

THE DEGENERATION OF ARCHITECTURE IN MEXICO TODAY

by Juan O'Gorman

In Mexico today, architects are divided into two ^{groups} ~~schools~~, the majority following the so-called International Style and a small minority in opposition.

The debates and lectures held in 1953 under the auspices of the Architects' Society, did little to clarify the issue, but the problem ^{of architecture} stands today, as it does in all the fields of art, between two trends: The non-objective ~~expressionist~~, and the realistic.

In any case, it is necessary for me to say what I think in relation to the General theory of architecture, because I believe we have arrived at a critical point at which modernism is practically exhausted. It has nothing ^{more} to offer for the future, except a repetition of the same formulae which make up what we know as modern architecture.

In Mexico at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries architecture was limited to the imitation of the styles of the past, especially of the late Renaissance and the Neo-Classical.

This servile attitude came about through the influence of the Beaux Arts ^{school of} ~~in~~ Paris upon the world, and their efforts to bring about the restoration of Classicism. It is still common today to confuse Classicism with Academicism.

At that period we find the same type of academic training for architects ^{all over the world} ~~of all countries~~, with few exceptions, and as a

result, we had the same unimaginative replicas of disguised imitations of the decadent ~~operetta~~ Grand-finale Parisian ^{opera} interpretations of the late Renaissance. This bastard ^{academic} architecture, ~~attributed~~ ^{glorified} in the Grand Prix de Rome, was the "International Style" of that period. ~~The great art historian~~ ^{The great art historian} ~~in the one sentence:~~ ^{Elle Faure says in} ~~the history of art of the academy:~~ "In art, academic thinking is nourished by everything that has already passed through the digestive tube of humanity."

In this same period there existed in Mexico, on a small scale, an equally academic school, which copied the architecture of the buildings and monuments of the Spanish Colonial period. This represented a forward step, for at least we looked for "inspiration" in our own country and turned away from the influence of Europe. This tendency to copy the Colonial style persists today, in a diluted form. ^{But only} ~~the ones~~ ^{the ones} who can accept the repetition of this architecture are those gentlemen for whom the Colonial period represents the yearnings of lost feudal privileges.

After the Mexican Revolution (1910-1914) the outstanding architects began to interest themselves in the popular architecture of Mexico. ^{Popular meaning that which is} ~~Popular meaning the~~ architecture built exclusively by the people without the intervention of engineers or architects. The interest in this architecture was provoked in part by the popularity in the United States, at that time, of the Mexican Ranch style, introduced by a group of California architects and derived from Mexican folklore architecture. ~~of the poor~~. The indigenous house of Mexico was processed into one acceptable

to the rich and "decent" who came from the East to play ranchers in the West. By way of ~~"decent"~~^{magazines and architectural reviews,} Mexico's popular houses^{was brought home canned.} Upon its return it appeared novel, even revolutionary, while it was in fact only a false interpretation of the popular taste. The academy accepted it as a rich family does a poor relative. Its trip abroad caused it to be elevated to the ranks of architecture.

It is ~~not~~^{nevertheless} necessary to note that this architectural tendency of the Colonial California Style (1918-1926) is the expression of the first Constitutional Government of the revolutionary ranchers who came with Garza into power, and in spite of its being a picturesque-academic conception of architecture, it initiates for the first time in our country the desire to express Mexico in its popular aspect. This trend was soon abandoned, with the loss of what it implied ideologically to the theory of architecture. In the same way, and in a parallel manner, most of the popular vindications of the Agrarian Revolution have also been lost.

After the first World War, and as a consequence of the necessity of reconstructing the devastated areas in Europe, the European architects of greater ingenuity developed an architecture which came to be known as functional. Its theory^{was} derived from purely technological principles, based on the mechanical axiom of "maximum efficiency for minimum effort," ~~and in this way~~^{the} architecture was transplanted into the field of engineering.

Functional architecture appeared to be ~~important~~^{most} important and useful in poor countries where economic conditions ~~made~~^{them} important.

Justified^{efficient} the most ~~efficient~~^{use of} use of natural resources and the ~~adaptation~~^{adaptation} of work^{hours of}. Functionalism was as ~~valuable~~^{valuable} in structural planning as in liberating the floor plan, or in the composition of the facades, that is to say in the total architectural problem. Functionalism proposed to apply the same principles that had up to then only been used ~~only~~ in factories and industrial buildings. The phrase of Le Corbusier's, "~~The house is a machine to live in.~~"^{"La maison est une machine à habiter"} explains the theoretical basis of this form of architecture, which ~~to my understanding~~^{engineering, school engineering, etc.} should be called ~~engineering~~^{engineering}.

It is not to be confused with structural engineering, which deals only with the problems of construction in buildings, ~~not with architecture~~. What was gained with functionalism in architecture?

Functionalism destroyed the narrow, academic frames into which architecture had been set and ended the era of "eternal truths," which were the foundation and reason for copying and re-copying the styles of the past. Functionalism put at end to ~~the obsession,~~ the blind faith in all the sacred academic notions, ~~was ended.~~

Functionalism ~~also~~^{opened} the door to greater possibilities ~~and gave technical bases for mechanical development~~^{which}. ~~Functionalism made evident the need to apply to building the divers methods of construction invented by~~^{engineering. It gave the architect the} ~~direction of, experimentation in and planning in the development of~~^{character in relation to the climatic adaptation and is the theory of the building.} Functionalism, furthermore, obliged the architects to form

programs in order to solve the problems of utilization of space, ~~adaptation to climate~~^{adaptation to climate}, and the various human needs of a building in a reasonable manner and in accordance with the strictly mechanical function of each part as well as of the total building. Today, looking at this phenomena from a distance, and comparing ~~the entire functional architecture~~^{what} ~~the entire functional architecture~~^{that} ~~which came out of that period with that~~^{being produced now,} being produced now,

we appreciate the importance of functionalism as a basis for objective understanding of any form that modern architecture might take.

What was lost with functionalism?

The mechanical and technical character of functionalism ignored the necessity of æsthetic pleasure, one of the most important bases of any real architecture. Functionalism reduced the building to the mechanical necessities of a shelter for man, and by doing so it denied one of the most vital of his needs, the pleasure produced by the form and color of the place in which he lives.

In synthesis, functionalism in architecture is mechanically reasonable and humanly illogical because man isn't a machine.

One of the inevitable consequences of functionalism was ^{due} thanks to social conditions, of our "marvelous civilization," that the principle of "maximum efficiency for minimum cost" was transformed into "maximum rents for minimum investment." [Between the years 1925 and 1935 in Mexico the lessons of European functionalism were applied with more or less success by a small group of young architects, one of them myself. The venerable academicians did their best to stop the new movement, with sermons and grand lamentations delivered from their thrones, tribunes and pulpits. In spite of this, functionalism was ^{in a degree} ~~slowly~~ imposed. The general public, with intuitive logic, rejected this architecture and called it "square boxes with square holes."

into a country of poor technical resources. ~~see~~ ^{The} admiration of modern technology, (which approaches techno-idolotry) is a phenomenon frequent in backward countries, especially among certain intellectuals who romanticize ^(and think idealistically about the possibility of) ~~the~~ economic independence ⁱⁿ ~~of~~ their semi-colonial countries.¹⁵⁵

What has happened to architecture in the last twenty years in Mexico?

