Docomomo US: Modern Mexico City
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Louise Noelle Gras – Tour Leader

Introduction

In the 1937 U.S. photographer Esther Born observed of modern architecture in Mexico City that "the quantity of it comes as a surprise. Such a quantity would be unexpected in any North American city; but to the Northerner, acquainted with Mexico only though literature and heresy, the energy displayed and the up-to-the-minute quality are doubling astonishing." She told readers, "Mexico City has been urban roughly twice as long as Boston or New York." Eighty years later foreigners are as struck as she was by the city's architectural vitality and daring. But, as visitors and locals have long recognized, to understand 20th-century buildings and urbanism one must also understand a much longer past.

History is palpable in Mexico City of 2017, where the very new and the very old stand side by side. Ruins of the Aztecs' imperial capital, Tenochtitlan, lie beneath the surface of modern streets, while twenty-first century skyscrapers tower above. The Aztecs lived in a rigorously ordered island city on a lake, but the metropolis that has risen in its place sprawls over approximately 573 square miles in the Valley of Mexico, which sits 7,350 feet above sea level. About 21 million people live in the metropolitan area. In the nearly 200 years since Independence from Spain in 1821, the capital has been transformed from a clearly defined, gridded urban center dotted with baroque palaces and churches into one of the largest, most dynamic, architecturally diverse, and seemingly boundless cities in the world. Mexico City exists in the twenty-first century much as it did in the fourteenth: as the most consistently architecturally significant city in the Western Hemisphere, and a world center of architectural and urban innovation.

Awareness of Mexico's extraordinary architectural heritage and the expansion of the city, planned and unplanned, shaped the capital's best twentieth-century architecture and continue to inform the work of its most talented architects. Modern architecture here also responded to the enormous social inequalities that have defined Mexico since the conquest. Here many architects have designed for both the rich and powerful and for the very poor. Their buildings have alternately sought to ameliorate devastating social realities, help create a sustainable middle-class, and sometimes shut out poverty and difference altogether. We will consider the ways that the architecture of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has embraced the city, rejected it, or proposed separate cities altogether.

For much of the twentieth century Mexican architects grappled with how their buildings should relate to broad international currents of architectural modernity. Their awareness of the country's deep connections to Europe and to the United States, and its distinctive history and social situation, has shaped buildings that are often quite familiar in some respects, and surprisingly different in others. This quality of "both/and" distinguishes the architecture of modern Mexico City and makes it an ideal place to study the forms and problems of modern architecture.

Welcome to Mexico City.

Hotel Camino Real

Ricardo Legorreta designed a now legendary hotel in 1968 for affluent foreign visitors who came to Mexico City for the Olympics that year. It is on the eastern edge of the upscale Polanco neighborhood, just north of Chapultepec Park. The five-story hotel stands on 8.5 acres and has about 700 rooms.

Built around a series of courtyards and defined by its reposeful spaces created by sober walls, the hotel is one of Legorreta's earliest and most important buildings. An elegiac manipulation of solids and voids, the hotel's visual and spatial richness comes from the architect's juxtapositions of neutral and brightly colored planes and grilles, and the meeting of rough and smooth surfaces. The opening of interior spaces recalls colonial and pre-Hispanic courtyards, while the hotel's vivid colors evoke the intense hues of many Mexican crafts and some of the country's vernacular architecture.

The association of Mexico with bright colors, especially in architecture, developed gradually in the first half of the twentieth century. The connection grew stronger in the third quarter of the century with the international marketing of the 1968 Olympics, growing awareness of the architecture of Luis Barragán, and with buildings like this one.

Historic Center of the City of Palaces

At the heart of Mexico City is the enormous square officially named Plaza de la Constitución, but known to all as the Zócalo (due to a podium or *zócalo* that was placed there). This yes is the political and spiritual center not only of the capital, but of the nation. With an area of approximately 19,000 square feet, it is one of the largest squares in the world. It was at the heart of the plan for Mexico City drafted by Alonso García Bravo in 1523-24, immediately after the Spanish conquest. García Bravo was early New Spain's most important planner and he also designed the cities of Panama, Oaxaca, and Vera Cruz, each of which had a strict grid plan and central plaza.

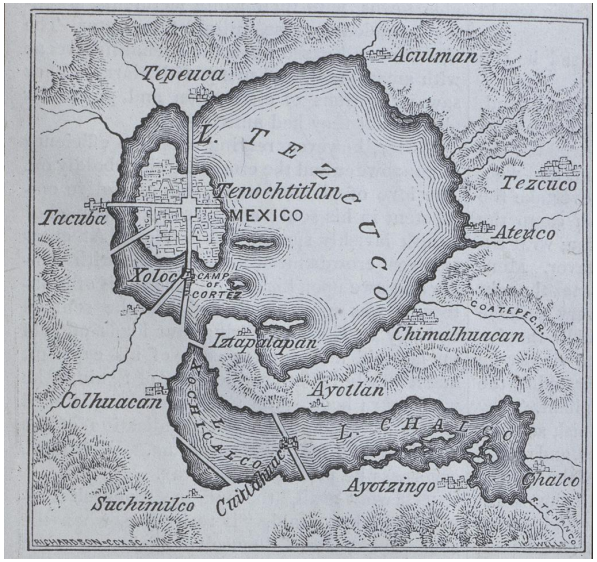
Map drawn by Gómez de Trasmonte, c. 1628

The square has undergone many changes in its nearly 500-year history. For several centuries, a large market filled much of it. In the nineteenth century it was transformed into a formal garden. In the mid-1950s the government completed the removal of benches, a kiosk, and plantings. Today the Zócalo is a giant open space used for protests, patriotic gatherings, concerts, exhibitions, and other events.

The Zócalo and the streets that emanate from it are among the very best examples of Spanish colonial urban planning. The extraordinary historical coincidence of the Spanish conquest of the Americas with the dissemination of Renaissance architectural and urban theory made possible the realization of European planning ideals in America on a scale that far exceeded any in Europe.

←N *Map sent by Cortés to Carlos V, 1524*

The success of the entwined programs of political conquest and religious conversion of native populations by the Spanish depended on the rapid destruction of existing cities and the building of new ones throughout the hemisphere. New cities in the Americas were governed by strict rules: only the Spanish could live near the center, and indigenous populations were pushed outside the formal boundaries. Long straight streets lined with impressive government and residential buildings were meant to convey the conquerors' intentions of staying for good, and to provide defensible spaces in the case of native rebellions. Although informed by Renaissance theory, the practice of urban planning in New Spain preceded Spanish planning doctrines: the famous Law of the Indies of 1573 provided prescriptions for the designs of new cities based on Vitruvian and Renaissance ideas, but in many instances simply described what had already been built in Mexico and Peru.



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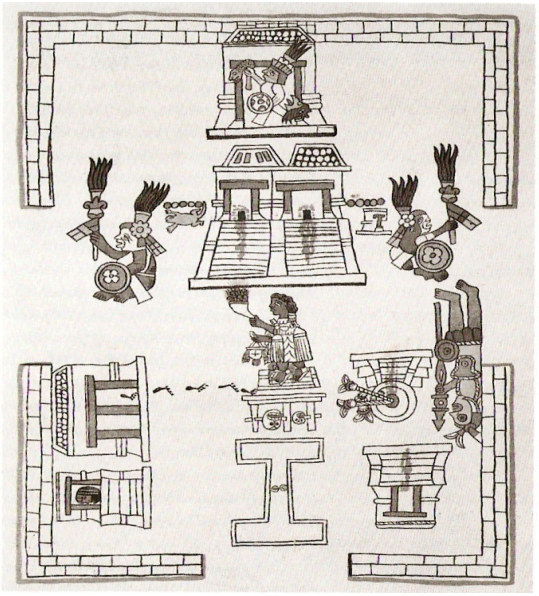

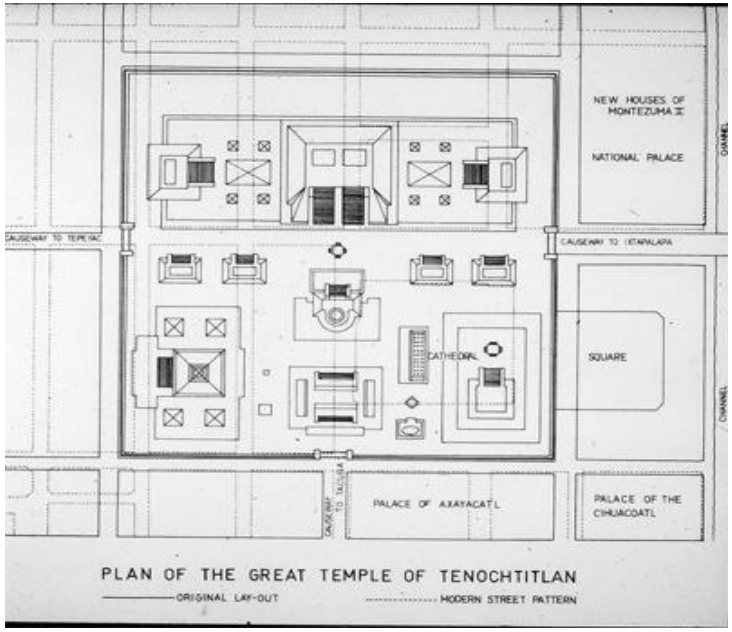

Mexico City was built on top of the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan, which itself was built on an island in Lake Texcoco. The people we refer to as Aztecs called themselves Mexica (the source of the name of the modern country), and came to the central valley from the north around 1325. According to their history, they were to build their capital on the site where an eagle holding a serpent landed on a cactus. The capital that they built quickly became the center of an extraordinarily powerful empire.

When the Spanish arrived in 1519 they were astonished by the city before them. In addition to the ideas of Renaissance urbanism, the straight streets and axial planning of Tenochtitlan appear to have informed the design of the colonial city as well. Tenochtitlan was dominated by a large walled ceremonial precinct where the great pyramid (which was built in successive layers) stood, topped by two temples. The building towered above smaller temples, a ball court, and altars. Ordinary people lived beyond the sacred precinct and used networks of canals and three causeways to the mainland to move through the city.

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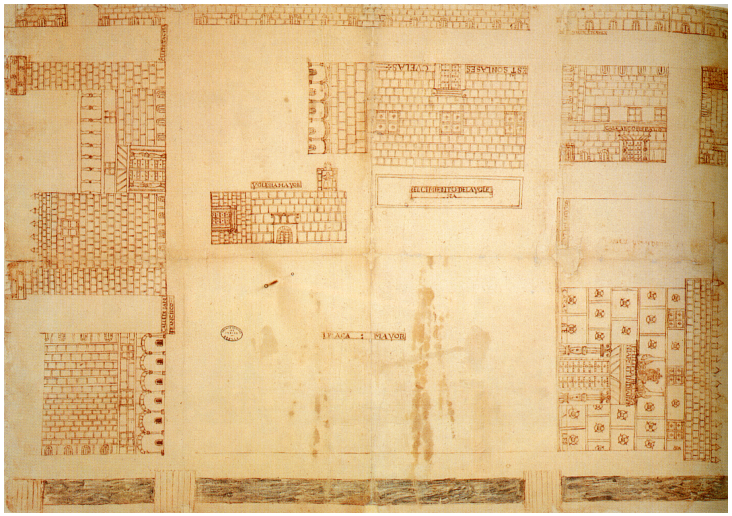


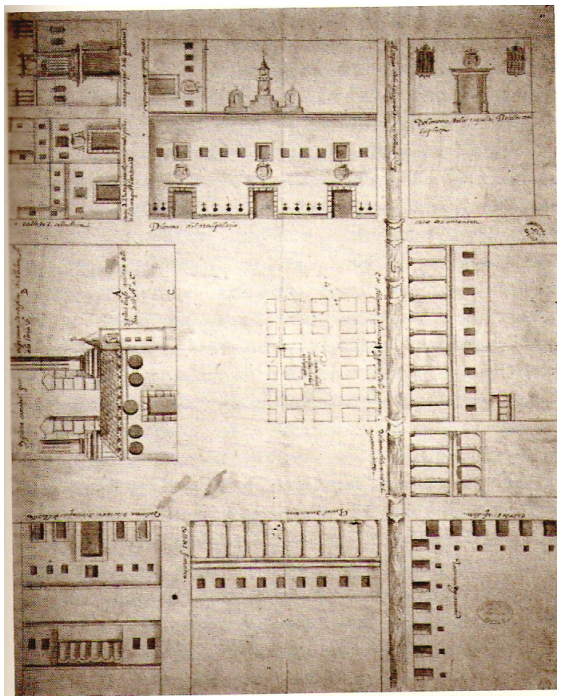
The center of modern Mexico City is built more or less on top of the sacred precinct. The excavated ruins of the main temple are northeast of the Zócalo. The modern square is about one-quarter the size of the sacred precinct and what we see today resembles, in many respects, the city that the Spanish built.

