








# Insights of Images Within the Chilean Student Architecture Press, 1930–1990

Patricia Méndez<sup>1</sup>  , Jessica Fuentealba Quilodrán<sup>1</sup> , Matías Ramírez Bravo<sup>1,2</sup> ,  
and Consuelo Emhardt<sup>2</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> Universidad del Bío-Bío, Concepción, Chile  
{patriciamendez, jfuentealba}@ubiobio.cl

<sup>2</sup> Universidad de Concepción, Concepción, Chile

**Abstract.** This work is taken from ongoing research, focusing on analyzing the student magazines of Chilean architecture schools, whose issues, published between 1930 and 1990, fostered important changes in the area's teaching systems. From the thirteen titles detected up until now, one of the lines of work stopped to review the images used and that, alongside their homemade nature, shows authentic and avant-garde visual resources for their time and also unveils, the phases of Chilean and university youth imaginary. The analysis as a whole, considers the theoretical meeting proposed by Chartier (2005), inasmuch as the consolidation of cultural history, coincides with Mitchell (2009) in terms of visual studies, is confirmed alongside Burke (2005) in the use of the image as a historic document, and with Rojas Mix (2006), in semantic units that condense images and as a reflection of social realities. Thus, the purpose of this text was to analyze the graphical discourse represented in some of these publications, doing so as the meeting point of architectural modernity. To achieve this, methodologically speaking, it inverted the traditional editorial process, extracting graphical material (photos, typographs, drawings, and sketches), went further into their creation process and, finally, contrasted this with the accompanying text. As a conclusion, it can be ventured that each magazine, despite their different times, graphics or ideological language, offers a varied imaginary of the avant-garde university that, through editorial expressions like these, augured the changes that deeply influenced the fledgling Chilean architectural culture.

**Keywords:** Magazines · Imaginary · Students · Graphics · Chile · Architectural culture

This article emerges from a broader research project<sup>1</sup>, focused on student magazines<sup>2</sup> of Chilean architecture schools, published between 1930 and 1990, whose issues fostered important changes in their teaching systems. From this particular editorial set -as an expression of student ideology-, progressive discourses stand out, which influenced

<sup>1</sup> This text provides early results from FONDECYT Regular 1201750, *Revistas estudiantiles y cultura arquitectónica en Chile. Tensiones, reformas y confluencias en la enseñanza de la arquitectura, 1930–1990*.

<sup>2</sup> The term 'magazine' is used instead of journal due to the characteristics of the object of study.

some of the fundamental areas of Architecture and that, as time went by, updated the profession, and promoted the renewal of Chilean architectural culture. (see <https://www.instagram.com/revistas.estudiantiles.arq>).

As of this presentation, thirteen student magazines had been detected, within the time period studied, from different Chilean architecture schools. Following the temporal synchrony and settings of the cases found, the findings show, from the national capital and in chronological order *Plinto*, from 1947, with a single issue from Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (PUC), while from Universidad de Chile (UCh), *Nueva Visión* (1950), *Publicación quincenal del Centro de estudiantes de la Escuela de Arquitectura* (1953), *EAU* (1953), the *Boletín Arquitectura del Frente de Juventudes Populares* (1954) are known, along with one which would come much later, that is excluded from this study, *Ágora* (1986). Outside Santiago, it is possible to add the only magazine published by students of PUC's Valparaiso (PUCV) campus with *Arquitectura* in 1953; *Arquitema* (1986), *Arqchipiélago* (1996) and *Perverso Polimorfo* (1989) by Universidad Católica del Norte (UCN) and *Alza Prima* (1981), *Diarquitectos* (1986) and *NN Cosas y Casos* (1989) by Universidad del Bío-Bío (UBB).

This compendium, as a result of acknowledging the variety of publications there are, offers several possible insights. On one hand, it can be analyzed using the heterochronic path of Chartier [4], revealing not just those from UCh with five different titles, or the single issue from PUC, among the older ones; but rather that, it is also possible to see their regional counterparts with novel and simultaneous examples, with UCN, in Antofagasta in the north, and UBB, in Concepción in the south (Fig. 1).