To this period belongs the glory of ^{decadence} ~~the modernity~~, which can be described as "the formalization of functionalism." Practically all the work done today in modern architecture, which I take the liberty of calling "modernistic," has the aspect of functionalism without being functional. This modernistic architecture has taken the elements of functionalism and employed them for decorative effects. From the point of view of mechanical function, this modernistic architecture is a degeneration of functionalism. ~~For~~ In functionalism the reason for a form is found in its mechanical use, either as an element of structure or as an element of shelter. In modernistic architecture the principal reason for using the "utilitarian" forms derived from functionalism is to produce effects, and use for cost are of secondary importance.

In functional ~~ism~~ ^{the} form is a consequence of function, and in modernism form only appears to be ~~functional~~ ^{a consequence of function}.

Modernistic architecture corresponds to and reflects the period of ^{this} ~~the~~ "Revolutionary" demagoguery, ^{and by the way} ~~in which we live today.~~ ^{the architects have their own advantage} ~~the architects~~ ^{and} pretend ~~with intent~~ to be liberal and progressive.

To make matters worse, this modernist⁴ architecture of the so-called International Style in Mexico, is not even original. Its greatest asset is to reproduce ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ Le⁵Corbusier's models or to imitate any other ~~person~~ ^{architect} who becomes fashionable in ~~Paris~~. ^{Europe} To arrive at a ~~new~~ ^{new} International "Style", these copies of European architecture ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ ^{are} processed, for their commercial use in the alembic of the coca-cola culture.

One of the clichés of the International Style is the prismatic tower, ^{usually} with two of its long sides ^{open} in glass and the two lateral ones closed with walls. This architectural specimen was originated by Le Corbusier in the house of the Swiss students in the University of Paris, ~~and~~ later used by him in the housing project in Marseilles, and again in Brazil in the Secretariat of Public Instruction. In Mexico we have the towers of Science and of Philosophical Investigation at University City, and many other such ~~structures~~ ^{buildings} used for offices and apartments.

The most magnificent example of this architectonic stereotype is the building of the Secretariat of the United Nations ^{in New York}. A French father and a North American corporation. Another mode of modernism is the prism of glass taken more or less directly from Mies van der Rohe. Here no walls seem to be needed. ^{in Mexico} When these glass ~~structures~~ structures face the south, east or west they become ~~houshouses~~ ^{houshouses} during the ^{time of} day when they receive the sun's rays and ~~and~~ ^{then} cold houses after the sun leaves them. When they face north they are permanently ice boxes.

In a lecture given last year by the director of the Faculty of Architecture, he suggested that venetian blinds were sufficient to counteract the heat of the sun's rays in these edifices. It is lamentable that in practice this remedy is no remedy at all, for as ^{every one} ~~each~~ knows we can get away from the direct sun's rays ~~in a very hot room~~ ^{but not from the heat} which is heated by indirect rays entering through the large glass areas ~~with the sun rays~~ ^{that strike the venetian blinds}.

Of course there is a remedy for this nuisance, not only very good but also very expensive; air-conditioning. Now we have a complete picture of the architectural adaptation to the climate of

Mexico. First, the largest possible windows are used, which raises the price of the facade. Second, in order to escape the sun's rays the largest venetian blinds are necessary, which also add to the expense. Third, costly air-conditioning must be added in order to make the building habitable. If we examine the advantages of this architecture we find that everything goes to make it as expensive as possible, without the smallest advantage, ~~disadvantage~~ except to the bank accounts of architects and contractors.

Of course there's the artistic consideration! If one believes that the beauty of these priests of Glas compensate for the expenditures necessary to make ^{the} habitable, then everything is fine. As I do not believe in window wall and cardex esthetics, I pronounce myself against such absolute lack of logic and common sense.

Another of the recipes of the International Style is the horizontal window band the entire length of the facade. These windows are used indiscriminately, without relating their size to the rooms to be lighted. Like other architectural usages which have no sense but ~~have~~ ^{have} a semblance of functionalism, architects have a glib esthetic reason. ^R As far as I can make out, all the illogical planning ^(and mis-conception of formalities) goes to make up what they call "modernity". ~~The~~ ^{swelling up} idea of modernity is what has been pompously called "the ~~functionalism~~ ^{expression of} functionalism". ^{is} ~~It comes to a necessary conclusion: the essence~~ ^{can be called the} of functionalism or modernity -- which is, what ~~is~~ ^{can be called the} artistic content added ~~to~~ ^{to} functionalism -- consists of the ~~illogical disquisitions~~ ^{mis-conceptions} of functionalism.

In buildings two or three stories high we frequently find the

unnecessary use of reinforced concrete skeletons. Apart from making the building more expensive, this is done for the purpose of using continuous glass on the facade, or of lifting the structure on stilts without any reason or cause, except to give modernity to the building. The lack of technical knowledge of the structures that are considered old-fashioned, and which do not ~~can~~ come under the head of modernity, cut the architect off from many of ^{the solutions to} the problems of popular and especially peasant architecture.

All these theories about modernity are similar to the thesis of the painter D. Alfaro Siqueiros, who tells us that only with modern materials, such as vinelitte or sillcon, can the modern painter do modern painting and arrive at a modern style. All this babbling simply shows the absolute lack of understanding of the simplest elements of technology, because naturally the solution to any problem of construction should be reached by the most favorable methods, and in each case studied in accordance with ~~them~~ reality and with the economic possibilities of each region. This is precisely one of the most important bases of realism in architecture.

I want to make it clear that I do not deny the great value of modern methods of construction, but in order to use them where their employment is indicated, possible and necessary. It would be stupid to deny the usefulness of reinforced concrete and steel structures, but I ~~am~~ pronounce myself against their employment in a formalistic, anti-functional and anti-realistic manner.

The characteristics which defines ~~the~~ modernistic architecture today in respect to its form ~~is, the following~~ ⁴⁵. The systematic employment in combinations and juxtapositions of the box form. ~~2. The windows resemble glass store fronts.~~ This indicates that the

International style in architecture expresses the equivalent of the box, used for packing commodities, ~~because its form is the most suitable for this.~~ *(most effective for a commodity of this kind)*

~~Architecture for cities.~~

~~At this time all history and the economic history of nations is one of many commodities, the architecture that represents most fully that society is one based on the form of a bourgeois society, the windows, the doors, the show cases for commodities.~~

~~Architecture which in our day is made to~~

~~alter men!~~

What is called in architectural planning the necessary space is determined ^{determined} in the same way as the dimensions are determined ~~are determined~~ by the dimensions of a box required for packing oranges or shoes or pencils. Thus ^{this} architecture ^{of the international style} ~~of the international style~~ reflects ~~in a clear manner~~ ^{and expresses} the dominion of the commodity over man. ~~Therefore this architecture~~ ^{T. Boy's} architecture as a manifestation of art, expresses the conditions that correspond ~~to the international style~~ ^{to the} dominion exercised by the class which has imposed this architecture upon the people. ~~Of course the people~~ ^{anything about} without understanding ~~of art or~~ architecture cannot accept the International style because it is contrary to ^{the} human ~~collective~~ aspirations ^{of the collectivity}.

