

# Lo Popular and the Modern: Displaying Popular Architecture in 1950s Mexico

## Lo popular y lo moderno Exhibir arquitectura popular en el México de los años cincuenta

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### Abstract

In October 1952, the exhibition *Arquitectura popular mexicana* opened at the still-unfinished Ciudad Universitaria (CU) of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). Displaying images of popular architecture within buildings identified with the pinnacle of Mexico's modernist movement suggested the comfortable coexistence and shared principles of the modern and the vernacular and the utility of vernacular culture for inspiring and contextualizing Mexico's modernism as unique, specific and timeless. However, through its mode of organization and display, the exhibition turned specific buildings into symbols, positioning vernacular architecture and those who build it as a generalized support for a specifically Mexican modernism.

**Keywords:** popular architecture, vernacular architecture, Mexico, exhibitions, Ciudad Universitaria

### Resumen

En octubre de 1952, la exposición *Arquitectura popular mexicana* se inauguró en la Ciudad Universitaria (CU) de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM). La presentación de imágenes de arquitectura vernácula dentro de edificios identificados con la cúspide del movimiento moderno de México sugirió la cómoda convivencia y los principios compartidos entre lo moderno y lo vernáculo, además de la utilidad de la cultura vernácula para inspirar y contextualizar la arquitectura moderna de México como única, específica y atemporal. Sin embargo, a través de su modo de organización y exhibición, la exposición convirtió los edificios específicos en símbolos y posicionó a la arquitectura vernácula y a sus constructores como respaldo, extensivo a una modernidad arquitectónica específicamente mexicana.

**Palabras clave:** arquitectura popular, arquitectura vernácula, México, exposiciones, Ciudad Universitaria

The early twentieth century saw Mexican architects searching for and debating what might define an architectural style that was both modernist and truly Mexican. In October 1952, the many facets of this in-progress definition went on display for an international audience at the VIII Pan-American Congress of Architects, hosted at the still-unfinished Ciudad Universitaria (CU) of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). The event showcased Mexican architecture, with the buildings of the campus itself forming one pillar and the numerous exhibitions and events staged by Mexican architects and artists forming another.

Among those exhibitions were two organized by the young Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes (National Institute of Fine Arts, INBA): Clara Porset's *El arte en la vida diaria* (*Art in Daily Life*) and Enrique Yañez and Gabriel García Maroto's *Arquitectura popular mexicana* (Mexican Popular Architecture).<sup>1</sup> These exhibitions endeavored to illustrate that popular culture, generally identified as Mexico's living indigenous and mestizo culture, was fundamental to Mexican aesthetics. Both exhibitions suggested that modern and vernacular designs comfortably coexisted and even shared principles, as well as that popular culture should play a role in inspiring and contextualizing Mexico's modernism as unique, specific and timeless. Much has been written on the Porset exhibition, which displayed popular crafts and designed objects alongside mass-produced items, but the Yañez and García Maroto exhibition, which solely included examples of popular architecture, has been largely overlooked.

Although *Arquitectura popular mexicana* was ahead of its time in showcasing popular architecture, its mode of organization and display turned buildings into generalized symbols rather than unique structures built under specific circumstances by individual creators, which broke with the norm for displaying and discussing modern architecture. Coupled with its location and placement among the other exhibitions at Ciudad Universitaria during the congress, this exhibition posited popular architecture, and by extension those who build it, to be a generalized and generalizable support for a specifically Mexican modernism, rather than truly valorizing these forms and their builders in their own right.

### The INBA Frames Architectural Debates

The INBA was founded in 1946 as one of the first acts of President Miguel Alemán Valdes (1946–52). Among its core functions is the promotion and dissemination of the arts—including architecture—to the general public, with an emphasis on both working class and academic publics.<sup>2</sup> At the INBA, architecture stood alongside the other fine arts, which was unusual at the time.<sup>3</sup>

The INBA's role in convening architects and organizing architectural exhibitions soon constituted a pillar of midcentury architectural debates. These discussions are perhaps most visible in the Mexican architectural journals *Arquitectura México*, edited by Mario Pani, and *Espacios: Revista integral de arquitectura y artes plásticas*, edited by the up-and-coming architects Guillermo Rossell de la Lama and Lorenzo Carrasco Ortiz. Both contained many articles exploring what a national Mexican architectural style would look like, frequently decrying foreign influence, but not yet arriving at a conclusive alternative.<sup>4</sup> In *Espacios* in particular, architects and artists attempted to understand the interaction between foreign and Mexican (or "authentic") influences, design and culture, with a focus on establishing an identity for the future. However, calls to merge international modernism with Mexican traditions often elided regional differences within Mexican design and popular architecture.<sup>5</sup>

Since the founding of the INBA, Yañez had worked to catalogue contemporary Mexican architecture. The architecture department established modern architecture as an element of Mexico's cultural heritage, historicizing it even as it continued to evolve. The first public exhibition by Yañez's department was 1950's *Arquitectura contemporánea mexicana* (Mexican Contemporary Architecture), in



Entrance to *Arquitectura popular mexicana* as exhibited at the Palacio de Bellas Artes. Source: Enrique Yáñez, "Una tarea sin precedente," 152

which the curators and other architects involved attempted to define *mexicanidad* in modern architecture as something "authentic" with an "autonomous" origin, distinct from European modernism.<sup>6</sup>

The INBA's 1952 exhibition *Arquitectura popular mexicana* is a follow-up to its 1950 exhibition, shifting the focus from largely urban, modern architecture to "popular architecture"—here meaning architecture from rural or semi-rural areas and found among indigenous or mestizo populations.<sup>7</sup> Whereas, in 1950, indigenous sources for Mexico's modernism were alluded to rather than shown outright, *Arquitectura popular mexicana* offers the opposite experience, displaying solely vernacular architecture, crafted largely by indigenous or mestizo people, while alluding to the modern.