From the scientific academic area, several works nurture this research; some analyze editorial design, anchoring their specificity on studying journalistic outlines; another sphere, closer to this topic, focuses on those linked to architecture journals as a disciplinary element [1, 7, 14]. From a different point of view, there are those who look into the study plans of Chilean architecture schools and their sociocultural manifestations, such as the ones cited by Molina [10] on the origins of plastic arts at UCh the reforms made at PUC [11], Maulén de los Reyes' review [6] on changes of plans, and Goy-coolea [5] on the concerns of the student body about political divisions inside the UBB Architecture School in the early 1980s.

The editorial set observed applied the theoretical coordinates proposed by Chartier [4] inasmuch the magazines, regardless of their origin, can be considered as the protagonists of the consolidation of cultural history. Likewise, there is a coincidence with the approaches outlined by Mitchell [9] in terms of incorporating the object studied to the scenario of visual studies and with that of Miguel Rojas Mix, where the graphics these publications included were revised as if they were semantic units [13]. Both proposals form a concatenated mirror of student design avant-garde, a silent reflection both of the social reality, and of the cultural moment their leaders were living and that, also, allows proving that this graphic flow makes up a valuable document to perfect cultural studies [2].

This research analyzed and revised the graphical discourse of publications promoted by Chilean architecture students over six decades, and how these laid the foundations for the country's architectural modernity. Once these titles were detected and their general content studied, the general setup was made, illustrated motifs extracted, differences

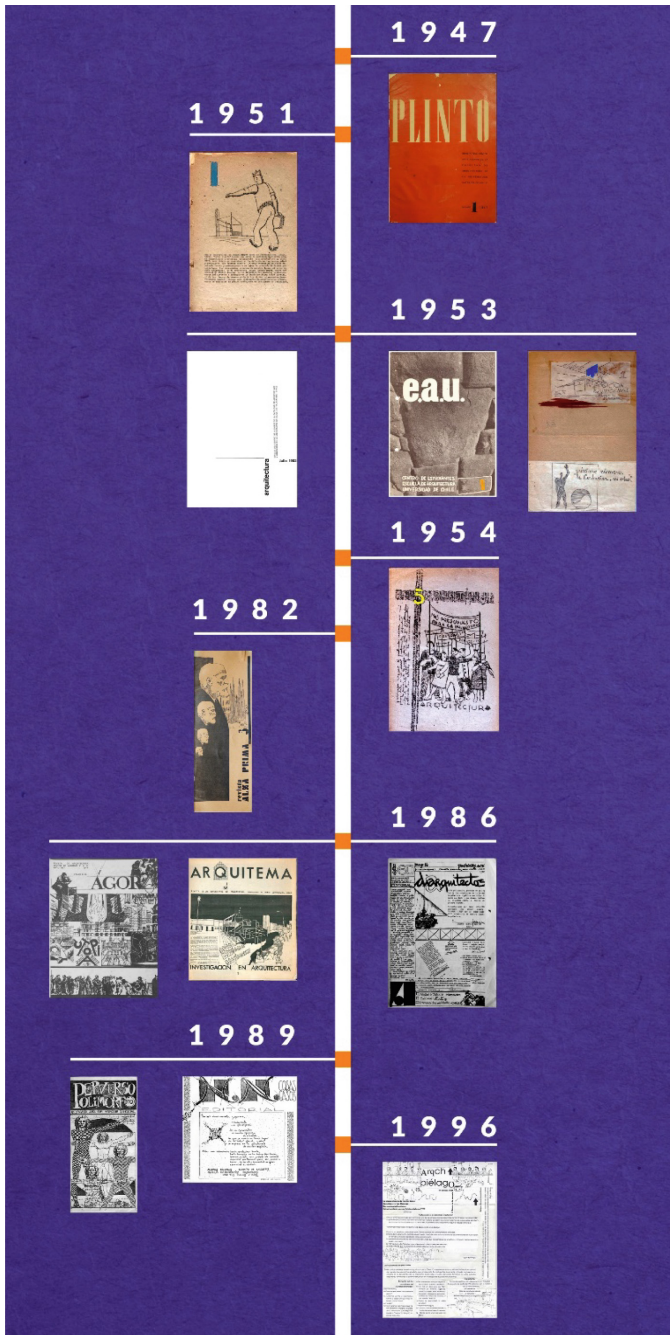


Fig. 1. Timeline of the magazines detected for this research.

