

LUIS E. CARRANZA *and* FERNANDO LUIZ LARA

Foreword by Jorge Francisco Liernur

MODERN ARCHITECTURE IN LATIN AMERICA

ART, TECHNOLOGY, AND UTOPIA





Albin, Vasconcelos, Elizondo, Casa Roja, Valle de Bravo, Mexico, 1991–1992.

box), is equally monolithic in its use of exposed reinforced concrete, yet its character is more subtle—akin to the work of Japanese architect Tadao Ando—and is emphasized through its contrast to a number of materials.

The economic situation and the emerging process of cultural globalization allowed a new generation of architects to emerge, experiment, and operate within these new prospects. So, while Barragán or neo-Aztec monumentality continued to be commissioned primarily by long-standing institutions and governmental entities, a new and diverse type of clientele actively sought these new works as an emblematic architecture to represent it. Works like Luis Vicente Flores's Centro Cultural X'Teresa (Mexico City, 1993–1994) or Isaac Broid's Centro de la Imagen (Mexico City, 1993–1994) made somewhat unprecedented but radically modern insertions of steel, glass, and concrete that contrasted with the existing historical structures in and around Mexico City's historical center. Others, like AVE (Enrique Albin, Fernando Vasconcelos, Alejandro Elizondo), experimented more freely with a wide range of historical precedents. The Saltiel House (Mexico City,

1990–1992) can be seen as a combination of standard Corbusian elements—horizontal windows and *pilotis*—around a central patio space yet is linked to the present through the presence of a large parabolic antenna on the roof of a protruding tower. Casa Roja (Valle de Bravo, 1991–1992), through the use of long horizontal masonry walls defining the landscape, is a rearticulation of the canonical Mies van der Rohe brick country house (1922). The central space of the house, however, is defined by a clay-tiled roof structure, clay-tile floors, and exposed heavy wooden rafters. Fernando Vasconcelos would continue this reconceptualization and readaptation of past forms in a more radical way. The design for the expansion of the Colegio Americano (Mexico City, 2007) references the character and rhythmic patterns of the prismatic glass International-style apartment buildings of Mario Pani and uses a variant of the Mathias Goeritz sculpture for El Eco, *La serpiente* (1953), as its structure.

However, it was the result of a diverse group of national and international publications and prizes tha



Nuevo Espíritu (Fernando Vasconcelos), Colegio Americano, Mexico City, 2007.

led to the popularization, dissemination, and further commissioning of new Mexican architecture in the last decades of the twentieth century. The magazine *Arquitectura* (1991–1996) became a central mechanism for presenting the work of its editorial board and close colleagues to a broader international audience. Put together by Kalach, Broid, Adriana León, Enrique Norten, Flores, and the historian Humberto Ricalde, and modeled primarily on the contemporary Spanish magazine *El Croquis*, the journal contextualized the work happening in Mexico within a broader international agenda by publishing works and writings from architects outside of Mexico. *Arquine* followed it, starting in 1997. Led by the Catalan architect Miquel Adrià, this self-described “international architecture magazine” continued the trend of presenting the high-quality work being developed in Mexico in the context of contemporary international architecture, criticism, and historiographical concerns. *Arquine* developed into a franchise that sponsors international competitions and publishes multilingual books primarily on Mexican architecture. The publication fervor at the end of the 1990s included, to name a few, Adrià’s

Mexico 90s: A Contemporary Architecture (Gustavo Gili, 1996), a special number of the Italian magazine *Lotus* dedicated to Mexican architecture (1996), coverage in the Spanish journal *2G* on a new generation of Latin American architecture (1998), and issue number 2 of the North American magazine *Praxis* (2001) devoted to the same topic. This focus had its apotheosis when Enrique Norten and Bernardo Gómez Pimienta received the 1998 award of the Mies van der Rohe Prize for Latin American Architecture for their work for TELEVISIA.

FURTHER READING

- Adrià, Alberto Kalach.
 ———, *Mexico 90s: A Contemporary Architecture*.
 Albin, Vasconcelos, Elizondo.
 Ingersoll, *TEN Arquitectos: Enrique Norten, Bernardo Gómez-Pimienta*.
 “Mexico City: Projects from the Megacity.”

This is the most comprehensive theory and practice (and even built-environment policy) survey of twentieth-century Latin American architecture ever attempted. I believe it will be a very important contribution to the field. . . . The book contains an erudite and discriminating collection of writings and projects.

—RAFAEL LONGORIA, ACSA DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR OF ARCHITECTURE, UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON, AND COEDITOR OF *AULA: ARCHITECTURE AND URBANISM IN LAS AMÉRICAS*

It is no small task to write a history of modern architecture of the vast region known as Latin America and the Caribbean. . . . This project required collecting and organizing the information currently scattered in a series of books and journals, with some areas well represented (Mexico and Brazil in the lead) and others barely documented (Central America and Bolivia, for example). Not only is this book commendable, it is also timely, given the growing interest in the region on the part of scholars, professionals, and educators.

—PATRICIA MORGADO, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ARCHITECTURE, NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY

The works and ideas [in *Modern Architecture in Latin America*] can find their place in the future construction of a truly global history of modern architecture—a history that will not only include these examples and processes, but also one whose own canonical structure will be understood as a result of that multiplicity of actors and signals. To move toward this new history, the book that Carranza and Lara have so carefully constructed and so adequately articulated will no doubt be an excellent instrument.

—JORGE FRANCISCO LIERNUR, FROM THE FOREWORD

Joe R. and Teresa Lozano Long Series in Latin American and Latino Art and Culture

Modern Architecture in Latin America: Art, Technology, and Utopia is an introductory text on the issues, polemics, and works that represent the complex processes of political, economic, and cultural modernization in the twentieth century. The number and types of projects varied greatly from country to country, but, as a whole, the region produced a significant body of architecture that has never before been presented in a single volume in any language. *Modern Architecture in Latin America* is the first comprehensive history of this important production.

Designed as a survey and focused on key examples/paradigms arranged chronologically from 1903 to 2003, this volume covers a myriad of countries; historical, social, and political conditions; and projects/developments that range from small houses to urban plans to architectural movements. The book is structured so that it can be read in a variety of ways—as a historically developed narrative of modern architecture in Latin America, as a country-specific chronology, or as a treatment of traditions centered on issues of art, technology, or utopia. This structure allows readers to see the development of multiple and parallel branches/historical strands of architecture and, at times, their interconnections across countries. The authors provide a critical evaluation of the movements presented in relationship to their overall goals and architectural transformations.

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