This exhibition first opened on April 21, 1952 at the Sala Nacional of the Palacio de Bellas Artes, the same gallery where *Arquitectura contemporánea mexicana* had been held two years earlier.<sup>8</sup> It was described by its organizers as an important, unprecedented exploration of the topic, and that does seem to be the case. The premise of *Arquitectura popular mexicana*, that of showcasing vernacular architecture within a modernist framework, was prescient, predating other serious, well-known studies on vernacular architecture. In the U.S., Sibyl Moholy-Nagy published her study *Native Genius in Anonymous Architecture in North America* in 1957, while MoMA's seminal exhibition and associated catalogue *Architecture Without Architects* broached the topic in 1964.

Within the Mexican context, this exhibition also reflected a change in the discourse around popular architecture. Whereas earlier architectural and anthropological studies focused on ways of improving housing design in rural and semi-rural areas, positioning vernacular designs as deficient and in opposition to modernity, *Arquitectura popular mexicana* promoted popular aesthetics as an inspiration for Mexican modernist architecture.<sup>9</sup>

The INBA devoted considerable resources to this exhibition, largely because the topic was severely under researched. It commissioned photographs from co-curator Gabriel García Maroto because they did not yet exist in any collections and produced a catalog, albeit published two years later, in 1954.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, García Maroto notes that both time and economic constraints, paired with the broad scope of the exhibition (to display popular architecture from across Mexico), made it difficult to be thorough. Perhaps because of these constraints, the exhibition was not intended to be complete or dogmatic, but rather to showcase the variety of practices across the country and to position popular architecture as something serious, worthy of being studied and discussed.<sup>11</sup>

#### Exhibiting Popular Architecture

The few extant images of the exhibition space suggest that it was organized similarly to the catalog.<sup>12</sup> In the book, the first three and last four sections group together photographs by idea or material—Pre-Architecture, Elemental Buildings and Adobe are the first three categories, while Chiaroscuro, Textures, Applied Sculpture and Looking and Seeing are the final four. The central sections, of which there are 12, are organized by location: Paracho, Michoacán; Izamal, Yucatan; Jerez, Zacatecas; San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas; San Mateo, Oaxaca; Tlacotalpan, Veracruz; San Juan de los Lagos, Jalisco; Campeche, Campeche; Atotonilco, Hidalgo; Santa Mónica, Zacatecas; Atlixco, Puebla; and Atotonilco, Guanajuato.<sup>13</sup> The exhibition also likely contained sections titled Accent of the Popular, Diversity and Contributions.<sup>14</sup> By beginning and ending with elements that are more "universally Mexican," such as the use of adobe or the attention to texture, this exhibition highlights commonalities across regions even as it predominantly presents regional case studies.



Exhibition view from *Arquitectura popular mexicana* as exhibited at the Palacio de Bellas Artes. Note the wall label for "San Cristóbal de Las Casas" on the right. Source: Enrique Yáñez, "Una tarea sin precedente," 155

The wall texts in the exhibition contained the titles of each category and short descriptions, just as the catalog contained brief texts prefacing each thematic section. The texts introduced some defining characteristic of the category, such as the relative poverty of a town, or suggested areas for further study. They were intended to explain why that category was chosen for inclusion in the exhibition.<sup>15</sup>

The overall impression of the exhibition is that of variety, abundance and, to some extent, exoticism. In the exhibition at the Palacio de Bellas Artes, the only one of the two exhibitions for which there appears to be published images,<sup>16</sup> a photograph of a heavily decorated arch adorned the entrance, placed above a large title, with an introductory text nearby.<sup>17</sup> The photographs were mounted in small groups on an assortment of walls, some raised on stilts, others accordion-shaped and placed on platforms of different heights and still others thick and freestanding. This variation in wall style, along with the general layout of the gallery, created many different vantage points; while it is impossible to get a



Exhibition view from *Arquitectura popular mexicana* as exhibited at the Palacio de Bellas Artes, demonstrating the variety of supports in the gallery. Source: Enrique Yáñez, "Una tarea sin precedente," 154



Exhibition view from *Arquitectura popular mexicana* as exhibited at the Palacio de Bellas Artes, with *jacales* in the foreground and baroque churches further back. Source: Enrique Yáñez, "Una tarea sin precedente," 155

sense of all the material at once, moving through the space would create different visual comparisons, particularly because of the angles of the different walls. This arrangement helped establish a general sense of variety, rather than providing a comprehensive account. However, this approach was critiqued by one reviewer as chaotic and poetic rather than practical, structured or instructive; he found in the lack of true organizational principle and in the occasional contradictions between the styles presented an exhibition unable to propose any definitive thesis on popular architecture.<sup>18</sup>

The buildings on display did vary widely and, indeed, were not often organized by any architectural criteria, such as the time period in which they were built, style, materials or a given architectural feature. We get a sense of this in the catalog, in which images of vastly different buildings are placed in proximity to each other: a house made of wooden planks in Huachinango, Puebla (image 23);<sup>19</sup> a *jacal* in Tihuatán, Veracruz (image 31); a stone-walled house with a thatch and tin roof in Mérida, Yucatán (image 47); and colonnades supported by wooden beams (image 58) or plastered columns (image 60) are just a few of the buildings appearing in the introductory section of the catalogue, titled "The Province." Baroque cathedrals, Spanish colonial homes, conical silos and wood and palm frond *jacales* all qualify as popular architecture for García Maroto.<sup>20</sup> There is an emphasis on domestic architecture throughout, though the images are exclusively building facades, rather than interior spaces. This perhaps indicates the limited access granted to García Maroto. This lack of any discernible architectural basis for the exhibition's organization may be due in part to García Maroto's background as a painter rather than architect, but it nonetheless shapes the lessons the exhibition can offer.

