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## PUBLIC SPACE AND POETIC LIVING. THE CASE OF MUSEO EXPERIMENTAL EL ECO

### ESPACIO PÚBLICO Y HABITAR POÉTICO. EL CASO DEL MUSEO EXPERIMENTAL EL ECO

### ESPAÇO PÚBLICO E HABITAR POÉTICO. O CASO DO MUSEU EXPERIMENTAL EL ECO



**Figure 0.** Yellow wall-tower.  
Source: Photographs by Alan  
Gerardo Galván de los Santos.

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## RESUMEN

El presente artículo, inscrito en una investigación más amplia en torno al espacio público y el habitar poético, analiza la obra denominada: Museo Experimental El Eco, una de las obras cumbre de la arquitectura moderna en México, donde el espacio arquitectónico participa activamente en la presentación de diversas manifestaciones artísticas y en la experiencia emocional, estética y sensible del público. Obra enclavada en la Colonia San Rafael, Ciudad de México, "El Eco" es proyectado y construido entre los años 1952 y 1953, por Mathias Goeritz, artista plástico de grandes búsquedas, cuya obra va desde el campo de la gráfica a la escultura urbana. Con un gran reconocimiento como artista y una visión crítica de la arquitectura moderna, a Goeritz se le presenta la oportunidad de plasmar en una obra arquitectónica, con escasas condicionantes programáticas, su propia comprensión de la arquitectura, la que a su vez condensa en su famoso manifiesto de la arquitectura emocional. El trabajo presenta un análisis de la espacialidad arquitectónica de la obra referida, centrado en la experiencia del lugar y soportado en la recopilación y estudio de los antecedentes, visitas y recorridos en distintos días al lugar; tomas fotográficas y elaboración de los planos respectivos. Como el gran artista que fue, Goeritz, es capaz con esta obra de abordar la arquitectura como el resultado de la conjunción del vacío y la materia, para que la emoción y las sensaciones del cuerpo en el espacio fluyan, para estructurar el sentido mismo de la creación arquitectónica.

**Palabras clave:** arquitectura emocional, México, habitar poético, espacio público, Mathias Goeritz

## ABSTRACT

This article, inscribed within a broader investigation of public space and poetic living, analyzes Museo Experimental El Eco, one of the masterpieces of modern architecture in Mexico, where the architectural space participates actively in the presentation of diverse artistic manifestations and the public's emotional, aesthetic, and sensitive experience. "El Eco," a project embedded in the San Rafael neighborhood in Mexico City, was designed and built between 1952 and 1953 by Mathias Goeritz, a grand plastic artist whose work ranges from the field of graphics to urban sculpture. With his great recognition as an artist and a critical vision of modern architecture, Goeritz is presented with the opportunity to shape an architectural project with few programmatic constraints, his understanding of architecture, which, in turn, condenses in his famous manifesto of emotional architecture. The article presents an analysis of the architectural spatiality of this work, focused on the experience of the place and supported by the compilation and study of the background information, visits, tours on different days, photographic shots, and preparation of the respective plans. Goeritz, like the great artist he was, is able to approach architecture as the result of the meeting of emptiness and matter so that the body's emotions and sensations in the space flow to structure the very meaning of architectural creation.

**Keywords:** emotional architecture, Mexico, poetic living, public space, Mathias Goeritz

## RESUMO

O presente artigo, parte de uma investigação mais ampla sobre o espaço público e o habitar poético, analisa a obra denominada Museo Experimental El Eco, uma das mais importantes obras da arquitetura moderna do México, na qual o espaço arquitetônico participa ativamente da apresentação de diversas manifestações artísticas e da experiência emocional, estética e sensível do público. Localizado na Colonia (bairro) San Rafael, na Cidade do México, "El Eco" foi projetado e construído entre 1952 e 1953 por Mathias Goeritz, um artista visual destacado por sua ampla pesquisa, cujo trabalho abrange desde a arte gráfica até a escultura urbana. Com grande reconhecimento como artista e uma visão crítica da arquitetura moderna, Goeritz teve a oportunidade de expressar em uma obra arquitetônica, com poucas condições programáticas, sua própria compreensão da arquitetura, que condensou em seu famoso manifesto da arquitetura emocional. O trabalho apresenta uma análise da espacialidade arquitetônica da referida obra, centrada na experiência do local e apoiada na compilação e no estudo dos antecedentes, visitas e passeios pelo local em dias diferentes, tomadas fotográficas e a elaboração dos respectivos planos. Como grande artista que foi, Goeritz, com esta obra, é capaz de abordar a arquitetura como o resultado da conjunção do vazio e da matéria, de modo que a emoção e as sensações do corpo no espaço fluam, para estruturar o próprio significado da criação arquitetônica.

