What does decolonizing architecture mean? This issue is dedicated to this question. It is not a coincidence that we are asking this now. In the past years, architecture, understood broadly, seems to be in a process of decolonial reckoning. More and more historians, theorists, curators, publishers, and practitioners are thinking about the entanglement between colonial and neocolonial violence and the built environment. From heated debates about dismantling the Eurocentric architectural history survey to an increasing number of exhibitions dedicated to the topic, this issue of ARQ reveals how the ideas of decolonization have permeated architectural thinking and practice. The essays and projects of the following pages explore the association between settler colonialism and architecture, rewrite disciplinary origin stories, explore the entanglement between modernism and racism, reconstruct Indigenous ontologies and cosmologies as well as imagine a sustainable non-extractive relationship to nature. Skeptics might say decolonization is a trend; others might argue that it is being whitewashed, used benignly as a metaphor for inclusion. However, what if we are in the midst of a ‘decolonial turn’ in architecture, a transformation that will reshape the understanding of our discipline and its world-building effects in the future?

The relationship between decolonization and architecture matters on two levels. On the one hand, decolonization is already shaping our built environment. In the past years, we have seen monuments being toppled as well as buildings and streets being renamed for the colonial and racist views of their name bearers. On the other hand, decolonization as a method allows us to re-examine the architectural canon and imagine a more diverse and inclusionary way of teaching, building, and writing architecture. For example, in his famous essay “Ornament and Crime,” Adolf Loos – one of the fathers of modernism – compared ornate architecture with tribal body art. As Irene Cheng indicates in her article, Loos argued, with an explicitly racist logic, that decorative elements were markers of underdevelopment while abstraction and modernism signified progress. Understanding how racism and Eurocentrism were embedded, even structurally in modern architecture, allows us to write new histories about those who have been systematically excluded from the architectural discourse.

But decolonization is not only about the past; it is such a powerful tool precisely because it simultaneously looks into the future, creating space for imagination and world-building. As we are engaging with the words of critical thinkers like Aimé Césaire, Arturo Escobar, Frantz Fanon, bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Walter Mignolo, Eve Tuck, and many more, we are standing on the shoulders of actual American and African independence wars. In other words, if we are approaching a decolonial turn in architecture, these events must be historicized, no matter if such an effort far exceeds this issue.

We must also recognize this moment as a result of decades, and centuries, of decolonizing activism and subaltern struggles. Since globalization is inseparable from colonialism, if our effort is to decolonize, we must also look carefully at the local. So, let us take a moment to situate this issue, to talk about the synchronous events surrounding these pages. ARQ is publishing this magazine in a nation-state that is currently at war with its indigenous population. Further, ARQ’s offices are located in Santiago de Chile, on the occupied territories of the Mapuche. At the same time, Chile is writing its new constitution, which will finally replace the one forced onto us by the civic-military dictatorship (1973-1990). While this is an ongoing process, the first period of the constitutional assembly (July 2021-January 2022) was presided by Elisa Loncón, a Mapuche scholar and activist, and in all likelihood, the new constitution will recognize Chile as a plurinational state. This context

frames the debate that Lia Aliaga and Dino Bozzi have around a guide for Mapuche design developed by the Ministry of Public Works. To put it simply, for us Chileans, the stakes are high. We are shaping the future of Chile; we are emboldened by, obsessed with, even drunk on change, on possibilities, on new beginnings. Combining our futurology with decolonization is important because it allows us to learn from the past and see the ongoing effects of European, North American, and Neoliberal colonialism.

There is a risk in taking on this topic in a journal of architecture. For some of our readers, these decolonial approaches might be disheartening, even painful to read. If architecture from its beginnings has been not only complicit but entrenched in structures of violence, oppression, and racism, how can we continue our everyday lives as practitioners, teachers, writers, and curators of architecture? While we do not aspire to provide a complete answer, the authors included here have managed to hold on to the promises of our discipline, imagining and building alternative futures while being conscientious of the past. From our interviewee Lesley Lokko, who build the African Futures Institute in Ghana; the community-based project of Natura Futura and Frontera Sur in Ecuador; Rael and Fratello’s dirt-building to house a Prada store in Marfa, Texas U.S.; the articles and projects we have included in this issue find ways to dwell in the discomfort between continuity and change, between accepting the status quo, rejecting it, or ignoring it altogether. This is not only a disciplinary undertaking: the work of Tlingit and Unangax̂ artist Nicholas Galanin suggests that to decolonize architecture, we might benefit from looking outside physical and disciplinary boundaries. Finally, our hope is that the essays and projects of the next pages will raise more questions than answers because decolonization is an ongoing process, not a destination. ARQ

Valentina Rozas-Krause
Editora invitada / Guest Editor ARQ 110
LSA Collegiate Fellow, History of Art Department, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA