
Postwar Modernism in Mexico: Luis Barragán's Jardines del Pedregal and the International Discourse on Architecture and Place

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Source: *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 58, No. 2 (Jun., 1999), pp. 122-145

Published by: [University of California Press](#) on behalf of the [Society of Architectural Historians](#)

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Postwar Modernism in Mexico

Luis Barragán's Jardines del Pedregal and the International Discourse on Architecture and Place

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To be interested in architecture is to be interested in gardens, it seems to me, for if a house is harmonious the designer has felt the *ambiente*—trees, vegetation, rocks. As a landscape affects the individual, so should it influence a house.

—Luis Barragán, 1951¹

A turning point in the career of architect Luis Barragán (1902–1988), the Jardines del Pedregal de San Angel (“the gardens of the stony place”) is widely recognized as one of the most important works of modern architecture in Mexico (Figure 1).² Barragán spoke of this exclusive Mexico City subdivision, whose design and promotion he directed from 1945 to 1953, at a meeting of architects in Coronado, California, in 1951; there he emphasized his efforts “to preserve the harmony of the architectural development and the landscape.”³ The word *landscape* as Barragán used it here suggests both the wild nature of the site and the gardens cultivated on it; for him, the site was not a problem to be overcome by design, nor was the garden a decorative appendage to that design. Instead, the “harmony” Barragán sought meant treating landscape, in both its natural and cultivated senses, as inseparable from, even generative of, architectural form. For contemporary critics both in and outside of Mexico much of El Pedregal’s success and distinctive “regionalist” aesthetic lay in its sympathetic integration of architecture and landscape.⁴

Though often noted, this integration has been little studied; yet such analysis opens new possibilities for understanding both the project and its architect. In short, Barragán’s buildings and gardens, beginning with El Pedregal, have been viewed by most critics and historians as Mexican and autobiographical in essence and association. Analyses have concentrated on those sources named by Barragán (Mexican vernacular building, Surrealist painting, memories of Moorish pleasure gardens, and the Mediterranean idylls of the gardener, author, and illustrator Ferdinand Bac), and on notions such as mystery, magic, silence, and serenity.⁵ Modern, to be sure, in their flat-roofed, planate, minimalistic forms, Barragán’s buildings are nonetheless treated as remote—disconnected even—from

contemporary architectural developments outside of Mexico. “Corbusian functionalism” and “Miesian minimalism” are sometimes mentioned, usually as something that he flirted with due to youth or financial duress or that he appropriated and modified beyond recognition; North American modernism is not mentioned at all.⁶ Undoubtedly, El Pedregal was deeply affected by the nature of its site, by its designer’s response to that site, and by his personal and professional experiences as a Mexican born to a certain time and social position (aristocratic, agrarian, politically conservative, deeply Catholic). Yet Barragán’s architecture was also well informed by broader trends, apparent both in Mexico and beyond, and these trends, as well as the more idiosyncratic affinities already mentioned, helped shape the work and account for its impact.⁷ By examining this one feature of El Pedregal’s design—the deliberate integration of buildings and landscape—we might return this important project, and Barragán himself, to a discourse from which they have long been separated. El Pedregal’s expression of place may well have been singular, but the ideas underlying it were very much of the moment.⁸

BARRAGÁN’S LANDSCAPES PRIOR TO EL PEDREGAL

Barragán began his architectural practice during the late 1920s in his native Guadalajara, following his graduation from that city’s Escuela Libre de Ingenieros in December 1923 and a year and a half spent traveling in Europe.⁹ Even in his earliest work, he was exploring the linkages to be made between a building and its site. The house he completed in 1930 for his friend, the lawyer, scholar, and conservative politician Efraín González Luna, provides the most refined illustration of this interest (Figure 2).¹⁰ Set on a quiet and newly developed residential street near central Guadalajara, the building seems at first to be a fairly typical, upmarket Guadalaran dwelling of the later 1920s, very much in keeping with its solid and stolid-looking neocolonial neighbors. The building’s reservedly modernized and minimized masses, accented with green roof tiles and brightly painted Moorish-style woodwork, rise from behind a wrought-iron fence and a wide lawn. As one moves closer, however, the spatial complexity of the design becomes more apparent. Through deep-set rectangular and



FIGURE 1: Luis Barragán, Prieto López House, Jardines del Pedregal de San Angel, Mexico City, 1949–1950, real estate advertisement from *Arquitectura México*, June 1955. Photo by Armando Salas Portugal

round-arched voids the house opens on to an elaborate, interlocking, multileveled sequence of exterior spaces: patios and terraces, reflecting pools and fountains, small formal gardens, a jai alai court. Notable are the many transitional features Barragán provided: pergolas, arcades, gazebos, sky-lit halls, stairways, and balconies that offer passage between enclosed interiors and more fully open exterior spaces.

