de gusto’ convirtieron lo moderno en local en África, América Latina, Asia, así como en Europa y en el mundo anglosajón.

Los edificios importan, no solo por su potencial poder estético, sino porque incluso los más humildes tienen un profundo efecto en la experiencia humana, sobre todo mediante los mensajes (típicamente inestables) que comunican sobre la identidad. Esto se consigue con la elección del estilo y la configuración del espacio. Los edificios también ofrecen a quienes tienen el poder de configurar sus entornos la capacidad de cumplir deseos y de imponer su gusto sobre quienes habitan esos espacios o simplemente transitan las calles que los bordean. Para ser y sentirse empoderadas, las mujeres y las minorías étnicas necesitan, no solo tener la capacidad participar en la creación de los lugares en los que viven, trabajan, compran y se relajan, sino ser conscientes de en qué medida han tenido ese poder en el pasado. La historia de la arquitectura moderna debe dejar de ser una narración que, con demasiada frecuencia, apoya la autoridad y la autonomía profesional masculina y comenzar a reconocer el abanico de agentes que siempre han sido responsables de la apariencia, no solo de los edificios, sino de los paisajes en los que se integran y de los objetos que forman parte de su mobiliario.

En los últimos tiempos se ha producido un auge en el interés que despiertan las mujeres arquitectas provocado, lamentablemente, por la indignación que generan los obstáculos a los que deben seguir enfrentándose las mujeres en la profesión, incluso en países supuestamente avanzados.<sup>3</sup> Dos

2 Para una exposición temprana e influyente de este punto de vista, véase “The Aftermath of the Bauhaus in America: Gropius, Mies, and Breuer”, *Perspectives in American History* 2 (1968): 485-543. Se repite con menos matices y detalles en la última edición de Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2021).

3 Una lista parcial de libros recientes incluye Sarah Allaback, *The First American Women Architects* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2008); James Benedict Brown, Harriet Harris et al, *A Gendered Profession* (London: Routledge, 2019); Christian Budde y Mary Pepchinski, eds., *Frau Architekt: Over 100 Years of Women in Architecture* (Berlin: Wasmuth, 2017); Madhavi Desai, *Women Architects and Modernism in India: Narratives and Contemporary Practices* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2016); Sonia Dümpelmann y John Beardsley, eds., *Women, Modernity, and Landscape Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2015); Carmen Espergel, *Women Architects in the Modern Movement* (London: Routledge, 2018); Katia Frey y Eliana Perotti, eds., *Theoretikerinnen des Städtebaus: Texte und Projekte für die Stadt* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 2015); Jane Hall, *Breaking Ground: Architecture by Women* (London: Phaidon, 2019); Mary Pepchinski y Mariann Simon, eds., *Ideological Equals: Women Architects in Socialist Europe, 1945-1989* (London: Routledge, 2016); D. Fairchild Ruggles, *Women’s Eye, Woman’s Hand: Making Art and Architecture in Modern India* (Delhi: Zubaan, 2014); Libby Sellers, *Women Design: Pioneers in architecture, industrial, graphic and digital design from the twentieth century to the present day* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2018); Anna Sokolina, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Women in Architecture* (New York/London: Routledge, 2021); Despina Statigakos, *Where are the Women Architects?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016); Agata Toromanoff, *Raising the Roof: Women Architects who Broke through the Glass Ceiling* (Munich: Prestel, 2021); Lynne Walker y Elizabeth Darling, *AA Women in Architecture, 1917-2017* (London: AA



been folded back into the classroom, nor in the United States has the much smaller body of work on African Americans, especially outside their experience of enslavement and of residing in public housing.<sup>4</sup> *Expanding Agency* seeks to redress this not only by recovering the stories of overlooked women and minority architects, but by writing both groups into the center of the history of modern architecture.

The individual members of the team include two postdoctoral fellows, two doctoral students, and a research assistant. Because they have not yet been named as I write, the following outline of the project detailing its themes and approaches focuses disproportionately on the examples that I am myself researching.