**Palavras-chave:** arquitetura emocional, México, habitar poético, espaço público, Mathias Goeritz.

# INTRODUCTION

- 1** The architect Luis Ramiro Barragán Morfín is the only Mexican architect to have won the Pritzker Prize, which was awarded to him in 1980.
- 2** *Ciudad Satélite* is an urban and residential subdivision located northwest of the metropolitan area of Mexico City. In 1957, the architect Mario Pani, head of the project, invited Luis Barragán and Jesús Reyes Ferreira to create an entrance landmark for this new housing area. The “*Torres de Satélite*” or Satellite Towers, a national artistic heritage since 2012, is a sculptural set of five monumental triangular prisms, symbolically marking the entrance to the “new city.”
- 3** Mathias Goeritz was not an architect by profession. In fact, in his meeting in 1949 with the businessman Daniel Mont at the Mexican Art Gallery (*Galería de Arte Mexicano*), where the businessman offered Goeritz to do “whatever he wanted,” Goeritz replied that he was not an architect, to which Mont answered that this was precisely why he was looking for him. See: <https://eleco.unam.mx/4665-2/>

# METHODOLOGY

- 4** This is the name of the document prepared by Mathias Goeritz as a manifesto for *El Eco's* inauguration, where he presents his vision of an architecture that fulfills a role forgotten by functionalist architecture, aimed at stimulating the emotion and senses of the human being.

When entering a building or touring a city  
something good must happen in the soul.  
(González, 2014, p. 275).

Conditions of total freedom to propose an architectural project are rare, and this is the case of the well-known *Museo Experimental El Eco*, the work of Werner Mathias Goeritz Brunner, a plastic artist who arrived in Mexico in the second half of the 1940s. He was invited to be part of the nascent Guadalajara School of Architecture, “accompanying” the architect Luis Barragán **1** in some of his works, with specific productions that were key in the spatial results of works, such as the stained glass window and the altar of the Chapel of the Capuchinas in Tlalpan, Mexico City, as well as the joint approach - involving the painter Jesús Reyes Ferreira-, in the iconic monumental urban sculpture at the entrance to Ciudad Satélite, internationally known as the Satellite Towers or Torres de Satélite.**2**

He also collaborated with other architects, such as Ricardo Legorreta, for whom he designed the famous large-scale pink lattice that framed the fountain and entrance to the Camino Real Hotel. Although direct commissions for Mathias Goeritz in architectural terms were scarce**3**, he had the opportunity to embark upon an iconic “emotional architecture”**4** project and built manifesto, the *Museo Experimental El Eco*, in a period where the main path being taken was an internationalist architecture, building a dwelling from reason, rather than from the senses.

The main goal of this article, which is part of a broader research on poetic living, is to analyze *Museo Experimental El Eco*. In this proposal, the architectural space actively engages as an artistic work, creating an atmosphere conducive to receiving the artist’s work, highlighting compositional-spatial characteristics that, in this specific case, contribute to the emotional and sensitive experience of the architectural work in pursuit of a poetic dwelling.

To analyze *Museo Experimental El Eco*, it was necessary to review the material there was on the project and study the author’s personal and artistic biography as a referential framework to understand the museum’s appearance.

Added to this, site visits, a sensitive interpretation of the place, leisurely tours at different times and on different days, taking shots, and studying and remaking the floor plans have been needed to properly analyze the plastic and spatial qualities of the work in question.

## Background

Mathias Goeritz Werner Brunner was born in Danzig in the German Empire, today, Gdansk in Poland. He studied at the School of Arts and Trades in Charlottenburg, Berlin, and later at the Friedrich-Wilhelms University, where he received a doctorate in Philosophy and Art History. In 1941, he traveled to Spain, working on his art alongside important avant-garde figures, such as Joan Miró and Ángel Ferrant. He founded the well-known School of Altamira (*Escuela de Altamira*). He also traveled to Africa (Jácome, 2007, p. 44). With this background and plastic experience, he was invited, in 1949, to be part of the newly created Guadalajara School of Architecture by the engineer-architect Ignacio Díaz Morales,<sup>5</sup> its founder and director in its first 15 years. After working as a teacher in Guadalajara for about two years, teaching the novel subject of Visual Education, Goeritz decided to move to Mexico City, where he made most of his artistic work, abundant and significant works of urban sculpture that stand out alongside *El Eco*.

