

# *When Distance Matters: Australian Modern Architecture Seen Through European Journals (1945-75)*

Ana Esteban Maluenda

Universidad Politécnica de Madrid

*If we look at an Antipodes World Map, Europe and Australasia are relatively close, so much so that New Zealand and Spain share a virtual territory. Thinking about antipodes, remoteness implies coincidence and distance brings countries closer together. This paper aims to track the spread that modern Australian architecture reached in some of the main European nodes of reception and emission of news: France, Great Britain, Italy, Switzerland and Spain. Based on articles published in the architectural periodicals of the moment, it will establish which aspects of Australian architecture mattered in these countries. More importantly, these cases can be compared with each other and, as a whole, with the interest that other closer continents aroused in Europe. Did distance play the same role in all cases? Or had any other circumstances, such as politics or economics, more weight in the rapprochement between countries? Is the presence of Australian architecture in modern canonical historiography the direct result of these exchanges of information? In short, does historiography have a debt to distance?*

*Keywords: Diffusion of modern architecture; European architecture periodicals; Australian modern architecture; Harry Seidler; Sydney Opera House*

Ana Esteban Maluenda, "When Distance Matters: Australian Modern Architecture Seen Through European Journals (1945-75)" in *Proceedings of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand* 36, *Distance Looks Back*, edited by Victoria Jackson Wyatt, Andrew Leach and Lee Stickells (Sydney: SAHANZ, 2020), 150-61. Accepted for publication November 10, 2019.

In the conclusion to her book *Australian Architecture since 1960*, Jennifer Taylor expressed the ambiguity that the concept of distance acquires when talking about Australia, “Geographically it is a part of Asia and the South Pacific, culturally it is a part of Europe.”<sup>1</sup> She also notes the boom in the publication of books on Australian architecture in the mid-1980s and the interest it awoke in “journals published elsewhere,” which in a way indicates that, until then, ignorance of Australian architecture had been significant.

1 Jennifer Taylor, *Australian Architecture since 1960* (Sydney: The Law Book Company, 1986), 220.

This is something that Macarena de la Vega de León has also recently pointed out about the presence of Australian architecture in the histories of modern architecture.<sup>2</sup> Until the 1980s and 90s, except for mentions of the Sydney Opera House and successive editions of *Modern Architecture since 1900* by William Curtis,<sup>3</sup> Australia was not included in the main histories of modern architecture. De la Vega also points out some of the sources used by historians and is surprised by the absence of references in later publications to important articles on modern Australian architecture that were already common in well-known European and North American publications. According to De la Vega, “the fact that these historians have focused mainly on the Sydney Opera House and the work of Murcutt explains the preference for monographic research on these themes.”<sup>4</sup>

2 Macarena de la Vega de León, “A Tale of Inconsistency: The Absence and Presence of Australia in the Historiography of Modern Architecture,” *Fabrications* 28, no. 1 (2018), 62.

3 William Curtis, *Modern Architecture since 1900*, 2nd ed. (London: Phaidon Press, 1987).

Regardless of the exact moment to which these statements refer, reading the comments by Jennifer Taylor and Macarena de la Vega leads us to ask what exactly was published in European journals about Australian architecture in the second half of the twentieth century. It is particularly interesting to understand what was being published during the years of the design and construction of the only project in Australia that seems to have captured the attention of the world, or at least of historians, the Sydney Opera House.

4 De la Vega de León, “A Tale of Inconsistency,” 62.

With this aim we have tracked articles on Australian architecture<sup>5</sup> published in major European journals from the end of World War Two until the mid-1970s, when the above-mentioned building had been inaugurated. We gathered references by consulting two important catalogues of periodicals: the Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals and the RIBA Catalogue. It is important to note that both catalogues only include references to articles, so short news items or mentions that appear in other sections or outside the main body of the journal are not recorded. This paper does not intend to present an exhaustive list of everything published about Australia in European architectural journals from the 1940s to 1970s,

5 For this paper, we have considered as such the architecture that was built in Australia, excluding work built elsewhere by Australian architects.

but rather to track the topics that they were interested in and published.