#### Popular Architecture as Architecture, or Something Else?

The vague aestheticization of popular architecture suggests that these buildings are useful in terms of inspiring plastic forms, rather than as buildings per se. García Maroto includes no floorplans, no information about why specific buildings were featured, no insights from the builders and no information about how the buildings might be taking advantage of or responding to climate or geography.<sup>21</sup> Rather than emphasizing these buildings as discrete structures, García Maroto highlights the aesthetic landscape in which these structures exist. García Maroto asserts that he "tried to give emphasis to the urbanistic

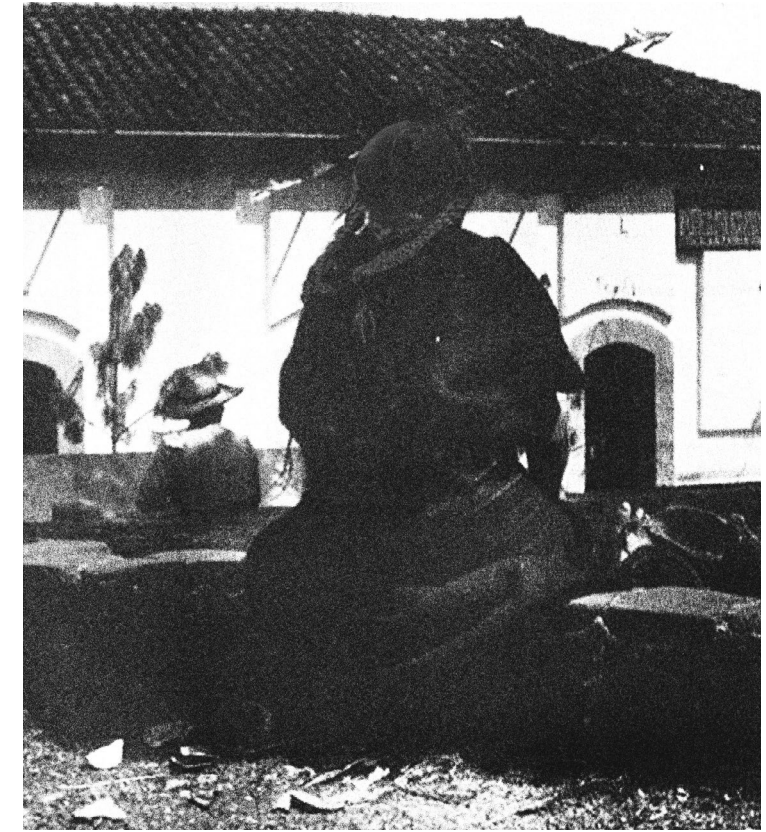
sense of space," and photographs of plazas, cacti, street scenes and sculptural details do just that. In doing so, he suggests that vernacular buildings cannot be decoupled from their physical locations because they are tied to specific communities, climates and geographies.<sup>22</sup> His captions are also impressionistic, with phrases like "The window" (image 135), "Quiet street" (image 142) or "Environment" (image 196) providing the only information about an image.

García Maroto tellingly refers to himself as a "very specialized anthropologist," attempting to identify the popular so that its influence could be detected in new, unexpected places, presumably in Mexico's developing contemporary architecture.<sup>23</sup> García Maroto's descriptions distance himself from those populations responsible for this architecture, perhaps in part because he was a Spanish immigrant to Mexico and there were vast class disparities between him and the populations he depicted. But this idea of García Maroto as a "specialized anthropologist" also carries on the legacy of post-revolutionary anthropology, which aimed to understand, define and validate Mexico's indigenous populations as a critical element of a new national identity, while also speculating about how these populations could be better integrated into the mestizo majority.

To this end, some of the photographs in the exhibition focus on the non-architectural or the anthropological. People make regular appearances in his images. Among the first images in the book is a woman's back, her braids becoming the focal point, although she sits in front of a strikingly white building (image 5). Images like this emphasize the environment and the people that shape the architecture as much as the architecture itself; the buildings cannot be separated from their contexts or populaces and therefore can themselves be viewed as a sort of anthropological evidence.

In the style of his photography, García Maroto further removes his exhibition from the conventions of architectural discourse, building on the lack of structure or mention of specific architectural features, styles or histories. In the INBA's previous exhibition on contemporary architecture, all buildings were shown closely cropped, empty of people and largely decontextualized from their physical locations. In contrast, the exhibition of popular architecture included a range of image types: close-up shots of ornaments, isolated full-frame buildings and ambient images that give a sense of the environment, including photographs of people.

While not standard architectural scholarship, García Maroto's approach is also distinct from that of standard anthropology: it is more impressionistic and less systematic. By comparison, Manuel Gamio's 1922 multi-volume anthropological study *La Población del Valle de Teotihuacán*, an important anthropological text, includes multiple detailed, heavily illustrated sections on the region's architecture, structured by period (pre-Hispanic, colonial and contemporary).<sup>24</sup> The section on contemporary architecture, which is essentially contemporary vernacular architecture, includes floorplans, interior images, descriptions of construction techniques and information about how residents use their



A woman's braids from *Arquitectura popular de México*. The caption reads, "Woman at the market, San Cristóbal de Las Casas." Source: Gabriel García Maroto and Enrique Yáñez, *Arquitectura popular de México*, 20. Photograph: Gabriel García Maroto

spaces. The authors analyze specific buildings, naming their owners, who are also understood to be the builders; this makes the link to individual people more concrete.<sup>25</sup> García Maroto's less rigorous approach both shifts the focus from buildings as structures to buildings as somewhat vague examples of culture and, at the same time, pushes the study of these buildings out of the realm of architecture and history and into the realm of aesthetics and the plastic arts.