The first of the project's four themes is patronage. Elite and middle-class women from many different parts of the world and many different periods in history have figured prominently in two generations of feminist histories of architecture.<sup>5</sup> That of African Americans, however, has not yet garnered the same degree of attention. *Expanding Agency* will encourage new research on this topic.<sup>6</sup> A postdoctoral fellow will focus on the architecture built on the campuses of Historically Black College and Universities (HBCU) between 1920 and 1970. This may prove an avenue for charting changes in Black architectural taste across this period. The situation is complicated by the fact that until the 1940s, many of these institutions had white leadership. White philanthropy also played a major role in creating many of these environments.<sup>7</sup> These campuses nonetheless at times offered prestigious opportunities to the small community of Black architects, and they certainly affected Black experience. The project will also generate a book to which Bryan Clark Green, Katherine Kuenzli, and I are contributing, on the Belgian Friendship Building at Virginia Union University in Richmond. A reconstruction of the Belgian Pavilion Henry van de Velde designed for the world's fair held in New York in 1939 and again in 1940, it included a tower dedicated to the memory of Robert L. Vann, the recently deceased editor of the Pittsburgh *Courier*. Visible from much of the city, as well as the most important highway running down the East Coast, it provided a compelling alternative to the white supremacist Confederate memorials lining nearby Monument Avenue. As no equally prominent modernist building yet stood on any another campus in the United States, this story challenges our understanding of how European modernism was imported into the country and by whom.

Further insight into Black taste will be a study of the churches and houses designed in and around Richmond, Virginia, by Ethel Bailey Furman (1893-1976). The daughter of a building contractor, she fulfilled African American aspirations in what often remained segregated settings.<sup>8</sup> While Furman's work appears to have been relatively conventional, it nonetheless offers important evidence that those Blacks who could afford it bought into a suburban ideal that is often presumed to have been

*ture, 1917-2017* (London: AA Publications, 2017); and Mary N. Woods, *Women Architects in India: Histories of Practice in Mumbai and Delhi* (London: Routledge, 2016).

- 4 For examples of feminist scholarship see Lori A. Brown, *Feminist Practices: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Women in Architecture* (New York/London: Routledge, 2011); Elizabeth Darling and Nathaniel Robert Walker, eds., *Suffragette City: Women, Politics, and the Built Environment* (London: Routledge, 2019); Elizabeth Darling and Lesley Whitworth, eds., *Women and the Making of Built Space in England* (London: Routledge, 2017); Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981); Deborah Sugg Ryan, *Ideal Homes: Uncovering the history and design of the interwar house* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018); and Jessica Ellen Sewell, *Women and the Everyday City: Public Space in San Francisco, 1890-1915* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011). For works that address the African American experience see Ben Austin, *High Risers. Cabrini-Green and the Fate of American Public Housing* (New York: Harper, 2018); Andrew Weise, *Places of their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); and Mabel Wilson, *Negro Building: Black Americans in the World of Fairs and Museums* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).
- 5 For instance, Alice Friedman, *Women and the Making of the Modern House* (New York: Abrams, 1998); and Sabine Frommel and Juliette Dumas, eds., *Batir au Féminin? En Europe et dans l'Empire Ottoman* (Paris: Picard, 2013).
- 6 For exceptions see Angel David Nieves, *An Architecture of Education: African American Women Design the New South* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2018); and Ellen Weiss, *Robert R. Taylor and Tuskegee: An African American Architect Designs for Booker T. Washington* (Montgomery: New South Books, 2011).
- 7 Bobby L. Lovett, *America's Historically Black College and Universities: A Narrative History, 1837-2009* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2011).
- 8 Susan Gergen Horner, "Ethel Bailey Furman," in Dreck Spurlock Wilson, ed., *African American Architects: A Biographical Dictionary, 1965-1945* (New York/London: Routledge, 2005): 222-25.

generaciones de conocimiento feminista, muy rara vez, se ha incorporado a las temáticas de las aulas, ni siquiera en los Estados Unidos donde el volumen de investigaciones sobre la cuestión afroamericana es mucho más pequeña, especialmente fuera de su experiencia de la esclavitud y de su situación en relación con la vivienda pública.<sup>4</sup> *Expanding Agency* pretende rectificar esta situación, no solo recuperando las historias ignoradas de mujeres y miembros de las minorías en la arquitectura, sino incluyendo a ambos grupos en el centro de la historia de la arquitectura moderna.