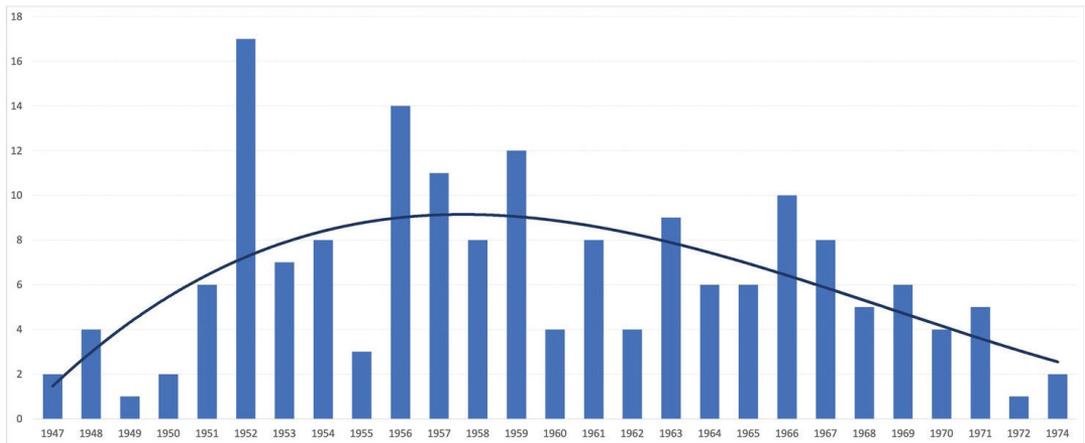
Thus the search has been restricted to a series of important hubs of reception and dissemination of architectural news in Europe during the decades studied. The importance of the British and French magazines at that time is particularly notable. *The Architectural Review* (AR) and *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* (LAA) exemplify the publications that maintained the pulse of the global diffusion of architecture and that were consulted by architects from across the continent. Switzerland is a special case in Central Europe. Removed from the destruction that World War Two brought elsewhere, Swiss architecture experienced a few years of an authentic boom in regionalism that was contested by a generation of young architects who made their voice heard in publications such as *Werk* or *Bauen + Wohnen* (B+W). The Mediterranean basin is represented by Italy and Spain, two countries with very different political situations and publications, but which, together, provide a fairly accurate portrait of the south of the continent.

## Australia in Europe: A General Overview

Unsurprisingly, 90 percent of the articles covered themes that focused on modernity. Of those remaining, the concurrence of articles dedicated to an Australian vernacular—especially colonial—architecture is striking, most of which were published at the end of the 1940s. That was clearly related to the special issue on Australia that AR published in July 1948, but it is also worth noting that in the previous year, three articles were published in three different journals, which suggests that the interest in the Australian tradition in the late 1940s went beyond just monographic publications.<sup>6</sup> It was an interest that was not generalized across Europe but was specifically British, as were all the articles on vernacular architecture at that moment, as well as those that were published in the following decades.

If we limit ourselves to the vast majority of articles devoted to modern Australian architecture, the trend between the mid-1940s and the 1970s draws a vertical parabola with maximum values around the end of the 1950s, with peaks in 1952 and 1956 (fig. 1). The number of articles in 1952 is due to several reasons, firstly, to the awarding of the Sir John Sulman Medal 1951 to Harry Seidler for the Rose Seidler House. The dissemination of the two neighbouring houses by Harry Seidler in North Turramurra began in the 1951 November issue of the English

6 "Aboriginal rock-paintings from rock shelters in the Kimberley district of North West Australia: copies exhibited at Australia House," *AJ* (January 23, 1947): 100; "British Colonial Architecture," *Bilder* 173 (1947): 172-75; "Colonial Architecture in Sydney," *A+BN* 190, no. 92 (1947): 93.



AR,<sup>7</sup> which LAA reproduced the following month.<sup>8</sup> The French magazine would publish the house again a year later, on the occasion of the prize, but before that the Swiss *B+W* had included it in its pages without any mention of the award.<sup>9</sup> In any case, the English magazine *Architects' Journal* (*AJ*) was the one that announced the award, while questioning whether this type of architecture had a national character.<sup>10</sup> Spain was a few months behind, but also joined the trend thanks to the magazine *Informes de la Construcción* (*IC*), where Fernando Casinello summarized the article that had appeared the previous year in *B+W*.<sup>11</sup> The only country, of those analysed here, that did not reflect either the construction of the house or the award to its architect was Italy.