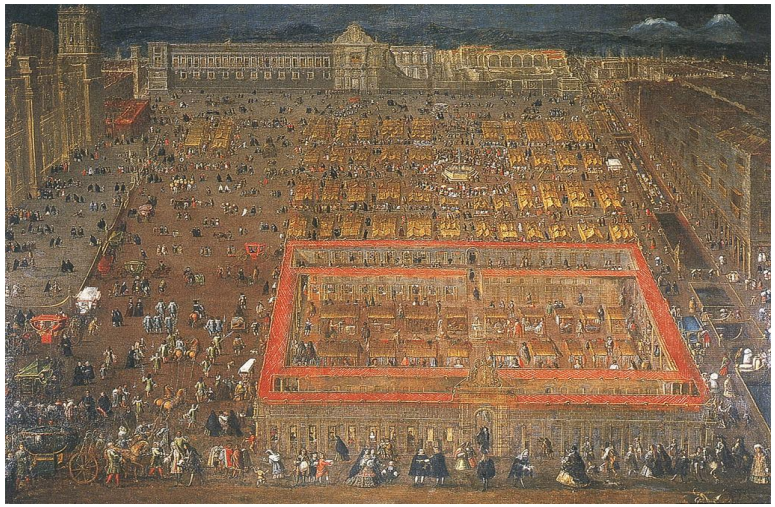
N ↑ (1563)

Two sixteenth-century maps give some sense of the plaza's organization in the early colonial period. A large canal ran along the south perimeter and was used to bring goods to the market in the square (this is shown in the Villalpondo's 1695 painting). A modest church occupied the north side of the square, and colonnades and arcades in government buildings on the south and west sides helped shape the character of the plaza. As building

continued throughout the sixteenth century, the viceregal palaces on the east and west sides of the square revealed shifting stylistic preferences: from the rather medieval-looking plateresque (on the 1563 map) to the sober regularity inspired by Alfonso de Herrera's peninsular architecture.

N← (1596)





Cristóbal de Villalpando, View of the Zócalo, 1695

The Metropolitan Cathedral of Mexico stands on the north side of the Zócalo, on the site where the Spanish built their first church using building materials from the Aztec temples that they had just destroyed. Immediately after the conquest, Cortés moved into one of Moctezuma's rebuilt palaces on the west side of the square. An enormous building with multiple arcaded courtyards, shops on the ground level on several sides, and spaces for the viceregal household and arsenal, the complex was known as Casas Viejas de Cortés (Cortés's Old Houses).

On the east side of the square is the enormous National Palace, the seat of the federal government. It stands on the site once occupied by one of Moctezuma's other palaces. In 1531, it was transformed into a palace complex for Cortés, the Casas Nuevas (New Houses). In 1562 the Spanish government bought the building and converted it into the viceregal palace. Although it has been much altered, the building of today recalls its predecessors in form, scale, and program.

On the west side of the square, along Madero is Rafael Goyenche's Hotel Majestic (1925). At street level on the west side of the square runs the Portal de Mercaderes, the long arcade that shelters shops. The original portal was built in 1529 and has been rebuilt or modified many times since. Shops and street vendors have occupied that portion of the square continuously since the conquest.

On the southwest corner of the square is the old Ayuntamiento (Town Hall) building. It was begun in 1527, and like other colonial buildings, organized around courtyards. It included offices and a chamber for the municipal government, a jail, a granary, the mint, and a meat market, and faced the market in the square. The building was modified considerably in 1574. Much of the Ayuntamiento was destroyed in riots in 1692, and it was largely rebuilt as a two-story building in 1720-24. Only the arcade and part of the structure remains. On top of it we see the neo-colonial design of Manuel Gorozpe (1921-34). The building houses the city archives, library, and some offices.

Shortly after the Department of the Federal District took the place of the Ayuntamiento as the city's political authority (December 1928), plans were begun for the construction of a building for the new entity. Federico Mariscal's Palace of the Department of the Federal District (1935-48) rose across the street from the old Ayuntamiento, which it resembles.

Cathedral of Mexico

The **Metropolitan Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption and the Sagrario Metropolitano** (the parish church of Mexico City), attached to its east side, cover the north side of the Zócalo. The Cathedral is the largest colonial building in Latin America. It harmonizes a variety of architectural languages and spatial arrangements in a surprisingly coherent composition. Construction began in 1573 according to a 1569 plan by Claudio Arciniega, but the design was modified significantly several times. The church we see today reflects changes made in the seventeenth through the early nineteenth centuries.

Metropolitan Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption and the Sagrario Metropolitano

The lower portions of the façade date to the second-half of the seventeenth century and combine elements of Renaissance classicism and sculptural massing typical of early Mexican baroque architecture. Massive buttresses topped by large scrolls frame three distinct portals. The relief panels and solomonic

columns above the doors were completed in 1689 and illustrate the Assumption (center), Peter receiving the keys to the kingdom (left), and the ship of the church.

The façade was completed only in 1817, just four years before Mexican Independence, under the direction of the sculptor-architect Manuel Tolsá, the most important person to shape Mexican architecture in the years around 1800. Tolsá pulled together the partially complete cathedral using a restrained baroque language.

Inside, the choir (c. 1696-1709; heavily restored after a fire) fills the southern end of the nave and is visually connected to the raised altar by an aisle demarcated by a low bronze balustrade (1734-45). Giant organs with elaborately carved cases (c. 1690; 1736) flank the choir, and the ornate Altar del Pérdon (completed 1732; heavily restored) closes the space on the south end.

In the apse stands the extraordinary Altar de los Reyes (Altar of the Kings, 1718-37), one the most important works of Mexican baroque art. It is the masterpiece of the architectural sculptor Jerónimo de Balbás, and it introduced the style known as "churrigueresque". Paintings depicting the Adoration of the Magi and the Assumption are overwhelmed by the richly encrusted gilded estipites that define the cave-like semi-circular space.

Templo Mayor museum

East of the Cathedral is the Sagrario Metropolitano (1740-1759). Here, architect Lorenzo Rodríguez brought the churrigueresque outside, adapting Balbás's language of ornamental estipites for retablo façades on the east and south sides of the Greek-cross plan building. The two-story facades are resplendent with estipites of differing widths, statues of saints, and curving cornices. The walls are of tezontle (red volcanic stone) and rise to form mixtilinear parapets.

The ruins of the Templo Mayor are northeast of the Sagrario. Many colonial buildings were torn down in the late twentieth century to open up this active archeological site. Although we will not do so as a group, you can go into the excavations and see the remains of the oldest pyramid, among other buildings. There is also a large museum, by Pedro Ramírez Vázquez, that holds sculptures and other objects recovered from the site.

Palacio Nacional

The History of Mexico

In the Palacio Nacional, we see the extraordinary murals by Diego Rivera. We come into the three-story Patio Principal, an enormous courtyard most recently renovated in the 1960s when the building had to be stabilized after the subway was built. In the grand stairwell (1926-27) Rivera painted one of his most important frescoes, *The History of Mexico* (1929-35) in which he linked modern and pre-Hispanic Mexico across three walls, proposing in paint an interpretation of Mexican history that influenced ideological and historical understandings of the nation for most of the twentieth century. On the right wall Rivera depicted scenes and figures from the pre-conquest period. The large central wall reads vertically and horizontally and illustrates battles and struggles since the Spanish arrival, and includes many impressive portraits of the heroes and villains of the 1521-1930 period. The left wall is an image of Mexico "today and tomorrow" and shows the social upheavals of the early 1930s, with particular reference to modern technology and labor struggles. Rivera's later panels in the corridors (1941-51) illustrate scenes from pre-conquest and early colonial life and include an extraordinary rendering of Tenochtitlan from the market at Tlatelolco, a Mexica city-state north of the Aztec capital.

Along Madero Street

The **La Perla Building's** (c. 1900-1902) ornate classicism was typical of the grand buildings of the turn of the twentieth century. Hugo Dorner and Luis Bacmeister, the architects, were the authors of several major buildings in and near the center of Mexico City. Built as a jewelry store, the building marks our entry into the "jewelry district" portion of Madero.

On the corner opposite La Profesa church is the former **Joyería la Esmeralda** (Esmeralda Jewelry Store, 1890-92), a lively building from the end of the nineteenth century that combined French Renaissance and baroque elements in a cosmopolitan composition. Dramatic oval dormers project from a mansard roof and rows of ornately framed windows and arches wrap around the corner in a composition befitting a store devoted to expensive ornament for the body. Built to the designs of architect Eleuterio Méndez and engineer J. Francisco Serrano, the building caused a delighted stir among shoppers. J. Francisco Serrano was the father of Francisco J.

Serrano (who designed many buildings in Polanco and Hipódromo), and grandfather of Francisco Serrano, whose work we will see in Santa Fe. The Joyería la Esmeralda was one of the first buildings in Mexico City built of iron and reinforced concrete.

Two more notable Porfiriato-era buildings define corner of Madero and Palma: Manuel Francisco Álvarez's four-story mixed-use building (1889) with notable balustrades and garlands wraps around the corner. Opposite, on the southeast is another building by Dorner and Bacmeister, with corner balconies and a mansard roof.

The group of late nineteenth-century century buildings on Madero is probably the best collection of Porfirian commercial buildings in the capital. The Porfirian elite preferred architectural forms reminiscent of recent Parisian buildings because they suggested that Mexico City was an up-to-date and upscale metropolis, worthy of participation in international business and culture. The eclectic language of turn-of-the-century commercial buildings differed considerably from the eighteenth-century residential baroque that preceded it, and reflected changing building programs and a changing society. By 1900 Madero's lavish stores for modern shopping vied for prominence with stately former residences for colonial governance, redefining the meaning of "City of Palaces."

At the corner of Madero and Isabella Católica is the church of **La Profesa** (Pedro de Arrieta, 1720), one of the major baroque churches in downtown Mexico City. The Jesuits built their main church on this site beginning in 1597. The present church has a basilica plan with wide aisles and a high crossing. Its principal façade faces east and is defined by a pair of tall towers and large sculptural buttresses that frame an ornate retablo façade that rises three levels. The tezontle stone and octagonal shape of the windows was typical of eighteenth century Mexican baroque churches. Statues of saints fill niches between the pairs of columns. The focus of the second level is a framed relief showing Christ carrying the cross to St. Ignatius while God the Father and angels look on. Dense patterns of foliation further embellish the façade.

Palacio de Iturbide

The south portal, on Madero, is considerably less ornate. This entrance, which is lower than the level of the street, gives some sense of the extent to which Mexico City has sunk in the last three hundred years.

The **Casa del Marqués de Jaral de Berrio**, now almost always referred to as the **Palacio de Iturbide**. The building is one of the very finest examples of eighteenth century palatial architecture in the capital, although its location in the middle of the block makes it seem unusual. Most palaces occupied corner sites, but this one abutted the east wall of the Convent of San Francisco, so its modern context is considerably different from what we would have seen two hundred years ago. The building was designed in 1779 by Francisco Guerrero y Torres,

one of the most important architects of the late eighteenth century, and completed about 1785 by his brother-in-law, Agustín Durán. Because of houses like this one, and the Casa de los Azulejos, for many years Mexico City was known as the "City of Palaces."

The building's walls are of red tezontle, with frames of gray chiluca stone. This use of materials —tezontle for the walls and chiluca for framing elements— is common to eighteenth century buildings of many types throughout the city. Here an elaborate sculptural pattern that occasionally suggests an estipite in section, decorates the chiluca frames, which are further adorned by vegetal pattern carvings. The enormous door is framed by would-be ionic pilasters and surmounted by huge atlantes that stand atop scrolls. The house's three stories are clearly expressed by cornices that run across the façade, and windows just below the first course indicate a mezzanine level. Large balconies on the upper levels derive from Spanish manorial houses, as does the arcaded upper gallery. Square towers with octagonal and circular medallions flank the main block.

The building's colloquial name comes from its most famous resident, Augustín Iturbide, the emperor of Mexico, and its first leader after Independence. The Marques de Jaral de Berrio made the house available to Iturbide in 1821 and he lived there until the end of his brief rule in 1823. In the years thereafter the palace was used as a hotel and a restaurant. It is currently the Palacio de Cultura Banamex, which has a large and impressive collection of Mexican painting and photography. The central patio was covered by Ricardo Legorreta, to allow for it use as a cultural center.

Palacio de Minería

After lunch we walk west, down Tacuba, stopping in front of the **Palacio de Minería**, the **Palace of the Mines**, the most important complete architectural work by Manuel Tolsá. Tolsá was a Spanish sculptor who arrived in Mexico in 1790 to chair the sculpture program at the Academy of San Carlos, Mexico's prestigious art school where classes were first held in 1781.