During his stay in Guadalajara, he met Luis Barragán Morfín, among others, with whom he would often collaborate. Their contributions would be indisputable in the creation of atmospheres from their stained-glass windows and golden leaf paintings, which throw light and color inside spaces considering the spatial purposes of "magic, enchantment, serenity, silence, intimacy and amazement" (Saito, 1994, p. 10), as Barragán would say of his architecture when he won the Pritzker Prize in 1980.<sup>6</sup>

Meeting and working collaboratively with Barragán and the painter Jesús (Chucho) Reyes Ferreira would be, for Goeritz, a key experience in the architectural field, since, before this, he had worked mainly in the fields of sculpture, painting, illustration, and teaching.

During his artistic life, Goeritz was a sculptor, poet, art historian, architect, and painter, recognized as a promoter of "emotional architecture," of which *El Eco* would be his manifesto. Goeritz was trained under the influence of Expressionism and Bauhaus, so the idea of integrating the arts was not unknown to him (Jácome, 2010, p. 58). At the age of 37, in 1952, during a chance meeting at an exhibition at the *Galería de Arte Mexicano*, he met an important businessman of that time, Daniel Mont, whose business interests were linked to restaurants, bars, and art galleries. He is the one who, by way of patronage, commissioned him for a project on a piece of land he owned in the Tabacalera neighborhood in Mexico City (Miranda, 2017).

The references to Goeritz's avant-garde vision in art led the entrepreneur to ask him to propose an architectural project free of programmatic constraints, where, in the words of Mont himself, he was to do "whatever he wanted." *The meaning of an Experimental Museum* (2020, p. 01)

<sup>5</sup> Ignacio Díaz Morales coined the phrase: "To conceive the poetic thing first and to build the walls around it." Among his standout professional work in the field of architecture and urban space design and construction, his successful intervention in the completion or remodeling of some of the most valuable heritage buildings and most distinguished open spaces in Guadalajara stands out. He received, among other awards, investiture as an honorary member of the American Institute of Architects, the National Academy of Architecture award in 1986, and the National Prize of Sciences and Arts in 1989 (Government of Jalisco, n.d.).

<sup>6</sup> The press release began with the following sentence: "We honor Luis Barragán for his commitment to architecture as a sublime act of poetic imagination" (Saito, 1994, p. 10).

This is how, based on the commission's tremendous creative freedom, the artist worked on the idea of an experimental space for different artistic manifestations (reminiscent of the Cabaret Voltaire), a building as a manifesto built of "emotional architecture." (de Alba, 1999)

As background information, it is necessary to mention that modern Mexican architecture produced in the 1930s and 1940s, as Toca (1989) would say, "...apart from its extraordinary quality, started from a radical change towards what he sensed was a modern culture and, for the most radical architects, entailed a complete social revolution for which they proposed models with full candor. A minimal retelling of the quality of the period's main works reveals notable achievements, such as the skill in designing functional and formal solutions; the interesting unprecedented constructive solution due to the lack of adequate technological infrastructure; the adaptation of rationalist typology to the climatic conditions of Mexico; and the outstanding incorporation of formal or technical solutions to foreign models, improving them and creating a modern, functional architecture that, in the case of Brazil and Mexico, soon achieved deserved international recognition." (p. 31-32)

During the 1950s, the period in which the work in question took place, De Anda (2013) mentions a transformation of the compositional principles of the functionalist trend. Many types of buildings were developed and labeled under the title of internationalism. In Mexico, the work of Augusto H. Álvarez stands out among others, characterized by approaching architectural design from both internal and external modulation, as in the case of the Mexico City International Airport in 1954 and the Castorena buildings of 1957 and Jaysur in 1961, which are presented with an absolute mastery of the glazed facades and whose composition is supported by the use of lines on planes (p. 207).

Faced with this panorama, Mathias Goeritz, a critic of modern architecture, writing in his famous manifesto on emotional architecture in 1953 for the inauguration of *El Eco*, highlights, among other aspects:

1. "...there is an impression that the modern individualized and intellectual architect is sometimes exaggerating, perhaps because he has lost close contact with the community, on wanting to emphasize the rational part of architecture too much. The result is that the 20<sup>th</sup>-century man feels crushed by so much "functionalism," logic, and utility within modern architecture (Goeritz, 1953).
2. ...the creator or receiver man of our time aspires to something more than a lovely, pleasant, and adequate house. He asks, or will have to ask one day, for a spiritual elevation from architecture and its modern means and materials; simply put, an emotion... Only by receiving genuine emotions from architecture can man consider it art again."<sup>7</sup> (Goeritz, 1953)

<sup>7</sup> These paragraphs are part of the "Emotional Architecture Manifesto " written by Mathias Goeritz in 1953 (El Eco, 2015).