made regarding typographical resources used, and then evaluated those editorial manifestations that anchored on the image as a continent for experimentation. Interviews were made, to check information collected from the documents, with informants who back when they were students, participated or were part of student unions or the editorial teams behind these publications, who explained the organization strategies, mechanisms and instruments used in these publications, as well as of their reproduction and distribution systems.

## 1 Student Press: A Reflection of Chilean Architecture Classrooms

Student magazines, mostly from the fringes, allow rethinking the responsibility of the architect, not only because they document community participation, almost confessional of a student body in the classrooms, but also because they problematize the social dimension in which they circulated, and made transparent the curricular and social-cultural subconscious of their reality. They were items which were different from the format that characterized architectural canonic publications, their ideological trajectories -theoretical and graphical- reached a permanence inversely proportional to the frailty their content seemed to be: purposeful in their graphic design, ahead of their times in their theoretical proposals, even groundbreakers of pedagogical reforms and, in the best of cases, some understood the opportunity they had considering the future, to reinvent themselves and become magazines with a sounder structure, although keeping their initial spirit. [7].

In other words, student magazines set a stage that, if one wished to say, transcended the themes addressed in their pages, integrating players from an unmistakable cultural dimension. Due to their particular format, material, or graphic design, some authors like Colomina [12], acknowledge them as fanzines, defining them as small magazines or underground publications, since “they played a paramount role in the dissemination and coordination of dissensus, while serving as forums for ideological debates”; Portal and Brugnoli say the same from closer up, by indicating that these pocket format publications were able to crystallize the professional transformation processes in Chile [12], and Patricio Mardones, in that same volume speaks about the invisible and unavoidable proximity there was between these publications and the cultural phenomena, highlighting the relationship between the word and architecture as a “constant in the area’s development in Chile” [12]. However, and due to the features this type of hemerographic gathers, the closest definition for this work is Caldwell’s proposal [3], who calls them microzines or SIP (Special Interest Publications), characterizing them as independent issues, with a small run, with a minority and quite specific public interest, that also compete for a niche within their area, proposing something to their readers that other publications with a larger run could not give.

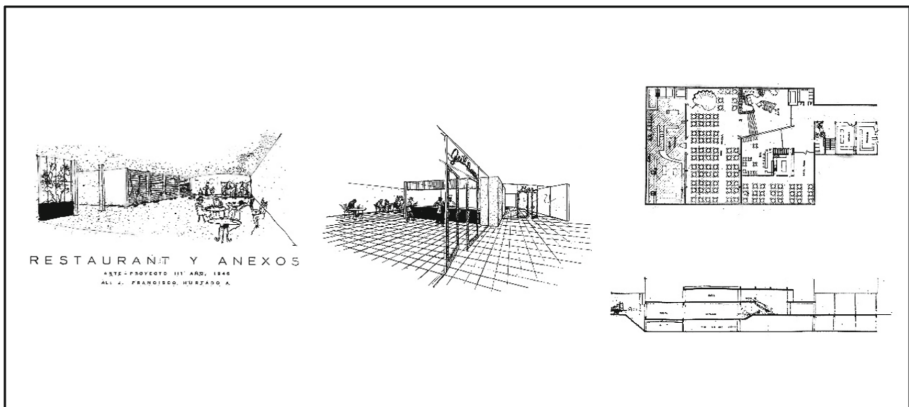
These constants are so relevant that, despite the low budgets that sustained them, the frailness of their support, short-lived existence, content and graphical arguments, they constitute radical examples for the formation of Chilean architectural culture and university imaginary. An auspicious one for the visuality of Chilean architecture, that allows unequivocally and congruously locating them in their time and place.