García Maroto's exhibition is perhaps most profound, intentionally or not, in that the images place these buildings in the present; they are not simply artifacts of past civilizations. In one image, a donkey waits below Coca-Cola and Pepsi signs, confirming that these architectural forms and the ways of life they signify coexist with the growing consumer culture (image 15). Whereas other contemporary discourses on popular architecture implied the backwardness and primitiveness of the communities living in those structures, García Maroto's images confirm that modernity, or at least key elements of it, had arrived.<sup>26</sup>

#### Defining *Lo Popular* in Service of the Contemporary

Two ideas presented in the exhibition's texts are central to understanding the motivations behind and perceived function of *Arquitectura popular mexicana*. One is that there is an ongoing search for an authentic, organic Mexican architecture and the other is that this might come from knowledge of the vernacular practices of this culturally diverse nation. What sets

A donkey waits outside of a shop in *Arquitectura popular de México*. The caption reads, "Street in Ario de Rosales, Michoacán." Source: Gabriel García Maroto and Enrique Yáñez, *Arquitectura popular de México*, 24. Photograph: Gabriel García Maroto

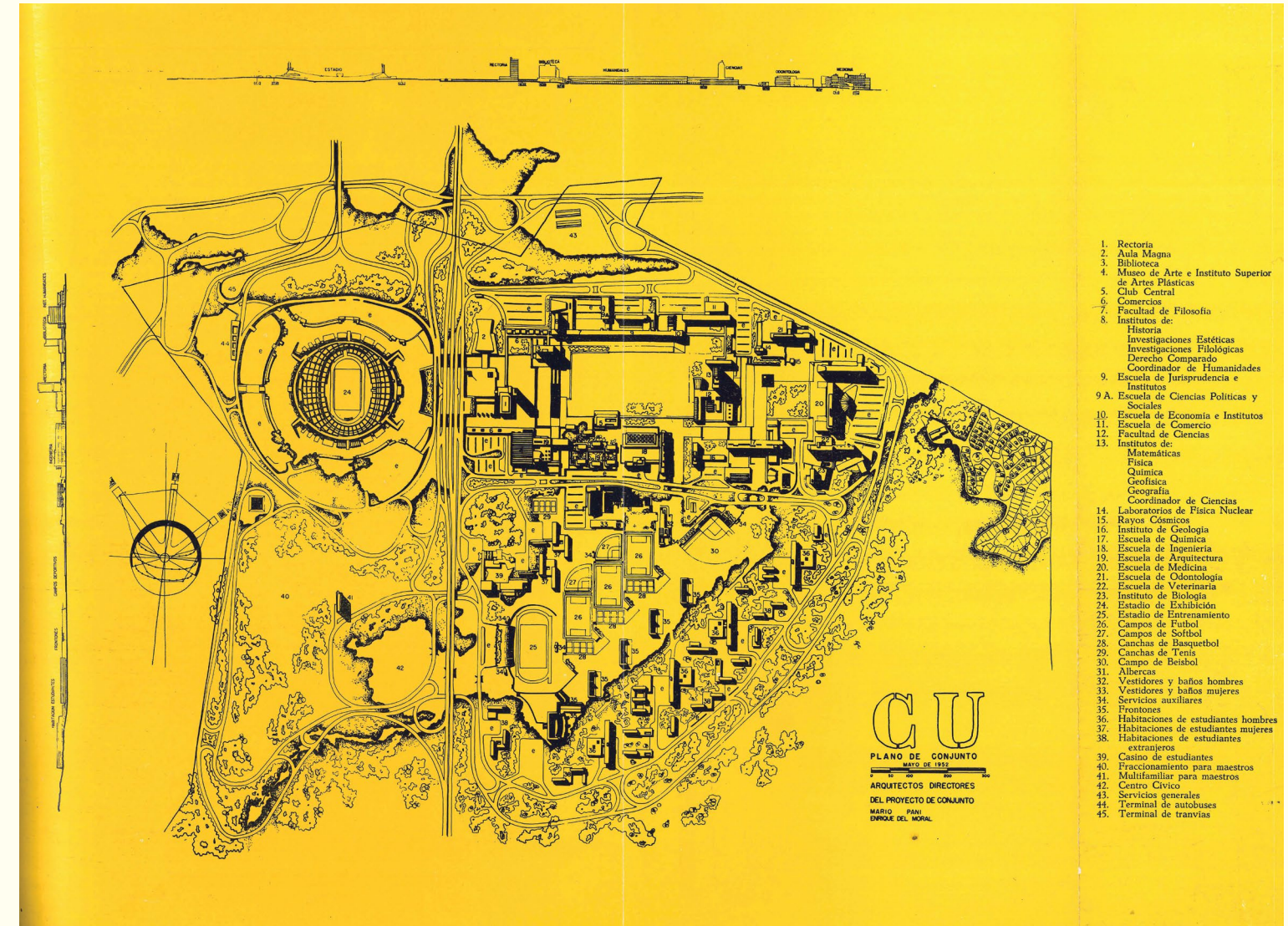


this particular formulation apart from similar narratives of Mexican architecture at the time is that it pulls not only from ancient architectural forms, but also from buildings created and maintained by living populations. This idea participates in a changing meaning of *mestizaje* and folk culture.

"Popular architecture" is a critical term and idea in the exhibition, and yet it was never clearly defined in its texts. In an article on the exhibition by García Maroto in *Espacios*, published in October 1952, during the second iteration of the exhibition, the first section is titled "The Concept of the Popular." However, García Maroto defines popular architecture quite generally: "The popular in architecture begins and manifests itself in the concrete will to realize, through minimal and individual means, in the available area, a 'different' and adequate dwelling, to a certain extent, for the necessity and taste of its realizer."<sup>27</sup> The person responsible for shaping their dwelling is referred to as a *realizador* (realizer/executor) rather than a designer, artisan or architect. The concept of people, without special training, shaping and defining their physical surroundings to suit their desires and needs implicitly positions popular architecture as innate and instinctive.<sup>28</sup> For this reason, García Maroto and Yáñez are able to use popular architecture to define a vision of a specifically Mexican architectural identity. García Maroto makes this connection clear by commenting, "valuable help will be found [in this exhibition] by those who strive to find suitable paths that will lead us organically 'towards an architecture of our own' (*hacia una arquitectura nuestra*)."<sup>29</sup>