La contratación del equipo incluye dos investigadores postdoctorales, dos de doctorado y un asistente de investigación. Dado que en el momento de escribir este artículo no conozco sus nombres, el siguiente esbozo del proyecto, detallando los temas y enfoques, se centra especialmente en los ejemplos que yo misma estoy investigando.

El primero de los cuatro temas del proyecto es el mecenazgo. Las mujeres pertenecientes a la élite y a la clase media de diferentes partes del mundo y épocas de la historia han ocupado un lugar destacado en dos generaciones de historias feministas de la arquitectura.<sup>5</sup> El caso del mecenazgo en la comunidad afroamericana, sin embargo, no ha recibido la misma atención. *Expanding Agency* fomentará nuevas investigaciones sobre este tema.<sup>6</sup> Un investigador postdoctoral se centrará en la arquitectura construida en los campus de las universidades históricamente negras (HBCU) entre 1920 y 1970. Esta línea de investigación puede servir para trazar los cambios en el gusto arquitectónico de la comunidad negra a lo largo de este periodo. El hecho de que muchas de estas instituciones estuvieran dirigidas por varones blancos hasta la década de 1940 complicaba la situación. La filantropía blanca también desempeñó un papel fundamental en la creación de muchos de estos entornos.<sup>7</sup> Sin embargo, en ocasiones, estos campus ofrecieron oportunidades de prestigio a un reducido número de arquitectos de la comunidad negra y, sin duda, influyeron en la ‘experiencia negra’. El proyecto también producirá un libro en el que participamos Bryan Clark Green, Katherine Kuenzli y yo, sobre el Edificio de la Amistad belga, ubicado en la Universidad Virginia Union de Richmond. Se trata de una reconstrucción del pabellón belga que Henry van de Velde diseñó para la Feria Mundial celebrada en Nueva York en 1939 y 1940, con una torre dedicada a la memoria de Robert L. Vann, editor del *Pittsburgh Courier*, que había fallecido recientemente. Visible desde gran parte de la ciudad, y desde la autopista más importante de la costa este, este proyecto ofrecía una cautivadora alternativa a los monumentos confederados a la supremacía blanca que bordeaban la cercana *Monument Avenue*. Dado que no se construyó ningún edificio moderno que igualara su magnitud en ningún otro campus estadounidense, esta historia desafía nuestra comprensión de cómo y quién importó la modernidad europea al país.

Además, el estudio de las iglesias y casas diseñadas por Ethel Bailey Furman (1893-1976) en Richmond (Virginia) y sus alrededores proporcionará una visión más amplia del gusto de la comunidad negra. Hija de un contratista, ella hizo realidad las aspiraciones de la comunidad afroamericana en lo que solían ser espacios segregados.<sup>8</sup> La obra de Furman —aunque parece relativamente convencional—

Publications, 2017); y Mary N. Woods, *Women Architects in India: Histories of Practice in Mumbai and Delhi* (London: Routledge, 2016).

- 4 Para consultar ejemplos de estudios feministas, véase Lori A. Brown, *Feminist Practices: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Women in Architecture* (New York/London: Routledge, 2011); Elizabeth Darling y Nathaniel Robert Walker, eds., *Suffragette City: Women, Politics, and the Built Environment* (London: Routledge, 2019); Elizabeth Darling y Lesley Whitworth, eds., *Women and the Making of Built Space in England* (London: Routledge, 2017); Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981); Deborah Sugg Ryan, *Ideal Homes: Uncovering the history and design of the interwar house* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018); y Jessica Ellen Sewell, *Women and the Everyday City: Public Space in San Francisco, 1890-1915* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011). Para más información sobre obras que abordan la experiencia afroamericana, véase Ben Austin, *High Risers. Cabrini-Green and the Fate of American Public Housing* (New York: Harper, 2018); Andrew Weise, *Places of their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); y Mabel Wilson, *Negro Building: Black Americans in the World of Fairs and Museums* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).
- 5 Por ejemplo, Alice Friedman, *Women and the Making of the Modern House* (New York: Abrams, 1998); y Sabine Frommel y Juliette Dumas, eds., *Batir au Féminin? En Europe et dans l'Empire Ottoman* (Paris: Picard, 2013).
- 6 Algunas excepciones son Angel David Nieves, *An Architecture of Education: African American Women Design the New South* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2018); y Ellen Weiss, *Robert R. Taylor and Tuskegee: An African American Architect Designs for Booker T. Washington* (Montgomery: New South Books, 2011).
- 7 Bobby L. Lovett, *America's Historically Black College and Universities: A Narrative History, 1837-2009* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2011).
- 8 Susan Gergen Horner, “Ethel Bailey Furman”, en Dreck Spurlock Wilson, ed., *African American Architects: A Biographical Dictionary, 1965-1945* (New York/London: Routledge, 2005) 222-25.