In 1936, Barragán left Guadalajara for Mexico City. Over the next four years he built about thirty houses and small apartment buildings there, mostly speculative projects that he financed himself. Employing elements of the Corbusian func-

tionalist mode widely seen in the capital since the early 1930s, these structures were located in dense urban settings and built with an eye toward quick profits. Consequently, most featured little if any landscaping; the closest they come to garden design is in the roof terraces found at such sites as the 1936 duplex on Avenida Parque México in the Colonia Hipódromo (Figure 3) and the block of painters' studios, built in 1939 with the German émigré modernist Max Cetto, on Plaza Melchor Ocampo in the Colonia Cuauhtémoc.¹¹ With their unglazed ribbon windows facing preexisting parks, these austere, open-air terraces framed well-groomed patches of grass and trees, allowing nature to be seen—at a distance—but not touched.¹²

But nature was soon to come to the fore of Barragán's architectural activity. Claiming dissatisfaction with the work he had been producing, and supported by the profits from his



FIGURE 2: Barragán, González Luna House, Guadalajara, 1930. Photo by author

LUIS BARRAGAN, ARCHITECT

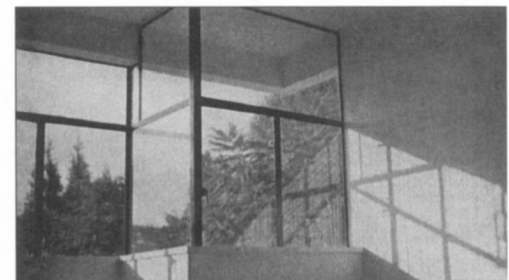
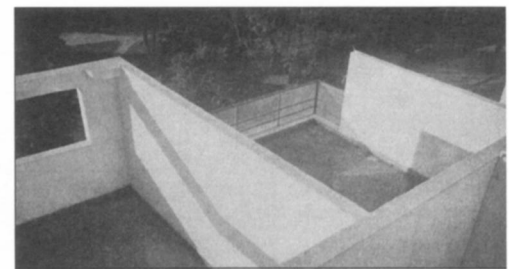
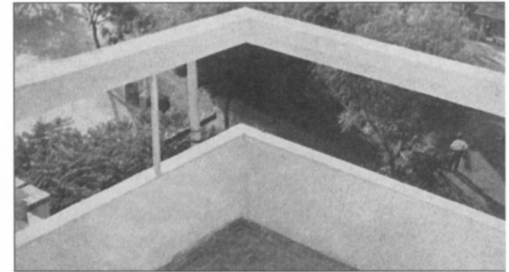
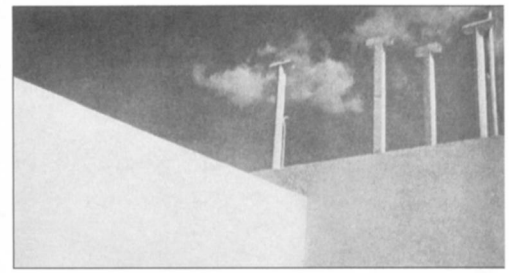
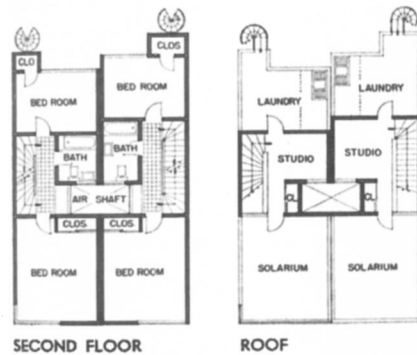
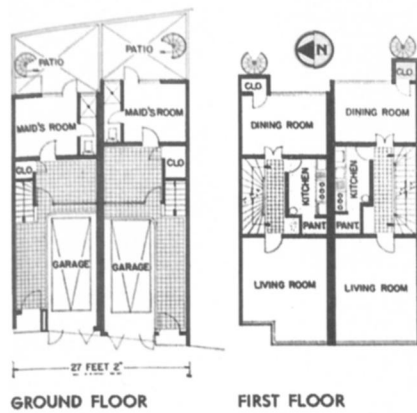


