

Region and, in turn, work with the local communities. Through the application of the Collaborative Action Training methodology, the training provides participants with theoretical and practical tools that they need to question dominant narratives and promote the appreciation of local knowledge, experiences and traditions. The aim is to enable the municipal staff and other professionals managing cultural and heritage projects to act in more inclusive and collaborative ways by valuing and considering the voices and perspectives of the communities, in addition to designing final projects that could be executed in the near future.

Future global collaboration perspectives for TICCIH

During the congress, NUDISUR and TICCIH signed an agreement on long-term cooperation in order to continue working together on critical industrial heritage perspectives. The representatives of both organizations who were present in Concepción participated in the ceremony), and a week later, during the TICCIH Latin American Congress in Mexico, TICCIH's President Miles Oglethorpe and TICCIH's Commissioner for Latin America and the Caribbean Camilo Contreras added their signatures.

WORLDWIDE



Grain silo in Vergara, Buenos Aires Province. Ferrocarril del Sud, 1921 (photo by author)

ARGENTINA

AN ARTIFICIAL FAUNA. RAILWAY STRUCTURES IN THE ARGENTINE PAMPAS

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The pampas plain of South America is inhabited by a forgotten fauna living in an open and infinite zoo. Perhaps they are already fossils, skeletons covered with the rust and woodworm of a century and

a half of history and change, like those “skinless dinosaurs” that the American Land artist Robert Smithson described when he visited Passaic, a suburb of New Jersey. It is a vast compound of constructions that have been left next to the rails, partly in ruins, in a landscape area of profound beauty and elusive richness.

We are referring to human-made constructions, a non-measurable series of utilitarian and industrial structures scattered across the landscape: water tanks, silos, sheds, warehouses, turntables, and workshops, a product of the expansion of the railroad during the second half of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th. They all have great importance in Argentine history and become a part of the enormous palimpsest the territory can be.

Its loneliness, current uselessness, and condition raise questions about its spatial, material, and technological valuation. In addition to



Railroad warehouses across pampas plain, Buenos Aires Province (First and third photo by Paula Alonso, other photos by author)



Wooden water tank in Unzué, Buenos Aires Province, 1889 (photo by author)

being constructions of immense heritage value, which have not yet been cataloged, surveyed, or inventoried, they acquire more richness as they are located in a particular landscape situation of South America and are quite unique in the world.

That region is the Argentine pampas, an immense alluvial plain with an area equivalent to that of, for example, all of Spain. The railway lines, constructed in Latin America from the importation of British and French technologies and capital, allowed the “colonization” of that vast, seemingly endless territory.

The railway allowed Argentina to take advantage of the leather, fur, meat, and other agricultural production of the plain between 1865 and 1930, entering a territory that before, due to its extension and the flooded and muddy condition of its natural substrate, had not been possible. In this matter, it accompanied a historical process that extended the border of the young Argentine nation towards the south and west, also producing a systematic extermination of the indigenous population.

This complex process that in this country was called the “conquest of the desert” involved the shifting of agricultural frontiers and the founding of advanced towns, often associated with the railheads of foreign-owned railway companies.

When one of those railway lines that entered the Pampas plain is traced today, one finds in the branches, sometimes during hundreds of kilometers, the systematic repetition of the industrial structures that made its expansion possible. Next to the stations, there is always a water tank to supply the steam locomotives. Also, silos and warehouses allowed the storage of skins, hides, grains, and meat for subsequent shipment to the ports and, ultimately, for overseas export. The steam system also required structures such as locomotive

rotation plates or turntables and large railway workshops; all spread out presumably “infinite”.

These structures, in addition to being valuable for their material, technological, and historical condition, are also rich insofar as they are part - and undoubtedly constitute and define - an immense industrial landscape, not yet entirely explored and constantly threatened by the abandonment and reconversion of economic and physical processes of today’s land.

This condition raises a series of questions that are beginning to be discussed in Argentina but are part of global discussions that are not yet resolved: What to do with such a vast series of buildings? Can a process of declaration and protection of this heritage be sought? What tools do third-world countries have to avoid the definitive ruin of these material pieces of great history and culture?

In principle, a path of photographic, visual, and documentary assessment of these constructions has begun, which is synthesized in an ongoing work carried out by the author entitled *Una Fauna Artificial* (An Artificial Fauna, @unafaunaartificial). It is based on some previous explorations produced in the country by architectural historians and photographers and represents a non-exhaustive survey anchored in the notion of typology.

On the one hand, photographic series were made to show the relationship between plain landscapes and industrial objects. On the other hand, academic research in the field of architecture seeks to define, illuminate, and characterize this type of building. Subsequently, an attempt will be made to spread the knowledge of this series of buildings to gradually gain the necessary support for the consecration of these pieces as “elements” of the practical and industrial heritage of South America and the World.