

English summary

Editorial

Felipe Leal

One major purpose of universities is proposing and carrying out alternative projects for the transformation of reality. The university counts on that enormous potential for it is the place where a critical mass of academics and researchers joins youth's freshness and dynamism. Together, they constitute an optimal platform for reflexively suggesting and orienting us towards solutions or alternatives for the improvement of our life conditions. The UNAM has had a leading role in countless proposals for our country's development. It is the source of many great ideas for the understanding and enrichment of our culture.

In the middle of the XX century, the *Escuela Nacional de Arquitectura* (National Architecture School), which at that time was located in the San Carlos Academy, witnessed a great exploit, product of the efervescence generated by a restless and innovative community: there was a contest for making the *Ciudad Universitaria* (University City) project at the south of Mexico City. Both students and teachers were involved in it. The experience could not have been more successful: once the new *Ciudad Universitaria* was built, it became one of the paradigms of architectonic modernity in Mexico.

Fifty years ago those ideas emerged from the university neighborhood downtown. Today, at the dawn of a new century and millenium, imaginative team work proposals for recovering the central and natural parts of our metropolis come from *Ciudad Universitaria*.

Precisely, this issue of *Bitácora* is inspired by bringing together a series of projects offering us a vision of our city in the future, while seeking to encourage a discourse on landscape, the city and its architecture. Fortunately, the fact that most of the subjects dealt with have a public nature and attempt to recover and renew our past and present with contemporary ideas, is symptomatic.

Through the pages of this *Bitácora* we may find two projects by Jaime Ortiz Monasterio that were awarded prizes in the contest "Socializing Spaces" summoned by the Architect's International Union, in the context of the UNESCO's Habitat II celebrated in Istanbul in 1996. The first one deals with the recovery of the atrium of the San Francisco Convent, and is preceded by an historical study by Raúl Nieto on the development of this conjunto, the second project is about an urban reordainment for the San Angel zone.

Back to lake city results from one of the issues developed by the *Taller de la Ciudad de México*, that attempts recovering, from a sustainable approach, a significant area of the former Texcoco Lake. This project will enable providing the city's eastern sector with appropriate infrastructure and services, while opening a possibility for locating the metropolitan zone new airport. Recreative, commercial and service areas may also be located on the zone; as well as housing and non-polluting industry.

Another two articles are about two winning projects of contests summoned by Mexico City's Government. Both, the *zocalo* and the *Casa de las Ajaracas*, projects have gained notoriety on recent months. The controversy which these contests generated allowed us to open the Open Forum section with one paper by Luis Arnal and another by Iñaki Echeverría. This section is completed by some thoughts on the Architecture and Transparency Congress. Readers and collaborators of *Bitácora* are wellcome to participate in this new open forum.

The Students section features an honorific mention winning work by a Faculty's group in an international contest for a housing project in Roswell, New Mexico.

In his paper *Center off-center*, Gonzalo Celorio offers, in his usual elegant writing, a vision of Mexico City's downtown before and after the University moved to the grounds in the *Pedregal de San Angel*.

The magazine opens and closes with articles devoted to Mario Pani, on the occasion of an exhibition on his work organized by our Faculty along with the INBA, in the *Palacio de Bellas Artes*. On one hand, Graciela de Garay, specialist in oral history, offers some fragments of her 1990 interviews with Pani, in which the architect comments on the teaching of his trade. At last, there is a review on this exhibition by Louise Noelle. She also dedicates a few lines to the memory of Bruno Zevi, deceased at the beginning of the year, closing this third issue of *Bitácora*. ☺

Felipe Leal



Mario Pani and the teaching of architecture

Graciela de Garay

Mario Pani had no passion but architecture, and he devoted his whole life to the ordered and human growth of Mexico City.

The solution was simple for him: making cities within the cities as in Tlalotelco, and cities out of the city anticipating future growth. He suggested the vertical growth of the city in order to intensify the use of ground. He thought this strategy could control the disorderly growth of the city while concentrating services to diminish costs and reduce de continuous transportation of its' inhabitants. He supported the construction of four fronted beautiful buildings with different heights separated by vast gardens. While studying in France, Pani had learned to think of architecture, along with urbanism, as the most important of beaux-arts. He died on February 1993, when he was 82 years old. Among his most outstanding works are the Miguel Alemán housing complex (1949), the Master Plan for *Ciudad Universitaria* with Enrique del Moral (1952), the Master Plan for *Ciudad Satélite* (1954), the first condominium in Mexico City (1956), the *Nonoalco-Tlalotelco* housing complex (1964), and his final proposal for restructuring Mexico City known as "Concerted City" (1988). He also founded the *Arquitectura México* magazine (1938-1980), and his last big project was the creation of the Architecture Academy.