FIGURE 3: Barragán, Avenida Parque México duplex, Mexico City, 1936, from *Architectural Record*, April 1937. Photos by Lola Alvarez Bravo

recent speculative endeavors, he built little between 1940 and 1945.¹³ During this period, however, he did purchase and remodel a house for himself in Mexico City's Tacubaya district, and he designed a pair of small, private gardens there and in San Angel, at the northern edge of the 2,000-year-old, 80-square-kilometer Pedregal lava field, just south of the city.¹⁴ The San Angel garden is gone, the Tacubaya garden is now divided and decrepit. Contemporary records, however, provide some evidence of their original character. In 1946 writer Mary St. Albans described the Tacubaya site as "mostly garden; the house is seldom seen from the sweeping lawns, the groves of trees and the pools that mirror their drooping branches. . . . High buttressed walls, toned the red earth color of the paths, contrast delightfully with the greenery."¹⁵ Photos of this

project and of the San Angel gardens—on a site known as El Cabrío ("the goats' pen")—were first published in July 1945 in the magazine *Arquitectura México* (Figure 4). While the site plan and photos of the Tacubaya garden show neatly terraced rectilinear zones, bounded by stone retaining walls and linked by stone stairways, the San Angel garden appears much wilder, less constructed or composed (Figure 5). Nature has taken over here. In the pages devoted to it, an ancient and contorted mound of lava covered with desert flowers and tall, thin cacti immediately confronts the reader. A surrealist anthropomorphic piece of wood sweeps upward from a walled field, as if blasted by lightning. A high wall made of volcanic stone encloses little apart from more stones and the empty sky above. A wooden gate in this wall and a cross rising from it

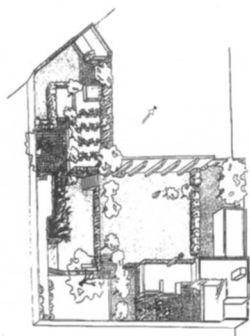
DOS JARDINES

EN MEXICO, D. F.

LUIS BARRAGAN, Arq.



Nº 1



Two Jardines en México, D. F.



Nº 2

EN SAN ANGEL, D. F.



FIGURE 4: Barragán, garden in Tacubaya, Mexico City, 1943, from *Arquitectura México*, July 1945. Photos by Guillermo Zamora and Armando Salas Portugal

FIGURE 5: Barragán, garden in San Angel, Mexico City, 1944, from *Arquitectura México*, July 1945. Photos by Armando Salas Portugal

stand like the last vestiges of some ruined mission. In another part of the garden, pools bordered by rough stone paths mirror the dense woods overhead. Reflections float in these pools—of clouds and of sculptures, robed, headless human figures, not so much reclining as half sunk. The prevailing condition presented in the photos is one of aestheticized desolation and decay. Recalling El Cabrío in 1962, Barragán said that the gardens he built there were “very entertaining to me . . . and they gave me a certain name, a certain ease in developing other projects, especially subdivisions. Specifically then, it was the garden that I made at the edge of the Pedregal that . . . gave me the idea of utilizing the Pedregal for

houses and gardens, and in this manner El Pedregal was born.”¹⁶

SHAPING THE PEDREGAL FOR HUMAN HABITATION

With its swirling stone eddies and crests, and such peculiar native flora as the *palos bobos* (“crazy trees”), the Pedregal was a dramatic, desolate, and venerable place, a visual mixture of violence and serenity, like a turbulent body of water suddenly frozen. Prior to the eruption that gave it its name, the region had been home to some of Mexico’s earliest cities, Copilco and Cuicuilco, whose remains were unearthed beginning in the late nineteenth century.¹⁷ These ancient ruins, and the

JARDINES DEL PEDREGAL DE SAN ANGEL
el lugar ideal para vivir..