In these points, Goeritz extols the importance of man and his emotions in facing the architectural experience and the necessary conjunction between space and body that arises without being explicit, a triggering moment of aesthetic emotion. The space and, with it, our corporeality are subjected to a whole experience, with our senses put into action to produce the aesthetic emotion to make possible an experience that enriches and changes us.

Put in a more current way, Carranco mentions (2014) that "The body is a fundamental concept in poetic living. From a phenomenological point of view, we can define the human being as embodied consciousness. In this sense, the body becomes relevant because it is the medium we have to live in the world. We understand our environment from our body, linking ourselves to the world through our verticality with the horizon and gravity, in a simultaneous natural and cultural reality" (p. 73).

In this way, in the search for an architecture of the "lost emotion," predominantly facing an architecture whose principles arose mainly from reason, Goeritz sees in Mont's architectural commission, the possibility to explore and express the substantial value of architectural work. In this sense, the concepts of depth, emotion, surprise, materiality, etc., are applied in the project's conception through plastic and scale resources to produce the necessary changes in living, feeling, and inhabiting the architectural space. In all this, Bauhaus beats as a reference, the experimentation with the work of total art. Goeritz, as an artist, worked with sculpture, painting, graphics, etc. Still, it is through the opportunity received at a mature stage of his artistic work that Goeritz considers in *El Eco* the realization of a true "material manifesto of emotional architecture."

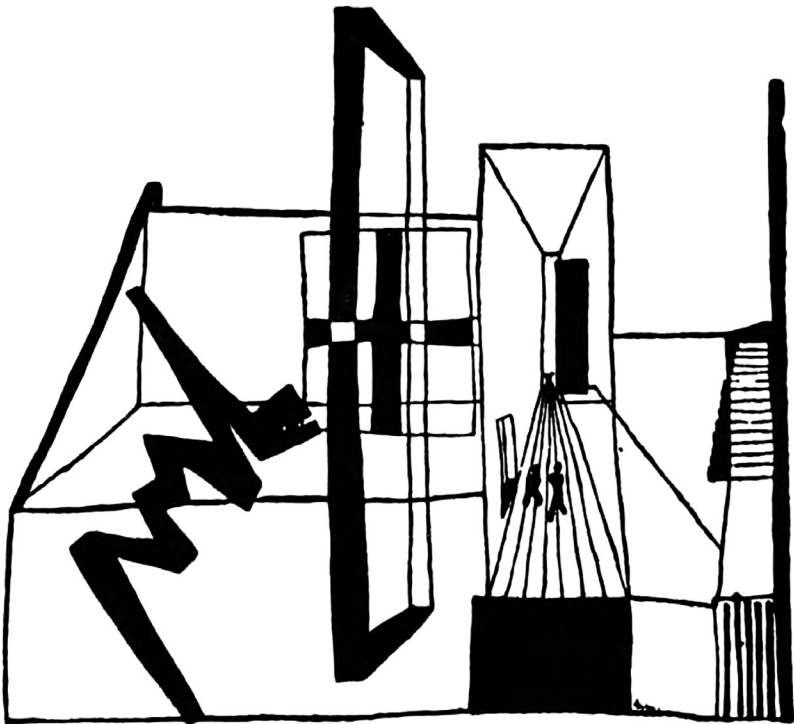
On the day of the museum's opening, a Dadaist-style event was held: Buñuel worked as a choreographer with Walter Nicks' Experimental Ballet; Lan Adomian directed a musical group and performed a piece entitled the "Tamayana"; Henry Moore made a mural with strokes based on the Mexican Judas; while Goeritz, among the crowd, read his "Emotional Architecture" manifesto (Torres, 2013, p. 24).

Set on a trapezoidal-shaped dividing plot, with an area of approximately 515 m<sup>2</sup>, facing a linear park, overlooking the Sullivan art garden, and very close to the *Monumento a la Madre Square* in the San Rafael neighborhood of Mexico City, Goeritz intends an architectural project combining the experimental work of diverse avant-garde artistic areas, where the architectural space actively takes part, integrating with the different creative manifestations.

One of the features that stands out from the first visit- once the building was restored by the National Autonomous University of Mexico in 2005- is the creative freedom with which the architectural work has been approached. Its essence, its origin, is definitely spatial. The limits and the entry of light are necessary to produce aesthetic emotions in the observer;

## ANALYSIS OF THE WORK

**Figure 1.** Ideogram of El Eco.  
Source: Miranda, 2017.



in and with the space, who can hardly assume a neutral attitude towards the architectural space in which they are immersed. Some authors, such as Rita Eder (n.d.), María Teresa de Alba (2011), and Cristóbal Andrés Jácome (2007), among others, highlight expressionism in his training as an artist. They establish a relationship, a particular echo, with the expressionist environments shown in the film “The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari” <sup>8</sup> (Figure 1).