For Yáñez, the concern is how to ensure that Mexican modernist architecture is authentically Mexican.<sup>30</sup> He writes that, although technical advancements come from abroad and certainly impact the formal qualities of architecture, they "must be accompanied [sic] by a desire of an interior knowledge of ourselves . . . to integrate them in the process of architectural creation."<sup>31</sup> He argues here for a synthesis of European functionalism with a Mexican specificity, pulled from the nation's popular aesthetics and heritage. Yáñez explicitly states that, through this exhibition and the work of his department, he hopes that architects and historians will be able to analyze the values of popular production in order to apply them to modern architecture. This goal aligns closely with García Maroto's straightforward aim "to stimulate Mexican architects through popular culture."<sup>32</sup>

The importance of popular architecture in the service of Mexico's unique contemporary architectural expressions, domestically and internationally, is emphasized by the exhibition at CU. After a first run at the Palacio de Bellas Artes in downtown Mexico City, *Arquitectura popular mexicana* was remounted and exhibited at CU for the VIII Pan-American Congress of Architects, which took place on the unfinished campus from October 18 to 25, 1952.<sup>33</sup> The event's numerous exhibitions, including



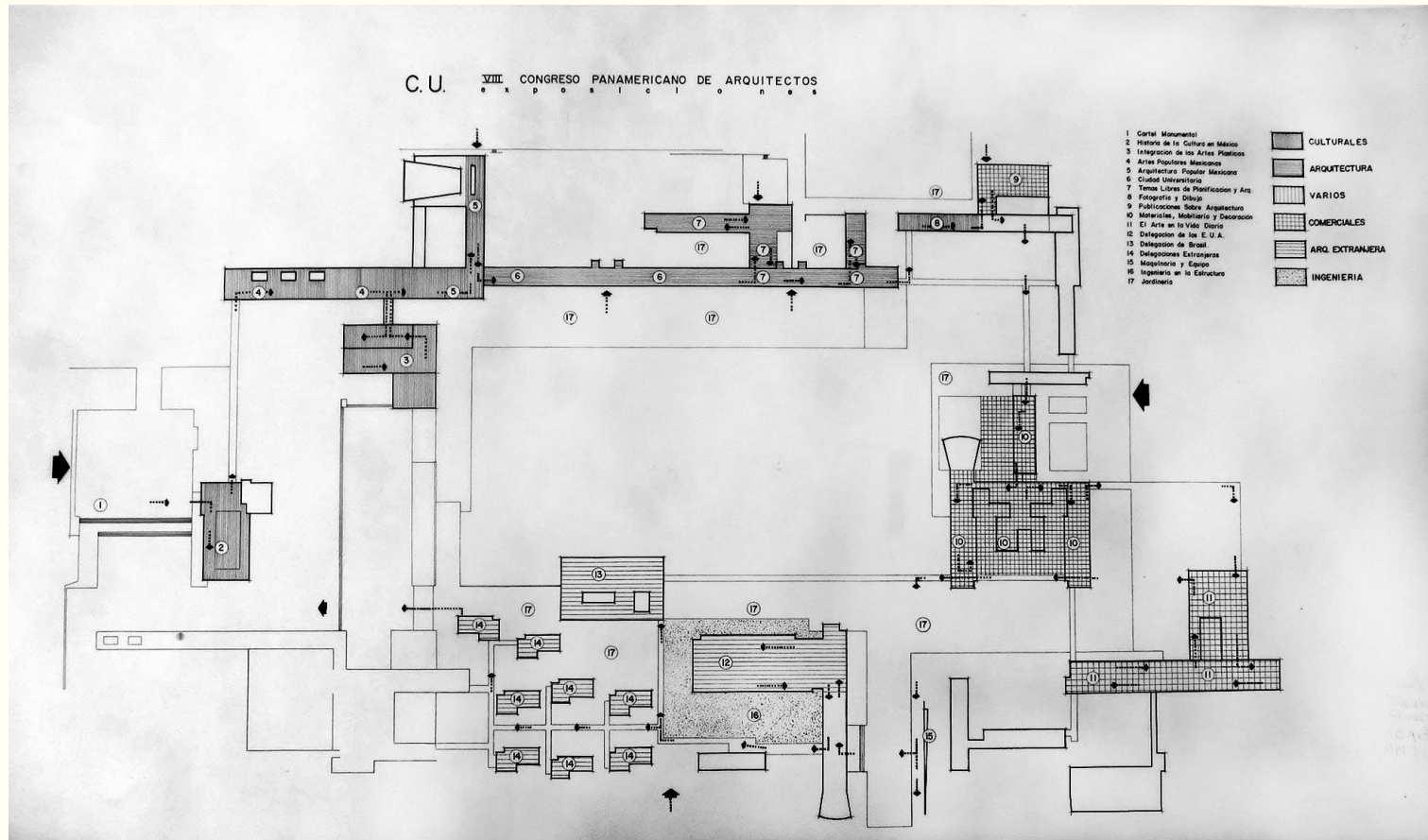
Map of Ciudad Universitaria campus. Source: "Proyecto de Conjunto de la Ciudad Universitaria," *Arquitectura México* 39 (September 1952), 217

*Arquitectura popular mexicana*, *El arte en la vida diaria* and the multinational display of architecture from across the Americas, surrounded CU's main plaza.<sup>34</sup> These exhibitions became part of the campus, which itself was on display. With the prevalence of glass in these buildings, the exhibitions would have been visible from both the inside and the outside, allowing the exhibitions to merge into the experience and image of the campus for the event's attendees.<sup>35</sup>

CU was a symbol of Mexico's modernization and promise and was still under construction even as the event took place. Carlos Lazo, the lead architect of CU, was also the president of this event, and CU was a centerpiece of Mexico's image-making within this hemispheric professional community. From the symbolism of its location on the lava fields of the ancient Xitle volcano to the pre-Hispanic inspiration visible in certain buildings, such as Alberto T. Arai's handball courts or the use of native materials in Juan O'Gorman's library, the campus linked contemporary architecture to Mexico's storied past.