The other reason for the many articles published in European journals in 1952 was the competition for the 1956 Olympic Games Stadium in Melbourne, the first large-scale competition for an Australian public building. Although the stadium later moved to the existing Melbourne Cricket Ground and Frank Heath's winning project ended up not being built, British magazines enthusiastically publicised the original result of the contest, which led to the appearance of several articles in 1952.<sup>12</sup> The exchange of news among British publications was common in these years, where the constant repetition of information can be easily traced.<sup>13</sup>

The Olympic Games kept Melbourne in British, French and Spanish magazines from 1952 until 1958, but focused only on two buildings—the aforementioned Olympic Games stadium by Harry Seidler and the Olympic swimming pools by John and Phyllis Murphy, Kevin Borland and Peter McIntyre.<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, in 1956, the year of the celebration of the Olympic

Figure 1. Articles devoted to modern Australian architecture in European journals (Graph by author).

7 "Two Australian Houses Near Sydney," *AR* (November 1951): 306-307.

8 "Deux maisons près de Sydney," *LAA* 22, no. 38 (1951): 77-81.

9 "Maison près d'une plage Australie," *LAA* 23, no. 45 (1952): 56-57; "Haus Turrumurra bei Sydney," *B+W* 5 (1952): 238-40.

10 "National Architecture?" *AJ* 116 (September 1952): 274.

11 "La casa Turrumurra en Sidney," *IC* 51 (1953): n.p.

12 "Prize Winning Design in an Australian National Competition for the 1956 Olympic Games Stadium at Melbourne," *A+BN* (November 13, 1952): 586; *A+BN* (December 4, 1952): 668-69; *AJ* (November 6, 1952): 547; *Builder*, (November 14, 1952): 709-10.

13 "Riley-Newsom Prefabricated Timber Houses, as Exported to Australia," *AJ* (January 3, 1952): 14-15; *A+BN* (September 25, 1952): 384.

14 "Competition for a Swimming Pool, Melbourne, for the Olympic Games, 1956: winners," *Builder* (January 30, 1953): 186-87; "Stade et piscine olympiques à Melbourne," *LAA* 25, no. 55 (1954): 76-77; "Estadio olímpico en Melbourne," *RNA* 159 (1955): 42; "Swimming Stadium for the Olympic Games 1956, in Melbourne," *A+BN* (November 15, 1956): 648-51; "Olympic Swimming Pool, Melbourne to Accommodate 5,500 Spectators," *Builder* (October 26, 1956): 702-703; "Piscine olympique de Melbourne," *LAA* 28, no. 70 (1957): 96-97; "Piscina olímpica de Melbourne," *CAU* (31): 28-29; "Stade Olympique à Melbourne," *LAA* 29, no. 76 (1958): 6-7.

Games and the year that accumulates the second highest number of articles, only two were published about the Olympic facilities, and they focused on the swimming pools.

The number of texts and news published in 1956 therefore must be due to other reasons, such as the exhibition celebrating the architecture of Australia hosted by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). The images displayed demonstrated the important role that modern architecture played in the post-war development of the continent. Understandably, the *RIBA Journal* covered the exhibition in two articles published in the months of February and March<sup>15</sup> and, as was usual in British magazines, *Builder* replicated them a couple of months later.<sup>16</sup> Another significant portion of the articles from 1956 on modern Australian architecture featured work by Harry Seidler. Although it had been designed years earlier, the Julian Rose House was completed in 1954 and *B+W* covered it in its March 1956 issue.<sup>17</sup> In August, *AR* included the house again in an important dossier that it published on the architect's recent work, which also included the Horwitz Building in Sydney and the Amenities and Workshop Building in Banksmeadow, precisely the two works that would appear months later in *LAA* and, again, in *B+W*.<sup>18</sup>

Reviewing these two years alone, patterns arise that are confirmed when observing the distribution of articles by country throughout the period studied. In the first place, the logical supremacy of the English magazines over European in terms of the dissemination of Australian architecture. In fact, a significant proportion of the articles that we reviewed in 1952 and 1956 are in British publications. Evidently, the historical ties between the countries and Australia's membership of the Commonwealth explains this attraction. However, it is striking that the interest was not sustained over time, given that in the 1960s coverage in English magazines only just outnumbers the articles dedicated to Australia by other nationalities.