exclusively white. A survey of the coverage of architecture and design in *Ebony* magazine, from its founding in 1945 until Furman's death in 1976, and of African American newspapers published in Richmond, provides further context for this analysis.

This leads me to my second theme, which is journalism. Although Beatriz Colomina has argued that modern architecture is mass culture, historians of modern architecture have focused their attention on journals targeted at an overwhelmingly male profession and at *Playboy* rather than those whose readership was largely female.<sup>9</sup> The latter need to be systematically mined to understand how an audience for modern architecture and design was created. That women journalists mattered has never been in question, as the example of Jane Jacobs, who wrote for *Architectural Forum* before publishing *The Death and Live of Great American Cities* in 1961, demonstrates.<sup>10</sup> To date only a handful of architectural historians, including Sibel Bozdogan, Abigail McGowan, and Monica Penick, have made systematic use of these sources.<sup>11</sup> Cultural historians have made more use of shelter magazines (monthlies that focused on the appearance and decoration of homes), women's magazines, and, although less often, the women's pages of newspapers.<sup>12</sup> They, however, have almost never looked beyond Europe and the English-speaking world, and they often posit these publications as sources of alternatives to modernism, rather than examining how women supported and yet transformed the modernist mainstream.<sup>13</sup> For instance, as editor of *House Beautiful* Ethel Power introduced her readers in the United States to the work of pioneering European modernists such as Le Corbusier and Pierre Chareau and to the concept of a machine aesthetic four years before the Museum of Modern Art's supposedly pioneering exhibition was staged in 1932. Moreover, she hired Henry Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, two of the curators of that exhibition, in order to help her do so.<sup>14</sup> *Expanding Agency's* two doctoral students will address Latin American and possibly African and/or Asian as well as examples from Europe to demonstrate the degree to which writings by and for women helped lay the foundation upon which iconic examples of modern architecture were later built.

Entrepreneurship is also important. Without celebrating either consumerism or capitalism, *Expanding Agency* can expand our understanding of the achievements of women in establishing businesses that contributed to the built environment while providing career pathways.<sup>15</sup> It examines how they built successful professional practices, where they opened shops selling modern design, and what they accomplished as real estate developers and possibly as building contractors. For many women, modern design offered a path to personal emancipation. That women such as Marianne Brandt, Eileen Gray, and Lilly Reich were among the most important modernist designers of the 1920s is already known.<sup>16</sup> The role that women played in establishing influential businesses, such as Artek, Eames, and Knoll, whose design and marketing of furnishings disseminated new styles internationally from the 1930s through the 1970s, has also begun to be chronicled.<sup>17</sup>

9 Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity. Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996).

10 Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961).

11 Sibel Bozdogan, *Modernism and Nation Building in Turkey: Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001); Abigail McGowan, "Domestic Modern: Redecorating Homes in Bombay in the 1930s," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 75 (2016): 423-46; and Monica Penick, *Elizabeth Gordon, House Beautiful, and the American Home* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

12 Catherine Clay, Maria DiCenzio, Barbara Green and Fiona Hackney, *Women's Periodicals and Print Culture in Britain, 1919-1939: The Interwar Period* (London: EUP, 2018); and Rachel Ritchie, Sue Hawkins, Nicola Phillips, and S. Jay Kleinberg, ed., *Women in Magazines: Research, Representation, Production, and Consumption* (New York/London: Routledge, 2016).