## 1.1 Student Press of the Central Zone

Within the limits of this study, whether by origin or temporary synchrony, the hemerographic series selected allowed placing these into two groups, both emerging from public universities.

The first set was borne in the classrooms of the Chilean capital, in one of the two oldest universities of the country, UCh, while the second group -decades later- emerged in the southern classrooms of UBB.

Despite the samples coming from Chilean public universities, due to their proximity with the spirit this text pursues, it is worth mentioning another two series from different campuses of Universidad Católica de Chile. On one hand, *Plinto*, the oldest student magazine found, dating from October 1947, is also the most different due to the type of edition shown on its pages. Its sponsor was the Students Union (SU) of the Architecture School, an entity that achieved with their work a publication that had a quality typical of the commercial magazines known back then: glossy full color cover, red background with yellow letters, the inside on heavyweight paper, printed in black and white, and with a sewn binding. These characteristics, alongside the adverts found on their pages, could make one believe that this series had significant financing, or this is at least perceived by the ad that talks about the photocomposition system used in its printing, made by Gutenberg<sup>3</sup>. According to what is read in the content, the graphical material came from the student body itself and their final projects, comprising documentation recorded on paper and microphotography of the proposal; the latter generated in itself an excellent graphic repertoire, relieving and ensuring with this, the print quality that made this magazine stand out from its peers (Fig. 2). The other title of this duo is *Arquitectura*, the newspaper published by the SU of the Architecture School of PUCV in 1953, whose first -and only- issue was printed at the same time as new professors arrived to re-found



**Fig. 2.** *Plinto*, student graphics from 3rd year workshop of the degree (Student: Francisco Hurtado A., 1946).

<sup>3</sup> Gutenberg Impresores SA promoted themselves as “printers, publishers and booksellers”, from their office on 178 San Diego, in the city of Santiago de Chile. *Plinto* (1), penultimate page unnumbered.

that school. In the words of Torrent, this academic reformulation was confusing for the students and it can be assumed that this was the *raison d'être* for publishing a magazine that revealed their expectations [14]. The issue, eloquent in its minimalism, presents a simpler graphic than its Santiago peer, with a cover with black letters on a white background. Its content reflects student interests, focusing on other artistic areas such as music and poetry, as foundations of the curricular and professional lines that this university adopted, which up until today are part of its institutional hallmark.

The first journalistic sets fomenting this research arose around the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, thanks to work in UCh's classrooms, supported by the student bodies present in Santiago. Chronologically speaking, the oldest magazine is *Nueva Visión*, which, albeit with temporary irregularities typical of this type of series, is also the one that lasted longest thanks to the seven issues that started in 1951 -year which also saw issues 2 and 3 published-, 1952 saw issues 4 to 6, 1953, issue 7, and the latest one detected, unnumbered, was published in October 1954. The editorial team comprised the Circle of Communist Students, a group aligned under said political flag, that took on the discussion of content and management of each issue, publishing a run of between 500 and 700 every time an issue hit the streets. Each magazine was published using the group's roving mimeograph which, considering their underlying politics, had to move from house to house to avoid being discovered. The content of *Nueva Visión* is summarized on a few stapled letter-sized pages, with text typed using a typewriter. All the covers were made on a higher density paper than those inside, printed in black ink, and only changed by the color that indicated the sequence of the series: first in blue; the two following issues in red as a political distinction of the group; before then continuing in black (Fig. 3).