One of the modular arguments used in defense of modernism is that ^{in time} the people, by a sort of inertia, ~~in time~~ become accustomed to box architecture. Nothing can be more false or stupid. One might as well say that inertia accustoms⁴ people to misery and hunger. One must not forget that for the people, in spite of their ignorance, art is an emotion perceived only through the expressions conditioned by their own tradition. That tradition is the only

language they understand. Tradition implies a sort of succession of facts, or series of conditions, ~~that have been linked in time and which~~ represent all that has been absorbed and selected from among the many possibilities of forms and expression within a determined region. These forms what is known as the culture of a people.

The peculiar and special forms of ~~art~~ ^{and} ~~art~~ ^{in history} have been developed in time ~~(this gives them their dynamic dimension)~~ by the constant increment of work that has always actualized tradition and at the same time formed it. When the production of art implies a constant reevaluation of the adjustment of man to his surroundings, that is to say, when the production of art responds to the objective necessity of expressing the harmony between man and the earth, it acquires what is called its regional character. And when the art production responds to the collective necessity of expressing the harmony between men, it acquires what is called style. The human need for harmony is not a moral precept, it is a material need in man's struggle for the survival of his species, and it implies a constant struggle to keep this relationship in harmony, or one might say, in dynamic equilibrium imposed by the transformations that are verified in time and in everything that exists.

Art, if it is to be an expression of life, that is to say, if it is to be emotional, ~~it~~ requires a constant transformation that can be achieved only through the means of invention. These inventions are the increments that ~~are added to the tradition and~~ ^{must} develop the course of tradition in accordance with the ~~permanent~~ transformations suffered ~~by~~ ^{by} man and his environment.

Art has ~~not~~ a permanent and constant value throughout history and pre-history because it expresses the struggle of the human species for survival through all periods of its existence. This is the reason why any work of art, from the most ancient to the most recent, in any period of history and ~~from~~ ⁱⁿ any part of the world, produces emotion in a human being with sensibility.

To the degree that man's efforts to survive have been more intense, to that same degree the art expressing ~~these~~ ^{these} conditions ~~has more~~ ^{should have} intense capacity of ~~an~~ emotion. This implies that man carries in his unconscious the experiences of his species, and that the actualization of tradition through the means of original invention is the only way in which he can link this collective, unconscious with present reality and to produce an art of popular acceptance.

It is also necessary to say that invention within a tradition has all the poetic possibilities of the human imagination, ~~the organic development of a type in style and space.~~ ^{like the organic development of a type in style and space.} ~~the same manner that the organic development of a type in style and space.~~ ^{the same manner that the organic development of a type in style and space.}

In popular art, also called folk-love art, the actualization of tradition is always realized, because it can be produced in no other way except out of the material which is in the people's unconscious. But those who have been educated in schools or art academies, or who have in any way suffered the process of esthetic ~~education~~ ^{education} or appreciation, have formed in their consciousness a series of ~~criteria~~ ^{criteria} which impede ^{the} creation of art. ONLY talent or genius can surmount these repressive conditions. This does not mean to say that all appreciation of the art of the past is a hindrance for the production of art. On the contrary. It is necessary, but only

when the estimation and knowledge of tradition becomes the means and not the end of ^a trajectory of possible development. To surmount the limiting barriers of the academic implies a great vitality, which shows in creative work, and which is an expression of the pleasure of living.

The knowledge of the traditional forms in art gives the artist, and especially the architect, a material to start from, so that ~~the~~ ^{through} ~~his~~ ^{the} inventiveness and the application of the technology of his ~~time~~ to the necessities and problems of his time, ^{he can} produce a modern work of art within his own tradition. Only in this way can art form a part of the process of man's adaptation to reality and serve as an instrument of harmony ^{to the other men that live in the same region} of the earth where it had its roots and where it can develop, ~~for a purpose~~ ^{for a human purpose}.

In art the original inventions, whether they be individual or collective, within the organic body of a tradition of any region of the earth are like the new cells necessary to the organism; the organism produces them in order to live, and they correspond to a determined species, or in the language of art, to a determined style of a determined region of the earth.

But the cultural process has been conditioned, or deformed, by the human relations of ^a society divided into classes. Art, which has always reflected the social conditions, acquires the character impressed upon it by the contradictions inherent in the economic forms of production and exchange ^{of the} historical period. ^{in which it is produced} ~~As we have seen~~ ^{we can see} in Mexico, since the beginning of Colonial days to our own time, ~~there~~ ^{there} have existed two currents of art. The first one is of Mexican character and style, ^{it} the work of the people, and is known as popular art; this has maintained itself within the ancient

Mexican pre-hispanic tradition. This art expresses the popular aspirations and preserves its regional character. It has been said with reason that the Mexican people could never have survived the brutalities of the conquest and ^{the} exploitation of centuries if they had not kept alive their traditions and culture. ^{It is} ~~So this~~ current of art that the artists of man talent and genius ^{have added themselves} ~~have added themselves~~ to the other current of art that imitates what is foreign to Mexico. ~~Some~~

The other current of art imitates what is foreign to Mexico. ~~It~~ ^{It} represents servitude and submission and reflects the position of ^{the} ~~the~~ class ^{in power} ~~in power~~ which has imposed this art on the people. Up to now this class has been incapable of achieving its own national economic independence, and therefore ~~it~~ ^{it} ~~sellings out the country and~~ ^{sellings out the country and} ~~only find a way to keep its privileges by listening to the foreigners.~~ ^{sets the one model which he copies and imitates.}

In spite of the ^{brutal} ~~brutal~~ episode of the Conquest, and the incredible exploitation suffered by the ^{people} ~~people~~ masters of Mexico, ~~their~~ ^{their} ~~people~~ ^{people} culture ~~of America~~ has not died out. The extraordinary art that flourished in Anahuac, center of the culture of America, was brutally cut to the ground. ^{By the conquistadors,} but its deep roots remained in the earth, and all through the Colonial period, the Independence and the Revolution, the Mexican people have kept producing and still produce their own art -- this in spite of Coca-colas, juke boxes and the architecture of the International Style.