Here are some of the stories told by Pani in an interview made by the author of this article on 1990. He talked about his father and uncle, and although both of them were engineers he thinks they would have liked to be architects. His uncle was a very important man in the government of the revolution. From 1905 to 1910 Mario's father and uncle worked on the introduction of drinking water from Xochimilco to Mexico City. The construction was directed by Manuel Marroquín y Rivera, and though his uncle Alberto had some trouble with Marroquín he was in charge of building the plants for pumps. He also tells how his father, Arturo Pani, taught him things like technical drawing and influenced him making him fall right on the spot, on architecture.

Pani says the best school of Fine Arts was in Paris, and even though it had been denigrated by modernism and anti-academicism, it was three centuries old and some of the most important American architects had studied there. Regarding the education system, Pani recalls there where three

official workshops with professors assigned by the education ministry and ten free workshops. In those the teachers were chosen by the students, of course they had to have a degree and a certain quality. Usually, these professors were part of the architecture school jury. There were no exams, instead there was a jury that approved your projects and then you passed to the next course. The theoretical subjects such as structures, construction and math were taught in courses with no marks. You just had to pass an exam that was independent from the classes. Lessons at the workshop were interesting, since the students had very different levels. At first, you had to be a draftsman and you worked for the advanced students.

You had to enter the school through a contest that was held twice a year. It was very hard to get in, so you had to show how good you were from the start. At first you entered one free workshop or other, and started studying architecture. You had to copy the classics, draw, do little projects. Then, you entered the contest that lasted twelve hours. Pani entered the contest four times, but the fourth time he did it, he got the first place out of six hundred contestants.

According to his memories, people in Paris were guided by what they call *esprit*, spirit. Students were divided in categories, and the older ones were real tyrants with the new ones. The time that took turning from a new student to an older one depended entirely on you, some students lasted 8 or 10 years as new ones. But Pani says he became an old one pretty soon.

Pani also talked about the situation of architecture teaching in Mexico at the moment of the interview saying that there were more architecture students in our country than in the US. Since only 5% of all the buildings are made by architects, a lot of these students will be unemployed and frustrated because they won't be able to find jobs. He calculated that there must be somewhere between 6000 and 8000 students and around 900 professors in the UNAM. And that obviously, those professors weren't the best architects in Mexico, instead they are persons who just studied and they only could teach. Pani concludes that architecture schools must be smaller.

For Pani, the separation of architecture and fine arts was very damaging because it considers technical matters are more important than architecture itself. Another trend that worried Pani was specialization. Then he talks about the moment when the *Centro Médico* was being built. Every important doctor wanted to have an Institute for his specialty, cardiology, nutrition, etc. For example some architects, like doctors, have become specialists, in hospitals. But doctors are the ones supposed to determine the hospital program and experience which hospitals are working and which aren't, if an architect specialized in hospitals was to build one and an architect with more talent received a program made by doctors, the hospital made by the latter would be better than the one built by the specialist. Pani asks: "Straus wasn't better than Beethoven just because he made only waltzes, was he?"

Pani also said he was against urbanism being taught at college level, because in order to solve the problems of the city you have to be an architect first; otherwise you are just a planner.

He tells how, back in the forties, when Augustin Álvarez, Enrique del Moral, Mauricio Campos, Alonso Mariscal and himself were teachers, each workshop was very different from the others due to the professor's personality and there were real competitions among them. Everybody worked on the same subject matter, but the criteria of which projects were accepted and which weren't varied a lot.

Naturally there was another interesting thing, you could enter the workshop you liked and you could change from one workshop to another, so the

best ones were crowded while the worst ones had very few students. The professors had to defend their students and the criteria they had used in their projects. Even though the contestants were anonymous, Pani assures all the professors knew their students very well, so they knew right away which was the best project and which was the worst. In other cases, they argued for ours while the students waited in San Carlos' hallways trying to overhear and communicate the results. Pani says that they taught and they also were architects, doing the most important constructions in Mexico. Since students that worked with them also worked as their draftspersons in the workshop, they were like family.

Pani remembers how emphasis switched from the curriculum to projects. When that happened they started practicing more elaborate and didactical exercises, even if they were never built. He tells how once the evaluation was finished, around seven or eight, they went to "La Flor the México" and waited for the fresh buns that came out at eleven. While they ate them, they discussed the reasons for the resolution they had taken hours before. That lasted for several years. Pani recalls that it was he who supported the idea of an only workshop, and he still thinks it was useful, because most of the important architects in Mexico studied with that group of professors. ☉



The big San Francisco Convent in Mexico City
Raúl Nieto García

The San Francisco Convent was the quarter of the first religious order in this Viceroyalty and the first schooling center and archbishop head of the Holy Scripture in Mexico. Once, it occupied 33,000 meters, its vestiges are enough to testify the enormous importance it had. The only witnesses of the Franciscan grandeur that are still standing in our days are: the main atrium and its access portal; the library wall (rebuilt); the arcade of the main cloister (at present, a Methodist temple); the big temple and the Balvanera Chapel; and the rests of the building that once housed the Calvary and Saint Anthony Chapels. Several private and public institutions have joined in a program aimed at recovering this historical space with actions as the construction of new buildings adapted to the permissible architectonic patterns; the preservation of XX Century constructions as the "Rule Building" and the "Latinoamericana Tower"; and the rehabilitation of the conventual atrium. The idea is bringing this place back to life as square inside the block, rehabilitating the restored parts of the Rule Building and the Guardiola Hotel. The most ambitious project is the restoration of the eastern facade, reintegrating the portal and big temple following historical documents.