CU also symbolized an integration of *mexicanidad* with internationalism. The campus was located along the Pan-American Highway, prompting Lazo to proclaim it the crossroads where Anglo-American and Indo-Latin cultures would meet and, more importantly, where they would be synthesized.<sup>36</sup> This ethos extended to the university's educational aims, which were described as "Mexican in [their] essence and universal in [their] horizons."<sup>37</sup> The importance of CU was so great that the event organizers disregarded the fact it was still rather remote; it was not efficiently connected to the city center and the surrounding villages did not have the capacity to house the attendees.<sup>38</sup>

While CU was the showpiece, the presence of the popular architecture exhibition furthers its meaning. *Arquitectura popular mexicana*, number five on the exhibition plan, was sandwiched between the



Plan of the exhibitions around CU's central plaza. Source: Documental/Caja 140/188168/5 exp. 5, Fondo Carlos Lazo, AGN

exhibition on popular or folk art on its left and the exhibition on CU itself to its right.<sup>39</sup> An exhibition titled simply *Integración de las Artes Plásticas* (Integration of the Plastic Arts) is accessible through the popular arts and architecture exhibition.<sup>40</sup> Curiously, this exhibition on popular architecture is labeled as a “cultural” rather than “architectural” display on the map’s legend, perhaps again tying it to García Maroto’s idea of the exhibition as an anthropological rather than architectural undertaking.<sup>41</sup> It exists in the same exhibition category as popular arts and plastic integration, but not as the development of CU. In its placement and its classification as a cultural display, the popular architecture exhibition acts as a bridge between vernacular culture, both in art and architecture, and the modern campus as site and symbol.

This placement says as much about the status of popular architecture as it does about the ways the organizers wanted to position CU and its image. The campus, which involved over 150 architects, engineers and consultants, aimed to achieve the kind of organic, Mexican architecture with explicit reference to Mexico’s indigenous past that García Maroto hoped his exhibition would inspire. Buildings attempted to integrate modernism and functionalism with Mexican tradition through materials, the plastic arts and popular architectural motifs. That the event’s programmers intended viewers to move through the popular architecture exhibition before experiencing the exhibition on CU demonstrates the perceived value of popular architecture for contextualizing Mexico’s contemporary architectural production, particularly the newly-built campus.

An essay on CU in a government-sponsored but independently published book, released the same day as the inauguration of the campus in November 1952, proclaims: “The past and the present, projected into the future, form the ideal of contemporary Mexican architecture.”<sup>42</sup> This aspiration is embodied in the architecture of the university, its literal incompleteness and in the narrative created around it, in part through this exhibition on popular architecture. In this formulation relating time and contemporary architecture, however, vernacular architecture occupies an unusual time; the exhibition’s focus on the living populations responsible for this architecture demonstrates how it represents both the present and the ancient past through the association of the vernacular with indigenous and mestizo populations.

*Arquitectura popular mexicana* diverges from and complicates many of the narratives of Mexican modernism that were being established through journals and other publications during this period. By focusing on and valorizing an innate ability of poor and rural or semi-rural Mexicans to design their spaces, this exhibition worked to pull Mexico’s diverse population into the discourse of modernism. While the exhibition may highlight and exoticize underdevelopment outside of Mexico City, a situation that would have been quite visible to congress attendees moving between downtown and CU, it also suggests that underdevelopment does not disqualify these populations from modernity. This intervenes in the then-contemporary discourse on *mexicanidad*, a conversation which was being held at the highest levels of government, by tying architecture’s modernist influences to both pre-Hispanic civilization and the living rural populations as the heirs of that ancient past. Nonetheless, with anonymous, uncredited builders and photographs that vaguely suggest the value of popular architecture instead of celebrating individual buildings or features, this exhibition presents the popular as merely a source for Mexico’s developing urban modernism and as context for understanding CU; the buildings and their builders are not allowed to stand on their own.

#### Notes

- Both the Porset and the Yañez and García Maroto exhibitions had first been shown in April of that year at the Museo Nacional de Artes Plásticas, housed at the Palacio de Bellas Artes in downtown Mexico City. García Maroto was a painter, rather than a photographer or architect, and had emigrated to Mexico from Spain in 1927. It is unclear how he came to be the primary researcher for this project, though Yañez mentioned García Maroto’s artistic sensibilities and ardent belief in Mexico’s place at the vanguard of artistic innovation. Gabriel García Maroto and Enrique Yañez, *Arquitectura popular de México* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, 1954), 12.
- “Ley que crea el Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes y Literatura,” December 31, 1946, [http://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/193\\_171215.pdf](http://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/193_171215.pdf).
- The INBA itself has acknowledged that its architecture department was unique because, around the world, governmental fine arts departments did not include architecture, which was frequently treated as a lesser art form. Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, *25 años del Palacio de Bellas Artes* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, 1959), 3.
- To some extent, these magazines represent different architectural discourses. Pani’s *Arquitectura México* was dedicated to presenting architecture from around the world. *Espacios* had close ties to INBA and many INBA employees regularly contributed, including Yañez, Arai (before he became head of the Architecture Department) and Clara Porset.
- This is apparent in architectural texts such as Alberto T. Arai’s *Caminos para una arquitectura mexicana* (1952).
- Enrique Guerrero, “Introducción,” in José Villagrán García, *Panorama de 50 años de arquitectura mexicana contemporánea: 1900-1950* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, 1952), 5. For more on this exhibition, see Zoe Goldman, *Leading America through Local Modernism: Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes’ (Mexico) Exhibitions and Publications on Architecture, 1950-1952*, Thesis (Chicago: School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 2017).
- The term “popular architecture,” as used at the time, was not well defined and was often interchangeable with vernacular architecture, meaning architecture that is regionally specific and built by those without formal architectural training. In the catalog, Yañez remarks that definitions of “popular” are “so vague” that its presence can be felt in all kinds of buildings. See García Maroto and Enrique Yañez, *Arquitectura popular de México*, 12. The term “vernacular architecture” does not appear in Mexican architectural writing until the late 1950s. For a discussion of this term in the context of the prominent architect Alberto T. Arai’s writings of the late 1940s through late 1950s, see Catherine Ettinger McNulty, “Alberto T. Arai, modernidad y arquitectura tradicional,” in Elisa Drago Quaglia, ed., *Leer a Alberto T. Arai: Reflexiones, ensayos y textos* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2019), 439–64.
- Justino Fernandez, “Catalogo de las exposiciones de arte en 1952,” *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas* sup. 21 (June 1953), 14, doi:10.22201/iiie.18703062e.1953.sup1.2455.
- For a discussion of Arai’s contemporaneous essays on vernacular architecture, which illuminate this changing view, see Catherine Ettinger McNulty, “Alberto T. Arai,”