The **Palace of Mines** was built from 1797 to 1813 to house Mexico's Royal Mining Office and the engineering school associated with it. It contained offices, shops, laboratories, a dormitory, a chapel, and reception halls. The building's sober and tightly composed façade gives no hint of the programmatic complexity within. Tolsá's rigorously

Palacio de Minería and "El Caballito" (the little horse) statue

symmetrical building commands the entire block and the clearly articulated piano nobile and adroit combination of classical elements link the building more strongly to Renaissance palaces than to noble houses in Mexico City, although the rhythm of the fenestration echoes that of the National Palace. He is often regarded as the most important neoclassical architect in Mexico, but at the Palace of the Mines Tolsá integrated baroque elements, notably the curved segmental pediments over the side doors. His paired columns and pilasters (on the main level) suggest a connection to Claude Perrault's façade of the Louvre, and simultaneously bespeak the arrival of a new French- inspired mode of artistic training in Mexico and auger the proliferation of Francophile forms in the nineteenth century.

The School of Mines thus marks a turning point in Mexican architecture, away from the exuberant, comparably chaotic, and distinctive forms of the Mexican baroque of the eighteenth century, toward an international classicism, which was simultaneously being embraced by the new republic to the north. The preference for this international architectural language as a reliable means of conveying permanence and asserting a connectedness to history corresponded, in New Spain, to the consolidation of wealth (especially from mining) and a growing sense, on the part of wealthy creoles, of the stability of their institutions, apart from peninsular Spain. We will briefly enter the building to examine the interior.

Across the square from the Palace of Mines stands the **National Museum of Art**, originally the Ministry of Communications and Public Works (1904-11, Silvio Contri), a sensitive, if considerably more ornate, Porfirian neighbor, which evokes the Renaissance even more forcefully.

The plaza between the two buildings is a kind of urban monument to Tolsá. His bronze equestrian portrait of Charles IV (1796-1803) faces the Palace of the Mines, the king now seemingly pointing to Tolsá's building.

"El Caballito" (The little horse), as the statue is known, is one of Mexico City's most famous sculptures, and it has occupied several prominent locations since it was completed in the early nineteenth century. It stood first in the Plaza Mayor (Main Square), following a 1796 redesign of the plaza by Antonio González Velázquez. (The image above shows the plaza as it was drawn by Rafael Ximeno y Planes and engraved by José Joaquín Fabregat.) The new scheme recalled Michelangelo's arrangement of the Campidoglio in Rome around the equestrian portrait of Marcus Aurelius and Anges-Jacques Gabriel's Place Louis XV in Paris.

After Independence, the statue was removed from its base or zócalo, and placed in the courtyard of the University to protect it. In 1852, it was relocated to the intersection of the Paseo de la Reforma and Bucarelli, where

it would later be one in a line of monuments along Reforma erected during the Porfiriato as part of the regime's urban beautification program. (We will discuss this moment in Mexican urban planning further when we tour Reforma). The statue was moved to its present location in 1979 and the square has been known since as Plaza Tolsá.

Palacio de Correos (Main Post Office)

At the Eje Central stands the **Main Post Office** (1902-07), designed by Italian architect Adamo Boari. Boari was one of late-Porfirian Mexico's most important architects and his post office has endured as one of the Centro's most distinctive buildings. Here Boari developed the Mexican palace type yet further, designing a building that celebrates one of modern bureaucracy's most useful services. The building opens to the corner and in color and style is dramatically different from Tolsá's building next door on Tacuba.

Main Post Office

Perhaps more than any other building in downtown Mexico City, the Post Office rewards the student of architectural history. On the lowest level the rounded arched windows and the ornament around them vaguely suggest Islamic forms, while on the story above the viewer is reminded of richly encrusted decorations associated with Tudor gothic. One floor up the trefoil windows and ornate decorative pattern call Venetian palaces to mind, while the gallery on the upper floor, despite its delicate ornamental details, suggests the Renaissance on the mainland. The building's puzzling arrangement of associative forms comes together legibly not under the vague term "eclectic," but when read as a rare example of the plateresque revival.

Despite its historicism, the building has a steel frame. The exterior decoration is continued inside in a great atrium crowned by a large skylight and filled by double-staircase.

Banco de México

Just south of the Post Office is the **Bank of Mexico**, another turn-of-the-century downtown palace, rendered in a modified Italian Renaissance language. Originally built as the offices of the Mutual Life Insurance Company (known as La Mutua in Mexico City), the building was constructed in 1903-1905. It was designed by the New York architecture firm De Lemos & Cordes, whose founders, Theodore de Lemos and August W. Cordes were both originally from Germany.

After the Revolution, the building was taken over by the Bank of Mexico and in 1926-27 Carlos Obregón Santacilia adapted and redecorated it, creating a sumptuous Art Deco interior. Manuel Centurion and Hans Pillig added the sculptures above the exterior doors and decorative glass inside.

The bank grew rapidly in the late twenties and early thirties and in 1937 its officers commissioned Obregón Santacilia to design an additional building at the corner of Madero and the Eje Central. This building, Edificio Guardiola, is named for the small square that once occupied the site. With heavy massing and sober axial symmetry and regularity, the building exemplifies the modern federal classicism adopted by many architects in the 1930s for government buildings in Mexico City and the United States. The Guardiola's contrast with the Bank of Mexico typifies the extraordinary transformation in architecture in the early twentieth century. Restrained Art Deco details including the lighting sconces, seen in contrast to the interior across the street, show the evolution of Art Deco and reflect effects of streamlined design associated with the style's transformation in the United States at the end of the 1920s and early 1930s.

Torre Latinoamericana

Two important skyscrapers stand at the corner of Madero and the Eje Central. On the southwest corner, we see the **La Nacional Building**, widely regarded as the capital's first skyscraper, and the one of the earliest exemplars of reinforced concrete construction. Designed by Manuel Ortiz Monasterio, Bernardo Calderon, and Luis Avila in 1930, the building's stepped upper stories link it simultaneously to Art Deco skyscraper design elsewhere in North America and to Mesoamerican pyramids. It stands on giant pylons sunk into a deep concrete foundation.

The **Torre Latinoamericana** was named for the insurance company, La Latinoamericana, Seguros, S.A., which commissioned the building as its headquarters stands on the southeast corner of Madero and the Eje Central. When it was completed in 1956, the building was the tallest in Latin America, and among the tallest in the world. Its 44 stories were considered daringly dangerous in an earthquake zone. Planning began in 1950 and the building was designed by architects Manuel de la Colina and Augusto H. Alvarez, with novel engineering and foundations by Leonardo and Adolfo Zeevaert.

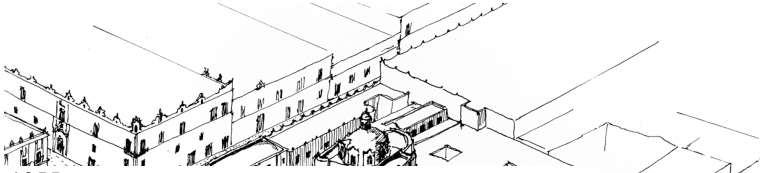
Bands of windows, concrete, and blue plastic panels wrap the building. The base steps up and back to a 24-story shaft that soars above the historic center. Atop the building is an observation deck and a 60-foot antenna. The building's glazing and form call to mind the great skyscrapers of Manhattan. When it was built, the Torre Latinoamericana clearly proclaimed a new era in Mexican architecture and symbolized the country's increasing participation in international commerce.

Torre Latinoamericana

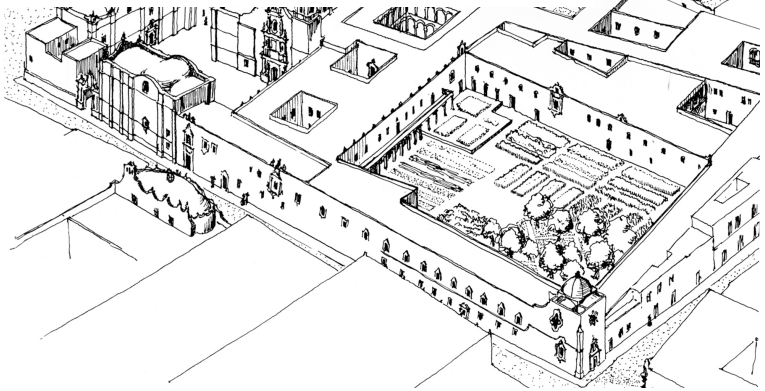
As striking as it is, the Torre Latinoamericana is most famous as a work of engineering. It stands on 361 steel beams driven deep into a foundation forty-four feet below ground. The steel frame was designed to withstand earthquakes and sway safely. The building passed its first major earthquake test in 1957. It withstood the 1985 earthquake (8.1 on Richter scale) with almost no damage, as many buildings nearby were reduced to rubble.

Approximately where the Latin American Tower now stands and where Moctezuma II's private zoo once stood, **San Francisco**, the first permanent church on the American continent was built in 1525. On a site to the east of that small, wooden church Fray Pedro Gante founded San José de Belén de los Naturales, the first mission in Mexico. Gante was a Flemish Franciscan who was one of the first three priests to arrive in Mexico after the conquest. He established San José as a religious and educational center: here natives were prepared for baptism and the children of Aztec nobles learned Latin and theology, in anticipation of taking their places in colonial society.

San José was probably Mexico's first open-air chapel, a building type that emerged in post-conquest America in response to the problem of converting enormous numbers of natives to Christianity. According to his 1532 account, Gante's original building was little more than a simple shed with a thatched roof. By 1560 it had become a large multi-aisled structure, seven bays wide and seven bays deep, with each aisle 10 yards wide and 30 yards deep. A forest of interior columns supported the roof, and the space may have resembled a mosque. It opened out onto a large walled outdoor atrium that could accommodate thousands of people for mass or instruction. San José is also significant for its role in colonial architectural education.



Guardiola Square, c. 1855



Convent of San Francisco

The original church of San Francisco was demolished in 1590 and rebuilt successively, and San José disappeared in the eighteenth century. By then the Convent of San Francisco had grown into a large campus, with a single-nave church, an atrio, a cloister, a huge garden, and various auxiliary buildings. The convent extended south approximately to Venustiano Carranza Street and east to the edge of the building now known as the Iturbide Palace.

All that remains of the Convent of San Francisco is the church (1710-16), and the Balvanera Chapel, a substantial side chapel on the north side, through which the church is entered. The chapel was dedicated in 1766 and from the atrio in front of it, we can see its once fine Churrigueresque façade.

On the north side of Madero, opposite the Balverna Chapel, is a one of Mexico City's legendary palaces, which is now occupied by the famous restaurant, Sanborn's. The Mexico City chain was begun by the brothers Walter and Frank Sanborn of California in 1903 and its most celebrated location is here, in the building known as the **Casa de los Azulejos** (House of the Blue Tiles), which Sanborn's acquired in 1918. Colloquially named for the extraordinary blue and white glazed tiles that cover the exterior, this colonial palace's proper name is the Casa del Conde del Valle de Orizaba. It was built by the fifth condesa of Orizaba in about 1730. The tiles come from Puebla, the center of colonial tile production in Mexico. Although the building's elaborate tile work is unusual, the pilasters, window frames, and mixtilinear parapet with scrolls are elements common to many eighteenth-century palaces in Mexico City.

The interior is much changed, but the essence of the building is preserved in the double-height atrium that was originally the central patio. The tiles continue on the interior walls of the upper level and an ornate carved fountain is on the west wall. Thin octagonal columns support the galleries. In the stair well José Clemente Orozco, one of Mexico's most important muralists, painted *Omnisciencia*, (*Omniscience*, 1925), an early and small, but excellent example of his work.

Alameda Central

The Alameda Central, Mexico City's celebrated downtown park, is bordered on the north and south by Avenida Hidalgo and Avenida Juarez, respectively, and Balderas to the west. Named for the álamos (poplar trees) that grow there, the park was planned in the 1590s, on the western outskirts of the city, and was originally a square rather than the rectangle we see today. In its early days, the Alameda was ill cared for and used as a pasture, but by the 1620s it had become a site for urban promenading.

An anonymous painting of 1775 documents the social dynamics of the Alameda in the eighteenth century: surrounded by walls, it was a space for the upper classes, which were increasingly defined relative to race. The painting is both a landscape and unusual example of casta (caste) painting. It illustrates in urban terms the social opprobrium associated with certain kinds of racial mixing: the black child produced by white parents reveals his mother's heretofore unknown racial background. She and her child cannot enter the Alameda, but the father, a Spaniard, surveys the park, still in a socially superior position, literally and symbolically able to move in the city in ways that his wife and child cannot.

Painting of the Alameda

In the 1770s, land was added to the east and west sides of the square, and the park took on its present form. This addition obliterated the infamous Plaza de Quemadero on the west end, where those condemned by the Inquisition had been burned beginning 1574.

Although formal gardens had clearly been laid out by the late eighteenth century, most of the statuary and fountains, and the present arrangement of the gardens date to the middle of the nineteenth century. The statues are by academic Mexican sculptors and are nearly all from the second half of the nineteenth century.