13 Penny Sparke, *As Long as it's Pink: The Sexual Politics of Taste* (London: Pandora, 1995).

14 Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Jr., "Six Modern European Houses," *House Beautiful* 64 (1932): 253-55; and Philip Johnson, "Two Houses in the International Style," *House Beautiful* 70 (1931): 307-09, 356.

15 This approach is informed by studies such as Lizbeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003); and Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

16 Christiane Lange, *Ludwig Mies van der Rohe & Lilly Reich, Furniture and Interiors* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2007); Chloe Pitiot and Nina Stritzler-Levine, eds., *Eileen Gray, Designer and Architect* (New York: Bard Graduate Center, 2020); Robin Schuldenfrei, *Luxury and Modernism: Architecture and the Object in Germany, 1900-1933* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

17 Ana Araujo, *No Compromise: The Work of Florence Knoll* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2021); Pat Kirkham, *Charles and Ray Eames: Designers of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995); and Nina Stritzler-Levine, ed., *Artek and the Aaltos: Creating a Modern World* (New York: Bard Graduate Center, 2016).



demuestra que los miembros de la comunidad negra, que podían permitírselo, invertían en el ideal de zona residencial que, se supone, era exclusivamente para blancos. Un estudio de la cobertura de la arquitectura y el diseño en la revista *Ebony* —desde su fundación en 1945 hasta la muerte de Furman en 1976— y de los periódicos afroamericanos publicados en Richmond proporciona, además, un contexto adicional para este análisis.

Esto me lleva al segundo tema, el periodismo. Aunque Beatriz Colomina ha defendido que la arquitectura moderna es una cultura de masas, los historiadores de la arquitectura moderna han centrado su atención en las revistas dirigidas a una profesión abrumadoramente masculina y a *Playboy*, en lugar concentrarse en las publicaciones con un público mayoritariamente femenino.<sup>9</sup> Son estas últimas las que deben someterse a un análisis exhaustivo para entender cómo se creó un público para la arquitectura y el diseño moderno. Nunca se ha cuestionado la importancia de las periodistas mujeres, como demuestra el ejemplo de Jane Jacobs, que escribió para *Architectural Forum* antes de publicar *The Death and Live of Great American Cities* en 1961.<sup>10</sup> Hasta la fecha, solo un reducido grupo de historiadoras de la arquitectura, como Sibel Bozdogan, Abigail McGowan y Monica Penick, han hecho un uso sistemático de estas fuentes.<sup>11</sup> Los historiadores de la cultura han recurrido más a las *shelter magazines* (publicaciones mensuales centradas en el aspecto y la decoración de los hogares), a las revistas femeninas y a las páginas para mujeres de los periódicos, aunque con menos frecuencia.<sup>12</sup> Sin embargo, casi nunca han mirado más allá de Europa y del mundo anglosajón, y a menudo proponen estas publicaciones como fuentes de alternativas al modernismo, en lugar de examinar cómo las mujeres apoyaron y, al mismo tiempo, transformaron la corriente moderna principal.<sup>13</sup> Por ejemplo, Ethel Power —como editora de *House Beautiful*— dio a conocer a su público de Estados Unidos la obra de arquitectos modernos europeos pioneros como Le Corbusier y Pierre Chareau, y del concepto de ‘estética de la máquina’ cuatro años antes de la exposición, en teoría pionera, del Museo de Arte Moderno en 1932. Además, contrató a Henry Russell Hitchcock y Philip Johnson, dos de los comisarios de dicha exposición, para que la ayudaran en su objetivo.<sup>14</sup> Los dos doctorandos de *Expanding Agency* abordarán ejemplos de América Latina, África, Asia y Europa para demostrar cómo los escritos por y para mujeres ayudaron a sentar las bases sobre las que posteriormente se construyeron ejemplos icónicos de la arquitectura moderna.