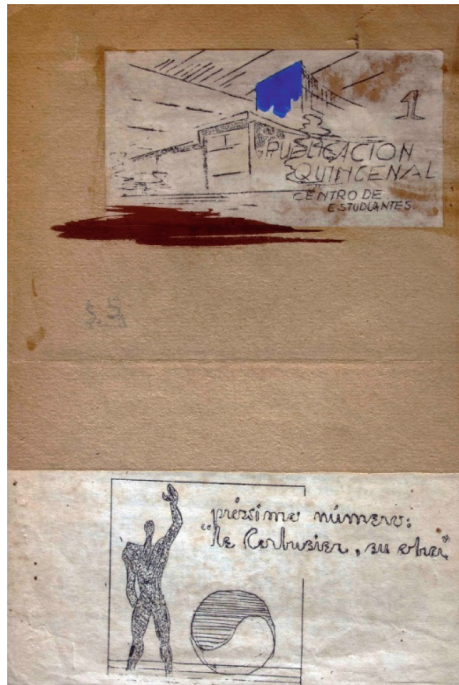


**Fig. 3.** *Nueva Visión* (Universidad de Chile, 1950–1954).

The covers were always drawn by free-hand and used a worker as their leitmotiv; without a doubt a starring role that is read in the successive representations of a bricklayer, of a building that made one reminisce about Russian constructivism; or as seen in the graphical synecdoche of the third issue, where the Communist symbol is transformed, placing a pencil instead of the traditional hammer, dignifying the people below it. However, the intellectual and militant progressivism that characterized the covers of the first issues would be reduced in later ones, simplifying the design with linear and more traditional and monochromatic drawings. This is what is read in the fifth issue where, crowned by the star of the Chilean flag, an apprentice is shown alongside his master; the sixth that combines a building with modern lines together with the spirit of participative assemblies; or in the following ones, where the silhouette of a solitary musician and the detail of a Mesoamerican Pre-Columbian pyramid fills the entire cover. The set shows some of the old techniques with their almost artisanal mechanical printing, using block

printing, stencils, or stamps. These are works that, although they do not directly reveal authorship, keep the spirit of collaboration typical of the group. Thus, set on paper, the graphic configuration of *Nueva Visión* allows confirming that the editorial image of the set schematized the ideological argument of their editors, trying to reflect left-leaning doctrines, but without losing sight of the architectural modernity of the time.

Alongside *Nueva Visión*, the official SU of the same school published two magazines of which only their first issues are known. One of them, titled *Publicación quincenal del Centro de Estudiantes de la Escuela de Arquitectura* dated from April 8th, 1953, is interesting for this text given its editorial purpose, “placing within the immediate reach of the school’s students, matters that until today were only possible to know in a foreign language”<sup>4</sup>, directly highlighting the lack of bibliographical material accessible for students. The composition of the cover confirms this, setting in the top margin, a mark together with the synthesis of a contemporary building, drawn with a few strokes and, at the bottom, a collage that included tempera strokes in primary colors, a reproduction of the “Modulor” that announced that the following issues would be dedicated to Le Corbusier. From its own title, the issue moves into defining its nature as a magazine, it is extremely short with only five legal sized pages, vertical and typed on a typewriter; but without a doubt, the graphics applied are consistent with the project logic of the time,

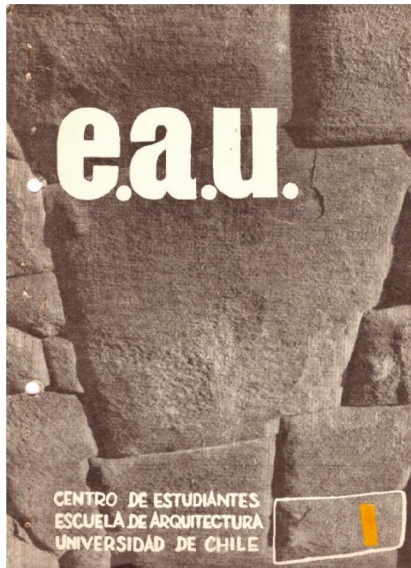


**Fig. 4.** *Publicación quincenal del Centro de Estudiantes de la Escuela de Arquitectura* (Universidad de Chile, 1953).

<sup>4</sup> Cfr.: *Twice monthly publication of the Students Union of the School of Architecture*, (1), p. 1.

combining this plastic synthesis with the asceticism that the architectural trends promised and students demanded to know more about (Fig. 4).