On the south side of the park is the Juárez Hemicycle, an enormous neoclassical monument celebrating the nation's first indigenous president, Benito Juárez, who was the leading force behind the mid-nineteenth century reform movement. The monument, by Guillermo Heredia, was erected for the centennial celebrations and completed in 1910.

The area around the Alameda was among the most heavily damaged in the powerful 1985 earthquake, and much of what we see along Avenida Juárez has been built since then. One surviving colonial building was built as the Church of Corpus Christi (1724) by Pedro de Arrieta.

Two office buildings, part of Ricardo Legorreta's **Juárez Complex** tower above the old building and are the signature elements in his Juárez Master Plan, which was completed in 2003. The reddish eastern building houses the Superior Court of Justice of the Federal District, and the beige building, is occupied by the Foreign Affairs Secretariat. A series of plazas and walkways connect the buildings and echo the pattern of squares in the historic center. Plaza Juárez is the most significant of these, and includes a notable fountain by the artist Vicente Rojo. The Juárez Complex was meant to revitalize this section of the city, which languished since the earthquake while politicians, foreign developers, residents, and local merchants disagreed about how to rebuild.

Juárez Complex

Avenida Juárez has long been a street of up-to-date buildings, and in the 1930s it was one of the best places to see modern buildings in Mexico City. Carlos Obregón Santacilia's sleek, modern, **Hotel del Prado** (1933-41; destroyed in earthquake) stood along Juárez and was the home of Diego Rivera's mural, *Dream of a Sunday Afternoon in the Alameda*, which is now housed in its own museum at the west end of the Alameda. Number 30 is one of the few buildings remaining from this era. Siemens was its principal tenant then and it was designed by Enrique de la Mora and José Creixell, major architects of the period. Two blocks with rounded inside corners rise above a central court in a sleek composition that elegantly synthesizes Art Deco and International Style principles.

Palacio de Bellas Artes

Another of the great Porfirian palaces, the **Palacio Bellas Artes** was originally called the **National Theater**, and an elegant symbol of cosmopolitan culture. Adamo Boari also designed this building, and Milliken Brothers engineered it, with Fundidora Monterrey supplying the iron for the frame. Construction began in 1905 and shortly after workers attached cement and marble cladding to the enormous frame (which weighed 40,000 tons), the entire building began to sink into the soggy ground. Boari returned to Italy in 1916, in the midst of the Revolution, and construction stopped. It was completed, however, only in 1932-1934, under the direction of Federico Mariscal; he changed the interior vestibule and stairs, and transformed the lounges into art galleries, in an Art Deco style.

Palacio Bellas Artes

The building we see today reflects, more than any other in Mexico City, perhaps, the Porfirian taste for Parisian forms. The grand entrance, with its stacked archivolts recalls the grand entrance to Charles Girault's Petit Palais for the 1900 Universal Exposition in Paris, while the building's expressive statuary evokes Charles Garnier's Opera.
Pre-Columbian references in the architectural sculpture on the exterior and interior suggest the complexity of Mexican architects' roles in shaping an international Art Nouveau and Art Deco. Simultaneously decorative, historically referential, and politically charged, sculpted representations of serpents, coyotes, and jaguars symbolically link the building to pre-Hispanic culture and architecture, even as its dominant language is French. Mariscal developed the pre-Hispanic motifs on the interior, adapting the Chaak mask, used extensively as architectural sculpture on Maya temples around the 10th century, as capitals atop the pilasters in the lobby. Red, white, and black marble clad the interior.

One of the museum's most famous spaces is the theater with its great stained-glass curtain and stained-glass dome, both designed by the Hungarian artist Geza Marotti. The curtain shows the Valley of Mexico with its two volcanoes, the curtain was fabricated by Tiffany Studios and installed during the first phase of construction. It weighs 27 tons. The famed Ballet Folklórico performs on this stage.

Galleries open off of the atrium, but particularly notable are the murals on the third floor by Mexico's greatest muralists: Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros. On the west wall is Rivera's partial recreation of the mural he began painting in the lobby of the RCA Building at Rockefeller Center, *Man at the Crossroads looking with Hope and High Vision to the Choosing of a New and Better Future* (1933). That mural was destroyed before Rivera completed it because of its controversial imagery and relative discord with the artistic program of Rockefeller Center as a whole. Rivera repainted most of the mural, as *Man, Controller of the Universe*, here in 1934. Competing forces of capitalism and communism surround a central figure that sits at the center of two ellipses that recall airplane propellers and which refer to microscopic and telescopic viewing and modern science.

Nearby are Rivera's four panels (1936) that originally hung in the Hotel Reforma (designed by Mario Pani). One panel satirizes four world leaders, blending Hitler, Mussolini, Roosevelt, and Hirohito into one "dictator," while another panel pokes fun at tourists eager to participate in Mexican folkloric traditions without understanding them.

Opposite *Man, Controller of the Universe*, is Orozco's unsettling *Catharsis,* also from 1934. Where Rivera's response to mounting international crises was a comparison of competing ideologies in a balanced composition, Orozco presents conflict unleashed, depicting it as chaotic and emotion-driven. Mixing images of war machines with references to interpersonal violence, prostitution, and financial greed, he portrayed the haunting effects of war and the dehumanization that makes it possible. In Siqueiros's forceful *New Democracy* (1945) a nude woman plunges forward, fists raised, baring a torch, and seemingly having broken confining chains. The mural was painted in pyroxylin, and is a good example of the muralist's interest in rendering dynamic motion and his use of industrial

paints. His slightly later depictions of Cuauhtémoc (1951) are on the opposite wall. On the second floor, there are two large murals by Rufino Tamayo, from 1952, that speak through a more contemporary language.

Back outside, on the west side of the Alameda we note two twentieth-century monuments celebrating Mexico's connection with Western Europe. Marking the entrance of the Bellas Artes Metro station is a replica of one of Hector Guimard's famous Art Nouveau entrances designed for the Paris system around 1900. It was inaugurated here by President Jacques Chirac in 1998. Across the street is the 1927 Monument to Beethoven, a gift from the German community.

Condesa/Hipódromo

Condesa neighborhood from above

Hipódromo was one of the most important real estate developments of the late 1920s. José G. de la Lama and Raul Basurto, who developed Polanco, also developed Hipódromo as a center of middle class life, about ten years earlier. The neighborhood was designed by José Luis Cuevas, a major urban planner in Mexico, and integrated Garden City planning principles and aspects of designs in Hegemann & Peets' *American Vitruvius* (1922). Cuevas's design evolved, with considerable input from de la Lama, between 1925 and 1927, when the park at the center of the new neighborhood was inaugurated.

A ring street, Amsterdam, encircles the park and recalls vaguely the racetrack that once occupied this land. Interrupted by small traffic circles and bisected by a tree-lined median with a pedestrian path, Amsterdam is Hipódromo's main street, although the park, known as Parque México, but officially named for Argentine General José San Martin, liberator of southern South America, is in many respects its spiritual core. The park was paid for by the developers and the municipal government. It reflects the merging of private-sector beautification efforts and post-revolutionary social reform ambitions that were founded on long-standing beliefs about the potential of contact with nature to affect individual and social transformation.

Condesa park

Condesa park

There are several notable architectural elements in the park. Leonardo Noriega's large open-air theater dominates the space. It is named for Charles Lindbergh, whose celebrated flight from Washington, D.C. to Mexico City in December 1927 was planned as a diplomatic gesture to smooth relations between Mexico and the U.S. in the wake of government appropriations of properties in Mexico owned by U.S. citizens and corporations. Nearby, there is fountain, whose structure was originally a radio, to entertain and to boast the modernity of the urban development.

The first buildings to line the streets of the neighborhood were Art Deco apartment buildings and private houses, as well as some restrained colonial revival buildings. At its height, Hipódromo was one of the best places to see Art Deco architecture in Mexico, and although the neighborhood has changed, it has nearly always been a center of up-to-date design. In the decades since it was developed, architects have, in general, shown considerable sensitivity in altering the neighborhood, shaping buildings that help maintain Hipódromo's urban sophistication and make it one of the city's most pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods.

Although Art Deco is the most prominent style in the neighborhood, significant colonial revival and modernist buildings are here as well. The **duplex at Avenida México 141-143** of 1936 was one of Luis Barragán's earliest buildings in Mexico City. The pair of white townhouses reads almost as one building. Each house has a garage, large industrial windows, studio space, and a roof terrace. This building is one of over twenty that Luis Barragán designed in Mexico City in the language of International Style modernism during the period from about 1936-1946. Barragán began his career in Guadalajara where he designed several notable large colonial-revival style houses. He spent parts of 1931 and 1932 in Europe where he met Le Corbusier and clearly absorbed many of the forms characteristic of the Swiss architect's 1920s buildings. Throughout his career Barragán combined architectural design and real estate development, and this duplex is typical of such projects.

At Avenida Mexico 188 is **Edificio Tehuacán** (José M. Buenrostro, 1931), another Art Deco composition but whose semi-octagonal arch more strongly calls to mind the shape of the corbelled arch associated with the Maya than that of colonial buildings.

Across the street stands a Hipódromo icon, the **Edificio Basurto** (1942-45), designed by Francisco J. Serrano, one of Mexico City's most productive architects in the 1930s and 1940s, whose work we can see here and in Polanco. The Basurto Building was Mexico City's first modern luxury apartment building to be modeled on the glamorous high-rises of large U.S. cities.

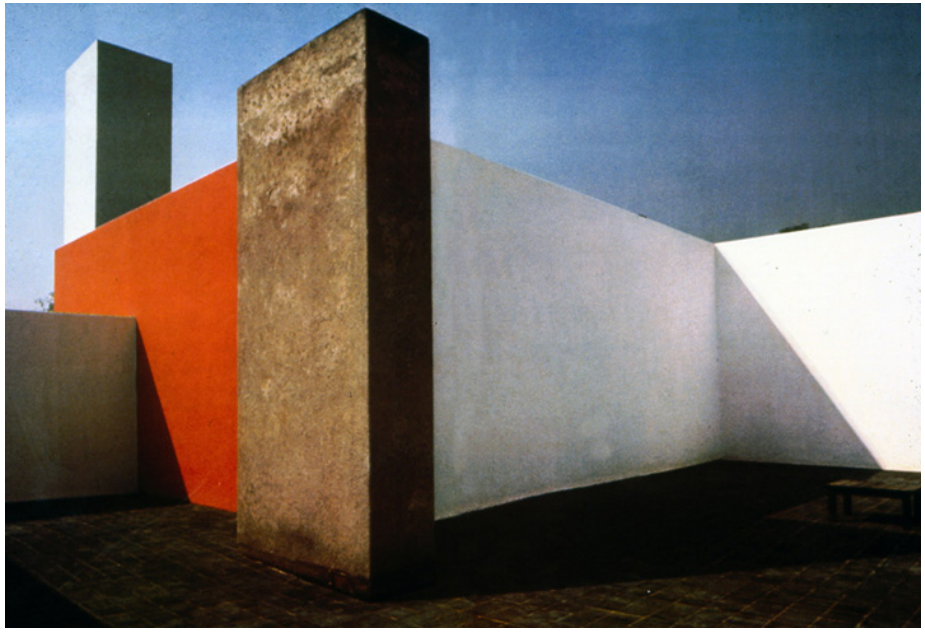
The cruciform plan makes possible ample light and a balcony for each apartment, and the three penthouses (innovations in Mexico) each have a large terrace. The building was also notable for including garage space. Curved steps spill down to the street from the small door, giving a hint of the extraordinary vestibule within.

Edificio Basurto

Condesa

Condesa bookstore

Casa Barragán



Casa Barragán

The house that Barragán designed for himself in 1947 at Calle General Francisco Ramírez 14 in the Tacubaya neighborhood was the architect's first mature departure from International Style modernist fenestration patterns and materials, and marked the beginning of a new phase in his career. This house is defined by large, planar walls, slow rhythms, and the integration of the architecture and landscape that characterize Barragán's best-known works, and for which he won the Pritzker Prize in 1980.

Barragán's own house marked an important shift in twentieth century Mexican architecture. Unlike his earlier work in México City, his house, and nearly all the buildings that followed, turned inward, away from the street. Unlike most of his contemporaries, Barragán designed almost exclusively for private clients. Most of his best-known buildings were houses or included a residential component, and they were distinguished by the absence of architectural sculpture or mural decoration.

The planarity of Barragán's buildings, with occasional bright colors, have made his work easy to place within a framework that defines modern architecture as fundamentally planar and unornamented, and Mexico as brightly colored. By these standards Barragán's work manages to be "both Mexican and modern." This limited interpretation has many weaknesses, but among the most significant is its failure to understand Barragán's work in terms of other architecture in Mexico, where "Mexican" and "modern" meant many other things.