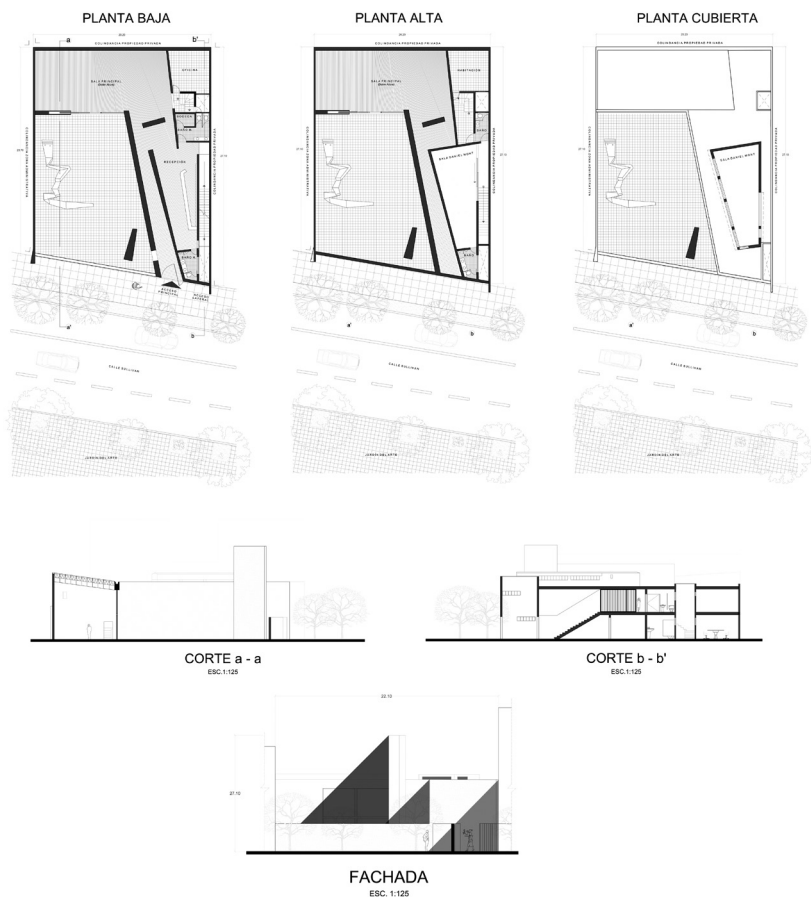
A second feature is the configuration of flexible spaces, totally split from functional rationalism. According to the words of Goeritz himself, quoted by de Alba (1999), he comments,

“The whole [project] was made in the same place, without exact plans. Architect, mason, and sculptor were one and the same person. I repeat that this whole architecture is an experiment. It does not want to be more than this. It is an experiment to create new psychic emotions in man within modern architecture without falling into an empty and theatrical decorativism. It wants to express a free will of creation, which, without denying the values of ‘functionalism,’ tries to subdue them under a modern spiritual conception” (p. 45). <sup>9</sup>

Faced with a panorama of architectural production in Mexico and the world, of an eminently functionalist view supported by reason and dominating the architecture stage, Mathias Goeritz criticized the building

<sup>8</sup> Rita Eder tells us: “Goeritz will absorb not only the gospel according to Hugo Ball but the synthesis of the German art of his time; the scenography of Robert Wiene’s film, ‘The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari,’... the purity of Paul Klee; the cleanliness of Bauhaus shapes ...” (Eder, n.d., p.73).

<sup>9</sup> Statement written in early 1953 and published in the *Architecture Notebooks* of Guadalajara in March 1954, according to what was mentioned by María Teresa de Alba in her text *Cabaret Voltaire* (1999).



**Figure 2.** Floor plans, cross-sections, and facade of El Eco.  
Source: Plans by Luis Daniel Bello Jiménez.

production of the moment. Provided with great artistic sensitivity, both as a creator and a theorist, and enriched by his encounter and collaboration with Barragán and Reyes Ferreira, among others, he sees in the architectural commission the possibility of developing a manifesto built from an “other” architecture, capable of housing in it the emotional experience that, beyond the appropriate functional resolution, accommodates the bodily and sensitive experience of the one who inhabits it, or beyond this, as Pallasmaa (2006) expresses it, “...like our memories, our dreams and our imagination” (p.19).