The ^{poverty-stricken} ~~poverty-stricken~~ people of Mexico, who are in the great majority, build their own houses with the earth that they pick up with their own hands, and with the absolute minimum of mechanical elements. These houses are always adapted to the climate and to the elementary needs of their inhabitants, and in spite of the miserable conditions

under which they are built, they maintain their traditions in the proportions ^{of the architecture which is always} and are perfectly integrated with the landscape that surrounds them. These houses show a perfect adaptation to the region because the people who built them have not lost their ~~own~~ culture. The same is true of their fiestas, their dress, their pottery, etc. It is important to note that the popular art section of the Mexican Art Exhibition in Paris, London and Stockholm in 1953 was the one thing that caused a great sensation among the ultra-sensitive intellectuals of Europe. The ceramics ^{executed} ~~produced~~ recently by ~~don~~ Pablo Picasso, -- one plate ~~was~~ ^{about} priced at 50,000 francs, -- would be undistinguished if placed among the polychromed pottery selling for twenty-five cents in a Mexican market.

But the architects of Mexico have no eye for the country where they live and that feeds them. They prefer to separate themselves from everything that is truly Mexican, copying and imitating the architecture that is fashionable in New York or Paris. These second-rate and ~~expensive~~ ^{costly} copies have nothing to do with Mexico, neither with the climate nor the ~~program~~ ^{needs} and taste of the people. They are ~~an expression of human inferiority~~ ^{proof of intellectual inferiority} and show ~~clearly~~ ^{the} servility and incapacity ~~of the intellectual class~~.

In Mexico the class in power tries to appear part of the cosmopolitan international clique, ^{that} ~~claims~~ ^{it} itself free of the contradictions inherent in the nature of the social forms through which it exists, ~~and the art that it imports on the whole~~ ^{which mirrors the conditions of the social forms} ~~which mirrors the conditions of the social forms~~ ^{which mirrors the conditions of the social forms}. The ~~modernist architecture of the international style in Mexico claims its place in the world of a cosmopolitan civilization, and for this very reason is non-objective in its expression of reality. That is to say, it is non-objective in its approach to reality.~~ ^{the international style is a new object, a new expression.} ^{it is non-objective in its approach to reality.}

It is negative in solving the problems of a functional shelter or of expressing the aspirations or desires of the people. The International Style serves the class in power as a disguise to make the people believe in its cosmopolitan superiority. ^{in this way the class} ~~architectural~~ ^{architectural} exercises cohesive action through the forms of expression of this architecture, ^{which} ~~which~~ ^{intensifies} its own power and ~~intensifies~~ ^{intensifies} its privileges. Logically,

in time these artifices become ineffective because these forms of non-objective art and architecture become in the popular mind the negative requisites of a world incapable of bettering the material conditions of life.)

This non-objective art and architecture ~~represent~~ ^{represent} everything contrary to popular ^{needs} ~~needs~~ and will finally ~~signify~~ ^{signify} to the people the waste of human ~~labor~~ ^{labor}. In a similar fashion thousands of tons of commodities are yearly thrown into the sea, millions of pounds of butter are stored until rancid so that prices of these commodities can be kept high on the international markets. This architecture and this non-objective art ~~have~~ ^{begin} already ~~begin~~ ^{begin} to smell, although they ~~would~~ ^{would} maintain their prestige as expensive commodities.

It is interesting to compare this antiseptic and de-humanized art of our days to its first antithesis, the Baroque of the 18th century, which ^{was} ~~can be interpreted as~~ ^{was} the architectural expression of ~~the clerical counter-reform. This style was possibly the one~~ ^{the clerical counter-reform. This style was possibly the one} ~~most closely related to the popular taste of Mexico~~ ^{most closely related to the popular taste of Mexico}, during the Colonial Period. This was due to the fact that the Churrigueres, and in general the Mexican Baroque, has a wide appeal ~~in~~ its profusion of form and color, also characteristic of the ancient art of Mexico. ~~Even the neo-classic architecture of the period of the independence is in a certain way more decorative, with the application of sculpture and painting, when it is applied to the alters of the Catholic churches, making it more acceptable to the popular taste~~ ^{Even the neo-classic architecture of the period of the independence is in a certain way more decorative, with the application of sculpture and painting, when it is applied to the alters of the Catholic churches, making it more acceptable to the popular taste}

St. Augustine this example is a Catholic church; The Expiatory Temple of the Sacred Family in Barcelona, in which the most authentic modern forms, ~~are~~ integrated with the medieval Gothic tradition ~~and~~ the ~~original~~ ^{original} baroque, creating an architecture which ~~finds~~ ^{finds} the truly Christian spirit, and faces the drama of a world in which, according to Thomas of Aquinas, there can be no Christian dignity for those who live in hunger and misery. This lesson in religious architecture has not been learned either by the Catholic clergy or by the architects who build churches in the International style. ~~that in modern times~~ ^{their churches resemble} super-markets or railroad stations, or they are pale academic imitations in reinforced concrete of some church of the past. Certainly the architectural ~~of this~~ ^{the} forgotten man of genius, Don Antonio Gaudí y Cornet, is an exceptional case in the modern world, and his ~~architectural~~ ^{buildings} show us the possibilities of an imaginative integration of architecture, sculpture and painting, ~~which is possible when there is capacity and talent.~~

This example also shows us that the truly Christian position is very rare in this mercantile world of traders who, in spite of themselves, build market places when they try to build modern churches. It is perhaps by way of vengeance against Christ, who threw them out of the Temple, ~~that~~ ^{that} they now throw Him out of theirs.

It is now necessary to explain how the degeneration of architecture came about, in a period of approximately forty years. We first have to understand that Frank Lloyd Wright is the inventor of modern architecture. From ~~his~~ ^{his} very first work ~~at Wright~~ (1890-1910) we find the basic and fundamental elements of the archi-

itecture which was later developed in Europe from 1919 on. But it is necessary to understand that the elements of the architecture of Wright, which formed an organic unity, were separated, as ~~breaches~~ ^{breaches} taken from a tree) and systematized into different schools in Europe. Later these systems became the more or less extensive manuals and ~~some material~~ ^{systems} for the architecture which is done commercially everywhere.

Originally Wright was influenced by the work of Louis Sullivan and Henry H. Richardson, the two greatest ^{American} architects of the 19th Century. Sullivan was one of the theorists and inventors of functionalism, and his phrase "Form must follow function" shows that he was fifty years ahead of the Europeans who turned functionalism into a system of architecture in the 20th Century. In any case, in the course of twenty years (1890-1910) Wright produced a radical change in domestic architecture. He was the first to reject the basement-cellars and attics under the pitched roofs which had been brought to America from Europe, ~~and to~~ ^{and to} apply Sullivan's principle of form-follows-function to an authentic American architecture.

Wright was one of the first architects who grouped the windows horizontally to produce a more even lighting inside the house; he also used wide overhangs on the roofs to protect the house from rain and snow as well as the interiors from excessive sun. He handled these elements not only from a strictly functional standpoint, but he applied his genius to them in order to obtain great dramatic effects in the form and proportions.