El espíritu emprendedor también es importante. Sin celebrar ni el consumismo ni el capitalismo, *Expanding Agency* puede ampliar nuestra comprensión de los logros de las mujeres en la creación de empresas que contribuyeron al entorno construido, al tiempo que proporcionaron opciones profesionales.<sup>15</sup> El proyecto examina cómo construyeron despachos de éxito, dónde abrieron tiendas de diseño moderno y lo que lograron como promotoras inmobiliarias y, posiblemente, como contratistas. Para muchas mujeres, el diseño moderno ofrecía una vía de emancipación personal. Mujeres como Marianne Brandt, Eileen Gray y Lilly Reich se encontraban entre los profesionales del diseño moderno más importantes de la década de 1920.<sup>16</sup> El papel de las mujeres en la creación de empresas influyentes como Artek, Eames y Knoll —cruciales en la difusión de nuevos estilos a nivel internacional desde la

9 Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity. Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996).

10 Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961).

11 Sibel Bozdogan, *Modernism and Nation Building in Turkey: Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001); Abigail McGowan, “Domestic Modern: Redecorating Homes in Bombay in the 1930s”, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 75 (2016): 423-46; y Monica Penick, *Elizabeth Gordon, House Beautiful, and the American Home* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

12 Catherine Clay, Maria DiCenzio, et al., *Women’s Periodicals and Print Culture in Britain, 1919-1939: The Interwar Period* (London: EUP, 2018); y Rachel Ritchie, Sue Hawkins, et al, eds., *Women in Magazines: Research, Representation, Production, and Consumption* (New York/London: Routledge, 2016).

13 Penny Sparke, *As Long as it’s Pink: The Sexual Politics of Taste* (London: Pandora, 1995).

14 Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Jr., “Six Modern European Houses”, *House Beautiful* 64 (1932): 253-55; y Philip Johnson, “Two Houses in the International Style”, *House Beautiful* 70 (1931): 307-09, 356.

15 Este enfoque se basa, entre otros, en los estudios de Lizbeth Cohen, *A Consumer’s Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003); y Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America’s Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

16 Christiane Lange, *Ludwig Mies van der Rohe & Lilly Reich, Furniture and Interiors* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2007); Chloe Pitiot y Nina Stritzler-Levine, eds., *Eileen Gray, Designer and Architect* (New York: Bard Graduate Center, 2020); Robin Schuldenfrei, *Luxury and Modernism: Architecture and the Object in Germany, 1900-1933* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).



I am focusing on the role of Svenskt Tenn (Swedish pewter), founded in 1924 in Stockholm and still in business.<sup>18</sup> Established by Estrid Ericson (1894-1981) to sell the pewter she designed, Svenskt Tenn's wares were quickly featured in exhibitions across Europe and in the United States. Originally offering an inexpensive alternative to silver, Ericson quickly branched out to sell work in other media and by other designers that she marketed as supporting a lifestyle defined more by informality than mass production. She also appears to have done more to develop the pathways through which later Scandinavian design was marketed internationally than has been documented to date, at least in literature published in English. Understanding the contribution that women-owned businesses supported by a largely female clientele made to the export of European design to the United States once again challenges a story hitherto dominated by émigré architects.

More remains to be done as well to document the impact of such businesses, particularly in the Global South. Expanding Agency will also pay particular to the activities of female real estate developers and their motivations. The key role that Phyllis Lambert played in securing commissions for Ludwig Mies van der Rohe in first New York, and then Montreal and Toronto is already well known, but she was hardly alone.<sup>19</sup> Corina Kavanagh, for instance, was responsible for the erection in 1936 of Latin America's highest building, modeled on skyscrapers in New York and Chicago.<sup>20</sup> The knock-on effect of female patronage could also be inspiring and empowering for other women. The designer Clara Poset lived, for instance, for many years in Mexico City in an apartment building Carmen and Paz Oroco commissioned from Luis Barragan and Max Cetto.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, there is institution building, or what Marta Gutman has termed matronage.<sup>22</sup> Already in the last decades of the nineteenth century, women were not only founding public libraries in New England but buying and commissioning the buildings in which they were housed. Feminist scholars based in the United States and the United Kingdom have paid a great deal of attention to the many women who since the beginning of the Arts and Crafts movement have intertwined an interest in – and often careers in – architecture and design with social improvement.<sup>23</sup> My focus is instead on Gira Sarabhai (1923-2021), who after studying architecture with Frank Lloyd Wright, returned to her native Ahmedabad where she played a key role in the founding of the Calico Museum and the National Institute of Design, and in the design of the building housing the latter.<sup>24</sup> She also was an important patron of modern American art, bringing Alexander Calder and Robert Rauschenberg, for instance, to India and encouraging them to engage with the situation they found there.<sup>25</sup> Her story highlights the role played by inherited wealth in enabling women to gain the authority necessary to have an impact as institution builders.