Staircase: Casa Barragán

Accepting the Pritzker, Barragán summarized his approach to architecture, emphasizing its autobiographical qualities, and its capacity to be "beautiful", and provide spaces of "silence", "solitude" and "serenity." Explaining that his own "nostalgic" recollections of Spanish courtyards, vernacular architecture in Mexican villages, and colonial cloisters were among the chief inspirations for his work, Barragán outlined an architectural program which took no notice whatsoever of the efforts by other modern architects, in Mexico and abroad, to address in their work social inequalities. His focus on creating spaces for personal and private introspection by the wealthy flew in the face of efforts by architects throughout the twentieth century and around the world to affect change, and were particularly striking in a country where vast inequalities continued to define modern life.

The exterior of the house at number 14 gives no hint of the space within. Like other houses on the street, it presents a blank concrete wall dotted with square and rectangular openings, seemingly randomly placed. We enter through a narrow hall before seeing, on the ground floor, the living room and the attached library, with its floating wooden staircase that leads to an upper sitting room. The arrangement calls to mind the roof terrace of Le Corbusier's Beistegui apartment (Paris, 1929-31), but the wooden

Exterior: Casa Barragán

beams of the ceiling evoke the timber beams of great colonial houses, even as their rapid rhythm echoes that of the stairs.

Next to the library is a living room, of sorts, defined by the large window that provides a view onto Barragán's garden. Also on the ground floor are a dining room, kitchen, and service spaces. A studio, accessed from the living room, is also on this level. The second floor is reached from a staircase in the hall. One bright pink wall contrasts with the gray lava rock of the floor and steps, and the other white walls. A cantilevered slab that serves as a telephone table, a rustic chair and a chest furnish the room. Light streams into the space and a brilliant gold painting by Mathias Goeritz, one of his *Mensajes* (*Messages*) hangs in the landing, as if beckoning the ascendant and marking the transition. On the second floor are three private rooms and a large roof terrace on the third floor, where concrete planes seem to slide past and into one another in a kind of De Stijl sculptural space.

Living room: Casa Barragán

Jardín Ortega

Barragán's work in landscape design was as significant as his work as an architect, as the **Jardín Ortega**, his first important modern garden reveals. It was designed in the early 1940s and is largely intact. The garden is adjacent to Barragán's house and studio and behind the house Barragán briefly occupied and later sold. As in the house, the viewer is directed through a sequence of spaces with different characters. Stairs, terraces, and paths shape the site and statuary anchors sightlines. The project provided the architect an opportunity to develop ideas about landscape design that emerged more fully in his residential development, Jardines del Pedregal.

Casa Gilardi

In 1974 Francisco Gilardi, an advertising executive and art collector asked Barragán to design a house for him on a narrow, 35' x 100' plot of land in the neighborhood San Miguel Chapultepec, not far from Barragán's own house. The commission coincided with Barragán's growing international fame.

The client requested and received a pink house. As at Barragán's house movement on the ground floor is tightly controlled and the house reads as closed to the outside. The main façade has only one window directly onto the street, which opens onto the second-story studio, and two smaller ones in the third story volume that is set back from the street. At ground level is a recessed, inconspicuous main door, and a wide wooden garage door. Above this is a second story terrace accessed from the living room with walls, like those in the Tacubaya house that are high enough to keep people from looking in or out.

Casa Gilardi

Casa Gilardi

Barragán organized the ground floor plan roughly in the shape of a C, and placed the entrance, garage, vestibule, staircase, kitchen and domestic service spaces at the base. Rather than creating a secluded garden at the back of the house, positioned the building around a courtyard in which stood a jacaranda tree.

The main public space of the house is a large living room on the second floor that opens onto the front terrace. On this level is also a studio that opened onto to this terrace and could be

accessed by a short hall from the living room. Another roof terrace, accessible through a narrow door from the stairwell, that roughly mirrors in plan the long narrow corridor on the ground floor and leads, up a few stairs, to a more spacious terrace at the very back of the building. Two bedrooms and two bathrooms occupy the much smaller space of the third floor, and are above the living room and studio below. Nearly all of the rooms were painted white, had relatively low ceilings, and were more or less square in plan. Carpet covered the living room and bedroom floors and downstairs squares of black volcanic rock, of the kind used widely in Mexico City, paved the floors.

Barragán secluded the most important and most famous room of the house—a combination natatorium/dinning room—at the back of the plan on the ground floor. From the beginning of their partnership, Gilardi, a life-long swimmer, specified that he wanted the house to have a pool. Instead of building it outside in the courtyard, Barragán placed it inside. The rectangular pool took up nearly all of the back half of the room it occupied and ran from one end of it to the other. Barragán raised the back-left corner of the ceiling above the pool and created a clearstory window to illuminate the space. He painted the walls of that corner bright blue and placed a giant red plane oriented in the long direction of the pool at one end of it. The colors, he claimed, were inspired by those in a painting of a rooster by Jesús Reyes Ferreira (*Chucho* Reyes). From the entrance vestibule, there was no hint of the almost unbearably photogenic, alluring dinning room/natatorium, hidden behind two sets of doors at the end of a long corridor illuminated on one side.

Paseo de la Reforma and Chapultepec Park

The **Paseo de la Reforma** is Mexico City's grandest and most important street. The most significant portion of the road is a broad southwest-northeast boulevard that connects the **Bosque de Chapultepec** (Chapultepec Park) to the Alameda Central. In Aztec times water from Chapultepec was brought to Tenochtitlan by an aqueduct and Aztecs rulers built pleasure palaces here. Today Chapultepec Park is approximately 8 square miles, and is Mexico City's largest and most important park. It is home to seven museums, the National Auditorium, lakes, a zoo, various monuments, and miles of paths. Although most of its museums are more notable architecturally, the building that is now known as Chapultepec Castle has played a considerable role in establishing the modern significance of the park and its important place in the urban development of the city.

Angel of Independence

In the late 18th century Viceroy Bernardo de Galvez began building a palace atop the hill. For many decades that structure was incomplete, but was modified for use as a military school. Here, in 1847, under siege by U.S. forces for whom the hill was the last obstacle to

Paseo de la Reforma

taking Mexico City, six young cadets leapt to their deaths, becoming the famous "Niños Heroes". In 1864-65, under the direction of Maximilian von Hapsburg, who had been installed as Emperor of Mexico by Napoleon III, the building was transformed, using the eighteenth-century foundation, into a neoclassical palace for Maximilian and his wife, Carlotta. Subsequent modifications in the late nineteenth century altered the building further. Until 1939 it was the official residence of the Mexican president.

Although their tenure was brief, Maximilian and Carlotta played a significant role in the development of modern urbanism in the capital, using baroque planning principles, recently reinvigorated by Baron Haussmann in Paris, to reshape the city. Under their direction the long, broad, tree-lined boulevard, now known as the Paseo de la Reforma was begun. Stretching from the Bosque (Forest) de Chapultepec to the Alameda, the street literally and symbolically linked city and country, executive and legislative powers, and provided the spine along which urban growth in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries would proceed.

Throughout his long rule, Porfirio Díaz made the Paseo de la Reforma the most important piece of his urban beautification program. At nearly every one of the traffic circles created by the intersection of the great boulevard with the growing grid, Díaz caused to be erected a monument to a figure or ideal of the Mexican past, thereby helping to codify urbanistically Mexican history, as scholars were writing it.

In order, from Tolsá's Caballito at the intersections of Reforma, Bucarelli, and Juárez at the northeast end (and which was placed there in 1855), are the Monument to Columbus (Charles Cordier, 1873-1877), and the Monument to Cuauhtémoc (Francisco M. Jiménez, architect, Miguel Noreña, sculptor, 1887), the **Monument of Independence**, known as **Angel of Independence** (Antonio Rivas Mercado, architect, and Enrique Alciati, sculptor, 1902-1910). The monuments are important not so much as exemplars of public academic sculpture, but because of the way they helped establish, in the nineteenth century, the tendency to integrate historical symbols that were understood as both nationally specific and "universal," with architectural and urban form.

In the late nineteenth century, Reforma was lined with large houses, most of them owned by wealthy families (some of them foreign) who made their fortunes in railroads or mining. Many of these buildings had Mansard roofs and many of their architects sought to evoke Parisian elegance. Nearly all of those early buildings are gone, and today Reforma has supplanted the Centro as Mexico City's main business district and is lined with hotels and tall office buildings, many of which serve as the Mexican headquarters of major international corporations.

Condominio Reforma

Seguros Anahuac

Cárcamo de Rio Lerma

The **Cárcamo de Río Lerma** marks the River Lerma waterworks, long Mexico City's most important source of water. A neo-classical pavilion (1951) by Ricardo Rivas houses the waterworks' mechanical systems. In a subterranean basin is Diego Rivera's extraordinary, recently restored fresco, *Water: The Origin of Life on Earth*, which combines references to modern hydrology, human evolution, and aquatic life.

Outside of the pavilion Rivera's giant sculpture-mosaic depicting Tlalolc, the god of water, lies in a fan-shaped pool of water. It is best appreciated from the adjacent hill.

Cárcamo de Río Lerma

Centro Urbano Presidente Alemán, known as Multifamiliar Alemán.

This housing complex, known as **Multifamiliar Alemán** was built between 1947 and 1949, by Mario Pani. It is a significant work of Mexico´s Modern Architecrure, where the designer follows the ideals of the European masters, especially Le Corbusier, but with a result that takes into account the site and the context. The main idea was to depart from individual houses, to achieve an ensemble that could provide larger green areas and services, for the inhabitants, including a kindergarten and various shops.

The Multifamiliar (a name invented by Mexicans) occupies a superblock and houses 1000 apartments composed of six buildings of thirteen floors and six with three floors, all with the best orientation. The tall buildings, follow the pattern "à redent" proposed by Le Corbusier, as well as apartments with two levels, one for the kitchen and dining room, the other for the bedrooms; the structure, allows for diverse interior partitions, and offers large open corridors to access each unit. Furthermore, the construction was finished with concrete and bricks that allowed for a good and low-cost maintenance.

Pani endorsed densified ensembles, to avoid the excessive growth of cities, benefiting from better installations and efficient transportation systems. It can be said that this concept was retained both in his own work as in other examples of governmental housing, to cope with the demand of the working class, due both to the appropriate of the solution and the generosity of the implementation. Furthermore, it can be said the approval of the Ley de Condominios, 1955, evolves from these ideas and the negotiations he carried out, modifying the way of living of the inhabitants of the city.

Also, it is necessary to remember that, with other architects, Pani is one of the champions of the movement called "Integración Plástica" (Integration of the arts), since his first projects. He worked with Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, Carlos Mérida, and José Clemente Orozco; with this last one he collaborated in the Escuela Nacional de Maestros, 1945-1947, and was supposed to paint the mural "La Primavera" in this ensemble, but died the day he drew the first lines.

Unidad Independencia

This housing unit was built between 1959 and 1960, for the Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social, IMSS, (Social Security of the workers), designed by Alejandro Prieto and José María Gutiérrez. Situated in what used to be the gardens of a florist, the urban design not only flows with the sloping terrain, but was made with a special effort to conserve most of the existing trees, offering amazing gardens for the inhabitants. The 2500 dwellings are organized in three types of buildings: tall ones facing the thoroughfare, lower ones (4 flours) with interesting mosaics on the façades by Francisco Eppens, and houses grouped in units of four.

The ensemble offers various complementary services, as a sports complex with a large competition pool, and theatres. In the open-air theatre and entrance esplanade we find sculptures by Luis Ortiz Monasterio with pre-Hispanic motifs, and the large theatre has stone reliefs by Federico Cantú presenting various characters of Aztec times.

Images: Unidad Independencia

Rivera-Kahlo house and Cecil O'Gorman house

Casa Rivera-Kahlo

The pair of buildings Juan O'Gorman designed for Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo in 1931-1932 are among his most famous. They occupy a large corner lot in the upscale suburb of San Angel that was once a separate colonial town. (The buildings were restored in 1995-96.) The larger of the two houses, with monitor windows, is painted deep red and white and was Rivera's house/studio. The smaller, blue house, connected to the larger one by a bridge, was Kahlo's.

The buildings in San Angel were among several houses/workspaces O'Gorman designed for Mexico City artists and intellectuals in the early 1930s. Buildings for other notable clients include a house for the painter Julio Castellanos in Colonia del Valle, a town house for Frances Toor, the U.S. publisher of *Mexican Folkways*, a bilingual journal of Mexican folk art, and the house and observatory of Enrique Erro, an astronomer. In the same years the architect designed dozens of elementary schools for the Ministry of Education.

Most immediately evident at the Rivera-Kahlo complex is the larger building's resemblance to the Ozenfant Studio (1923) in Paris, with its saw tooth roof, exterior spiral staircase, and glazed wall. The Ozenfant studio was an obvious model because of its program, and perhaps because like Ozenfant and Le Corbusier, Rivera and O'Gorman had overlapping interests in painting and architecture. Both buildings are raised on *pilotis* and have industrial windows. In the smaller building, we readily identify the expressed stairwell as having been inspired by the pictures of grain elevators Le Corbusier reproduced in *Vers une Architecture*. On the north side of the small building is a staircase, consisting of nothing more than cantilevered slabs and a metal railing. It leads from an upper story door to the roof. There a bridge connects the roof to a terrace on the east side of the larger building.