The other magazine promoted as an “Official SU Document”, was published five months later using the institutional acronym, *eau*<sup>5</sup>. With a small format -half a letter-sized page folded in the middle-, its text was also typewritten, including a few images, but its singularity lies once more on the cover. It had better quality paper than its contemporaries, and a graphic peculiarity: a monochrome photo takes up the entire cover and the color only appears to indicate the sequence. The illustration portrays the twelve-angled stone of Cuzco and, although coherent with the content favoring the formation of the “Complete Architect”, this cover shows a gap from the reality of the students’ concerns back then, also from the interests that it is assumed that the same editorial group had to defend and that is shown with the participation of some professors (Fig. 5).



**Fig. 5.** *eau* (Universidad de Chile, 1953).

The last case considered is *Boletín Arquitectura del Frente de Juventudes Populares*, of which only issue N°5, published in 1954 by the SU of the School of Architecture of UCh, is known. As Torrent cites, its content moves away from contemporary architectural debates and should actually be understood as focused on social and political concerns, as can be seen in some of the issues already analyzed [14]. Its publication replicates the handmade techniques already seen in others with limited budgets -legal paper format and, inside, typewritten in two columns-, although it shows a different dedication on the interior design of its pages, where it incorporates handwritten titles, details in the sketches, illustrations of characters and allegories (Fig. 6).

<sup>5</sup> EAU: School of Architecture and Urbanism.



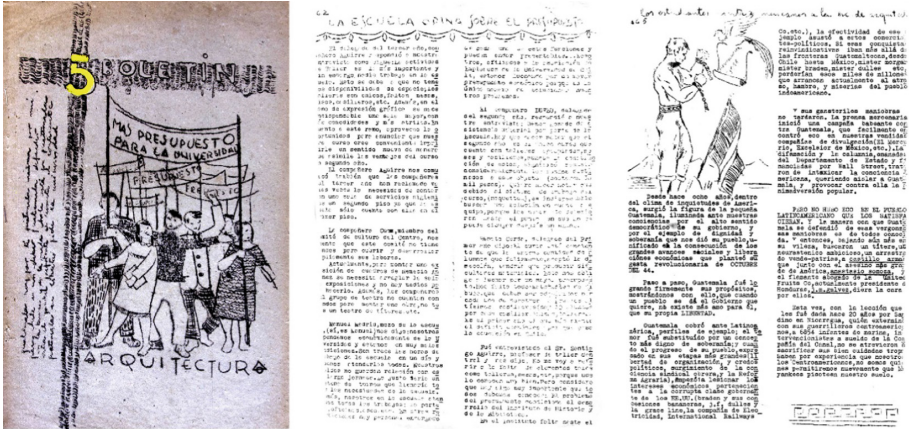


Fig. 6. Boletín del centro de estudiantes de arquitectura N°5 (Universidad de Chile, 1954).

This first document set, valid in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, with geographically centralist Capital city traits from the social point of view, and that used expressions with an artisanal skew, left the doors open for similar expressions that would be repeated, years later, in other regions and, at the same time, show the validity of recovering this information, allowing delving further into local visual culture.

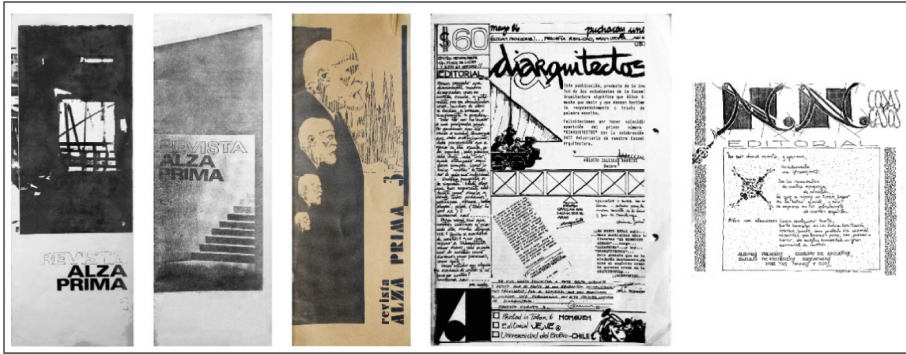
### 1.2 Student Press from the South

The second set within this analysis, addresses editorial production outside the Chilean geopolitical center. The School of Architecture of UBB<sup>6</sup> was founded in 1969, becoming one of the first institutions outside Santiago. However, the issues that emerged from this area of studies were known somewhat later, as a result of space for intellectual freedom that was so necessary, in the context of the military dictatorship and the 1981 General Law on Universities<sup>7</sup> that veiled the Chilean reality.

