rather than read long labels. But texts were needed to differentiate original Hoffmann-designed objects from reproductions. Limiting wall text certainly has merit, yet this approach presumes knowledge and visual skills viewers may lack.

A handsome book, not precisely a catalog, accompanied the show. Five essays by American and Austrian scholars focus on general aspects of turn-of-the-century Austria and Austrian design but not necessarily Hoffmann’s work. Some of the topics, such as the mental interior of Viennese space, woman and reform clothing, and nationalism and design are indeed interesting, but their relationship to the exhibition at hand seems elusive except in the broadest of terms. Two essays, however, focus on the design and decor of Hoffmann’s various residences: one by curator/editor Witt-Dörring on the Hoffman interiors and the other by Michael Huey on Hoffmann’s personal spaces. A more thorough treatment of the reconstructed rooms is forthcoming.

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Publication related to the exhibition:

Museo de Historia de la Ciudad de Barcelona
19 May–8 October 2006

“Architecture in Spain does not exist; there are no architects, only pastry-makers. What for? So that foreigners can laugh at us.”

The exhibition G.A.T.C.P.A.C. 1923–1939: A New Architecture for a New City, organized by the Museo de Historia de la Ciudad de Barcelona and Colegio de Arquitectos de Cataluña, provided a context for these words written in 1930 by the young Basque architect José Manuel Aizpurúa. In 1929 in attempting to answer the question, “when will there be architecture in Spain?” Aizpurúa, along with Joaquín Labayen, designed and built the Club Náutico of San Sebastián, a small emblematic building along the beautiful seashore of the city. Both architects belonged to G.A.T.E.P.A.C.—Grupo de Arquitectos y Técnicos Españoles para el Progreso de la Arquitectura Contemporánea (literally, Group of Spanish Architects and Technicians for the Development of Contemporary Architecture). The group was established in Zaragoza in 1930 by several young, forward-looking Spanish architects following the success of two exhibitions held during that year in San Sebastián and the year before in the Dalmau galleries of Barcelona. During their first meeting on 26 October, they drafted a charter and decided to publish a journal, AC-Documentos de Actividad Contemporánea. G.A.T.E.P.A.C. was organized into three groups: the Northern Group, almost exclusively represented by the Basque architects Aizpurúa, Labayen, and Vallejo; the Central Group, with headquarters in Madrid, represented by Fernando García Mercadal and his followers; and the Eastern Group, centered in Barcelona and structured around its two most distinguished representatives, José Luis Sert and José Torres Clavé.

Mercadal and his friend Juan de Zavala were the only two Spanish architects invited by Hélène de Mandrot to her castle at La Sarraz where the Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne (CIAM) was conceived, and consequently they were able to participate in the foundation of the Comité International pour la Réalisation des Problèmes de la Architecture Contemporaine (CIRPAC, an executive branch of CIAM), as well as in the first CIAM. Mercadal also participated as the Spanish delegate in the CIAM of 1929 in Frankfurt, and he was joined by Sert for the 1930 CIAM in Brussels. In 1932, CIRPAC met in Barcelona with the Spanish architects of G.A.T.E.P.A.C. By 1933, the Northern and Central groups of G.A.T.E.P.A.C. had ceased to function, and thereafter the Catalan group grew in size and became more active. Chartered in October 1930 as G.A.T.C.P.A.C. (Grupo de Arquitectos y Técnicos Catalanes por el Progreso de la Arquitectura Contemporánea), it aggressively championed the cause of contemporary architecture. Torres Clavé, a key figure in the group, directed the publication in Barcelona of its critical, theoretical, and propagandistic journal AC-Documentos de Actividad Contemporánea. Torres Clavé and his partner Sert, serving as the driving force behind G.A.T.C.P.A.C. and its pledge to modernize architecture, represented the best rationalist architecture of those years. Generally, rationalist architecture arrived in Spain rather late and with a formalist, uncompromising orientation. However, younger architects like Luis Lacasa, who were committed to a social function of architecture, showed that Madrid provided a fertile rationalism, as seen in several realized projects that developed independently from the avant-garde postulates defended by G.A.T.C.P.A.C.³

The exhibition, curated by Antonio Pizza and Josep M. Rovira to mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of both G.A.T.E.P.A.C. and of the proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic, was organized around four clearly differentiated periods: the first period, 1925 through 1930, presented the architects as restless students and the academic training of the young architects that formed G.A.T.E.P.A.C.; the second period, 1931 to 1936, devoted to architects of the republic, documented the consolidation and realization of the new ideology in projects for a new city, a productive phase that benefited from the publication of the journal AC; the third period, 1936 through 1939, showed the change of direction of the avant-garde group affected by the Civil War and revolution at this time in Barcelona; the fourth period, 1939 and shortly thereafter, examined the demise of the group in the midst of criticism, silence, and exile.

