

The Museum of Modern Art

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THE ARCHITECTURE OF LUIS BARRAGÁN by Emilio Ambasz. 128 pages, 94 illustrations (28 in color). \$27.50 clothbound; \$12.50 paperbound. Published by The Museum of Modern Art. Clothbound distributed to the trade by The New York Graphic Society, Boston.

The Architecture of Luis Barragán by Emilio Ambasz, the first book on the work of this noted Mexican landscape architect, will be published by The Museum of Modern Art on June 4, 1976. The book, containing an essay on Barragán and detailed analyses of seven of his most accomplished projects, is illustrated throughout by numerous photographs, 28 in full color. A complete list of the architect's works documented by photographs, drawings, and plans, and an extensive bibliography are also included.

Barragán is one of landscape architecture's most refined and poetic practitioners. While his design approach is classical and atemporal, the elements of his architecture are deeply rooted in his country's cultural and religious traditions. As Emilio Ambasz writes, "Barragán has always endeavored to create an architectural language which would express man's eternal longings in the context of modern Mexico's natural and cultural conditions." The publication of the book is accompanied by a slide exhibition of Barragán's work at the Museum, the first of a series on contemporary architects to be organized by the Museum's Department of Architecture and Design.

Barragán's dramatically simple, richly colored architecture is both deliberately monumental and static in quality. "In the de Chirico-like settings he creates, the wall is both the supreme entity and the inhabitant of a larger metaphysical landscape: a screen for revealing the hidden colors of Mexico's almost white sun and a shield for suggesting never seen presences. His magnificent fountains and carefully constructed plazas seem to stand as great architectural stages for the promenade of mythological beings," says Mr. Ambasz.

Among the projects which are discussed in the book is El Pedregal (1945-50), a housing development where Barragán brought about the metamorphosis of a lava desert

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into a park and residential area. Steps and pathways were carved into the rock and water pools and stone walls were so carefully placed that the gardens seem to have been created together with the sea of lava. Barragán's own house, which he describes as "my refuge, an emotional piece of architecture, not a cold piece of convenience," is also included, illustrated by seven photographs. Built in 1947, the house owes little to the International Style of modern architecture, but rather is an elaboration of Mexico's provincial architecture.

Other works featured are the Towers of Satellite City (1957), which Barragán created in collaboration with Mathias Goeritz, five large abstract towers of varying heights and colors which are used as promotional symbols identifying a residential area and which counterpoint the distant hills which surround Mexico City; and Las Arboledas (1958-61) and Los Clubes (1963-64) residential subdivisions created for horsemen, both designed with an equestrian character. Las Arboledas features water as a continuous presence throughout; fountains, water tanks, and reflection pools express the element's sounds, movements, and mirror-like surfaces. Los Clubes is the site of one of Barragán's most accomplished fountains for horses which creates a magic play of shadow and reflections against solid and liquid surfaces.

The most recent work in the book, which also reflects Barragán's love of horses, is San Cristobal (1967-68), consisting of a stable, horse pool, swimming pool, and house. The project, Barragán's most complex creation, is a micro-model of the pueblos he knew as a child, "the house, the plaza, the horses, the friendly trees, and water coming from far away."

The Architecture of Luis Barragán measures 9 1/4" by 11 5/8" and contains 128 pages with 94 photographs, 28 in full color--the majority of which are the work of the well-known photographer Armando Salas Portugal. The book, designed by Emilio Ambasz, the author, sells for \$27.50 clothbound, \$12.50 paperbound.

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In addition to The Architecture of Luis Barragán Mr. Ambasz is also the author of the book which accompanies the Museum's exhibition The Taxi Project: Realistic Solutions for Today on view from June 18 through September 7. Other Museum publications by Mr. Ambasz include Italy: The New Domestic Landscape (1972), Walter Pichler, Projects (1975), and The Universitas Project (1976). He has also contributed numerous articles to such journals as Perspecta, Oppositions, Industrial Design, and Casabella among others.

Reiview copies and additional information available from Michael Boodro, Assistant and Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53 St., New York, NY 10019. Phone: (212) 956-7504; 7501