In fact, the French magazines clearly overtake the British in two specific years—1959 and 1963. *LAA* is mainly responsible for the rise in 1959, when it published examples of Australian architecture in three of its issues: February-March dedicated to offices; June-July on public health; and the miscellany of October-November that, among other things, included single-family houses and hotels.<sup>19</sup> *Aujourd'hui Art et Architecture* (*AAA*) also contributed to the number of French articles that year by publishing two articles in one of its issues.<sup>20</sup> It was precisely this latter magazine that caused French magazines

15 "Architecture in Australia: Exhibition at the RIBA," *RIBA Journal* (February 1956): 150-51; "Architecture in Australia: Opening of an Exhibition at the RIBA," *RIBA Journal* (March 1956): 190-91.

16 "An Exhibition at the RIBA of Architecture in Australia," *Builder* (May 18, 1956): 541-42.

17 "Einfamilienhaus in Turrumurra," *B+W* 10, no. 3 (1956): 73-75.

18 "Five Recent Buildings in Australia," *AR* 120 (August 1956): 84-92; "Foyer social et atelier Banksmeadow," *LAA* 27, no. 69 (1956): 84-85; "Immeuble de bureaux à Sydney," *LAA* 27, no. 69 (1956): 28-29; "Geschäftshaus in Sydney," *B+W* 10, no. 10 (1956): 230-31.

19 "Deux immeubles de bureaux en Australie," *LAA* 30, no. 82 (1959): 86-87; "Petit hôpital rural à Beulah," *LAA* 30, no. 84 (1959): 58-59; "Habitation près de Sydney," *LAA* 30, no. 86 (1959): 33; "Hôtel Lennons Broadbeach, Brisbane," *LAA* 30, no. 86 (1959): 57; "Immeuble de bureaux à Sydney," *LAA* 30, no. 86 (1959): 90-91.

20 "Architect's Office, Sydney, Designed for Their Own Use," *AAA* 23 (1959): 78-79; "House on a circular plan in Canberra," *AAA* 23, (1959): 72-75.

to exceed English ones in 1963, when they published several articles about recent works by Seidler in one issue.<sup>21</sup> In the same year, *LAA* contributed with two articles on Pier Luigi Nervi's project for the New Norcia cathedral and the IBM Centre in Sydney.<sup>22</sup> In short, if you look at the total number of articles in those years, French magazines published half the number of articles of the British journals, but they amount to more than double that of the Swiss and Spanish and four times as many as the Italians.

21 "Harry Seidler," *AAA* 7, no. 40 (1963): 68-81.

22 "Centre IBM à Sydney Australie," *LAA* 34, no. 111 (1963): 50; "Project pour la Cathédrale de New Norcia, Perth," *LAA* 34, no. 108 (1963): 31.

## Sydney Opera House and Spanish Interest in the Building

As in the history of architecture books, the most published building in magazines was the Sydney Opera House. Once again, English publications were the first to broadcast the news. *AJ* and *Architect and Building News (A+BN)* published information about Jørn Utzon's winning project, but the latter also included another review about the second and third prize winners.<sup>23</sup> A month later the magazine returned to the competition and offered more details about the other proposals,<sup>24</sup> as *AJ* would also do a little later.<sup>25</sup> In September of that same year, the Spanish *Revista Nacional de Arquitectura (RNA)* also published an extensive six-page review of the competition and the winning proposal.<sup>26</sup> It is quite striking that *LAA*, usually one of the first publications to publish news and buildings, did not cover the news until its issue later that year dedicated to "Young Architects of the World."<sup>27</sup> In fact, a model of the Sydney Opera House illustrates the cover of that number, but as the issue is dedicated to architects and not to buildings, Utzon's proposal was linked to Denmark and not to Australia, which appears near the end of the issue and is illustrated with the works of another young architect who, in reality, was not Australian either: Harry Seidler.

