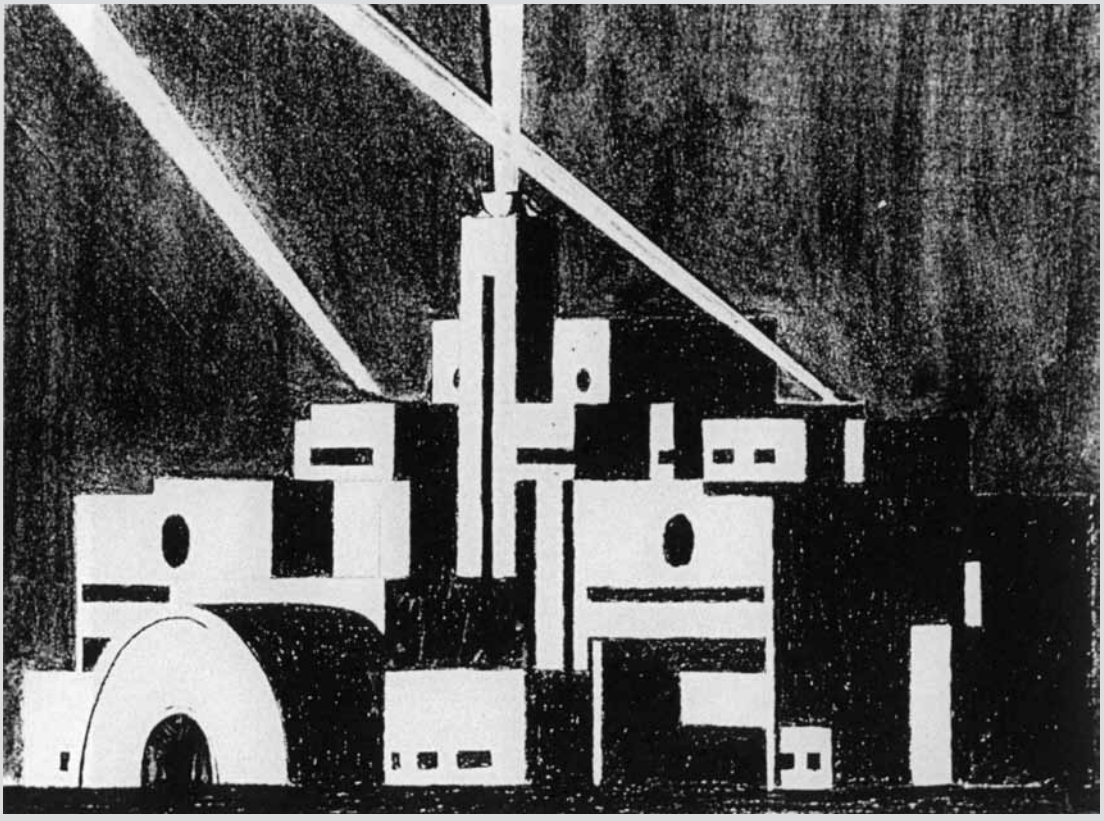
1930

FLÁVIO DE CARVALHO, "CITY OF THE NAKED MAN"

PRESENTED ON JUNE 28, 1930, at the Fourth Congress of Pan-American Architects held in Rio de Janeiro, Flávio de Carvalho's "City of the Naked Man" incorporates some of the tenets of the Brazilian anthropophagist avant-garde into an architectural and urban proposal. The central metaphor of *antropofagia* is a desire to cannibalize culture: a consuming of both local and foreign civilization, values, and forms to arrive at a new form of culture (something akin to the contemporary idea of "transculturation"; see 1925 entry). In Oswald de Andrade's founding *Manifesto Antropófago* (May 1928), culture is to be formed through the rejection of the "sacred" or inherited aspects of culture, the interest in the telluric and instinctual characteristics of Brazilian culture (something heavily influenced by surrealism), and the critical assimilation of the "foreign" elements of culture.

Carvalho, a civil engineer by training, began his architectural investigations in 1927 with a proposal for the palace for the governor of São Paulo, self-described as the "first piece of modern architecture in Brazil." This design and others he produced—including his submission for the Columbus Memorial Lighthouse Competition (1928; see 1928 entry), his house in Valinhos (1933), and the Alameda Lorena housing complex (1936–1938)—are distinguished by the combination of diverse formal characteristics and traditions that include pre-Hispanic forms



Flávio de Carvalho, Palace for the Governor of São Paulo competition entry, São Paulo, 1927.

and motifs, elements reminiscent of the Futurist designs of Antonio Sant'Elia, and references to functionalist architecture.

The central proposal of the "City of the Naked Man" is to provide an environment for the "man of the future, without God, without property" ("A Curious Thesis," 341). It is also "a home for thought; men produce ideas that are guided towards and used for the betterment of the whole human race and the attainment of progress" (ibid., 343). In a time of machine production and mechanical selection, the application and use of ideals from the past in the present, as he saw it, only harmed humanity. The "naked man," in the tradition of Karl Marx, is one who is stripped of the outdated lineaments that hold him/her back, who seeks collective and spontaneous organization, who is guided by natural desires: "The anthropophagic man, stripped of his taboos, is like a naked man. The city of naked men will certainly be a proper dwelling for the anthropophagic man" (ibid., 342).

The characteristics of Carvalho's utopian city are based on the new American cities: related to their geographical conditions; collective; appropriate for rational thinking; and, like the machine, organized, productive, and efficient (see 1971 entry). The design of the city as a "single uniform monolith" was to be based not only on addressing the functionalist necessities of humans but also their intellect through its mathematical organization. Since Carvalho believed that human needs were to be "concentric," the city would also take the same shape in order to be available to all as well as to lead to an efficient organization of the various zones that would make it up. The most important zone was to be the ring-shaped Research Center at the outermost edge of the city. This Research Center would house the hospital and would be linked to the Center for Teaching and Guidance. The Management Center, where "life is studied and catalogued," would be separated from the Research Center by a park. The Sex Zone is the second major zone in the proposal. It is a "vast laboratory where a wide range of desires are indulged in . . . without repression . . . [in order to] shape [the inhabitant's] new ego, guide his libido[,] and destroy the illogical . . ." (ibid., 343). Religion and food would be located within this zone. At the center of the whole complex would be the Government Administration (with housing nearby) and Transportation Hub, from which its different transit lines would radiate outward.

The "City of the Naked Man," like many of Carvalho's other writings based on the anthropophagist ideas, reflects an assimilation of some Corbusian ideas of rationality and purism, of Frank Lloyd Wright's exaltation of the machine and its liberating possibilities (as articulated in his 1901 "The Art and Craft of the Machine"), and of Ebenezer Howard's ideas and diagrams for his *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* (1902).