To obtain greater architectural unity between the exterior and interior, Wright was the first to use ~~simultaneously~~ ^{save} the water-

ials ~~and~~ for exterior and interior walls. In synthesis, Wright gives architectural expression to the movement of the reincorporation (2) of man ~~and~~ ^{to} nature, which at the end of the 19th century popularized the free air romances and the virtues and pleasures of rural and pastoral life. His mad love for the earth of America finds its immediate antecedents in the revolutionary thinking of Lincoln and of the naturalist Thoreau. And I ~~firmly~~ believe that he fulfills his great creativeness in the house which forms a part of the landscape surrounding it, where exterior and interior are ~~one~~ ⁱⁿ architectural ~~extension~~ ^{relation} ~~of~~ the forest, the desert or the prairie. ~~and where~~ ^{In his house} architecture becomes the vehicle of harmony between man and the region where he lives.

~~Wright invented organic architecture, which to me means, the combining of nature with the construction of functional planning within to an harmonious relation to natural environment.~~ Wright builds for the first time the house that is organically ^{composed} ~~related~~ in its fluency of the interior space, without the barriers of unnecessary walls dividing the various rooms. Such a house was described by Thoreau in a poetic form in "Walden" as the ideal house for America.

The horizontal window which ~~was~~ had been used by Sullivan since 1880 in the application of his form-follows-function principle acquired in Wright's hands a human and poetic value when he employed it in his extraordinary prairie houses to accentuate the horizontal beauty of the landscape. Wright was the first to use the corner window, to minimize the boxy appearance in those cases in which for structural and economical reasons it was necessary to use parallel walls to form the room space. By doing this he also achieved a

Greater unity of interior and exterior. ~~within~~

Wright was the first architect of our times to understand what tradition means to modern realistic architecture. Since his early houses, we find in his work the proportions of ~~volume~~ ^{the architectural elements} and a pyramidal sense of the masses, which give to his architecture the sensation of heaviness, accentuating the force of gravity, linking the structure to the earth. We also find ~~in~~ his later work the asymmetry of the axis, which implies a dynamic composition. His use of wood superstructures built over stone, and the pyramidal inclination of ~~the~~ ^{these} walls, are characteristic of the ancient architecture of America before any of the influences ~~after the~~ ^{that came with the} European conquests.

When Wright went to Japan to build the Imperial Hotel, he abandoned every preconceived idea of art and started by studying the classical Japanese architecture to find the synthesis of its general character and of its ^Vinterrelational proportions. This does not mean to say that Wright copied the form of the archeological elements of Japanese classicism. He used the most modern materials and forms of construction to conceive the modern Japanese architecture of our times.

This aspect of Wright's architecture is very little understood, because academic training has always confused tradition with the copy of archeology, and the actualization of tradition by the means of invention is the one thing that the academy cannot tolerate. Thanks to Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture, the 20th Century passed from the dead and boring "fin de siècle" copies of Beaux Arts models to an original expression of a living and vigorous art. The

architecture of Wright signifies the passing from the servile veneration of European stupidity to the confidence in the creative capacity of America. Paradoxically, it was in Europe that Wright's work was first fully appreciated, and after its greater recognition and influence there, it returned later from Europe to the United States ^{in the form of direct material,} ~~as a direct material,~~ to be used for commercial purposes in America. *No*

In general, we can say that Wright's architecture contains the functional principles of Sullivan, which form the base of its organic nature. It is true that in some instances that Wright sacrifices the mechanical function to the expressive form, but in any case, if we compare his work with that produced in Europe up to 1910, we find that Wright is outstanding ~~among~~ ^{in the modern} solutions of the problems of structure and space distribution.

Between 1910 and 1924, ^{some of the young architects} ~~the most outstanding architects in Europe~~ understood the great importance of Wright's work. ~~But~~

it is necessary to understand today that the elements of the architecture of Wright, which formed an organic unit, were separated. Like branches taken from a tree ~~and using each branch as a complete system,~~ and systematized into the different schools of architecture in Europe. Later these systems became ~~the more or less extensive manuals and recipes for the architecture which is done commercially everywhere.~~ ^{modernistic, different,}

The work of ~~Gropius, Van der Rohe and Le Corbusier~~ ^{Gropius, Van der Rohe and Le Corbusier} ~~the three most outstanding architects in Europe, and their work can~~ be considered an approximate synthesis of the European architectural thinking of the 20th Century.

To understand what is called modern architecture, it is necessary to look into the process each of them followed through the last 30 years, ~~but that is still an important task~~ ^{and} to understand their point of departure, which certainly was not in the tradition of their countries.

We find in the ^{early} ~~work~~ work of Gropius, from 1919 to 1924, the ~~direct~~ application of the technical method of mechanical functionalism. Later on the influence of the painter Deeburg and of the Stijl Group of abstract Dutch artists, to which Gropius belonged, appeared in his work, especially in the compositions of the facades which have the character of the non-objective paintings of this particular school of European art. The direct influence of painting in general, and especially non-objective painting, on the form of architecture, implies a subordination of architecture to ~~the~~ pictorial conceptions and shows an architectural degeneration, because it proves the incapacity of architecture to produce emotion with its own great resources.

In all the great periods of art, architecture has been the matrix which determines and conditions the other plastic arts, because architecture is the only space where ~~painting~~ painting and sculpture can exist and become the complement of architecture, ~~and~~ to help give greater force of expression to the whole plastic unity.

~~We can say that Gropius' point of departure, and of all the functionalists of Europe in the 20th Century, was Wright's organic architecture, based on Sullivan's principle that form follows function.~~ ~~But~~ Gropius's lack of understanding of organic architecture is evident in as much as he followed the exact opposite trend to organic realism when he became a non-objective architect of the Stijl Group.

Mies van der Rohe can also be considered one of the eminent functionalists of Europe in the period of the construction of the Groups of apartment houses in Stuttgart, ^{and} his first projects of Glass

and concrete skyscrapers and office buildings. In these, Van der Rohe made very important and novel uses of structural engineering. It is in his rural houses that the influence of Wright is evident, especially in the ~~approach~~ ^{integral} planning of the interior space. The difference is that ⁱⁿ Wright's conception ~~the interior can be as fluid as the organic necessity of space in relation to man permits it to be.~~ Van der Rohe has systematized this conception and given it a Prussian form, one in which all the walls ^{enclosing} ~~forming~~ the interior space are at right angles and parallel to one another, and this to such an extent that the plans of his houses resemble ~~the paintings of~~ by Mondrian.

