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Regionalist Pavilions in San Diego and Seville: International Expositions as Global Platforms of Exchange (1915-1929)

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Abstract

At the Panama-California Exposition in San Diego (1915) and the Exposición Ibero-Americano in Seville (1929) regionalism was made the official architectural style of the entire exposition. The organizers in San Diego argued that the American South-West had a very rich cultural heritage that could compete with New England. Actually the Spanish colonial heritage and the patrimony of the Native Americans were even much older than the earliest remains of the first British settlers on the East Coast. As a consequence all buildings of the exposition were constructed in the new Spanish Colonial Revival Style. At about the same time, a small group of activists active at the New Mexico Museum of Art in Santa Fe, who had close contacts with the organizers of the San Diego Fair, developed the Pueblo and Santa Fe Style in the South-West, which were inspired by indigenous and Mexican predecessors.

At the Ibero-American exhibition in Seville similar trends could be found. The Spanish pavilions, masterpieces of Anibal González Álvarez, the country's most influential regionalist architect, were inspired by the neo-vernacular Spanish and Moorish heritage. The Spanish regions and colonies (Morocco and Equatorial Guinea) had their own characteristic pavilions, while most American countries built an impressive pavilion in a regionalist style. They found inspiration in the Spanish colonial legacy and the indigenous heritage, which until then had been largely disregarded. Thus, Mexico built a neo-indigenista pavilion inspired by pre-Colombian remains in Yucatan, Peru chose a Mestizo Style in which Spanish colonial and indigenous elements were fused, while Argentina and the United States used the Spanish Colonial Revival Style for their pavilion. Very influential among the Latin American architects were the "indigenista" philosophy of the Mexican intellectual José Vasconcelos. Many of the architects of these pavilions held a lecture at the Ateneo of Seville, which became the main platform for the exchange of ideas during the exhibition.

This paper aims to provide a comparative perspective by combining views from architectural journals and more theoretical treatises from both Spain and the Americas with the practical results in the form of the regionalist pavilions at both international expositions. Finally, I will reflect on the impact of both imperialist ideas and nationalist ideologies on these architectural debates.



Juan Talavera, Villa Enrique & Villa Pilar, Seville, Spain, 1922-23.

Website for the 2016 Conference: http://www.asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de/en/global_regionalism