The results of the project will be disseminated through the usual scholarly venues – dissertations, conferences papers, and peer-reviewed articles and books – but also be formatted as an exhibition that can travel to architecture schools. I hope they will contribute to supporting a more diverse profession and also to inform a diverse public that can hold the profession accountable to building for them.

18 Christian Bjork, *Estrid Ericson* (Stockholm: Orosdi-Back, 2011).

19 Phyllis Lambert with a forward by Barry Bergdoll, *Building Seagram* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

20 Kathleen James-Chakraborty, *Architecture since 1400* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014) 391-92, for the inclusion of this key building in a survey text.

21 Suleman Anaya, "Luis Barragan's Forgotten Works, Revisited," *New York Times*, 24 July 2020.

22 Marta Gutman, *A City for Children: Women, Architecture, and the Charitable Landscapes of Oakland, 1850-1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

23 Jude Burkhauser, *Glasgow Girls: Women in Art and Design, 1880-1920* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1990); Zoe Thomas, *Women Art Workers and the Arts and Crafts Movement* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020).

24 Madhavi Desai, *Women Architects and Modernism in India: Narratives and Contemporary Practices* (London: Routledge, 2016) 58-63; Aparna Basu, *As Times Change: The Story of an Ahmedabad Business Family: The Sarabhais, 1825-1975* (Ahmedabad: India: Sarabhai Family Foundation, 2018).

25 Asha Sarabhai and Suhrid Sarabhai, "Robert Rauschenberg Oral History Project: the Reminiscences of Asha and Suhrid Sarabhai," a series of interviews by Cameron Vanderscoff and Gina Guy, Columbia Center for Oral History, Columbia University, 2015; and *Calder's Voyage to India: Works from a Private Collection* (New York: Christie's, 2016).

década de 1930 hasta 1970 mediante el diseño y comercialización de mobiliario— está comenzando a ser objeto de crónicas.<sup>17</sup>

Voy a centrarme en el papel de Svenskt Tenn, fundada en 1924 en Estocolmo y todavía activa.<sup>18</sup> La empresa fue creada por Estrid Ericson (1894-1981) para vender los artículos de estaño que ella misma diseñaba. Los diseños de Svenskt Tenn no tardaron en aparecer en exposiciones de toda Europa y de Estados Unidos. Si bien, en un principio, ofrecía una alternativa económica a la plata, Ericson no tardó en diversificarse y comercializar trabajos realizados en otros materiales y por otros diseñadores y diseñadoras apoyando un estilo de vida definido más por la informalidad que por la producción en masa. Aparentemente, su contribución al desarrollo de las vías a través de las que se comercializó internacionalmente el diseño escandinavo fue más importante de lo que se ha documentado hasta la fecha —al menos en la literatura publicada en inglés—. Comprender la contribución de las empresas fundadas por mujeres —apoyadas por una clientela mayoritariamente femenina— a la exportación del diseño europeo a los Estados Unidos pone de nuevo en tela de juicio una historia hasta ahora dominada por arquitectos varones emigrados.