Beyond contextualizing the work of G.A.T.C.P.A.C. and documenting their urban projects, the great attraction of the exhibit was the coherent presentation of
the most interesting projects developed by the design group and their profound experimental character. Nothing like this work could be observed elsewhere in Spain at the time.

The exhibit encompassed the most important designs by a large group of architects (G.A.T.C.P.A.C. had nearly ninety members), including practitioners and students. Architects represented by rationalistic works of undeniable merit included Sixto Illescas, Jaume Mestres, Germán Rodríguez Arias, Francesc Fàbregas, and Ramón Durán. However, the most important works corresponded to Sert and Torres Clavé, some of them with the collaboration of Juan Bautista Subirana. The central space of the exhibition was devoted to new architecture for a new city, largely consisting of housing projects and urban design elements (such as schools and hospitals). These projects were aligned with the republican desire to improve living conditions in the city according to the motto “the human spirit looking after the common good,” posted in the exhibition. Among the several projects that were featured, two by Sert, Torres Clavé, and Subirana from 1933 in Barcelona best represented the idea of a modern architecture put to the service of a new social program: a group of 207 workers’ houses referred to as the “Casa Bloc” and a center for treating tuberculosis. Both of these projects exemplify the design principles and construction technology of modern architecture while fulfilling the urban prescriptions of G.A.T.C.P.A.C.’s Plan Maciá that responded to the social needs outlined by the republic.

The three-dimensional models in the exhibition, executed by a studio of design students, showed these buildings to advantage and contributed to a better appreciation of their historical and cultural significance. If Torres Clavé served as the principal cultural and ideological agent of the group through his publications in AC, Sert remained unchallenged as the most active practicing architect. The exhibition also brought to light Sert’s concern about negative criticism of his work, which had been described as “too Germanic.” In response, he defended the inherent “Mediterranean” qualities of his architecture, pointing out that its simple forms and dominance of horizontal planes were the essence of Latinidad. Sert saw his own work as representative of the avant-garde but filtered through the roots of popular Mediterranean architecture.

The exhibition concluded by explaining the demise of the group marked by the war, the political conflict of the republic, and a chaotic Barcelona with a population of nearly three million inhabitants at the end of the war immersed in a revolutionary process. As an epilogue, the exhibition described the pavilion of the republic at the Paris Exposition of 1937, designed by Lacasa and Sert with the collaboration of Antonio Bonet. In this simple, modern pavilion, the contribution that the republican government made with its limited resources was to exhibit Picasso’s Guernica, a powerful work of art that revealed the reality of Spain at the time, the disaster of war.

The death of Torres Clavé, the defeat of the republic, and the exile of Sert, who was judged and condemned in absentia, caused the dissolution of the design group, which could not survive without their leaders. But the exhibition gave no definitive answer how the group could have proceeded without them, nor did it look at any of the contradictions surrounding these important events in Catalan modern architecture.

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Notes
1. José Manuel Aizpurúa “¿Cuándo habrá arquitectura?” La Gaceta Literaria (Mar., 1940).
3. Some writers refer to a “real rationalism” to differentiate Madrid from the Barcelona developments; cf. Miguel Ángel Baldellou and Antón Capitel, Arquitectura española del siglo XX, Summa Artis XL (Madrid, 1995).
4. See Baldellou and Capitel, “Epílogo. De Barcelona a Paris (1937),” in Arquitectura española, 351: “If Mies van der Rohe’s Barcelona Pavilion came to represent a turning point in the architectural consciousness of Spanish professionals, then Sert and Lacasa’s Paris Pavilion could be considered the swan song of the utopia.”

Carlo Mollino arabeschi
Galleria Civica d’Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Turin, Italy
Castello di Rivoli—Museo d’Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli (Turin), Italy
20 September 2006–7 January 2007

Carlo Mollino architetto. Costruire le modernità
Archivio di Stato, Turin, Italy
12 October 2006–7 January 2007

Architect, designer, photographer, and writer, Carlo Mollino (1905–1973) was one of the most interesting figures within Italian modernism, but he is little known outside Turin, his birthplace. Only in the last few years has his work been rediscovered, much like that of Franco Albini and Carlo Scarpa. Son of the civil engineer Eugenio Mollino, the younger Mollino studied at the Architecture School within the Polytechnic University in Turin, graduating in 1931. He then trained in the office of his father, who opened his eyes to the potential of technology both in terms of structural know-how and formal expression. Mollino also developed a special interest in the visual arts, deepened by his friendship with a group of artists in