Casa Rivera-Kahlo

The water tanks and smokestack-like pipe on the roof of the larger building (which O'Gorman included in a 1931 drawing) add to the "industrial" look, but were in fact basically vernacular: throughout Mexico City, in buildings humble and grand, water is stored in giant tanks on the roof. The meaning of the roof itself is also of great interest here. One of the Five Points of Le Corbusier's New Architecture, the roof terrace was nothing new in Mexico, and in fact was (and is) a site of ordinary daily life, where laundry is hung up, children play, and animals sleep.

The cactus fence that surrounds the property introduces "local" nature, softens the straight lines of the buildings, and when read as a pattern of regular solids and voids, maintains the geometric abstraction that characterizes the architecture. It calls to mind the interaction of landscape and architecture at Gregori Warchavchik's slightly earlier house for himself in Sao Paulo (1927-28), another of Latin America's early modernist houses. This kind of fence was (and is) often used in rural Mexico.

For Rivera O'Gorman designed an open, double height studio which included a small loft space. The floor below was intended as a gallery space. Four small bedrooms (referred to in some early accounts as "guest bedrooms"), two bathrooms, and storage space occupied spaces behind the studio and gallery on the south side of the house. The only kitchen space in the complex is in the smaller house, which also included a living/dining room, bedroom, and studio.

Casa Cecil O'Gorman

Behind the Rivera-Kahlo complex is the house that O'Gorman designed for his father, Cecil, one year before he received the commission from Rivera. This building is notable for its large glazed wall and dramatic swooping exterior staircase. **Cecil O'Gorman**, like Rivera and Juan, was a painter. Rivera's admiration for Cecil's house led him to hire O'Gorman to design his own, in which O'Gorman reworked some of the motifs he used in the first house.

Prieto López House

Luis Barragán's **Prieto López House** (1950) was among the first built in the subdivision of Jardines del Pedregal de San Ángel, which the architect also designed and where he was a major investor. The large house typifies the planning principles in the subdivision: native volcanic rock is left in situ (and used to pave small plazas and floors) and the austere modernist house is set back from the street, behind a wall, in a large garden. Inside spaces unfold more readily than in Barragán's own house and large windows provide views to the garden. Architectural elements, such as exposed wood beams, rail-less stairs, decorative devices such as mirrored balls, and works of colonial or folk-art familiar from the Tacubaya house reappear here.

Images: Prieto López House

Anahuacalli

In the early 1930´s, Juan O´Gorman was the architect that designed and built the House/Studio for his friend Diego Rivera, at the time married to Frida Kahlo. When Rivera decided on a new Studio and Museum for his pre-Hispanic collection, and designed the building, he asked his old friend O´Gorman, to do the official drawings and build it, around 1945.

The site is located in the south of the city, in the part of the terrain covered with lava, and Rivera called it "**Anahuacalli**" that means House of Anahuac (Anahuac is the indigenous name for the Valley of Mexico). One of the ideas of the painter, was to use the local stone in the building, to achieve the pre-Hispanic aspect and to lower the costs. Also, it has to be mentioned, that the architect and the artist sought an organic architecture, directly influenced by a visit to Falling Water, in Pennsylvania by Frank Lloyd Wright.

The museum is massive, with a pyramidal roof, all in natural stone, inside and outside. The first level has a cavernous feeling, due to the lack of large windows but the second floor surprises the visitor with a large double height studio, with great natural light.

O´Gorman did not share this historicist inclination, but complied with the demand. Furthermore, he devised, alongside with Rivera, the use of mosaic stones embedded in the concrete casting of the ceilings. This idea is at the base of O´Gorman´s mosaics of natural stone of the Central Library of the National University.

Anahuacalli

National Autonomous University of Mexico

Far south of the historic center is the best-known work of twentieth-century Mexican architecture. The **National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM)** is widely regarded as a masterpiece of modernist planning and architecture. Here, from 1950-1954, a team of architects lead by Mario Pani and Enrique del Moral, authors of the master plan, that arranged an enormous campus according to CIAM principles: vehicular traffic is banished to perimeter roads, the site is organized into sections based on program, housing was planned, and large areas were left open for nature preserves and playing fields. Although over fifty architects designed UNAM's buildings, a fairly consistent language of mid-century Corbusian Style modernism unites most of the buildings. Several buildings have exterior murals or mosaics by important Mexican artists. Carlos Lazo, was the General manager of the works, and accomplished the task of building the ensemble in less than two years.

National Autonomous University of Mexico from above

Anahuacalli mosaic

Library of the National Autonomous University of Mexico

When
UNAM was built it was at the edge of Mexico City. The campus, University City or CU, covers more than a mile on the rocky landscape known as the Pedregal. Avenida Insurgentes, one of the capital's main north-south streets (which forms the western boundary of Hipódromo and crosses Reforma a few blocks north of here) forms an axis through the campus, separating its large stadium from the main academic zone. The design brought together all the faculties of the

university on a single campus and in its architectural language and plan, proclaimed Mexico's modernity and the progressivity of higher education. Before it opened, university facilities were dispersed in modified colonial buildings scattered throughout the Centro.

Mexico's first university was the Royal and Pontifical University of Mexico, founded in 1551. In 1910, Justo Sierra, one of the country's leading intellectuals, founded the institution that preceded the modern UNAM, and which was granted complete autonomy from the government in 1929 to allocate its own budget and determine curriculum. UNAM is one of the foremost universities in Latin America and one of the largest in the world, with more than 300,000 students. In 2007 UNESCO declared the campus a World Heritage Site.

Although as it was realized, it has no residential sector, it does have its own internal system of transportation that shuttles students, faculty, and researchers between buildings and to connections with bus and subway lines. By virtue of its distance from other major centers in Mexico City, and the careful regulation of vendors, signage, and growth, UNAM often feels quite separate from the capital.

UNAM campus

Diego Rivera mural

Olympic Stadium

The northwest section of the campus, west of Insurgentes, holds the huge open-air **Olympic Stadium** designed by Augusto Pérez Palacio, Raúl Salinas Moro, and Jorge Bravo Jiménez in 1952. The stadium is basically a hollowed-out bowl in the ground. The field is oval shaped and seats for 110,000 spectators rise from field-level below ground, up beyond it. Tunnels and ramps cut into the building provide access to the stands. Volcanic rock

excavated for the building was used to build up the sides of the stadium, forming a sloping wall.

On the eastern exterior embankment Diego Rivera designed a multi-colored mosaic depicting light and dark-skinned athletes. The mosaic refers to the socio-cultural philosophy of mestizaje that became fully and officially institutionalized with the building of the UNAM campus, and which is reiterated in many of the murals and mosaics. Because the Pedregal is a lava bed and had not been built on, its associations with pre-Hispanic culture were particularly strong. In its materials, program, and art, the Olympic Stadium metaphorically linked ancient (indigenous) sport and modern (mestizo) physical fitness, as if to announce the success of the social and educational programs begun in the 1920s and which we saw referenced at the **Health Ministry**.

We cross Insurgentes by walking through two large tunnels beneath it and come up in the heart of UNAM, in the main academic zone. Standing on the plaza overlooking the area we see, in the foreground to the right the **Rectorate**, to the left the **Central Librar**y. Running along the north side of the giant open field (the Jardín Central) before us is the **School of Law and Philosophy and Letters**. To the south is the **School of Architecture**. To its east is the **School of Engineering**. Directly in front of us, although at some distance, we see a building devoted to graduate studies, and, towering above it, the glazed slab known as the **Tower of the Sciences**.

Torre de la Rectoría

The **Rectorate Tower** is a twelve-story building of ribbon windows, concrete, brick, and onyx. It was designed by Pani, Del Moral, and Salvador Ortega Flores and houses some of the university's administrative offices. The building's west façade is comprised of vertical and horizontal elements that recall constructivist designs; here slabs and planes are organized as if to suggest movement past one another and to emphasize relationships between solids and voids. The arrangement suggests that the architects and presumably the Mexican government had a profound faith in the capacity of 1920s avant-garde European modernism to convey progressivity in mid-century Mexico City. Indeed, elements we associate with 1920s Corbusian modernism,

Rectorate Tower

particularly *pilotis* and the fenêtre en longueur appear throughout this portion of the campus. The southern and eastern facades of the tower have a more typically mid-century modern corporate aspect, with bands of glazing interspersed with blue bands. Seen from this angle, and from the grass and plazas around it, UNAM seems to belong comfortably with the modernist corporate and educational campuses familiar from the Midwestern United States.

National specificity is claimed, however, in the sculptural murals designed by David Alfaro Siqueiros on three sides of the building. The most notable are on the northern and southern faces of the lower wing; these are arguably the most successful of the outdoor murals. On the north side a giant sculptural hand holding a pencil points toward a hand seemingly grasping at something unseen, and to the tower. The artist wrote four dates on the left: 1520, 1810, 1857, and 1910 and one incomplete year, "19--?" recalling the important years of Mexico's history (1520 and asking when the next would come. On the south side, he created a composition that celebrates the role of the university in shaping society. Its title explains much: *The people for the university, the university for the people, for a national and neohumanistic culture that it is profoundly universal*. The mural depicts figures, including an architect, with arms outstretched. They lean toward Insurgentes and point back toward the center of the university. Like other parts of the campus, the mural enshrines ideals of modern Mexican cultural development that had circulated in arts and letters since early in the century. It also celebrates modern technology and consumption: ever fascinated with movement and vision, Siqueiros designed the mural to be seen from a car along Insurgentes.

Central Library

Central Library

Juan O'Gorman's famous **Central Library** is north of the Rectorate. O'Gorman designed the building with Gustavo M. Saavedra and Juan Martínez de Velasco. The large slab containing the stacks is wrapped in a mosaic mural while bands of glazing define the reading rooms below. Narrow windows are the only openings in the slab. Using fragments of stones that he collected throughout Mexico, O'Gorman created a mosaic whose themes are history and science, particularly as they are related to Mexico. The north wall deals with pre-Hispanic history and has formal similarities to some early codices. The south wall includes references to Mexican culture and depicts the coming together of indigenous and European cultures: it shows conquerors and priests, colonial churches, classical buildings, and other "old

world" symbols. A map of Tenochtitlan appears on the lower right side. Two giant circles evoke ancient and Renaissance astronomy: below them, on banners, "Ptolemy" and "Copernicus" are written.

The narrow eastern side of the building is dedicated to modern science and the Mexican Revolution. The giant atom recalls Rivera's mural, and, lower, vernacular buildings are contrasted with factories. Opposite, the western wall celebrates the university itself. The seal of UNAM, banners referring to the Biblioteca Nacional and Hermeroteca Nacional (National Library and National repository of periodicals), images of modern buildings, and scenes of Mexican athleticism cover the wall, which, appropriately enough, can be seen from the road, and thus functions as a kind of entrance sign for the university.

Walking across the giant Jardín Central or campus we get a sense of just how long the **Law School Humanities building** is, with its seemingly endless bays of blue-framed windows and *pilotis*. At the far end we come to the building built to house the Faculty of Sciences (Raúl Cacho, et al). On its south end is José Chávez Morado's mosaic, *Return of Quetzalcoatl*, which shows the pre-Hispanic god bringing learning from various "old world" civilizations. On the north end is the *Conquest of Energy*.

We now move through a courtyard framed on the east by the heavily glazed **Tower of Sciences**, and through a relatively narrow passage, and out onto a sloping embankment at the west end of a second, smaller plaza, surrounded by buildings devoted to science. To the south is the factory-like School of Chemistry, designed by Enrique Yañez el al.

The largest building in this zone is the **School of Medicine**. It has huge open-air walkways and ramps. The mosaic on its west side was designed by Francisco Eppens and includes symbols of ancient gods, Quetzalcoatl, Tlaloc, and Coatlique, among them. The tri-facial head is meant to suggest the mixing of two cultures into a third.

Cosmic Ray Pavilion

Cosmic Ray Pavilion

The small building on the north side of the plaza is Felix Candela and Jorge González Reyna's rather charming **Cosmic Ray Pavilion** (1952). Into the strongly orthogonal campus this building introduces curves. The little structure is held up from the ground by three arches and meets the earth on six delicate feet. A short staircase, formed by cantilevered slabs leads to the

laboratory. A very thin (5/8" thick) layer of concrete curves over undulating walls at the north and south ends to form the side walls and roof.

González Reyna was the architect, but Candela was most responsible for the building's structure, which is indistinguishable from its form. Candela came to Mexico from Spain in 1939 and supplied the knowledge of structures required to build numerous buildings of concrete and steel with soaring, swooping roofs, which provide dramatic contrast to the right-angled compositions that proliferated in the same period. His famous thin-shelled concrete roofs and thin umbrella vaults cover churches, restaurants, markets, factories, and one subway station.