Two of these titles, *Alza Prima* (1981–1983) and *Diarquitectos* (1986), were promoted by the SU, while the third *NN Cosas y casos* (1989), was supported independently by a group of students (Fig. 7).

<sup>6</sup> The Technical University of the State (UTE, in Spanish), Concepción campus, was intervened by the dictatorship in 1973. However, in 1981, when the Law on Universities decreed splitting up big institutions in an attempt to weaken the power of student federations, UTE became the Universidad del Bío-Bío (UBB).

<sup>7</sup> Within the plan of Augusto Pinochet Ugarte (1973–1990) and his military junta, the Law on Universities (1981) marked the start of privatization of higher education in Chile.



**Fig. 7.** *Alza Prima* (N°1, N°2 and N°3), *Diarquitectos*, *NN cosas y casos* (Universidad del Bío-Bío, 1981–1983, 1986 and 1989, respectively).

*Alza Prima* could only publish three issues; it presumably started at the beginning of 1980, the second one appeared in December that same year, and the last one in May 1983. Its narrow and tall format<sup>8</sup> was novel and was made from left over paper collected from a shop in Concepción. The general design of its covers reflects several authorships, exhibiting a free graphic layout for the content. On them, the inscription of the title appears in several different positions, while the supporting color of its covers varies, possibly as a result of its free supply. The magazine, to mark its covers, makes a small reference to the “Stencil”<sup>9</sup> typewritten alphabet, created by Josef Albers in 1925 [8] (Fig. 8), into which several.



**Fig. 8.** *Alza Prima*, typographic analysis of its label.

<sup>8</sup> Closed, the magazine was 35.5 cm tall by 12.7 wide and open, it is a vertical page of 35.5 high by 25.4 wide.

<sup>9</sup> Josef Albers, together with other Bauhaus professors, was one of the promoters of the new typography [8] (Maluenda, 2017:63).

illustrations are mixed, generally reusing examples of previous articles. Its third issue, a profile on Antoni Gaudí<sup>10</sup>, with a freehand diluted sketch of his Sagrada Familia Basilica, replicated three times by reducing its scale in thirds, stands out. The monochromatic interior content shows authorship versatility in the composition of its pages, where some texts are typewritten, others handwritten, and some made with normographs, which were popular back then. The use of standardized adhesive plots typical of the time, made it easier to reach a grayscale and to mechanically intervene in illustrations, possibly using a photocopier<sup>11</sup> which made it easier for the designers -students- to play with the composition using collage techniques and achieving the visual power needed to accompany each text. Consistent with its name, *Alza Prima* gave a different editorial space, relating the extracurricular activities of that school. Its proposal, *like a call to action*<sup>12</sup> materialized an inverse response to the institutional apathy, raising with it the voice of the guiding group that did not overlook other artistic disciplines in their content. Several of these sections, such as “Poetry”, “Travelers chronicles” or of “Art and Architecture” echoed this animosity. They showed a variety of cultural interests and different areas, supported by intellectual clarity in the choice and production of the images (Fig. 9).



Fig. 9. *Diarquitectos* (Universidad del Bío-Bío, 1989).

<sup>10</sup> Cfr.: “Gaudí and his Basilica”, *Alza Prima* (3), 1983, p. 20.

<sup>11</sup> Photocopiers have been available in Chile since the 1950s. However, they only became popular in the 1980s.

<sup>12</sup> Cfr.: *Alza Prima* (3), p. 1.

