

APT LATIN AMERICA CHAPTER

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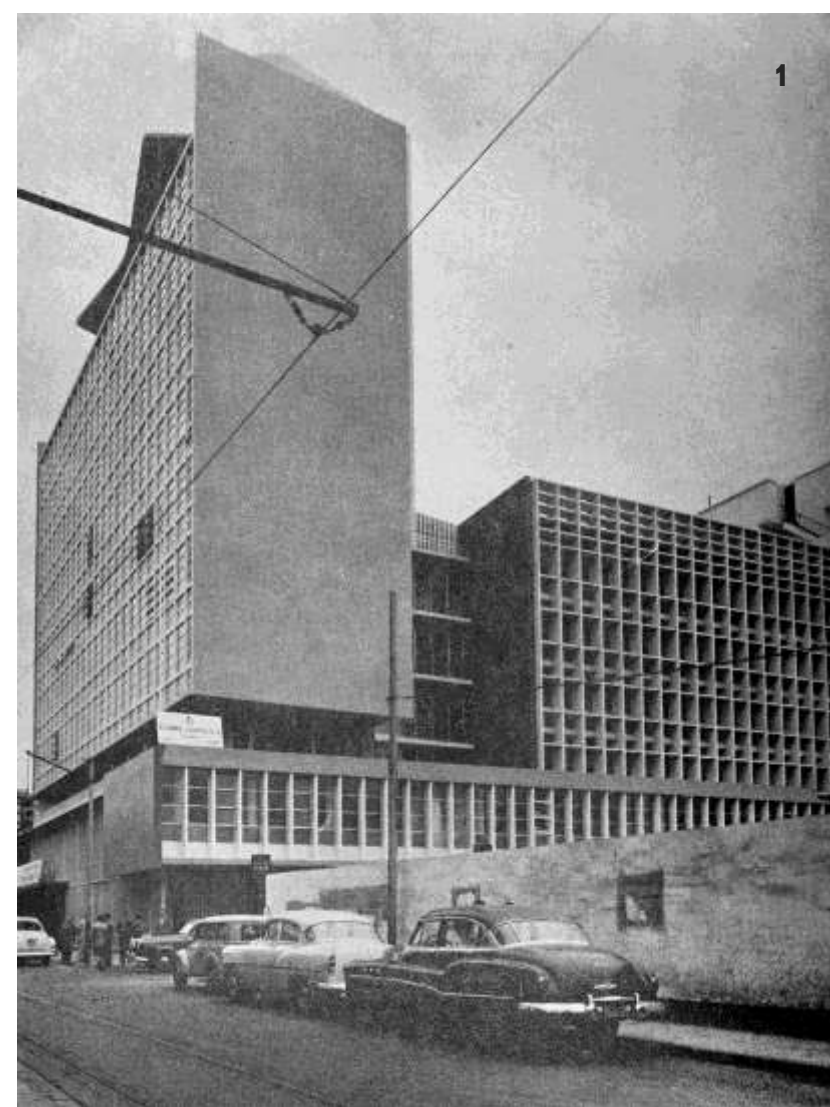
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The Future of a Modern Atlas

Addressing an iconic mixed-use Modern building in the context of a World Heritage historic city center in Lima, Peru



Source for images 1, 2: *El Arquitecto Peruano* journal, May-June 1955. The Atlas building when it opened in 1955.

Our research addresses some of the challenges and opportunities of Modernism architecture and urbanism within a World Heritage Site (WHS) through the case of the iconic Atlas building, designed by architects Walter Weberhofer and Jose Alvarez-Calderon (1953-1955) for the Atlas insurance Company and located in the historic city center of Lima, Peru.

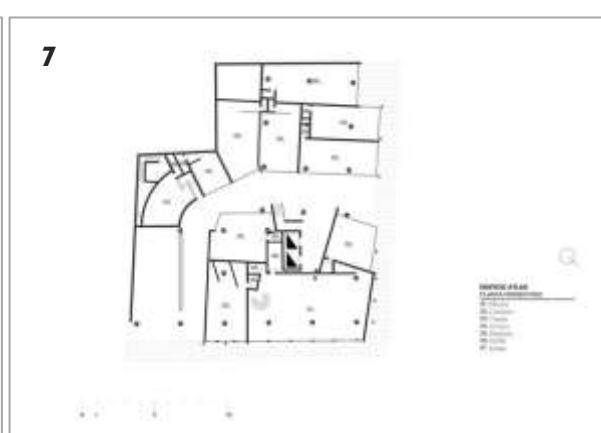
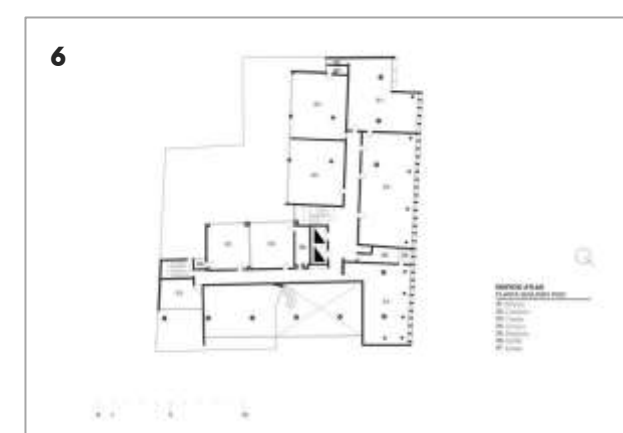
Containing shops, offices and housing, and distinguished by its sensitive massing and finely scaled façade articulation, Atlas relates with delicacy to the street and its urban neighbors. Despite years of neglect and piecemeal interventions, Atlas remains an extraordinary example of an unabashedly modern building sensitive to and contextual with the surrounding historic city.



3: Theatre Plaza, future location of the Atlas building, during a political revolt in 1895. Image courtesy of the Riva Aguero Institute Archive, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Lima, Perú.

4: Mid-century skyline of the historic city center of Lima, showing the new Modern buildings among the churches and traditional architecture.

5: The Atlas building in the late 1950's, next to the 19th century Segura theatre.



6 and 7: First and second floor layouts of the Atlas building.

8: The Atlas building in 2019 and its relationship with the street.

9: Architectural details of the façade of the Atlas.

10: Architectural details and textures of the Atlas, including glass bricks, green matte tiles, and black tiles for the elevator corridor.



Like many significant Modern buildings within the historic city center of Lima, Atlas is a commercial, mixed-use building, with many owners and stakeholders. This means getting these different actors to reconcile their agendas and to agree on how best to renovate this building is difficult. Peru also has few resources and no clear guidelines on intervening Modern sites in order to keep these buildings functional, sustainable, accessible and resilient, especially within the World Heritage area. These combined factors discourage good conservation stewardship, as well as the necessary investments required to sustain and enhance the properties.

A viable future for Atlas requires engaging the challenges of the social, political, and regulatory apparatus, in order to facilitate sound technical and management that reflect critically on the value of Modern buildings and sites as interventions within the context of this World Heritage Site.



11: The Atlas building in 2019, next to the 19th century theatre in the Theatre Plaza.

Images 8 – 11 by Rosabella Alvarez-Calderón.