UNAM Ball Courts

The University City has a large ecological preserve. Adjacent to this area lies the **Centro Cultural Universitario** (Orso Núñez, Arcadio Artís, Arturo Treviño; 1976-80), a complex of four main buildings that includes the **National Library**, and three buildings for the performing arts. Like many other Latin American buildings of the 1970s, all four are notable for their juxtaposition of geometric masses and voids. In bright sunlight, the relationship is particularly effective, as deep shadows are cast. All four buildings were built using rough, striated concrete and may be examples of late brutalism.

Also in this southern sector are the research institutes for the humanities, and the well-known **Espacio Escultórico**. In this area are outdoor sculptures, some of which are quite elegantly integrated into the rugged landscape. The artists of the Espacio Escultórico, whose work is here include: Helen Escobedo, Manuel Felguérez, Mathias Goertiz, Federico Silva, Hersua and Sebastián.

Teotihuacan

Around the first century of our era, some inhabitants of the Valley of México (Cuicuilco) immigrated to the site of Teotihuacan, due to the eruption of the Xitle volcano. It soon became the largest pre-Hispanic city, with and influence throughout Mesoamerica, based not only in the religious and military preponderance, but also in the commerce of the Thin Orange pottery. It is an impressive site, with two large pyramidal structures, today known as the Sun and the Moon Pyramids. But the site is very large and encompasses on one hand the religious buildings and on the other various residential complexes and palaces. It is important to note, that this site came to a collapse around the 7th Century (due to famine and/or war), and has no relation with Tenochtitlan or the Aztecs.

Sun Pyramid

It is organized alongside a main axis, that stars in the South with a large enclosed plaza, called Ciudadella (Citadel) that houses, in the east side, an interesting decorated pyramid, in honor of Quetzalcoatl (the feathered serpent good of the rain). For many, the main attraction is to climb on the **Sun Pyramid**, but it has to be taken into account that in those times, only few elected priests would be allowed to go up to perform the religious ceremonies, and the majority would watch from below. Also, it is interesting to visit the nearby museum.

The **Museum of Teotihuacan** is the work of Pedro Ramírez Vázquez, Javier Ramírez Campuzano and Javier Giovanini, 1995, and worth visiting. Its location is accurate, and conceals the construction with the green of the walls and a roof with vegetation. The inside offers some good archaeological pieces, a large map of the site and a magnificent view of the Sun Pyramid.

Museum of Teotihuacan

Also worth visiting is the area of the Moon Pyramid, with two palatial complexes, one excavated under the second. The lower one is interesting for its murals, and the top one, for a patio with extraordinary carved pillars.

San Agustín Acolman

As a result of the conquest of Mexico by Hernán Cortés, several religious orders came to the vast new territory to devote themselves to the conversion to Catholicism of the indigenous people. They divided the New Spain into areas for each of the main evangelizers: Franciscans, Augustinians, Dominicans, and latter Jesuits. The zone around Teohtihuacan, was first entrusted to the Franciscans, the first ones to arrive, then was taken over by the Augustinians, thus the name of the monastery and church: **San Agustín Acolman**.

The ensemble started construction as early as 1524 and finished around 1560. It is composed by a monumental church and the monastery, and offers the characteristic elements of what was called "conventos fortaleza" (fortress convent), due to the closed and defensive aspect. Like most of the monasteries built in the 16th Century, it is preceded by a large walled atrium, used for religious ceremonies, but in this case, it lacks the four "capillas posas" (chapels for processions and evangelization) placed in the four corners. It has a large church, with a constructive system that recalls the gothic, but with a renaissance "plateresca" façade; it also has an open chapel, for open ceremonies and mass, in this case included in the façade, and the arcades before the entrance of the monastery to receive the pilgrims.

The cloister conserves 16th century monochrome (grisailles) mural paintings, most of them based in religious engravings. It is interesting to see the various halls and the monk's cells, with and integrated seat by the window.

San Agustín Acolman

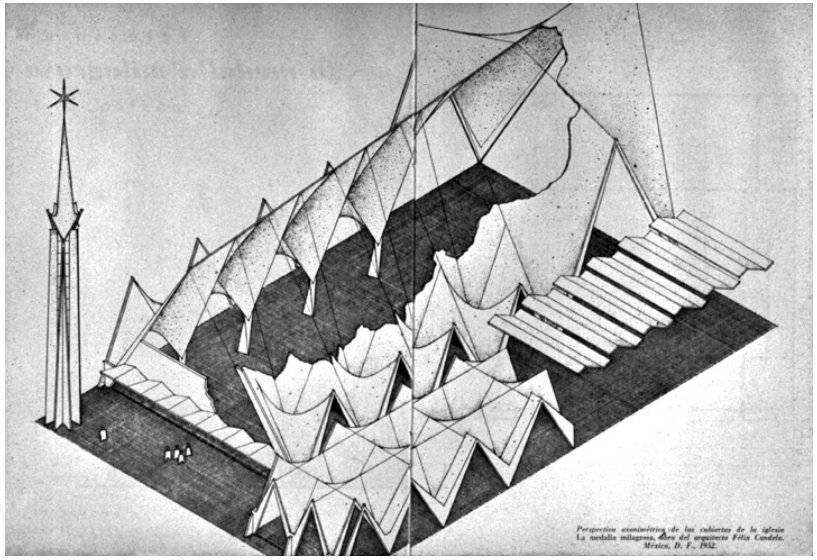
Capilla de Nuestra Señora de la Soledad del Altillo

1955-57, with Enrique de la Mora y Palomar and Fernando López Carmona

The architect Enrique de la Mora called Candela in 1955, to design with him the graceful covering with orthogonal edges of the chapel, known as "**El Altillo**" (the name of the site). The architect Richard Neutra said at this juncture the famous phrase "here only four centimeters separate us from God". De la Mora and Candela started their collaboration, two years before with the vaulting for the Mexican Stock Exchange, thus establishing a fruitful and creative collaboration, also with the participation of the young Fernando López Carmona. From the design talent of De la Mora, and the analytical minds of Candela y López Carmona, evolved the best spatial solutions of thin shells to cover temples, in Mexican towns and abroad.

Images: El Altillo

The chapel had a rhomboid floor plan, covered by a hypar. The stained-glass window of the apse, by Kitzia Hoffman, conveys a special illumination to the space that boast a central altar, designed six years before the regulations of the Second Vatican Council.



Drawing of the Church of the Medalla Milagrosa'

Capilla de Nuestra Señora de la Medalla Milagrosa, convento de San Vicente de Paul

1958-60, with Enrique de la Mora and Fernando López Carmona

The motivation of novel coverings allowed a special quality in the interior spaces; in this case, the headdress of the nuns of Saint Vincent of Paul was the source of inspiration. This chapel, immersed in the convent and its gardens, shows three thin shells that cover an unusual triangular interior floor plan. Again, we find stained-glass windows by Kitzia Hoffman, and a central altar.

Mercado de Coyoacán

1955, with Pedro Ramírez Vázquez and Rafael Mijares

Felix Candela also designed or collaborated in public buildings, and private commerce and warehouses. In the 1950´s he teamed up with the atelier of Ramírez Vazquez in a program geared to provide hygienic markets throughout the city. Candela worked in the marketplaces of Coyoacán, Anáhuac, Azcapotzalco and Jamaica, using what was called “concrete umbrellas” (with four hypars). The same was true for a good number of gas stations all over the country and other buildings.

Candela Chapel

Iglesia de la Virgen de la Medalla Milagrosa

1953-57, with José Luis Benlliure and Fernando Fernández Rangel

In 1953, Félix Candela undertook with great enthusiasm the project of a church, for the **Virgen de la Medalla Milagrosa** (**Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal**). The floor plan is based in the typical basilica´s scheme, with three naves covered with distorted "concrete umbrellas". At the time, he said: "Concrete is the material of our times, and I tried to use it to build a traditional church, where both the structural function and the expression depended only on the form".

The shape of the columns responds to the way the efforts are transmitted to the foundations, and capitals disappear in favor of a subtle transition between the support and the roofing. The central nave shows a subtle elevation towards the altar, and accounts for the daring and appealing interior space.

Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal

Parroquia de San Antonio de las Huertas

1956-59, Enrique De la Mora y Palomar and Fernando López Carmona

The three vaults that Candela built in 1956 for the **Parish of San Antonio de las Huertas**, represent the first thin shells with free edges; an achievement that Candela called "apparently simple", but to arrive to this idea took him a hard process of thought and analysis. With an almost square shape (14 x 16 meters or 45 x 52 feet), the

vaults are separated by amber stained glass that account for the apparent lightness. The interior space acquires, with the subdued illumination, a mystic ambience.

Parish of San Antonio de las Huertas

National Anthropology Museum

The **National Anthropology Museum** was designed by Pedro Ramírez Vázquez, Rafael Mijares and Jorge Campuzano and inaugurated in 1964; it is a celebrated building that has inspired other museums and opened the door for a new way to look at long-gone cultures. Located in the Chapultepec Park, adjacent to Reforma Avenue, offers a low exterior profile that increases the surprise as the visitor approaches de main entrance and access to the main courtyard; the exterior is protected by an interesting fence, designed by Manuel Felguérez and inspired in the butterfly. In the vestibule, a large mural by Rufino Tamayo symbolizes the fight of day and night, or good and evil with pre-Hispanic motifs. In the courtyard, a monumental "umbrella" covers part of the open space, supported by a bronze column created by José Chavez Morado, and the protective lattice jalousie on the second floor was designed by Manuel Felguérez; these are some of the many interventions of Mexican artists throughout the edifice.

National Anthropology Museum

The museum has a clear plan that allows for a continuous visit, or a selected one. On the first floor, the visit can start with the rooms devoted to anthropology and archaeology in general, then come the special sections for the various cultures of the Mesoamerica territory: Teotihuacán, Tula, Aztec, Mayan, Olmec, Oaxaca, Gulf of Mexico, and Occident. The best examples of these are located in this museum with a renewed museography.

Interior National Anthropology Museum

The second floor houses the exhibits on the present-day cultures of Mexico that correspond with the lower archaeological exhibits, and communicate visually with them, through balconies; also, there are

various windows opening to the wooded area of the park allowing for a pleasant visit. The building has also various auditoriums, temporary exhibit rooms, and an excellent library.

Tlatelolco

Rufino Tamayo Museum

In 1981, Teodoro González de León and Abraham Zabludovsky designed this museum to accommodate the international modern art collection of the renowned artist Rufino Tamayo, as well as some of his paintings. One of the main qualities of the construction is its ability to integrate into the Chapultepec Park area, with a stepped exterior volume, and some sloping wall covered with greenery. The building is entirely rendered in hammered concrete, both in the exterior and parts of the interior, achieving a massive aspect with a dignified entrance; this material with aggregates of white marble and hammered to achieve a rough but unified finishing, is the signature of the first public buildings of these architects.

Images: Tamayo Museum

The interior consists of poli-angular rooms, organized around an ample covered patio that allows for diverse

functions; windows into the park offer solace to the visitors, with an auditorium is located in the basement. Recently, a store and cafeteria opening to the park, was added by Gonzalez de León, respectful of the original structure and its surroundings.

Museum of Modern Art

(Across the street from the Tamayo Museum, but will not be visited)

The **Museum of Modern Art**, 1964, share with the Anthropology Museum both the time of inauguration, and some of the architects: Pedro Ramírez Vázquez, Rafael Mijares and Carlos Cázares. In this case, we find a distinctive design, but the solution may not have been the best for art exhibition, due to the curved exterior walls entirely covered with glass.

The ensemble consists of two buildings, museum and gallery, surrounded by gardens that house a variety of large sculptures. The plan is based on the idea of a continuous circulation to obtain the maximum museographic flexibility in its two levels. The main building has an attractive double staircase that occupies the vestibule.

It has to be said that the most important examples of the 20th Century painting and sculpture are located in this museum, making it and significant place for the modern Mexican Culture.

Experimental Museum "el eco"

el eco

Located in front of a large park (Parque Monumento a la Madre, Monument by José Villagrán, Sculpture by Luis Ortiz Monasterio) "**el eco**" **Experimental Museum** was designed by Mathias Goeritz as a manifesto against International Architecture; it has to be added that Ruth Rivera (daughter of Diego Rivera) elaborated the architectural plans and supervised the construction, with Daniel Mont as the owner and patron. The building had various uses and was derelict, but in 2004, the National University bought it and restored it, recuperating the original aspect and devoting it to emerging and experimental arts.

The opening in 1953, was accompanied by a Manifesto by Goeritz "Manifiesto de Arquitectura Emocional" that called for a return to architecture as art, away from repetitive technological glass buildings. The relation to Barragán´s architecture is obvious, and the space retains his emotional proposals; originally the building had several art works, in the idea of the synthesis of the arts, a relief by Carlos Mérida, a grisaille by Henry Moore, a "graphic poem" and the large sculpture of a serpent in the patio, both by Goeritz.