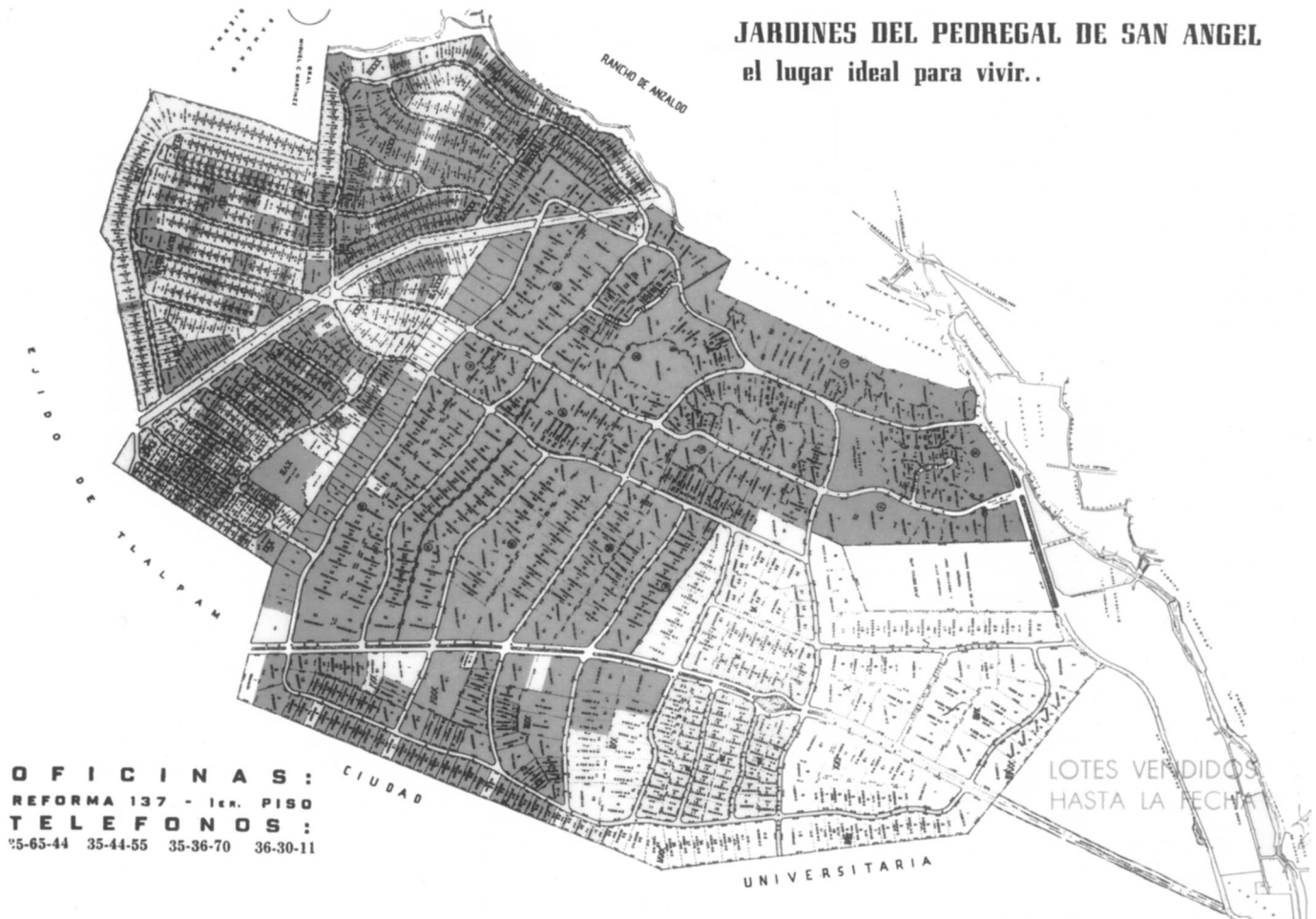


FIGURE 6: Barragán, Jardines del Pedregal, real estate advertisement showing plan from *Espacios*, January 1954

distinctive landscape and vegetation, led to the Pedregal's being seen in the twentieth century as a site of particular scientific and cultural significance.¹⁸ At the same time, these very features—the rugged badlands scenery and the enigmatic ruins—caused others to view it as a dangerous and mysterious place. One history published in 1913 reported that, “according to the Indians, the Pedregal is full of monstrous spirits and terrible witches, so much so that rare is the Indian who will walk through the place at night. . . . They call the Pedregal de San Angel the ‘primary school’ of witchcraft.”¹⁹ Elsewhere it was said that the region was crawling with snakes, scorpions, and criminals. These stories helped forestall development and attract hikers and a number of romantically inclined writers and artists, including the painters José María Velasco and Diego Rivera.²⁰