También queda trabajo por hacer para documentar el impacto de estos negocios, especialmente en el Sur Global. *Expanding Agency* prestará especial atención a las actividades de las promotoras inmobiliarias mujeres y a sus motivaciones. El papel trascendental de Phyllis Lambert en la consecución de proyectos para Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, primero en Nueva York y posteriormente en Montreal y Toronto, es bien conocido, pero no fue la única.<sup>19</sup> Corina Kavanagh, por ejemplo, fue responsable de la construcción, en 1936, del edificio más alto de Latinoamérica, inspirado en los rascacielos de Nueva York y Chicago.<sup>20</sup> El efecto colateral del mecenazgo femenino también puede ser inspirador y fortalecedor para otras mujeres. La diseñadora Clara Poset, por ejemplo, vivió muchos años en Ciudad de México en un edificio de apartamentos que Carmen y Paz Oroco comisionaron a Luis Barragán y Max Cetto.<sup>21</sup>

El último tema a tratar es la construcción institucional, o lo que Marta Gutman ha denominado matronazgo.<sup>22</sup> Ya en las últimas décadas del siglo XIX, las mujeres no solo fundaban bibliotecas públicas en Nueva Inglaterra, sino que compraban y comisionaban los edificios que las alojaban. Las académicas feministas radicadas en Estados Unidos y Reino Unido han prestado mucha atención al gran número de mujeres que, desde el inicio del movimiento de Artes y Oficios, han entrelazado el interés por la arquitectura y el diseño —y a menudo sus carreras— con la mejora social.<sup>23</sup> Mi atención se centra en Gira Sarabhai (1923-2021) quien, tras estudiar arquitectura con Frank Lloyd Wright, regresó a su Ahmedabad natal donde tuvo un papel decisivo en la fundación del Museo Calico y el Instituto Nacional de Diseño; además también fue clave en el diseño del edificio que alberga este último.<sup>24</sup> También fue una importante mecenas del arte moderno estadounidense, llevando, por ejemplo, a Alexander Calder y Robert Rauschenberg a la India y animándoles a comprometerse con la situación que encontraron allí.<sup>25</sup> Su historia pone de relieve el papel de la riqueza heredada en la adquisición por parte de las mujeres de la autoridad necesaria para influir como constructoras de instituciones.

17 Ana Araujo, *No Compromise: The Work of Florence Knoll* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2021); Pat Kirkham, *Charles and Ray Eames: Designers of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995); y Nina Stritzler-Levine, ed., *Artek and the Aalots: Creating a Modern World* (New York: Bard Graduate Center, 2016).

18 Christian Bjork, *Estrid Ericson* (Stockholm: Orosdi-Back, 2011).

19 Phyllis Lambert con prólogo de Barry Bergdoll, *Building Seagram* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

20 Kathleen James-Chakraborty, *Architecture since 1400* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014) 391-92, para la inclusión de este edificio clave en un texto de investigación.

21 Suleman Anaya, “Luis Barragán’s Forgotten Works, Revisited”, *New York Times*, 24 de Julio de 2020.

22 Marta Gutman, *A City for Children: Women, Architecture, and the Charitable Landscapes of Oakland, 1850-1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

23 Jude Burkhauser, *Glasgow Girls: Women in Art and Design, 1880-1920* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1990); Zoe Thomas, *Women Art Workers and the Arts and Crafts Movement* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020).

24 Madhavi Desai, *Women Architects and Modernism in India: Narratives and Contemporary Practices* (London: Routledge, 2016) 58-63; Aparna Basu, *As Times Change: The Story of an Ahmedabad Business Family: The Sarabhais, 1825-1975* (Ahmedabad: India: Sarabhai Family Foundation, 2018).

25 Asha Sarabhai y Suhrid Sarabhai, “Robert Rauschenberg Oral History Project: the Reminiscences of Asha and Subrid Sarabhai,” serie de entrevistas a cargo de Cameron Vanderscoff y Gina Guy, *Columbia Center for Oral History, Columbia University*, 2015; y *Calder’s Voyage to India: Works from a Private Collection* (New York: Christie’s, 2016).

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Los resultados del proyecto se difundirán a través de las vías académicas habituales —tesis doctorales, ponencias en congresos y artículos y libros revisados por expertos— pero también tendrán el formato de una exposición que podrá viajar a las escuelas de arquitectura. Espero que contribuyan a apoyar una profesión más diversa e informar a un público plural que puede exigir a la profesión que construya para ellos.

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