23 "Sydney Opera House Competition: The Winning Design," *AJ* (February 7, 1957): 105-106; "Sydney Opera House Competition: The Winning Design," *A+BN* (February 14, 1957): 202-203; "Sydney Opera House Competition: Assessor's Report, with Illustrations of Winning Design by Jorn Utzon, and Those Awarded 2nd & 3rd Premiums," *A+BN* (February 28, 1957): 274-79.

24 "Design Entered for the International Competition for an Opera House at Sydney," *A+BN* (March 14, 1957): 352-55.

25 "Sydney Opera House Competition: 9 Prizewinning & Commended Designs by British Competitors," *AJ* (April 11, 1957): 535-45.

26 "Concurso para la Ópera de Sidney," *RNA* 187 (1957): 15-20.

27 "Jeunes architectes dans le monde," *LAA* 28, no. 73 (1957).

28 Peter Keys and Trevor Mowbray, "Opera de Sydney," *LAA* 32 (99): 30-31.

29 "Sydney Opera House. Progress Report," *AJ* (February 23, 1961): 283-90; "Sydney Opera House. Progress Report," *Builder* (March 9, 1962): 488-89.

However, *LAA* would be responsible for picking up the baton of the publication of the work in 1961, with an article included in the monograph on "Architects and Engineers."<sup>28</sup> The images that were included show the plinth of the building in full construction. And that is how it was reproduced in other British magazines in the same year in each "Progress Report" articles.<sup>29</sup> From that moment on, the news and polemics about the Sydney Opera House would be shared between the British and Spanish magazines. Interestingly, it is in the latter where a greater interest in the project is detected due to a series of circumstances in which it is worthwhile to pause a few moments.

The first text published in Spanish journals announced the expected construction of the roofs of the Opera House.<sup>30</sup>

Mariano Bayón, his author, defended the result of the competition and supported the fact that the Jury's choice had been based on an idea, which had no need to be completely resolved, given that the technology of the moment would help solve the difficulties that would arise. A year later, he would dedicate one of the issues to reviewing the work of Utzon,<sup>31</sup> especially the Opera House, which he described in detail, mainly in its more technological aspects.

But, the most critical point of the Spanish debate was marked by Félix Candela and Rafael Moneo through the magazine *Arquitectura*. Candela had achieved worldwide fame for the structures he had built in Mexico, but he was originally from Spain. When Candela published "The Scandal of the Sydney Opera House" in the Mexican magazine *Arquitectura*, he immediately sent it to Carlos de Miguel, director of its Spanish namesake, who reproduced it in the Madrid magazine.<sup>32</sup> Candela's text was a harsh criticism of the development of the competition and of the construction of the building and detailed the various circumstances that hindered the execution of the project. The only person who was saved from his criticism was Ove Arup, whom his friend Candela relieved of all responsibility in the process.

But Candela could not know that the article would be read by Rafael Moneo, then a young architect who was probably unknown to Candela but, thanks to his analytical capabilities, had earned an unquestionable reputation in Spain as a learned critic of architecture. And what Candela could not know either was that Moneo had been a great admirer of the work and the figure of Utzon since his student days. He liked Utzon so much that when he was granted ministerial support to work abroad, he wrote to the architect asking to work in his studio—but the Dane did not respond to his letter.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the arrival of Moneo at the studio of Utzon coincided with the moment in which the design team had just found the solution to building the vaults. Moneo's response was immediate. A month later he published a text in the same magazine in a fierce defence of Utzon.<sup>34</sup>

As early as 1971, *IC* would return to the Sydney Opera House to deal, once and for all, with explaining its construction technique. The magazine presented its structure as "original and advanced" and as a technological and architectural showcase.<sup>35</sup> In short, except for Candela, all the opinions on the Opera House

30 "La Ópera de Sidney," *Arquitectura* 70 (1964): n.p.

31 "Jørn Utzon," *Arquitectura* 81 (1965): n.p.

32 Félix Candela, "El escándalo de la Ópera de Sidney," *Arquitectura* [Mexico] 98 (1967): 103-10; *Arquitectura* [Madrid] 108 (1967): 29-34.