The convent's history is closely linked with the History of the Country itself. It was founded on 1524, when the twelve members of the *Frailes Menores de Observancia* arrived to our country. At the beginning, the Franciscans settled temporarily in a house near the convent's site. The primitive temple, the first one in Mexico was built in 1525 and, according to Kubler, it was financed by Hernán Cortés and some indigenous nobles.

In the XVIII century with its generalized and intense building activity, the definitive spaces of the convent were built. In 1710 architects Feliciano Cabello, Diego de los Santos and Manuel Martínez

de Herrera started to build a new temple. The old big church was then devoted to San José. Many of the most important craftsmen of the time worked for this construction.

In the XIX century the convent had eleven chapels: San José de los Naturales -turned into the Sevitas Chapel-; the Tercera Orden de San Francisco Chapel -devoted to Saint Louis, King of France; San José de los Españoles, which changed its name to Señor de Burgos; the Purísima Concepción Chapel, two more devoted to Nuestra Señora de Aránzazu, the chapels of the Second and Third Stations of the Calvary; San Antonio, and, finally, the Balvanera Chapel devoted to the Guadalupe Virgin. Naturally, the convent had other premises that had been built at different moments. Some of them were the exterior cloister, the library, the gatekeeper's quarters, cells for the clergymen, a main cloister, a kitchen, a garden and a graveyard.

In 1856, president Comonfort suppressed the order and built a street that split the convent in two, demolishing the infirmary, the kitchen, several cells and the convent orchard. The convent was suppressed and everything but the big temple and the chapels was declared nationalized real estate.

Later on, certain agreements between the liberal and the conservative parties allowed the monks back into the convent, but the order was suppressed definitively in times of the Reform. The big temple was closed and dismantled back in 1861.

At that time, other part of the convent was destroyed to enlarge Betlemitas Street to the south. The bells were removed from the steeple and the convent was divided in twelve lots sold in public auction. It would be useless to name all the premises built or adapted as a result of the convent's dismantlement. In 1984 after being a protestant temple it was repurchased to reestablish the catholic cult. The parts that have survived into our times did so because in 1931 the remaining constructions were declared historical monuments. Since the remodelings made at that moment the building remained the same until the 1985 earthquakes. The construction that occupied the library and the cloister collapsed, and so did the neighboring buildings (Rule and Guardiola).

Since the convent's foundation, 476 years have passed, and finally there will be some actions to rescue part of this monument. Nevertheless some people have said this project is about recovering "fake original facades". As an answer we might say that recovering buildings catalogued as historical monuments is to preserve our collective memory. This buildings witnessed the first school of fine arts in America, how native evangelists learned Spanish, and a library with 32,000 volumes that dwelled mainly on Nahuatl-Spanish translations and herbal medicine. The grandeur of this convent is out of doubt, and even if it was not the only religious center with such an important history that went through a long series of transformations, it was the first one indeed. ☉

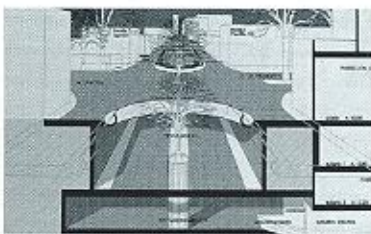


San Francisco Proposal
Jaime Ortiz Monasterio

In spite of all the losses our city has suffered due to the passage of time and historical events, there are plenty monumental spaces still waiting for their use and fate to be reestablished. The disdain with

which certain authorities and particulars have seen and treated our colonial heritage has been well known for generations. Unfortunately, the historical and aesthetic meaning of architectural testimonies has been understated, leading to their destruction based on political or economic considerations. Few owners have realized what restoration means for society and how profitable it can be. Recovery and reuse are vital as in the case of the San Francisco ex-convent and its old atrium.