It was necessary to wait until 1986, in times closer to the recovery of democracy, but still under the dictatorship, to get to know the other magazine supported by the SU of the School of Architecture of this university. *Diarquitectos* appeared with a collaborative and mixed nature, since its pages foresaw the involvement of professors and directors, alongside the students who promote the series. The magazine set out to follow the path of its predecessor, *Alza Prima*, their first pillar<sup>13</sup>. Its cover and general layout elude color and replicate the style of a newspaper, incorporating in the header the symbol of the school, and as a central image on its front page, a reticulated beam, with mobile support, holding a cart of students propelled by a sail, all of this done freehand (Fig. 10). It was monochromatic, alternating handwritten and typewritten texts on a legal-size page format. The photocopier is seen once again in the composition, using photographic collages and a variety of images. Here, the diversity of styles on its pages reveals that, each issue, had a different authorship only repeating as a constant, the use of stamps on all the pages but, each time, with different motifs. Its content shows a miscellaneous publication, a student newspaper that followed the structure of current journalism: editorial presentation, formal letters from readers, and some news from the area, articles acknowledging activities of students outside the school, interviews, and even an entertainment section with comic strips, crosswords, and the traditional *payas*<sup>14</sup>, nurturing architectural culture from a different place.

The journalistic variety linked to schools outside the Chilean geopolitical center is completed with the magazine, *NN Cosas y Casos* (1989), created by an independent group of students, which is more closely related to art. Using poetry and artistic drawing, its spirit moved away from political arguments to provide messages linked to the southern landscape and the city of Concepción. Its pages, square and with a white background, reflect a lack of mechanical means, betraying the use of a set square to frame illustrations, like the one of the “wooden cart with steam boiler”<sup>15</sup>, together with other varied techniques. As its editorial states, the magazine aspired to be a creative space on paper, but did not fit the “official group”, a clear allusion to the study plans at the school.

Thus, with minimum freedom and actions under surveillance [5], the set from Concepción, constitutes a relevant document set because, despite communication limitations imposed by central government and financial ones typical of this type of writing, its leaders opened the door for student opinions and were able to reflect, silently and creatively, images that condensed social realities and cultural representations that gave sense to the nature of those generating them, presenting different facts that, possibly, a canonic document of the time did not completely reveal.

## 2 Imaginaries in Architectural Press: Student Foundations of Chilean Visual Culture

Nowadays, it could be possible to think of an analogy between publications promoted from architecture classrooms and the current social networks. But, if the editorial enterprises reviewed could reflect an almost identical independence and autonomy of their

<sup>13</sup> Cfr.: *Diarquitectos*, (1), p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> Payas are poetic improvisations used in South America.

<sup>15</sup> Cfr.: *NN Cosas y casos* (1), p. without number. Signed by W. Pears.

circumstances, just as today's communication systems, the potential of their graphics puts them on a higher editorial step, permeable to the ideological environment that their classrooms saw.

Regardless of the time between the two sets analyzed, there are several characteristics that are common to both and others that make them different, but that together weave the same tapestry.

Among the variables they share, formats and physical structures can be mentioned, which repeat with similar sizes, rustic bindings, typewritten continuous texts, the general black and white print with the exception of color for their covers, as well as their fleeting survival and the financial limitations they faced. Thematically, references to the grand Master of Architecture, although always European, appear underlined on their covers, and it is also possible to perceive a fledgling editorial organization, evidenced in the coherence between ideology and their graphical and textual contents.

The graphics and freshness of contemporaneity that these sets offer is only differentiated and justified in the cultural and political situation of each timeframe reviewed. In Santiago, architecture was promoted from different political lines thanks to the gift of the greater freedoms of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, while from Concepción, the discourse was not as explicit and is seen shadowed by the censorship in place, although in its graphics it fought back against "the cultural blackout" promoted by the military government.

If it is considered that every group makes, though unconsciously, a culture visible around which the collective identify consolidates itself through these microzines, all these teams responded to their cultural context, drawing an imaginary proven by their graphics. In other words, they were flights of design as instruments of communication to sensitize and bring culture to the society of their times.

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