33 Ana Esteban-Maluenda, "Sustrato y sedimento. Los viajes en la formación y evolución del arquitecto: el caso de Rafael Moneo," in *Viajes en la transición de la arquitectura española hacia la modernidad*, ed. José Manuel Pozo (Pamplona: T6 Ediciones, 2010), 153-64.

34 Rafael Moneo, "Sobre el escándalo de la Ópera de Sidney," *Arquitectura* 109 (1968): 52-54.

35 "Teatro de la Ópera de Sydney," *IC* 231 (1971): 22-32.

that were expressed through the main Spanish architecture periodicals were positive and defended the work and its architect against its detractors.

Returning to the other countries, with what has been presented until now we would expect the English magazines to have published extensive articles about the building but, in reality, they only did so after the end of the 1960s, after the resignation and return to Denmark of Utzon.<sup>36</sup> During the most critical stage—the construction of the vaults—they emphasized the engineering work that would materialize Utzon’s idea. Finally, in the September 1973 issue, the Australian architect Tom Heath wrote an article in *AR* in which, under the stirring title “Cathedral of Culture,” he analysed the building itself, beyond the controversial history of its construction. The review is clearly positive and focusses on the evolution that the building represented, not only for Australian architecture, but for society in general.<sup>37</sup>

36 “Opera house, Sydney,” *A+BN* (January 4, 1967): 17-24.

37 Tom Heath, “Sydney Opera House: Cathedral of Culture,” *AR* 154, no. 919 (1973): 134-49.

France, it seems, completely distanced itself from the controversy that surrounded the construction of the building. In Switzerland, it was only covered in brief news pieces in the magazines until it was published once it had been inaugurated and the controversy that surrounded its construction was over.<sup>38</sup> It is particularly striking that of all the countries that we have analysed, it was precisely Spain, the most culturally backward and politically oppressed, that was the one that was really fascinated by this great architectural work and that defended it from the beginning, despite all its difficulties.

38 “Kulturhaus als Symbol: Opernhaus Sydney,” *B+W* 28 (1974): 122-28.

## The Resounding Success of Harry Seidler

Harry Seidler arrived in Sydney in July 1948, precisely when European magazines began publishing news about Australian architecture. Within three years he had been awarded the Sulman Medal for the first house he built in Australia. However, the house reflected very little of the country in which it was built. As William Curtis said in his *Modern Architecture since 1900*, using a quotation by Paul Rudolph, the Rose Seidler House is “the Harvard house incarnate transferred to Sydney without any modification whatsoever.”<sup>39</sup> Indeed, Seidler had attended Harvard Graduate School of Design under Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer in 1945-46, he had studied at Black Mountain College under Josef Albers in mid-1946, he had worked more than a year in Breuer’s New York office and collaborated for a few months with Alvar Aalto in Boston and

39 Curtis, *Modern Architecture since 1900*, 336.

Oscar Niemeyer in Rio de Janeiro. In this regard, following the granting of the Sulman Award, the British went on to ask— is this “National architecture?”<sup>40</sup> But as they were probably accustomed to Seidler’s style, European publications surrendered to his architecture and he is by far the most published architect in their journals. Moreover, in contrast to the way the Sydney Opera House was treated in the monograph of *LAA* dedicated to the “Young Architects in the World,”<sup>41</sup> where the building was integrated into the Danish output because of the nationality of its author, in Seidler’s case, although it was mentioned that his origin was not Australian, his work always appeared catalogued under that country.

40 “National Architecture?” 274.