A third feature refers to space with narrative; namely, as the journey progresses as a narrative, space tells us about different possibilities, producing a plastic and spatial dialog with the observer; which is always novel or unexpected, which awakens diverse emotions before the artistic-spatial fact. *El Eco* moves the observer. It carries in its soul the critical-creative action that enunciates a way of understanding and formulating the architectural space. The work becomes a personal manifesto that questions the disciplinary action of the time and explores the architectural from its most profound spatial nature, promoting a powerful encounter and dialog from the moment the observer faces the work. The first effect of this dialog is emotional.

*El Eco*, a work of poetic and experimental dimension, breaks all compositional precepts. The creation of the habitable void without any



**Figure 3.** Courtyard and wall-tower and plastic poem. Source: Photographs by Alan Gerardo Galván de los Santos.



functional imposition, open to various forms of occupation, is for Goeritz a search for the whole, living, and changing work of art, the result of his primary purpose, that of freely welcoming the artistic avant-garde in all its manifestations. This freedom is confirmed by its outline and materiality, breaking with the imposition of the right angle and strengthening the experience of time-space, displacement, and depth (Figure 2).

*El Eco*, shocking and revolutionary, is a revealing work. Just as Juan O'Gorman <sup>10</sup> introduced in the heart of the residential neighborhood of San Ángel, on a corner plot —the most visible in the entire sector— the famous house studio for Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, built between 1931 and 1932, and his parent's house on the adjacent property, as a champion of radical functionalism, so Mathias Goeritz will project and build, as a manifesto, the *Museo Experimental El Eco* (1952).

In the case of O'Gorman, the corner site of the land where he implanted his work gives him greater visual exposure to the urban context. In the case of Goeritz, the land between party walls entails greater limitations for its urban manifestation. Despite this, he takes advantage of this condition through a spatial proposal that ends in a courtyard bordered in the front by a low enclosing wall that allows visually eliminating the outside, the street, but recovering the participation of the tree mass of the park in front of it.

Goeritz, being a multifaceted artist, approaches the building not only from its architectural condition but also as a habitable painting and sculpture, incorporating graphics through his famous plastic poem (Figure 3).

**10** Considered a pioneer of modern architecture in Mexico, Juan O'Gorman was an architect, muralist, and painter. As an architect, he went from a radical functionalism to an organicist proposal developed in his house in San Jerónimo, Mexico City, , which is no longer standing, between 1948 and 1952. Source: <https://www.gob.mx/cultura/prensa/juan-o-gorman-artifice-de-la-arquitectura-moderna?state=publisheduente>



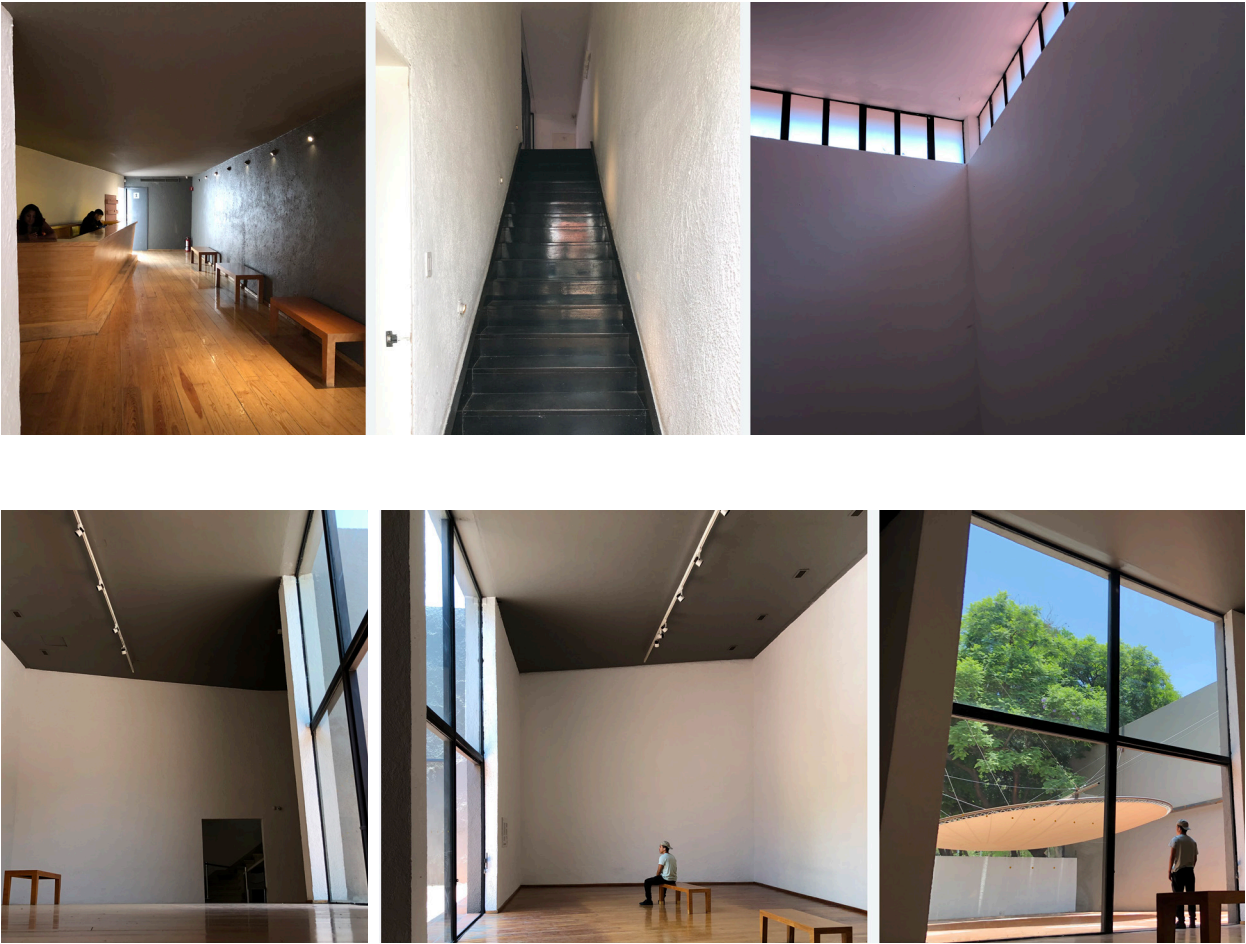
A tour of the building is marked by a constant spatial surprise whose main characteristics are given by the management of narrowing walls, the changing heights of the different spaces, and the management of very focused openings towards the end of the essential routes. The large sliding window that integrates the central space of activities, exhibitions, and artistic presentations with the courtyard acts as a spatial extension for the same ends.