In the organic architecture of Wright, the idea of harmonizing the edifice with the forms and materials of the landscape and the nature surrounding it, have been interpreted by Mies van der Rohe in such a way that passing from exterior to interior of the house is almost imperceptible, ~~and this to such a degree that one does not feel the difference between interior and exterior.~~ This was admirably done by Van der Rohe in the German Pavilion of the Barcelona Exposition of 1927. But the influence of the Dutch abstract painter, Mondrian, in Van der Rohe's work carried him to the systematic and exclusive use of cubes, right angles and straight lines, which determine the volumes and ~~space~~ ^{architecture} voids of his ~~construction~~ ^{of this period.}

Here also the pictorial conception of the Dutch Neo-plasticism dominates the architectural conception. ~~Therefore~~ ^{We} can ~~only~~ say, that the architecture of Mies van der Rohe has points of departure

^{some of the conceptions of} the architecture of Wright and in functionalism, but it is deformed because it finds ^{esthetic} ~~an~~ refuge in ~~abstract~~ the abstractionism of the non-objective painting which was the fashion in Europe at that time and which preceded Van der Rohe. We can therefore also say ^{that} from the point of view of realism, his architecture suffers a degenerative process.

Today Van der Rohe in the United States has become the super-esthete of the steel structure-right-angle-glass-box-hot-house architecture. ~~Today~~ ^{Presently} ~~in Mexico~~ ^{in the United States} the fashionable architects have just discovered this super-elegant, expensive and distinguished mannerism and have already begun to substitute the Le Corbusier on-stills architecture ^{with} ~~for~~ this new commercial modernism.

Van der Rohe wrote in 1940 the following, which I transcribe ^(QUOTE, HERE) here because it is relevant to my thesis. No other European architect has put his reputation at stake with a similar declaration, and the recognition of these facts show the superior human quality of Van der Rohe, and thereby he merits our most sincere respect. ~~His work is a masterpiece.~~

~~In relation to myself~~ ^I want to say here ~~that~~ ^{that} between the years of 1926 and 1935 I worked actively for the implantation of functionalism in Mexico, taking as a model ~~for my own work~~ ^{the} the architecture of Le Corbusier. This proves on the one hand the lack of any real orientation of the academic teachings of the University of Mexico, and on the other hand the lack of any personal talent, because I had at my reach and in the very continent where I live, the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, who was

abstract and non-objective painting, and that this esthetic content has adhered to the initial functionalism. We see with Great frequency in modernist architecture that the different facades of the same building are treated as independent two-dimensional abstract pictures, as they would be seen on the drawing board, ~~and~~ with the result that the sensation of architectural volume is sacrificed. Le Corbusier has gone to the extreme of giving a different color to the different facades of the same building. This is why Frank Lloyd Wright remarked that Le Corbusier should be reminded that no efforts of the imagination can change ~~the appearance of the~~ ^{the fact} that architecture has three dimensions in space.

Dear Esther:

I am sending you my article, which Helen believes should be cut down in the repetition, ~~about the probabilities~~. (Too much about what is more etc.). So much easier on the practical side. I believe Helen is right. But I don't see any way in cutting out ~~and~~ what should be cut out. I do hope you ~~will~~ do this for me and I hope I am not imposing too much work on you. I was wondering having a you stay with us and see how you were much. We also hope that your plan would be carried on order, (and thereby). Let me know what I can do for you in the way of getting plates etc. etc. which you may need so that you forget to do in Mexico.

Also, please change anything that you find in the cover, and concerning with which I wish to clarify or reduce the length, etc. etc.

"I think ~~me~~ a million for all the waste of sperry and waste I
would never have got this done."

we got no one.
fore from us both. we hope to hear from you soon.
Gives -

Quam -

The Degeneration of Architecture in Mexico Today

by Juan O'Gorman

In Mexico today, architects are divided into two groups, the majority following the so-called International Style and a small majority in opposition.

The debates and lectures held in 1953 under the auspices of the Architects' Society did little to clarify the issue, but architecture stands today, as do all the fields of art, between two trends: the non-objective and the realistic.

In any case, it is necessary for me to say what I think in relation to the general theory of architecture, because I believe we have arrived at a critical point at which modernism is practically exhausted. It has nothing more to offer for the future except a repetition of the same formulas.

In Mexico at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th Centuries, architecture was limited to the imitation of styles of the past, especially of the late Renaissance and the Neo-Classical. This servile attitude came about through the influence of the Beaux Arts School of Paris upon the world, and its efforts to bring about the restoration of Classicism. It is still common today to confuse Classicism with Academicism.

At that period there was the same type of academic training for architects all over the world and, as a result, we had the same unimaginative replicas or disguised imitations of the

grand-finale Parisian opera interpretations of the late Renaissance. This academic architecture, glorified in the Grand Prix de Rome, was the International Style of that period. The great art historian Elie Faure gives us a definition of academic art in one sentence: "In art academic thinking is nourished by everything that has already passed through the digestive tube of humanity."

In this same period there existed in Mexico, on a small scale, an equally academic school, which copied the architecture of the buildings and monuments of the Spanish Colonial period. This represented a forward step, for at least we looked for inspiration in our own country and turned away from the influence of Europe. This tendency to copy the Colonial style persists today in a diluted form. But the only ones who can accept the repetition of this architecture are those gentlemen for whom the Colonial period represents the yearnings of lost feudal privileges.

After the Mexican Revolution (1910-1914) the outstanding architects began to interest themselves in the popular architecture of Mexico, popular architecture meaning that which is built exclusively by the people without the intervention of engineers or architects. The interest in this architecture was provoked in part by the popularity in the United States at that time of the Mexican Ranch Style, introduced by California architects and derived from Mexican folklore architecture. (California's indigenous architecture was part of the Mexican-Spanish cultural tradition.) The indigenous house of Mexico was processed into one acceptable to the rich and "decent" who came

from the East to play ranchers in the West. By way of magazines and architectural reviews, Mexico's popular house was brought home canned. Upon its return it appeared novel, even revolutionary, while it was in fact only an interpretation of the popular taste. The academy accepted it as a rich family does a poor relative. Its trip abroad caused it to be elevated to the ranks of architecture.

It is necessary to note that this architectural tendency of the Colonial California Style (1916-1926) is the expression of the First Constitutional Government of the revolutionary ranchers who came with Carranza into power, and in spite of its being a picturesque-academic conception of architecture it initiates for the first time in our country the desire to express Mexico in its popular aspect. This trend was soon abandoned, with the loss of what it implied ideologically to the theory of architecture. In the same way, and in a parallel manner, most of the popular vindications of the Agrarian Revolution have also been lost.

After the first World War, and as a consequence of the necessity of reconstructing the devastated areas of Europe, the European architects of greater ingenuity developed an architecture which came to be known as functional. Its theory was derived from purely technological principles, based on the mechanical axiom of "maximum efficiency for minimum effort." Thus architecture was transplanted into the field of engineering.

Functional architecture appeared then to be most important and useful in poor countries where the economic conditions justified the most efficient use of natural resources and the

saving of hours of work. Functionalism was as valuable in structural planning as in liberating the floor plan, or in the composition of the facades, that is to say, in the total architectural problem. Functionalism proposed to apply the same principles that up to then had been used only in factories and industrial buildings. The phrase of Le Corbusier's, "La maison est une machine à habiter," explains the theoretical basis of this form of architecture, which should be called edifice engineering. This is not to be confused with structural engineering which deals only with the problems of construction in buildings.