- 439–64. Esther McCoy’s 1951 article “Architecture in Mexico” may also be a sign of shifting discourse; she points to the aesthetics of “the popular house,” which, in its stripped-down form, is similar to the International Style. She specifically mentions Luis Barragán as being influenced by popular architecture. See Esther McCoy, “Architecture in Mexico,” *Arts and Architecture* 68- 8 (August 1951), 27.
- Gabriel García Maroto and Enrique Yáñez, *Arquitectura popular de México*, 12. Unfortunately, there are limited archival records on this curatorial process. The catalog and exhibition have slightly different titles: *Arquitectura popular mexicana* is the title of the exhibition and *Arquitectura popular de México* is the title of the book.
  - Gabriel García Maroto, “Arquitectura Popular Mexicana,” *Espacios: Revista Integral de Arquitectura y Artes Plásticas* 11/12 (October 1952); and Gabriel García Maroto, *Promoción de México: Caminos hacia su integración* (Mexico City: Guías Mexicanas, Enciclopedia Nacional, 1958).
  - There appear to only be six images of this exhibition published. See Enrique Yáñez, “Una tarea sin precedente: Seis años del Departamento de Arquitectura,” *Mexico en el Arte* 12 (November 30, 1952): 150–162. The catalog is unlikely to exactly match the contents of the exhibition; see note 14 below.
  - This list makes it clear that northern states were not represented. Although the catalog contains a brief explanation of its structure and contents, labeled “20 Monographs,” there appear to only be 19 body chapters. Confusingly, the body of “20 Monographs” says that there are eighteen themes, suggesting perhaps that “Looking and Seeing” and the introductory essay may bring the tally to 20.
  - (*Acento de lo popular, Diversidad, Aportaciones*) These three section titles are listed in reviews of the exhibition. It is not entirely clear whether these sections in the exhibition were renamed for the catalog or whether their contents were moved to other sections of the book. Brief descriptive texts from these sections of the exhibition are found in a review in *Arquitectura México*, which also mentions six thematic categories, suggesting that these section titles, and possibly contents, were indeed changed in the catalog. “Notas y Noticias,” *Arquitectura México* 38 (June 1952), 192. See also José Rogelio Álvarez, “Una exposición deleznable,” *Mañana* 46 471 (Sep. 6, 1952), 71. However, in García Maroto’s *Espacios* article, there are three seemingly corresponding sections titled *Acento de lo Popular*, *Expressive Diversity* and *Recreative Capacity* (*Acento de lo popular. La diversidad expresiva, Capacidad recreadora*). It’s not clear what accounts for the differences among the titles in García Maroto’s article and the reviews in *Arquitectura México* and *Mañana*.
  - Gabriel García Maroto and Enrique Yáñez, *Arquitectura popular de México*, 50.
  - Six photographs of the exhibition appear in Enrique Yáñez, “Una tarea sin precedente.” A few of these same images were republished in García Maroto’s book *Promoción de México*, as well as in a review of the exhibition in the September 6, 1952 issue of *Mañana*.
  - While it’s unclear precisely what text was displayed on the walls, it may be similar to that included in the exhibition review in *Arquitectura Mexico*, which presented a large amount of text written by the INBA. The text may also be similar to García Maroto’s essays in *Espacios* and the catalog text, which are very similar to each other. “Notas y Noticias,” *Arquitectura Mexico* 38 (June 1952), 192.
  - Jose Rogelio Alvarez, “Una exposición deleznable,” *Mañana* 46 471 (September 6, 1952), 70–72.
  - These image numbers come from the catalog captions. Pages with images are unpaginated in the book.
  - The first section, “Pre-Architecture,” focuses largely on *jacales*, which had often been dismissed in other studies of Mexican architecture. Although García Maroto, too, leaves them to the side to some extent by writing that they “anticipate our [Mexican] architecture,” even calling them “miserable,” their inclusion as aesthetic inspirations and as contemporary manifestations of vernacular buildings nevertheless must not be overlooked. For a discussion on *jacales* in midcentury Mexican architectural discourse, see Catherine Ettinger McEnulty, “Alberto T. Arai.”
  - Many of these critiques appear in Alvarez, “Una exposición deleznable.”
  - Enrique Yáñez, “Presentation,” in *Arquitectura popular de México*, 12.
  - Gabriel García Maroto and Enrique Yáñez, *Arquitectura popular de México*, 18.
  - Gamio’s regional study took place over two years with the assistance of forty researchers, specialists and even artists. See Ángeles González Gamio, “Manuel Gamio: Padre de la Antropología Mexicana,” in Manuel Gamio, *La Población del Valle de Teotihuacán: Representativa de las que habitan las regiones rurales del Distrito Federal y de los estados de Hidalgo, Puebla, México y Tlaxcala*, Tomo I, Volumen Primero (Mexico City: Secretaría de Educación Pública, Secretaría de Cultura, and Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2017), 18. The contemporary architecture section in Gamio’s book was written by the architect Ignacio Marquina, a specialist in pre-Hispanic architecture.
  - Manuel Gamio, *La Población Del Valle de Teotihuacán: Representativa de las que habitan las regiones rurales del Distrito Federal y de los estados de Hidalgo, Puebla, México y Tlaxcala*, Tomo II, Volumen Segundo (Mexico City: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1922), 579–94.
  - Kathryn O’Rourke disagrees, contending that the majority of images contain no symbols of modern life and that García Maroto tries to “exclude or diminish advertising, cars and other elements considered emblems of modern life.” While perhaps minimized, the inability to erase the visual signs of modernity points to coexistence. Kathryn O’Rourke, “Pasado y futuro de la arquitectura mexicana de mediados del siglo XX,” in Catherine Ettinger, ed., *Imaginario de modernidad y tradición: Arquitectura del siglo XX en América Latina* (Mexico City: Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 2015), 27–28.
  - Gabriel García Maroto, “Arquitectura popular mexicana.” Translation mine. A similar sentiment, slightly revised, can also be found in Gabriel García Maroto and Enrique Yáñez, *Arquitectura popular de México*, 202, 213. The English translation in the catalog reads: “The actively popular . . . begins and reveals itself through the conscious or unconscious will to carry out, through its own means, within an elected or possible zone, a *differentiated* dwelling-place, that is adequate to a certain point and conforms to the needs and taste of its executor.”
  - Yáñez even uses the term “innate” in describing the materials presented and notes that they focused on uneducated builders. Gabriel García Maroto and Enrique Yáñez, *Arquitectura popular de México*, 12.
  - Gabriel García Maroto, “Arquitectura popular mexicana.”
  - Enrique Yáñez, “Presentation,” in Gabriel García Maroto and Enrique Yáñez, *Arquitectura popular de México*, 11.
  - Enrique Yáñez, “Presentation,” in Gabriel García Maroto and Enrique Yáñez, *Arquitectura popular de México*, 11.
  - Enrique Yáñez, “Presentation,” in Gabriel García Maroto and Enrique Yáñez, *Arquitectura popular de México*, 14.
  - These dates are taken from the official program. After registration, the first official activity was a tour of the exhibitions at Ciudad Universitaria, demonstrating the importance the organizers placed on this aspect of the event. “VIII Congreso Panamericano de Arquitectos: La planificación y la arquitectura en los problemas sociales de América, Programa y Reglamento,” 1952, Documental/Caja 87/188104/5 exp. 5, Fondo Carlos Lazo, Archivo General de la Nación (AGN). For a more thorough discussion of the importance of this exhibition for the international audience, see Zoe Goldman, *Leading America through Local Modernism*.
  - This plan was also reproduced in one of the many booklets produced for the event. This booklet largely reprises the *Espacios* invitation and the outline of the event published in issue eight. This map was not included there. Rather, it appears it was a handbill distributed to attendees. Carlos Lazo and Raul Cacho, “VIII Congreso Panamericano de Arquitectos: La planificación y la arquitectura en los problemas sociales de América, la Casa del Arquitecto Ave. Veracruz, Numero 24,” n.d., Libros y folletos/caja 01/188184/32 reg. 32, Fondo Carlos Lazo, AGN.
  - Roberto Vallerino, *Museums: 1952-1994, Pedro Ramirez Vázquez* (Mexico City: Artes Gráficas Panorama, 1995), 212.