Today, the only buildings left are the Saint Francis Church (in use); the cloister - occupied by Methodists as a praying temple; the Pilgrim's Portal - almost completely demolished; the atrium (- out of use), the Guardiola Hotel (- out of use), and the Rule Building (- out of use). For sure, the key element of this project as a meeting space is the old Atrium. Thus, it will be connected to the four streets that surround it (Francisco I Madero, Gante, 16 de Septiembre, and Eje Central Lázaro Cárdenas), through a network of passages aimed at incorporating society and promoting economic, historic, touristic and aesthetic activities inside its premises. This transformation will allow the historical sites to be enjoyed and the development of a number of activities, profitable from the cultural and economic viewpoints. The increase in the demand for parking space will be faced enlarging the Bellas Artes parking lot and creating an underground access from the atrium. The restoration of the San Francisco Temple's facade, the atrium, and the cloister; and the restitution of the Pilgrim's Portico will be vital for this project. ⊗



San Angel, Concrete Proposals

Gustavo Lopez Padilla

The modern city is an always-changing live phenomenon where different historic times come together, and market laws stemming from social agreements orient the transformation of urban space. San Angel, to the south of Mexico City, is part of this permanent transformation process. In recent years, intensified developmental pressures in the zone have altered the face of important portions of its territory.

Neighbors face the choice of keeping the quiet atmosphere of the neighborhood or letting the modern and hectic city invade it, an appealing alternative given its market potential. Conciliating San Angel's tradition with urban modernity and all its implications is unavoidable, and the only way of achieving it would be through the honest effort and the goodwill of the whole community. The fact that its residents are worried about San Angel's development and growth is an advantage for this neighborhood.

Jaime Ortiz Monasterio, a widely acknowledged architect, has carefully studied San Angel's problems, and has presented a series of proposals to neighbors and authorities aimed at solving the most urgent problems. Issues like the increase in traffic, bus stops, street vendors, shopping malls, and the lack of parking space have altered the everyday peace of San Angel.

Revolución and Altavista are two of the avenues with more traffic and commercial impact in the zone. Ortiz Monasterio's plans are intended for bringing back the pedestrian and socializing ambience that used to characterize this part of the city by making a radical intervention on Revolución Avenue.

This proposals include continuing rout seven of the subway system up to Ciudad Universitaria, and rescuing the La Paz, Revolución, Madero and Amargosa crossing for pedestrians, thus creating an important square that would restore the urban architectonic and human character of the Carmen Convent, the San Angel Cultural Center and the Carmen Garden itself. In Ortiz Monasterio's proposal this would be possible building parking lots and a by-pass under Revolución. Then, only local traffic would remain on the surface. Another square would be built on the space known as "La Palma" with its correspondent underground bus stop and street vendor stands, generating a system of open space pedestrian sites that would bring together the monuments and squares. Finally, an extra bus stop would be set near Ciudad Universitaria and the wall surrounding San Rafael Cemetery would be changed by a fence, providing a green image for the general urban context of the zone.

In Ortiz Monasterio's proposal each urban component must occupy its own space, bringing together the interests of all the sectors involved. Historical architecture would receive its proper place, while hastening the traffic flow, fostering the commercial sector and creating a space where persons may walk, and meet their friends and relatives. For financing purposes, Mexico City Government should join private investors in order to achieve the economic self-sufficiency of the project.

Although issues like the placement of the subway stations and the use of by-passes have generated some controversy, the objections may be dealt with proper regulations. This plan shows that Jaime Ortiz Monasterio isn't only an architect building his own projects, but one that has a commitment with society and with the city. ⊗



Back to Lake City

Gustavo Lipkau

Global warming, the gradual advance of deserts, the melting of glaciers, the extinction of species, and storms with no precedents are some of the signs that warn us of the planetary crisis the whole world is about to face. It is well known that some of this phenomena have been encouraged fostered by an uncontrolled population growth.

The apocalyptic signs are clear and so are its causes: as population grows, so does the amount of resources it consumes. Everybody is waiting for it in two different ways. Some are search for lifestyles involving green technology that stop the processes and reverse environmental deterioration, and others are just waiting for it to come. It is easy to see this crisis will strike undeveloped countries first, especially in large cities. That makes Mexico City one of the major candidates for reaching this state. Atmospheric pollution is the most notorious of its environmental problems. Nevertheless, water and subsoil issues are even worse, and there is no conscience about them.

Ecosystems are very sensitive to changes and strongly interrelated. Mexico City's belongs to The Mexico Basin geographic region which is, perhaps, one of the places on earth that has registered a harsher environmental deterioration. When its first settlers arrived 500 years ago, it was a fertile land with an enormous lake surrounded by vast forests. Today, it has turned into one of the cities on earth where water is more expensive because the supply system spends

ridiculous amounts of energy trying to find it, and the drainage system has been about to empty the city's treasury in several occasions since its "colonial refunding". The last of this constructions is a very costly deep drainage system that hasn't been finished yet.

In this situation, the city has lost one of the main reasons its their founders had for settling in this place. That is had a lot of water, a precipitation of 7000 mm per year that due to bad management has turned into a non-usable resource. Instead, and at high economic costs, the water-bearing stratum have been over-exploited, causing alarming sinkings and threatening the wellbeing of its inhabitants. In this situation water has to be brought from neighboring basins, sacrificing the electric power generation and farming production capacity of the region. Mexico City is like a parasite for this territory and its effects are beginning to be felt in its surroundings.