The low limit at the front of the site, the light of the courtyard behind the enclosing wall, and a free-standing yellow wall tower, very bright and of sufficient scale, play harmoniously, composing a space facade of sculptural character. The tower, together with the sculpture of the snake –initially located in the courtyard– participate in the courtyard's composition, also conceived as a meeting space for different artistic disciplines (Figure 4).

**Figure 4.** Model of the snake.  
Source: Photo by Alan Gerardo Galván de los Santos.

**Figure 5.** Access, corridor, and hallway. Source: Photographs by Alan Gerardo Galván de los Santos.





**Figure 6.** Gallery-bar, access staircase to Daniel Mont Room. Source: Photographs by Alan Gerardo Galván de los Santos.

**Figura 7.** Views of the main room and courtyard. Source: Photographs by Alan Gerardo Galván de los Santos.

Between nondescript facades, *El Eco* announces itself. Passing through a black door (which, when fully open, is configured more as a mural than a door), we find ourselves facing a corridor whose walls, thickened at one of their ends, are not parallel but looking for an almost illusory perspective effect, where even the hardwood floor has been worked to produce and reinforce this purpose. The stave has been thinned to do this, emphasizing a space fled in its materialization (Figure 5).

After that initial effect, a neutral distribution point is reached that leads us, on the one hand, to a triangular-shaped space, opposite to the access, where to one side and at the bottom, we find a step that leads us towards a staircase to the next floor. Once on the upper floor, a triangular-shaped space, intended for different uses, appears once more, illuminated through an upper opening as a continuous belt of light, including the exhibition of works (Figure 6).

Towards the back, in the right corner, the entire service area that has been hidden is concentrated through a practically continuous wall that separates this area from the habitable and significant areas of the building.

The spaces are configured considering variable shapes for directions, scales, dimensions, light, color, and textures that, concatenated and changing, become



**Figure 8.** Yellow wall-tower.  
Source: Photographs by Alan Gerardo Galván de los Santos.

fundamental plastic resources, making the observer an active subject of spatial experience and aesthetic emotion.

When we return to the ground floor and cross the lobby that plays between the finite and the infinite, we find a very lit space with a relatively regular floor plan made up of a wall, a large window, and a glass door; square in shape and with a cross-shaped inner door; which opens to the sizeable trapezoidal courtyard that returns us to an encounter with light, with the horizontality of the enclosing wall, with the treetops of the park and with the free-standing yellow tower-wall, which acts as a sculpture in the space and that at the time was accompanied by the serpent, the author's sculpture, now located in the sculpture garden of the Modern Art Museum, in Mexico City (Figure 7).