- Carlos Lazo, *Pensamiento y destino de la Ciudad Universitaria de México* (Mexico City: Imprenta universitaria, 1952), 9–10.
- Raul Carranca Trujillo, “Valoración de La Ciudad Universitaria,” in *México: Realización y esperanza* (Mexico City: Editorial Superación, 1952), 315.
- Salvador Lizárraga Sánchez and Cristina López Uribe poetically describe the journey participants would have taken, crossing through Mexico City’s chaotic and contradictory urban landscape to reach a “desert of volcanic rock,” out of which the half-built CU inexplicably appeared. See Salvador Lizárraga Sánchez and Cristina López Uribe, eds., *Living CU 60 years: Ciudad Universitaria UNAM 1954-2014* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2014), 19-20.2014 CU was also an important symbol not only of modernization, but also of *mestizaje*. See Carlos Lazo, *Pensamiento y destino*.
- Curiously, whereas at the Palacio de Bellas Artes, it was Porset’s *El arte en la vida diaria* placed opposite the folk art gallery and *Arquitectura popular mexicana* that had the larger, more independent space on the second floor, here Porset’s exhibition is placed by itself in the chemistry building.
- The exhibition on “plastic integration” appears to have included images of ancient architecture, organized by the architects Ricardo de Robina and Ignacio Marquina, the architect who had worked alongside Gamio in the 1920s. “VIII Congreso Panamericano de Arquitectos: La planificación y la arquitectura en los problemas sociales de América, Boletín No. 6, 24 de Octubre,” 1952, Documental/Caja 87/188104/3 exp. 3, Fondo Carlos Lazo, AGN. Pedro Ramírez Vázquez, the architect for the National Museum of Anthropology and one of the architects of Ciudad Universitaria, designed the exhibition on the integration of the plastic arts. Roberto Vallerino, *Museums*, 34.
- This designation is visible in the key for the plan of the exhibitions around CU’s central plaza (image on page 116), where different kinds of exhibitions are given different patterns.
- Enrique Aragón Echegaray, “Arquitectura, símbolo permanente,” in *México: Realización y esperanza* (Mexico City: Editorial Superación, 1952), 83.

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