Ciudad Habitacional Nonoalco-Tlatelolco. Torre Banobras. Plaza de las Tres Culturas

Tlatelolco

The large housing state, was planned as a city for over 12000 inhabitants, distributed across 102 buildings, and was constructed between 1962-1964. This enormous undertaking by the atelier of Mario Pani, addressed both the urbanism and the architecture of the ensemble; the proposal was to re-urbanize and re-build a large area north of the city of Mexico, to dignify the housing. The first phase, and the only one that was carried out, was programmed mostly on the neglected railroad areas, in order to move there the inhabitants of the adjacent slums, and regenerate the zone in various phases.

The Paseo the la Reforma was thus prolonged to add dignity to the new housing district. Furthermore, Pani, and his architects include eight types of buildings, to achieve a proper mix of inhabitants with various economic profiles:
the slender tall buildings, facing Paseo de la Reforma, allocate the expensive apartments,

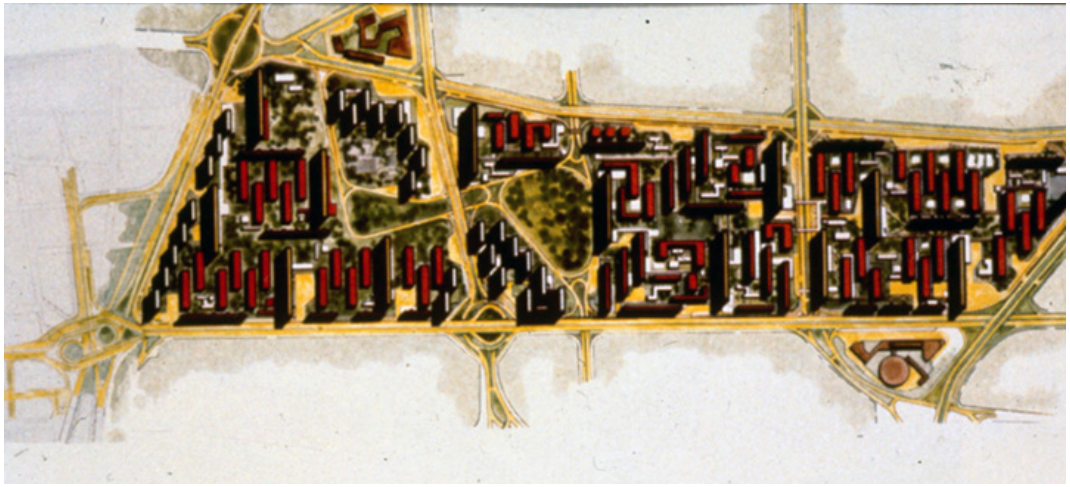
Banobras building

whereas the buildings with four levels are less expensive due to a subsidy, pay by the expensive units and the commercial establishments. As in previous units by Pani, the high density of the constructions, allowed for large gardens, and complimentary installations: schools, a hospital, theatres, sport facilities and commerce.

In addition, most of the area with pre-Hispanic remains and the colonial Franciscan School of La Santa Cruz (the first school of superior studies for natives in America) with the Church of Santiago Ápostol, were preserved, and form what is now known as the **Plaza de las Tres Culturas** (Plaza of the Three Cultures). Currently the school shelters the Foreign Relations Archives, and the church was renovated integrating a relief and stained-glass windows by Mathias Goeriz.

Additionally, Banobras, the government bank that funded the constructions, came up with a tall triangular building, also by Pani. On the sides, there is an art work by Carlos Mérida.

On another note, two events had shaded this housing unit: the terrible killings of protesting students in 1968, and the fall of one building with a problem of water in the foundations, during the earthquake of 1985; this forced the rest to adopt some changes to reinforce the structures, evident in some façades.



Tlatelolco plan

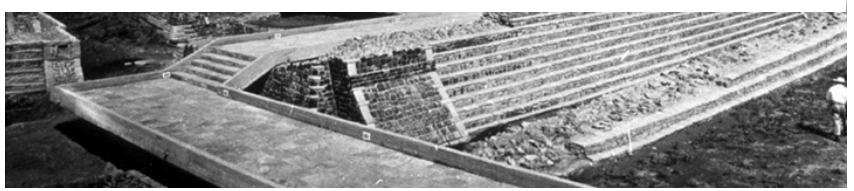
Ministry of Foreign Relations, actually a Cultural Centre of the National University

Facing the **Plaza de las Tres Culturas**, Pedro Ramírez Vázquez and Rafael Mijares designed the new **Ministry of Foreign Relations**, in 1964-1965. In 1985 the building had problems with the earthquake, forcing the Ministry to relocate the new offices in front of the Alameda by Ricardo Legorreta (the mural by Rufino Tamayo was also moved to the new facilities).

The ensemble is formed by a 20-floor high tower that housed the chancellery offices, surrounded by three lower structures. These buildings were planned for a large public attendance: the large room to supply passports, still in use; the auditorium and the reception lounges. The clean International Style silhouette of the ensemble harmonizes with the Plaza; the use of materials like white marble for exteriors and interiors, and well-crafted wood, bestowed the dignity the institution deserved. In 1990 David Muñoz built an annex across the street, of a great simplicity, and still in use by the Ministry.

Since a few years ago, the tower and the reception areas were granted to the National University to create a Cultural Centre. The tower was intervened in 2010 by Thomas Glassford, with a light installation, "Xipetotec" (the Aztec skinned god).

Plaza de las Tres Culturas



Ministry of Foreign Relations

Edificio Ermita and Edificio Isabel

Juan Segura is an important architect, especially notorious for his Art Déco style. Most of his buildings are devoted to housing and were built for the Fundación Mier y Pesado, a charitable institution that focus in the education of less privileged children.

Two of his most notorious edifices are alongside Avenida Revolución, and stand up as multipurpose constructions. The first one is the **Edificio Ermita**, 1931, an interesting building that occupies a triangular lot, with the sharp angle facing the flow of traffic. At the street level we find shops, and at the base of the triangle there is a cinema that is positioned (Cine Hipodromo, no longer active) to take advantage of the angular design accommodating the screen.

The top three floors are devoted to small apartments, with a central triangular covered patio. The overall use of restrained Déco decorations, makes this building a worthy example of this style.

A few blocks away comes the **Edificio Isabel** (name of the lady that founded the charitable institution), 1930, also with a multipurpose scheme. Facing the avenue, twin apartment buildings allow for shops on the street level, and on the side street are located the car garages; the roof terraces and the elaborate entrance doors are to note. The most attractive part of the ensemble, are the two ample walkways that emerge from the two entrances and lead to 16 houses, with a graceful fountain at the ending.

Edificio Ermita

Edificio Isabel

Edificio Celanese, today SEMARNAT

In 1964, Legorreta Arquitectos was asked to design a large building to locate the offices of a textile company. Ricardo Legorreta convinced them to take advantage of the location of this site, by building a tall building with special functional features, alongside a laboratory connected with the back street. The proposal relates to a novel technological system, a “hanging building”; the construction has a central core that holds a top structure from where the rest of the building is suspended. The suspending elements are clearly apparent, as well as the ingenious proposal of quarter floors that allow for a continuous advance throughout the building.

Semarnat

Bazar del Sábado

The Bazaar is situated in the main plaza of San Ángel, a town originally separated from the city, that has retained is traditional colonial character. The shopping complex originated in the 1960's with a group of Mexican artisans and designers, that occupied one of the large houses in San Jacinto square, to sell high-quality decorative items manufactured in different regions across the country; it offers a wide variety of items ranging from crafts to paintings. Their success fostered a space of international prestige, open only Saturdays, with a pleasant restaurant in the middle of the courtyard.

Every Saturday in the surrounding area, an artisan´s market takes place with traditional products. Nearby it is also interesting to visit San Jacinto Church, “Isidro Fabela” (or Casa del Risco) Cultural Centre, with a collection of viceregal art and a peculiar fountain in its courtyard. Finally, the colonial Carmelite Monastery is located in the vicinity, next to the restaurant Carlota.

Polanco

Lomas de Chapultepec and Polanco

Lomas de Chapultepec was created as Chapultepec Heights in the 1930´s, by Albert Blair and American entrepreneur that was married to Antonieta Rivas Mercado (daughter of Antonio Rivas Mercado, architect of the Independence Monument). The names of the

streets, mountains and sierras, derive from the hilly condition, and were chosen by them; here for the first time the Spanish orthogonal grid is abandoned. The original proposal of urbanism and housing follow the idea of the "garden cities" or US suburbia, with large houses surrounded by gardens; the difference lays in the fact that here they have fences and an opulent neo-colonial style, called "Colonial Californiano" due to the influence of the Californian Mission Style. In the urban elements, this style is also present.

Polanco (named after a Jesuit, Juan Antonio de Polanco, whose family got stablished in Mexico) was designed a few years later for the developers "De la Lama y Basurto". Here also the neo-colonial style is the chosen one, both in the urban elements and in the constructions, with sumptuous residences, some well conserved but with commercial use.

Christ Church

Carlos Mijares Bracho was asked to design and build the main English **Episcopal church of México**, 1988-1990, in a lot next to the house of the minister. The previous construction was of apparent bricks, thus the choice of this architect that mastered the use of this material.

The building achieves a respectful integration with the residential area, while offering a dignified ensemble, in spite of the size and height. The ample interior is worth visiting, to appreciate both the architectural expression and the spiritual ambiance. The structure of large arches, all in reinforced brick, are attractive and technically interesting; the crossing of the arches has an appealing result. Nevertheless, the main feature lies in the handling of the light that infuses the interior with a sacred ambiance, favorable for prayer and meditation.

Images: Christ Church

Conservatorio Nacional de Música

As part of the first National Plan for the construction of public schools (Comité Administrador del Programa Federal de Construcción de Escuelas, CAPFCE), Mario Pani built the **Conservatorium**, 1946-1947. The ensemble has a group of sculptures by Armando Quesada, and two unpretentious (unfinished?) murals by José Clemente Orozco, in the main concert hall.

The low-profile project evolves from an axial symmetry, derived from the teachings of Beaux Arts School in Paris were Pani studied in the 1930´s. The vestibule, entered under the sculptures, doubles as the foyer of the Concert hall and distributor to the classes and studios; these last ones are situated in two parallel constructions, with rounded walls for the sound management, covered in stone to foster isolation.

Conservatorio Nacional de Música

An open-air auditorium was planned in the area between the studios, with scenario that doubled as the exterior organ; it is connected with the concert hall that offers an excellent acoustic. It has to be said, that Pani was a proficient cellist, and his first-hand knowledge of conservatoriums favoured the outstanding results. The school houses also a book and a sound library. It is a well conserved building, where many important musicians have studied, but has lost some of the original features like the pond in front and the back gardens.

Cuban Embassy

In 1978, the Cuban architect, Fernando Salinas, designed the embassy for his country in Mexico, in a lot that was taken from the back gardens of the Conservatorium. The simple three floors volume of the building, is situated at the back of the lot, allowing for a large piece of water in the front; this condition is reinforced by the free standing stained-glass mural by Mariano Rodríguez.

Maguen David Synagogue

The architects David Serur, Julián Farah and David Hume, invited Mathias Goeritz to collaborate in this synagogue in 1965. A powerful stone volume, show the destiny of the building with a bold Star of David pending from two large piers, that symbolize the fundaments of faith. From the interior various stained-glass windows can be appreciated, some by the decorator Arturo Pani, and an interesting abstract proposal by Goeritz in amber color glass.

Liceo Franco Mexicano (French Lycée)

Vladimir Kaspé, french architect from Russian origin (and co-student of Mario Pani in Beaux Arts), built the **French Lycée**, 1950-1952. The main feature of this school is the quality of the construction and the efficiency of the spaces, in a complex ensemble that houses students from kinder to high-school, and administrative offices. Towards the avenue, a simple horizontal volume of three levels

displays the finishing throughout the whole complex: concrete and glazed brick, with ample windows (that had been changed recently for noise control).

The entrance hall, with double height, has a mural, by J.P. Dechaume, on three of its walls, adding to the dignity of the access.

Interior circulations and stairs are ample, and communicate with the playgrounds.

French Lycée

"Lincoln" Park, Theatre "Ángela Peralta" and Commercial building/passage

Polanco was organized with orthogonal regularity in the streets and ample avenues; with several parks, the main one is **Parque Lincoln**, in homage to Abraham Lincoln, with two large ponds, a clock tower on one end, an aviary, and an open theatre on the other; the theatre, 1938, offers an innovative concrete acoustic shell by Francisco Lazo. Most of the residences around the park boast a flamboyant neo-colonial style, as did the urban components.

Images: Polanco Park and Surrounds

Several apartment buildings and houses were designed by Francisco J. Serrano in the area, to foster the arrival of new inhabitants. The most relevant construction is from 1940, with shops at street level, and two floors of apartments that open to an interesting passageway that connects two streets and the avenue.