The Mexico City Workshop is part of the Facultad de Arquitectura at the UNAM, and has been studying the geography, history and infrastructure of the city for three years. Using this information, it has generated a series of plans and projects that add up to an integral proposal for the recovery of the environmental basin of Mexico. The major issues of the proposal are as follows:

A hydraulic master plan for the recovery of hydrological balance. It includes the maximum rain water impounding through tanks and dams, encouraging natural absorption and injecting water to the shafts, reducing exploitation and importation through the treatment of a 100% of residual waters for urban and rural reuse, and recovering lake zones, rivers and canals.

Other plan contemplates reorganizing the traffic and transportation system to make the actual network more efficient. A third master plan on urban space is mainly concerned for green spaces and finding ways to provide maintenance for the existing parks, creating new ones and generating ideas for the strengthening of reforestation campaigns. The last plan is focused on the management of waste and energy, and is oriented to the ordered growth of sanitary fillings and their potential use in the conformation of the future city. With this actions, the TCM expects making a contribution in reversing the environmental deterioration processes that Mexico basin has suffered.

"Back to Lake City" is one of their projects. It involves going back to the past as a way of achieving a sustainable future. This urban model implies new activities in the fields of planning and construction, and it would be impossible carrying it out without an equally new political disposition -communicative and democratic-. This approach would bring an important increase in economic activity, generating thousands of jobs and a whole revolution for future survival.

Re-flooding Texcoco Lake, the most emblematic project of the Workshop, has its origins back in 1965, with a project called "Proyecto Lago de Texcoco" by Nabor Carrillo and R.J. Marsal. It was based on a deep scientific knowledge of the subsoil and its hydrological workings. The project was aimed at creating a lake system in the zone of the old lake that was to regulate traffic, defend the city from flooding, improve the sewage treatment, stop the sinking, recover the neighboring zones environmentally, contribute to the potable water supply, and cool a nuclear reactor. Although the government supported the project, another plan got more attention: the construction of the deep drainage system. The Texcoco project only was partially carried out owing to the dedication of Nabor Carrillo's follower, engineer Gerardo Cruishank. As head of the project, Cruishank has achieved the construction of Nabor Carrillo Lake and the treatment plants that feed it, the reforestation of great areas in the Texcoco desert. With this actions there were less sand storms and several species of migratory birds were able to return to this area.

The new "Proyecto Texcoco" or "Back to Lake City" is a hydraulic management, infrastructure and urban development program. Its goals are helping with the recovery of the hydrological balance inside the basin, protecting the city from flooding, and treating residual waters. With this actions the climate would be sensibly improved, helping to alleviate the atmospheric situation. There would be more oxygenation and winds; minimizing the differences in temperature, diminishing the frequency of thermal reversals, lowering suspended particle indexes and increasing relative moisture, and hampering the generation of ozone. The gradual recovery of the region's wildlife complete the environmental advantages of this project. Lakes are the only opportunity to defend this ecologically valuable areas, that are inappropriate for farming and urban development. The irregular settlers that have occupies the zone could be part of the city's future development on the lake's 75-kilometer shore and slopes.

The lake would be built through the construction of dams, such as "El nuevo Albaradón", made from treatment plants mud and sanitary fillings. Once confined, the lake would be filled and maintained through the treatment of 15% of the city's drainage (under international compromises). This scenario will be completed by new infrastructures, of regional and metropolitan relevance; the lake-based development would supply services to the poorest parts of town and turn into a psychological escape for the residents of the capital. It would be as a flag of hope for the future. ☉



Zócalo Project

Ernesto Betancourt

In March 1999, the team headed by Ernesto Betancourt won the contest for the remodeling of the Zócalo, in this article he talks about some of the basic ideas of his proposal and the diverse reactions it has generated.

In 1996, Teodoro González de León and Oscar Paz regretted the poor conditions of the Zócalo after strolling in it for a while. Apparently, the pre-project for the remodeling of the square was a result of this conversation. When the new government for Mexico City was elected, there was a citizen poll about planting trees in the Zócalo again and they published the basis of a contest for the rehabilitation of the Plaza de la Constitución.

In march 1999 Cecilia Cortés, Juan Carlos Tello, Patricia Aguerreberre, and the students Eduardo Carvajal, Nicolás Vázquez, Pedro Huerta, Fabián García, Ariel Rojo, Pablo Velázquez, Juan Carlos Illescas, Fernando Hernández, Alejandro Flores, Rodrigo Rivero-Borell and the author of this article won the contest out of other 150 projects.