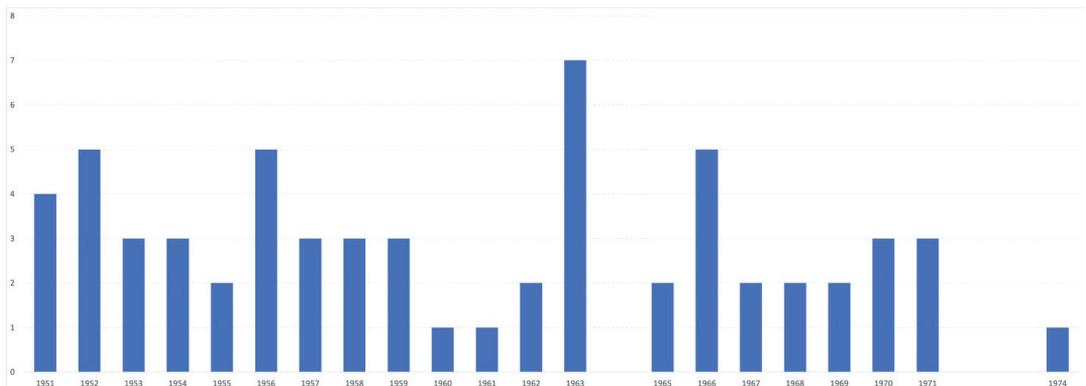
41 *LAA* 28, no. 73 (1957).

The success of the “Australian” architecture of Harry Seidler in Europe was such that it accounted for more than 35 percent of the articles about the continent, compared to the 10 percent that was devoted to the Sydney Opera House. European magazines covered much of his work in those years, at least the most significant buildings. In comparison with the vertical parabola that all the articles on Australia over the years formed, Harry Seidler’s is a much more constant distribution, with the natural rises or falls at some points (fig. 2). However, a greater trend is notable in earlier decades, with a very significant peak in 1963, which then drops to hold a level of two or three articles published each year. The steep rise in 1963 is due directly to the aforementioned dossier on Seidler published by the French magazine *AAA*, which was joined by another article on Australian domestic architecture that appeared in the English *AR*.<sup>42</sup>

42 “Harry Seidler,” *AAA* 7, no. 40 (1963): 68-81; “Australian Domestic Architecture,” *AR* (July 1963): 12-19.

One of the most published buildings was, logically, the Rose Seidler House, which made him famous in Australia and abroad, and which we have already referred to above. However, there were other buildings that were published as much or more and

Figure 2. Articles devoted to Harry Seidler and his work in European Journals (Graph by author).



stayed longer in the media. That is the case of the Australia Square complex in Sydney, which had already appeared in the AAA dossier as a project, and continued to appear in Swiss, Spanish and even Italian magazines on the occasions of the successive openings of the Plaza Building and Australia Square Tower.<sup>43</sup> Interestingly, in this case, no articles were found published in English magazines, which is probably due to that British “disinclination” that we have detected in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

As stated by Macarena de la Vega, although the seminal histories of modern architecture reflect the unquestionable work of Harry Seidler, the architect who embodies the true essence of Australia in them is Glenn Murcutt.<sup>44</sup> This is not true in architectural magazines, where Seidler “reigned” throughout the period studied. Obviously, at that time Murcutt was not yet in the architectural panorama, but there were others who could have shared the stage with Seidler. His affinity with a more international style, as well as the fact that he was not born in Australia, surely contributed to the fact that historians did not give him as much weight in their texts.

## Conclusion

Articles about Australia and its architecture were published in Europe, but not comprehensively and not in every country. The Sydney Opera House monopolized the headlines, which varied from initial surprise at Jørn Utzon’s risky proposal; worry—even annoyance—at the difficulties that arose in its materialization; to admiration, once the building was inaugurated. It is, however, logical that it was one of the Australian buildings most covered in magazines not only because of the effort involved in its construction, but because of the number of years the construction lasted. Nonetheless there were other buildings, especially by Seidler, that were continuously covered in European publications. We have already commented that one possibility for the predilection of Seidler’s architecture is that his architecture reminded Europe of its own architecture, but the strong self-diffusion that Seidler himself made of his work cannot be ignored. Australian architects—as well known in their own environment as Grounds Romberg and Boyd—and their emblematic buildings—such as the Academy of Science in Canberra—barely toted up a couple of mentions in the entire period. It is true that Bates Smart and McCutcheon, Peter Muller, John and Phyllis Murphy, Borland and McIntyre

43 “Australia Square, Sydney,” *AAA* 7, no. 40 (1963): 75; “Geschäftshausüberbauung am Australia Square in Sydney,” *B+W* 20, no. 1 (1966): 25-29; “Australia Square – Sydney,” *Architecture: Formes et Fonctions* 16 (1971): 316-22; “Complejo ‘Australia Square’ en Sidney,” *IC* 227 (1971): 3-12; “Project for Australia Square Office Tower and Plaza Building, Sydney,” *L’architettura: Cronache e storia* 167 (1969): 318-19.