At *El Eco*, the courtyard is a unique representation and exhibition space. It can be accessed in two ways: one, through the sequence of interior spaces, and the other, through the lobby that appears once entering the building, where on the left-hand side, there is a door that leads us to a small external lobby generated by the separation between the building and the tower-

wall, which makes us enter the courtyard without going through the interior. It should be noted that this yellow wall, rotated from the main wall and forming a right angle with the front of the lot, has a particular feature: an irregular base that thins at one of its ends, generating a more significant presence as a volume. The use of yellow proposes an intense luminosity, which, together with its height, dominates and composes the courtyard playfully and sculpturally (Figure 8).

Triangular, more or less pronounced prisms would be a permanent feature of his work. Sometimes combined with stained glass and light, as in the case of his intervention in the Chapel of the Capuchinas **11**, or as massive prisms of different scales, free-standing volumes as in the case of *El Eco*, or sometimes as large-scale sculpture-towers, where his participation in the Satellite Towers becomes evident, or in the sculptural work "*Corona del Pedregal*," made for the sculptural area of the cultural circuit of Ciudad Universitaria and the "Sculptural Space," a great collective work for the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), with the participation of the sculptors, Federico Silva, Manuel Felguérez, Helen Escobedo, Manuel Hernández Suárez (Hersúa), Sebastian and, of course, Mathias Goeritz.

In his plastic work, both the stroke and the volumetric explorations and the management of dimension, color, light, and textures emphasize a playful relationship, promoting a body-aesthetic and spatial experience that is always different and surprising.

Some slightly inclined roofs, especially that of the main room on the ground floor, have differentiated handling of the slabs, effectively contributing to capturing the limits as if obeying enormous compositional freedom that, by discarding the right angle, critically questions their dictatorship. This also contributes to the fact that the condition of a dividing lot disappears in the spatial experience of *El Eco*.

Since 2005, the *Museo Experimental El Eco*, acquired by the UNAM, has been retrofitted, returning it to its original condition, and is open to the public. Although it is the heritage of UNAM, the building, by vocation, is of a public nature; anyone can visit it within opening hours.

Beyond the exhibitions and artistic expressions, *El Eco*, for a long time forgotten, left adrift from the commercial comings and goings, represents for Mexico and the world the possibility of moving to the thought of a great artist who, with a holistic vision of art, understood and exposed with this work his criticism of the forgetfulness of the international functionalist movement, forgetfulness that reduced living and architectural creation to merely practical character solutions, leaving aside the experience and aesthetic emotion.

**11** Chapel inside the Convent of the Capuchinas, Tlalpan, Mexico City. Architect Luis Barragán, 1952..

The *Museo Experimental El Eco*, thought of as a space for artistic experimentation, tells us about a poetic living marked by many signifiers and meanings. The main one: architecture as a poetic and emotional message that acts on us, not in a neutral or anodyne way, but admonishing us to discover the millenary and wise art of building with imagination, to produce dialog and emotion, that is, active and sensitive participation of the human being, of the body and senses, contributing to enrichment and experiences. Pallasmaa (2016) about this comments that:

“the existential meanings of inhabiting space can only be forged through the art of architecture. Architecture continues to have a great human task in mediating between the world and us and providing a horizon of understanding in our existential condition” (p. 75).

From the analyzed work, we can extract, among others, the following lessons:

Poetic living is associated with the movement of the inhabitant or spectator and the different plastic and aesthetic emotions that the architectural work can produce in the subject who moves through it, and as González (2014) says: “the movement of the user is a central part of any architectural proposal: the movement is foreseen, proposed, promoted and, incredible as it may seem, *it is projected*.” (p. 72).

Poetic living in architecture is primarily associated with purposes and actions that do not necessarily arise from a practical purpose but from understanding the act of inhabiting as the conjunction between reason and emotion. The architecture that arises from it incorporates verbs such as walking, contemplating, entering, leaving, passing, strolling, waiting, looking, hiding, revealing, surprising, etc.

*El Eco* is experimental in itself. It is an enclosure that welcomes and actively participates in the different artistic manifestations, and fundamentally, it is a work that arose from the creativity of an integral artist who, with this work, manages to establish an intense dialog between those who explore it, travel and inhabit the space and its atmospheres, where the boundary between architecture and sculpture seems to disappear.

Today, since the life of most of the population in Latin American countries takes place in spaces so alien to a poetic dimension of living, it is essential to turn our gaze to examples of architecture and the city that lead us to the search for a living that allows the development and full enjoyment of human beings.

## FINAL THOUGHTS



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