The space of the Plaza de la Constitución has a persistent dual character, the Zócalo is at the same time, the story of this changes and the permanence of a big empty space that hasn't changed since its origins. The proposal acknowledges both, and while respecting the space, it attempts to eliminate the vices that have accumulated throughout the years. The Zócalo is larger than the Plaza de la Constitución. The Plaza Mayor should be reconfigured to keep its open and civil character, while reformulating its contemporary symbolism.

Diagnosis

The perimeter of the space is fragmented by traffic

and the different floors and pavements. Buildings and monuments are perceived as distant, and their hierarchy is diminished by the width of the streets that surround them.

On the north-south axis, the Templo Mayor and Plaza del Volador are obstructed by street vendors, visual pollution, and garbage that denigrate and block the accesses to both spaces. The square doesn't have public and shady places for users and visitors. Services and equipment as lighting, furniture, floors and signaling are inadequate, inexistent or poorly designed. The entrances to the subway are disseminated in the zone, unrelated to the space, the flows of persons or the placement of buildings; they have no urban presence and the space of the station is divorced from the Zócalo.

We based the actions to be taken our decisions on these issues.

The actions proposed are as follows:

The ordinary traffic in front of Palacio Nacional and the Cathedral as circulation towards the east from 20 de Noviembre and Pino Suárez will be suspended, and the parts that keep car traffic will have the same floor as the rest of the space separated only by bollards. The new pavement will go from the Guatemala parameter and Palma north to Academia including the Plaza del Volador, Plaza del Marqués and Cathedral. Only the monument to Enrico Martínez will be left on the Plaza del Marqués. The material chosen for this purpose is concrete prefabricated on site with different marble aggregates to give it a natural color. This material is easy to replace, good for intensive use and has a low maintenance cost. The basaltic stone junctures will mark the routes and the different places and events. Fragments of texts from Cervantes de Salazar's México en 1554 will be engraved on some of the floor slabs.

The visual and spatial solution of the square will be given by a slight slope no taller than 1.80 m, framing the flagstaff and Palacio Nacional. This slope will form a sunken square that will generate areas for resting and a series of fountains without hard to maintain receptacles. Part of the slope will house the water deposit and the pumps to avoid additional excavations.

An avenue of jacarandas (jacaranda mimosa) will be planted all along the square's western border and till the closing on the north side.

To reinforce the shape and enclosure of the space we have decided to place 18 columns, 20 meters high, surrounding the square at the south and west facades. These columns will work as light sources but they will also have a special device that will make them function as wind chimes. The objects of everyday use such as telephones, garbage cans, benches or bollards have been carefully designed.

The space of the Templo Mayor will be integrated to the Zócalo by means of a 12 meter high luminous columns forest placed on the existing grid. There will also be an access staircase to the Pre-Hispanic precinct and a scenic bridge uniting the square with República de Argentina.

There will only be three subway exits left, one on the Plaza del Volador and two on the Zócalo. They will be enlarged and reformed while keeping their structure; we would like to start a pilot plan for designing elevators for disabled persons in some key stations. We also suggest redesigning the vestibule of the station using the same floor as in the square and creating flexible mobile screens for temporary exhibitions and tourist information.

The square that houses the Supreme Court of Justice will be freed from visual interruptions to create a dignified access to it. Using the restructured subway exits, the different levels, and the suppression of traffic the square will be elevated a meter as a way of acknowledging recognizing the separation between the executive and the judicial powers.

We also propose to make a monument for one of the most important issues of our time and a key fact in the making of Mexico City: immigration. Inspired in monarch butterflies, 2000 stainless steel butterflies designed by artists, children and workshops will be hanged from invisible wires reflecting mobile lights at day and night.

A lot of citizens had been displaced from the Zócalo which has been symbolically recovered for the inhabitants of the city. Now, It is a meeting and celebration space again, and the notoriety of the contest was part of that transformation. Today, a number of events takes place in the square (concerts, theatre plays, art exhibitions, festivals of all political signs, and even a controversial catholic massive mass), proving the square belongs to all of us, whether we like it or not.

Even if the works haven't started yet, the rehabilitation of the Zócalo already has. I have received lots of opinions on the project and I have tried to classify them according to the aspect they take into consideration:

The first group that wanted to preserve the false virginity of the space, makes several mistakes. The first one is wanting to keep the abandoned and deteriorated floors and furnishings of the Zócalo. This immobilism is an accomplice of the degradation and destruction of our heritage. The contest called us to rehabilitate the Zócalo, not to remodel it. We are placing our bet on the first idea, not on the mummification but on a plan that eliminates the heterogeneity of the arbitrary without destroying the variety of everyday life.

Another group was worried about the cost, arguing taxpayers need services and infrastructure, but forgetting they also need spaces of identity, enjoyment and collective pride. But this argument is not so good if we think about the real cost of the project (no more than a hundred million pesos in all its phases) and in the fact that this investment not only considers the exterior aspect of the square. Nowadays it seems useless reminding this critics that this places give pride and identity to the citizens.