What was gained with functionalism in architecture?

Functionalism destroyed the narrow, academic frames into which architecture had been set and ended the era of "eternal truths," which were the foundation and reason for copying and re-copying the styles of the past. Functionalism put an end to the blind faith in all the sacred academic notions.

Functionalism opened the door to greater planning possibilities and gave technical bases for mechanical development, which made evident the need to apply to building the diverse methods of construction invented by engineering.

Functionalism, furthermore, obliged the architects to form programs in order to solve the problems of utilization of space, adaptation to climate, and the various human needs of a building in a reasonable manner and in accordance with the strictly mechanical function of each part, as well as of the total building. Today, looking at these phenomena from a distance, and comparing functional architecture with that being produced now,

we appreciate the importance of functionalism as a basis for objective understanding of any form that modern architecture might take.

What was lost with functionalism?

The mechanical and technical character of functionalism ignored the necessity of esthetic pleasure, one of the most important bases of any real architecture. Functionalism reduced the building to the mechanical necessities of a shelter for man, and by doing so it denied one of the most vital of its needs, the pleasure produced by the form and color of the place in which he lives.

In synthesis, functionalism in architecture is mechanically reasonable and humanly illogical because man is not a machine.

One of the inevitable consequences of functionalism was that, due to social conditions, the principle of "maximum efficiency for minimum cost" was transformed into "maximum rents for minimum investment."

Between the years 1925 and 1935 in Mexico, the lessons of European functionalism were applied with more or less success by a small group of young architects, one of them myself. The venerable academicians did their best to stop the new movement, with sermons and lamentations delivered from their thrones, tribunes and pulpits. In spite of this, functionalism was to a degree imposed. The general public, with intuitive logic, rejected this architecture and called it "square boxes with square holes."

The imposition of this functional architecture upon Mexico was due in part to the fact that it was a product of European importation into a country of poor technical resources. The

admiration of modern technology (which approaches technolatriy) is a phenomenon frequent in backward countries, especially among certain intellectuals who romanticize and think idealistically about possibilities of economic independence in their semi-colonial countries.

What has happened to architecture in the last twenty years in Mexico?

To this period belongs the glory of decadence, which can be described as "the formalization of functionalism." Practically all the work done today in modern architecture, which I take the liberty of calling "modernistic," has the aspect of functionalism without being functional. This modernistic architecture has taken the elements of functionalism and employed them for decorative effects. From the point of view of mechanical function, this modernistic architecture is a degeneration of functionalism.

In functionalism the reason for a form is found in its mechanical use, either as an element of structure or as an element of shelter. In modernistic architecture the principal reason for using the forms derived from functionalism is to produce esthetic effects, and use or cost are of secondary importance.

In functionalism the form is ~~consequence~~ consequence of function, and in the modernistic, form only appears to be functional.

One of the cliches of the International Style is the primitive tower. Usually two of its long sides are in glass and the two lateral ones closed with walls. This architectural specimen

was originated by Le Corbusier in the house for the Swiss students at the University of Paris, the form later used by him in the housing project in Marseilles, and again in Brazil in the Secretariat of Public Instruction. In Mexico we have the towers of Science and of Philosophical Investigation at University City, and many other such buildings used for offices and apartments.

The most magnificent example of this architectonic stereotype is the building of the Secretariat of the United Nations in New York, son of a French father and a North American corporation.

Another mode of modernism is the prism of glass taken more or less directly from Mies van der Rohe. Here no walls seem to be needed. In Mexico when these glass structures face south or west they become hothouses during the hours they receive the sun's rays and ice boxes after the sun leaves them. When they face north they are permanently ice boxes.

In a lecture given last year by the director of the Faculty of Architecture, he recommended venetian blinds to counteract the heat of the sun's rays in these edifices. It is lamentable that in practice this remedy is no remedy at all, for as everyone knows, we can get away from the direct sun's rays but not from the heat that enters through the large glass areas when the sun's rays strike the venetian blinds.

Of course there is a remedy for this nuisance, not only very good but also very expensive: air-conditioning. Now we have a complete picture of the architectural adaptation to the climate of Mexico. First, the largest possible windows are used which raises the price of the facade. Second, in order

to escape the sun's rays, large venetian blinds are necessary which also add to the expense. Third, costly air-conditioning must be added to make the building habitable. If we examine the advantages of this architecture, we find that all the elements combine to make it as expensive as possible, without the smallest gain — except to the bank accounts of architects and contractors.

Of course, there is the artistic consideration! If one believes that the beauty of these prisms of glass compensate for the expenditures necessary to make them habitable, then everything is fine. As I do not believe in window wall esthetics, I pronounce myself against this absolute lack of logic and common sense.

Another of the recipes of the International Style is the horizontal window band the entire length of the facade. These windows are used indiscriminately, without relating their size to the rooms to be lighted. Like other architectural usages which make no sense but have a semblance of functionalism, architects have a flib esthetic reason.

As far as I can make out, illogical planning and misconception of architecture go to make up what we call "modernity."

In buildings two or three stories high we frequently find the unnecessary use of reinforced concrete skeletons. Apart from making the building more expensive, this is done for the purpose of using continuous glass on the facade, or of lifting the structure on stilts without any reason or cause, except to engender a look of modernity to the building. The lack of technical knowledge of structures now considered old-fashioned,

and which do not come within the category of modernity, cut the architect off from many of the solutions to the problems of popular and especially peasant architecture.

Today's theories about modernity are similar to the thesis of the painter D. Alfaro Siqueiros, who tells us that only with modern materials, such as vinylite or Gillion, can the modern painter arrive at a modern style! This simply shows a lack of understanding of the elements of technology, because naturally the solution to any problem of construction should be reached by the most favorable methods and, in each case studied, in accordance with reality and with the economic possibilities of each region. This is, precisely, one of the most important bases of realism in architecture.

I want to make it clear that I do not deny the great value of modern methods of construction and often their employment is indicated, possible and necessary. It would be stupid to deny the usefulness of reinforced concrete and steel structures, but I pronounce myself against their employment in a formalistic, anti-functional and anti-realistic manner.

A characteristic which defines modernistic architecture today in respect to its form is the systematic use in combinations and juxtapositions of the box form. This indicates that the International Style in architecture expresses the equivalent of the box employed for packing commodities.

What is called in architectural planning the necessary space is determined in the same way as the dimensions of a box required for packing oranges or shoes or pencils. Thus architecture of the International Style reflects the dominion of the commodity over man.

One of the conspicuous arguments used in defense of modernism is that the people, by a sort of inertia, become accustomed to box architecture. Nothing can be more false. One might as well say that inertia accustoms people to misery and hunger. One must not forget that for the people, in spite of their ignorance of such matters, art is an emotion perceived solely through the expressions conditioned by their own tradition. That tradition is the only language they understand. Tradition implies a succession of facts, or a series of conditions, which in time represent all that has been absorbed and selected from among the many possibilities of forms of expression within a determined region. These constitute what is known as the culture of a people.

