

Luis Barragán. *Cómo deben desarrollarse las grandes ciudades modernas.* 1958-'69

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For over twenty years Luis Barragan engaged himself on designing and improving urban development, thus getting involved on the creation of suburban areas of the city, in direct symbiosis with natural environments and aimed at a particular group of users: the emergent urban bourgeoisie.

The project was based on decentralization and on spreading the population as widely as possible at the city's borders. His ideal was based on low-density urban areas, with properties all surrounded by wide green spaces, thus keeping the privacy of family's life. Such places should have had collective symbolic places and monumental reference points, all shared by its inhabitants: areas, or perhaps refuges, in which old traditions like horse riding and Mexican landscapes were mixed with modern habits and achievements.

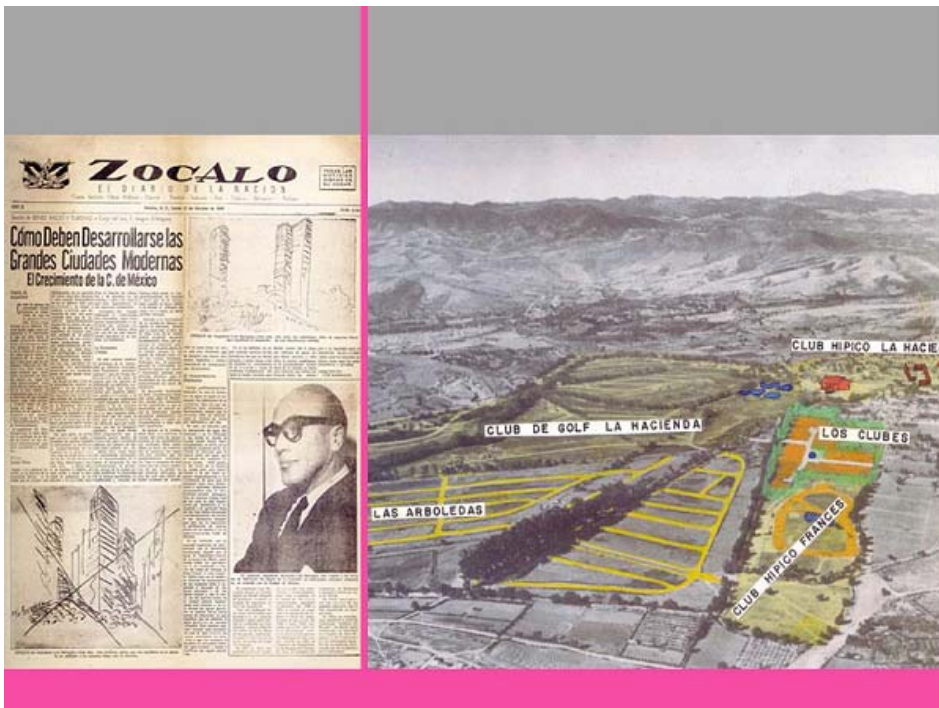


Image 1: Luis Barragán, *Cómo deben desarrollarse las grandes ciudades modernas*, in "Zocalo. El Diario de la Nación", 1959.

This mixture of old and new supposed to be the answer to the irrational growth of the city, to the change of values in modern society and standardization of life that began at the end of World War two.

Making reference to geographical and cultural traditions of people or nation meant fighting the uncertainties and the problems linked with the overwhelming growth of Mexico City but at the same time it meant the making of a new model in which Barragan integrated nature and man, a varied townscape with new symbols and new reference points in order to fight places' loss of value.



Image 2: Luis Barragán, Fuente del Bebedero, Las Arboledas, Mexico City, 1958-'62

Following his own personal route, the Guadalajara's born architect tried to understand Mexican culture by going on a parallel research of the others followed by many artists from his own country that, in many ways or forms, were trying to discover its identity.

The architect was inspired by Mexico: colours, shapes, buildings and materials were, according to his experience and thoughts, an expression of the local culture to re-approach its own roots that reside "en los pueblos indigenos y en el estado de animo de los habitantes".

However, what emerges is a professional image totally different from the one known in Europe. Barragan was contemporaneously an architect, an urban planner and an entrepreneur; he was his own client in promoting new enterprises about urban expansion. The diversity was also in his working practices: instruments used

in design, his representation's techniques, project stages, realization and promotion methods.

These concepts are the basis of my thesis contents and were developed through a research on two urban developments designed by Barragan between 1958 and 1969: Las Arboledas and Los Clubes (Estado de Mexico).



Image 3: Luis Barragán, Fuente del Campanario, Las Arboledas, Mexico City, 1958-'62

This research was completed in two phases: the first in Turin, by analysing the rising of Barragan within the European and American architectural community, from the early thirties to nowadays. The second at the architect's archive, based on a study on the two specific projects, namely Las Arboledas and Los Clubes, in order to place his work in the international and Mexican architectural panorama, starting from the end of WW2.

The complexity and accuracy of this work has been guaranteed by accurate research on the documentation found at the Barragan Foundation. In Basilea there can be found the architect's own archive and a research within this institute represents a unique opportunity to Italian Scholars for deepen their knowledge on Latin-American architects, best represented by Barragan.

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