Another group was only interested in standing for their particular interests or compromises -religious, political, academic or even stylistic- and against everything that came from outside their group. The saddest parts were played by the Architects Board when they refused to take part in the contest due to their political compromises, and by the clergy when they refused removing the fence that stands in front of the cathedral, forgetting it was installed in times of a rigid separation between civil and religious affairs was necessary.

Another group was formed by the other participants in the contest that felt they had the right to win just for having participated in it. Even though contest results may be controversial they have proved their efficiency in countries known for the architectural quality of their cities. Questioning the validity of the contest itself goes against the interests of us all. I don't know if our project was the best, but it won. We only used architecture as we thought it should be used: to create a human order inside the involuntary chaos, to create forms that shelter and reveal us, to honor the city and its monuments, and those who make them and use them.

Architecture is the most civic of Arts, our main concern was to recompose the degraded space of the square recovering its scale, improving its infrastructure for all its functions and celebrating it. We did it barely marking the interventions with some discreet and asymmetrical elements, and a good dose of architectonic optimism. We tried to make it in an almost invisible and always changing manner, as the wind turning into sound through the columns framing the space, or time passing quietly at the rhythm of the changing colors of the jacarandas through the seasons. ☉



"Ajaracas house" contest: the winning project

The basis for the "Ajaracas (Arabic knot ornamentation) house" contest were published on October 1999, issuing the location of a house for Mexico City's Major on a strategic corner of the Historic Downtown. The jury chose the project of the team headed by architect Javier Sanchez out of 45 proposals.

The historic downtown is a faithful witness of seven hundred years of History, showing the overlapping of different layers in time. The project for the Ajaracas House attempts rehabilitating the corner of República de Guatemala and República de Argentina, once a conqueror's lot. The Ajaracas House occupied this space since the XVIII century. Then, it was divided in four irregular estates, and remodeled by architect Federico Mariscal in 1932, who added a fourth level to the house. A part of it was demolished in 1993 due to the damages caused by the 1985 earthquake.

In Pre-Hispanictimes the main roads to Tenochtitlan - Tacuba and Iztapalapa - met at that point. Afterwards, in the Colonial City it was the intersection of the eastern-western and southern-northern axis at the starting point for the urban plan. The site witnesses both historic layers with vestiges from the front steps of the Templo Mayor and a vaulted niche that belonged to the original house.

The great Plaza de la Constitución is a platform merging several activities and programs in one space. The buildings that surround it have a constant three level height, offering a clear image of the historic downtown typologies. Facades are made of rubblework covered in highly crafted stone. Each facade may be regarded as a great homogenous stone wall with ordered perforations that open into bays. Even when floor levels do not always match cornices and balconies show a horizontal trend reinforcing urban continuity.

The project dialogues with the cloister typology using the patio, the arcade and the bay. The patio is represented by an interior empty space conformed by the Templo Mayor, the Plaza del Seminario and the Plaza de la Constitución. The arcade is the transition space between the private and the public domains, dignifies the relation between interior and exterior, and offers endless experiences and relations with the historic downtown as context. The arcade has a dual situation, the part facing the patio keeps the masses and openings of the original Ajaracas House. The part facing the bay is a thin transparent skin, vanishing the relation between the patio and the arcade. The arcade contains the bay and has a double use, expressing the semi-public character of the building. An interior patio will be placed at the corner of the arcade, housing the most public functions of the program along with the multiple use hall, and allowing opened space events to be carried out.

The bay is located at the center of the project surrounded by the arcade. It houses the most private functions of the building, and works as a free plant served by a block containing utilities. The bay has several levels destined to satisfy the needs established in the house's program. The height of the building is the one allowed by the regulation H4M: 14.40 meters over the sidewalk.

The arcade facing the Templo Mayor generates a respectful space for the front steps that testify its continuity. On the other hand, the colonial vaulted

niche will be set in the broken corner that expresses the superposition of historical layers.

The arcade facing the street has three exterior levels according to the original volumes of the building. Even when the house will have more levels, the floor of the living room is tied to the original floor of the Ajaracas house, thus creating a continuity aided by the cornices and openings.

The basement will host a Pre-Hispanic exhibition and will only be accessed from the Museo del Templo Mayor. The ground floor will be devoted to general services. The differentiated accesses to the private and the public parts of the house are very important for this space in which monitoring, security and car access will be controlled. The manager's office, the banquet kitchen, the dressing rooms for waiters, the grocery storeroom, and the service door will also be at floor level.

The mezzanine will be a multiple use space offering two different spatial qualities: exterior and interior brought together in a free plant of big dimensions. This space is lived through the arcade and only has one window on the eastern facade to face the empty space generated by the Templo Mayor.