The peculiar and special forms of any art in history have been developed in time by the constant increment of work which has always actualized tradition and at the same time shaped it. When the production of art implies a constant evaluation of the adjustment of man to his surroundings, that is to say, when the production of art responds to the objective necessity of expressing the harmony between man and the earth, it acquires what is called regional character. And when the art production responds to the collective necessity of expressing the harmony between men, it acquires what is called style. The human need for harmony is not a moral precept, it is a material need in man's struggle for the survival of his species, and it implies a constant vigilance to keep this relationship in harmony, or one might say, in dynamic equilibrium.

Art, if it is to be an expression of life—if it is to be an emotional experience, requires a constant transformation which can be achieved only through the means of invention. These inventions are the increments that develop the course of tradition

in accordance with the permanent transformations suffered by man and his environment.

Art has permanent and constant value throughout history and pre-history because it expresses the human species through all periods of its existence. This is why any work of art, from the most ancient to the most recent, and from any part of the world, produces emotion in a human being with sensibility.

To the degree that man's efforts to survive have been more intense, to that same degree the art expressing these conditions has more intense capacity of emotion. This implies that man carries in his unconscious the experiences of his species, and that the actualization of tradition, through the means of original invention, is the only way in which he can link this collective unconscious with present reality to produce art of popular acceptance.

It is also necessary to say that invention within a tradition has all the poetic possibilities of the human imagination, like the organic development or growth of a tree in time and space.

In popular art, also called folk lore art, the actualization of tradition is always realized, because it can be produced in no other way except out of the material which is in the people's unconscious. But those who have been educated in schools or art academies, or who have in any way suffered the process of esthetic appreciation, have formed in their consciousness a series of criteria which impede the creation of art. Only talent or genius can surmount these repressive conditions. This does not mean to say that all appreciation of the art of the past is a hindrance for the production of art. On the contrary, it is necessary, but only when the estimation and knowledge of tradition becomes the means and not the end of a trajectory of possible develop-

ment. To surmount the limiting barriers of the academic implies a great vitality, which shows in creative work, and which is an expression of the pleasure of living.

The knowledge of the traditional forms in art gives the artist, and especially the architect, a material to start from, so that through his inventiveness applied to the necessities and problems of his time, he can produce a modern work of art within his own tradition. Only in this way can art form a part of the process of man's adaptation to reality and serve as an instrument of harmony, and an example to others who live in the same region where it had its roots.

As we can see in Mexico, since the beginning of the Colonial days to our own time, there have existed two currents of art.

The first one is of Mexican character and style, the work of the people, and is known as popular art; this has maintained itself within the ancient Mexican pre-hispanic tradition. This art expresses the popular aspirations and preserves its regional character. It has been said with reason that the Mexican people could never have survived the brutalities of the Conquest and the exploitation of centuries if they had not kept alive their traditions and culture. The extraordinary art that flourished in Anahuac, center of the culture of America, was brutally cut to the ground by the Conquistadores, but its roots remained in the earth, and all through the Colonial period, the Independence, and the Revolution, the Mexican people continued to produce and still produce their own art.

The poverty-stricken people of Mexico, who are in the great majority, build their houses with the earth they pick up with

material conditions of life.

It is interesting to compare the antiseptic and de-humanized art of our days to its antithesis, the Baroque of the 18th Century, which was the architectural expression of the clerical counter-Reform. This art was possibly the one which came closest to the popular taste of Mexico during the Colonial period. Its wide appeal was due to the fact that the Churrigueresque and, in general, the Mexican Baroque, were characterized by a profusion of form and color and also typical of the ancient art of Mexico. Even the Neo-Classical architecture of the period of Independence is in a certain way made more decorative by the application of painting and sculpture to the altars of the churches, rendering it more acceptable to the popular taste.

The Swiss puritanism of the architecture of Le Corbusier represents the exact antithesis of the plastic art of Mexico. This is because the principal characteristics of Mexican art are the pyramidal form of the composition; an exaggerated emphasis on the tri-dimensional volume; the dynamic asymmetry of the axis; the complex variety of decoration; the richness of form and color; and the superb manner in which the building harmonizes with the landscape. Even in the popular architecture of today we find these characteristics which, in my estimation, are the general traits which synthesize the Mexican manner of expression.

The total absence of sculpture and painting as part of architecture is one of the achievements of our modern civilization. Throughout the history of mankind, from the most ancient cultures of the Anahuac or the Mediterranean, up to the beginning of the 20th Century, architecture was always accompanied

by painting and sculpture. Sometimes these arts were an integral part of architecture and, at other times, only decorations attached to architecture. In the Neo-Classical period, architecture employs, as did the ancient Roman art, columns, pilasters, cornices, pediments, balustrades, etc., as decorative elements more sculptural than architectural, and used bas-reliefs to adorn the walls, and statuary to humanize its purity. Even in the most academic period of the end of the 19th Century and the beginning of the 20th, architecture persisted in the employment of sculpture and sometimes painting executed within the narrow limitations of the academic manner typical of that time. Naturally this juxtaposition of the plastic arts is not comparable to the integration of an Ankor-vat or the Cathedral of Chartres, but nevertheless it shows the importance placed upon the human need to decorate its buildings.

We therefore have to conclude that the systematic elimination of sculpture and painting from architecture is typical of modern times and of our occidental civilization.

In our period of history the majority of people have been converted to specialized labor, and they no longer count ^{by the} as spectators in the cultural processes of our times. Also architecture today is a product of specialized work in which the architect, having no connection with painting or sculpture, has become a sort of manager of production of buildings. Painting and sculpture are executed by artists who are also specialized in their work, and who are competing with one another. They have no understanding of or connection with the construction of buildings.

It has been our luck in Mexico to initiate the movement to incorporate again, on a large scale, painting and sculpture into architecture. This has been possible only because of the important development in Mexico of monumental mural painting.

With the exception of the architecture of the Olympic Stadium at University City, which is an expression of Mexico, and which also harmonizes with the landscape, all other cases, in which integration of the plastic arts has been attempted, have been only the superimposing or the application of sculpture or painting (mosaics), which are Mexican in character, upon the face of a foreign architecture of the International Style.

University City offered a great opportunity to reunite the arts of architecture, painting, and sculpture but little was done with it.

Nevertheless there is today in Mexico the first buds of a modern architecture of real Mexican character — an architecture which will some day become a foundation upon which to establish the unity of the plastic arts of Mexico.

On the ^{other} hand, the school of architecture is formed by a number of pavilions separated, two storied pavilions. Each of these pavilions ~~correspond~~ correspond to a project work shop and are also separated from the main building of the school. This planning

fore. Mum. E. Allen. Chicago University
Hello and a happy new year to you! Please material -
I was deep they have and you will have material -
yes we do know you must - here