44 De la Vega de León, “A Tale of Inconsistency.”

and Yuncken Freeman appeared on some occasions, but their presence is diluted by the great “European”—International—themes that dominated the interest of the Old Continent: the Sydney Opera House and Harry Seidler.

Most of the articles on Australia during our timeframe were published in Britain. Only the historical ties between the two nations can justify that. We might think that the common language was another factor that boosted that interest. However, another English-speaking country (the USA) did concentrate the greatest interest on several European countries, including Spain, a country traditionally focused on Latin languages. So, discarding the common language, we must think of more traditional ties. Moreover, the interest dropped radically from 1952—when Australian modern architecture began to be published—to end up with just one or two articles per year in the early 1970s, a rate similar to that of countries as little related to Australia as Switzerland or Spain. France maintained a low profile throughout the period, except in 1959 and 1963, when two peaks of interest were observed, caused by unconnected examples in several thematic issues of *LAA* and the preparation of a dossier dedicated to Seidler in *AAA*. If we eliminate both peak years, France would have published hardly more than Switzerland and Spain, an anomalous situation for the country that, with *LAA* at the head, was one of the main hubs of architectural dissemination in Europe. Spain is a very curious case as a country with notable political and economic differences from the others in this study which, nevertheless, maintained the same level of coverage and even sometimes exceeded it. In fact, it doubled the number of articles that were published in Italy, which, once again, shows itself as a country quite absorbed in its own reality.

Modern Australian architecture interested Europe, although not as much as that of other distant latitudes. Understandably, more was published about the European continent itself and about North America but, if we look at what happened with other regions in the southern hemisphere that were not included in the histories of modern architecture, we see that, for example, Latin American architecture was much more popular than that of Australia.<sup>45</sup> When compared, Australian architecture barely exceeds twenty percent of what was published on South America. We could think that the Latin American supremacy was because of the greater size of the continent and the number of different countries. However, if we compare only Brazil with Australia, we see that there were still double the number of articles published on the former than on the latter. And the same

45 Ana Esteban-Maluenda, “A arquitetura moderna brasileira e latino-americana em jornais europeus após a II Guerra Mundial,” in *Anais do III Encontro. Arquitetura, cidade, projeto: uma construção colectiva*, ed. Angélica Benatti y Wilson Ribeiro dos Santos (São Paulo: Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie, Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Campinas, 2014), s.p.

is true even with a much smaller country like Mexico, on which there were almost double the number of articles published than on Australia during the period of study. Latin America was not part of the “strong nucleus” of modernity,<sup>46</sup> but it received much more recognition than Australia. There is no doubt that Brazil and Mexico developed a very powerful and personal modern architecture that immediately caught everyone’s attention. But, despite the fact that, according to Jennifer Taylor “the introduction of modern architecture [in Australia] was but one more phase in a sequence of events” and “the main thrust of modern architecture in Australia belongs in the second half of the century,”<sup>47</sup> the output at the time certainly deserved more attention than it was given. We, therefore, have no choice but to blame the European lack of coverage of Australian architecture on something else: distance. We could also discuss the difference, but ultimately, what is the cause of the difference? Why were some countries less influenced than others by the European Modern Movement? Because they had less contact with that “strong nucleus” of modernity. Apart from political, social and cultural differences—which even occurred within the European continent—when distance comes into play, the difference is accentuated.

Indeed, in terms of diffusion, distance matters. In today’s world, where documents travel in seconds and we take less than a day to cross the planet, distance may not be that important. But at the time it was, and that caused both the editors of the magazines and architectural historians to maintain little contact with certainly more distant countries that were, nevertheless, developing their own quality, modern architecture, something different from what the Europeans were used to, but that was equally interesting. Distance and the consequent ignorance resulted in Australian architecture’s absence from the media in general.

46 Understanding as such the only two poles that considered the canonical architecture histories: Europe and the United States of America.

47 Taylor, *Australian Architecture*, 9.