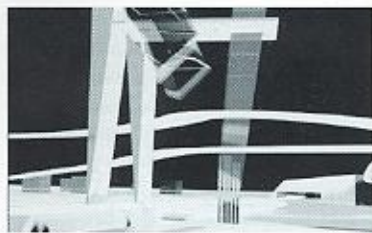
The following levels may only be accessed through the main staircase, but may be connected to the mezzanine if needed. The privacy of the house increases from the lower to the higher levels.

The offices will be placed on the first floor. The public part of the private house starts on the second floor where the living room and dining room are placed. Both are integrated with the open air terrace that crosses the facade establishing a direct relation with the Ajaracas House cornice. The next two levels are the closed and private part of the house. The children's bedrooms will be on the third floor, and the main bedroom and private library studio will be on the fourth one. The last element of the house is a terrace with a panoramic view of the city.

The house is communicated through three vertical columns: the main staircase, the elevator - concealed under a red volcanic rock wall -, and the service staircase leading to the backyard.

The structure will be based on the use of a light metallic structure for the bay and exposed concrete walls to create rigid frameworks for structural reasons. The house's foundations are made of foundation slabs and friction piles. Some punctual supports with piles may be installed in the outdoor patio and the Pre-Hispanic exhibition complying with the regulations of the INAH (Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia). To avoid getting too close to the northern stairs (towards Las Campanas House) the wall dividing both properties may be in cantilever and work as an enormous reinforced concrete beam that takes the metallic structure of the facade on República de Argentina. The structure of the floors of the bay is solved with 8 inches round metal columns and 10 inches steel I beams that support a floor made of 12 centimeters wide romsa sheet and a compression layer of concrete reinforced with electric welded mesh. The bay's finishings would be wooden staves and plaster soffits for the bay, and laminated spaces for hallways, stairways and patio. The use of romsa sheet will allow embedding lamps, and heating or cooling systems inside the soffit. The floors of the services block will be made of solid concrete slabs, given the need to perforate for hydraulic and sanitary installations.

The quarry and tezontle (red volcanic stone) used for the main facades of the arcade, will only cover a metallic structure in order to make it lighter, mostly for respect of the vestiges that are housed beneath the interior outdoor patio. The use of quarry on the facade will establish a dialogue with the texture and color of the ajaracas. The red tezontle wall that is receded from the ajaracas and the quarry marks a pause and reestablishes the verticality of the original access before the intervention of 1932. ⊗



Contest for Housing Proposal in Roswell, New Mexico

The participants in this contest were expected to take a stand as defenders or critics. In the first case they would design a hotel for aliens in downtown Roswell, and in the second they should deny their existence and propose a scheme for the future growth of the city with a prototype house and a new subdivision on the outskirts of town. The team integrated by Miguel del Río, Ignacio del Río, Tania Díez, Cynthia Echave, Paulina Goycoolea, Salvador Gutiérrez, Jorge H. Bueno, Mauricio Márquez, Agustín Pereyra and Víctor Romero won the third place. The first place went to Elizabeth Stoel and Nikita Pashenkov from Brooklyn, New York; and the second one to LIQUID from New South Wales, Australia.

This proposal chose the critical stand and was based on the following concepts:

The most complicated issue in human history is the city. Today's cities are like ant nests - very complex and labyrinth-like structures inhabited by insects unaware of their life purpose. While building our cities we invent objects, so every invention involves a new infrastructure created for its use, shaping our urban landscapes. The invention of cars has tattooed endless black lines on the surface of earth. Today, science allows us to see the consequence of this process: earth is overheating. To avoid damaging the surface of our planet, we have built streets on top of the houses.

The proposal formulates systems that allow nature to do its work: slopes in accesses for temperature control, gardens, a cooling system based on different air pressure levels inside the house, and solar energy as power source.

The new division housing of Roswell resembles a satellite city. Every company and institution, public or private, shares structures facing northeast and southeast that work as limits for future growth. These structures are connected to a node of reference, a third building that houses the Civic Center of Roswell, New Mexico - UFO City - and also works as a constant spatial reference.

While setting this new division, we thought we needed to create a landscape housing a city that kept the urban body together for the families of higher and lower income. This was the reason for creating studios and low priced housing.

Roswell is placed on a vast and flat territory, so buildings will merge with the landscape. There are no tall buildings, and each house has the least elements possible on its facade, allowing a general unity made of two basic elements: a crystal cube for the stairs that lights the streets at night and the solar cells that cover the garage. The whole forms a fifth facade, while interiors may be modified according to the personality of its inhabitants.

In this project we got the opportunity of thinking how the infrastructure of every city is related with the creation of new objects, at a moment when new technologies - as computers and cellular phones - are drastically altering our lifestyle in the cities. We need to learn from the mistakes of the past and that's why we decided to take the critical stand. Everything human society builds remains on the surface of the earth like a tattoo. ⊗