By the early 1940s Luis Barragán was also making forays into the Pedregal, often accompanied by the young photographer Armando Salas Portugal and the elderly landscape painter and vulcanologist Dr. Atl.²¹ Barragán began buying property there—it was still quite inexpensive if purchased in large tracts—and working on his gardens at El Cabrío. Inspired by these, and correctly anticipating Mexico's postwar economic

development and building boom, he began, in 1944, formulating plans to construct houses and gardens in the Pedregal. By the following year he had purchased 865 acres of land and set to work designing road and water systems, public plazas, model homes and gardens, and an extensive print and broadcast advertising campaign (Figure 6). In this he was assisted by several individuals: realtors Luis and José Alberto Bustamante, his business partners in the venture; Columbia University-trained city planner Carlos Contreras, author of the master plan for Mexico's Federal District and the man whom Barragán once credited with El Pedregal's street layout; painter Diego Rivera, whose proposal for El Pedregal's development (discussed below) would influence or mirror Barragán's own plans; German émigré artist Mathias Goeritz, who contributed sculptural elements like the *Serpiente del Pedregal* at the subdivision's entrance; photographer Salas Portugal, whose images were used in the advertising campaign that Barragán directed; and architect Max Cetto, with whom Barragán designed two model homes for the project (also discussed below).²² The first lots were sold in 1949, and within a year El Pedregal was on its way to becoming a tremendous financial and critical success. By 1952 there were more than 100 houses completed or in

progress, property values had skyrocketed, new land had been added to the development (for a total of 1,250 acres), and critics around the world were praising the Jardines del Pedregal as a new and distinctively Mexican modern architecture, where jewel-like gardens and dramatic modern houses (more than 900 by 1958) were blended into a savagely beautiful native landscape.²³

Much was made of Barragán's "building code" for El Pedregal, intended, said the architect, "to preserve the harmony of the architectural development and the landscape."²⁴ In December 1949, a writer for the Mexican art and design magazine *Espacios* (on whose editorial review board Barragán sat) described this code as "endorsed by a Presidential Decree with legal force."²⁵ There is, however, little evidence to support the existence of a building code; no printed copy has yet emerged. The only record of what it might have contained is in an article by architectural critic and historian Esther McCoy, based on conversations with Barragán, that was published in the magazine *Arts and Architecture* in August 1951.²⁶

McCoy noted four key points. The first point concerned style. The houses at El Pedregal were to be of "contemporary design"; houses in the style Barragán called "California Colonial" (that is, the ornate stucco and red-tile buildings popular in both Mexico and the United States since the 1910s) were "expressly forbidden." The architects should avoid overt historical references and superfluous, applied ornament, and must work to preserve and enhance the wildly irregular natural landscape. Buildings should contrast but not vie with the setting for attention. "We have found," said Barragán elsewhere that year, "that in order not to harm and spoil this landscape beauty, and to create beautiful architectural forms that will not compete with [it], they must be of such simplicity—abstract in quality, preferably straight lines, flat surfaces, and primary geometric forms."²⁷ Second, the minimum lot size was to be about one acre, with houses occupying no more than 10 percent of the total surface area of the development. The rest would be devoted to roads, gardens, and open space. Two-thirds of the region, said McCoy, "will always remain in gardens." Front-yard tennis courts, favored at the time by well-to-do Mexicans, were prohibited. Third, the lava rock was to be protected; all that could be removed was a small amount to be used in building walls or paths that would serve to promote further integration of buildings and site. Finally, native vegetation was to be preserved, and all new plantings and roads were "to follow the natural lines of the terrain."

In the case of El Pedregal, following the terrain meant abandoning the classic Spanish-colonial grid system found elsewhere in Mexico. With rare exceptions like Chapultepec Heights—an exclusive subdivision built near the center of Mexico City in the early 1920s, consisting of large, single-

family, neocolonial-style houses, sweeping lawns, winding streets, and cul-de-sacs—most residential areas in the capital and other cities were built along orthogonal grids and rectangular blocks.²⁸ By contrast, El Pedregal employed a picturesque, meandering street layout that followed the landscape's natural contours; in this, it was comparable to the sort of arrangement prevailing in what urban historian Robert Fishman calls the "classic" suburb of nineteenth- and twentieth-century England and the United States.²⁹ Rarely at El Pedregal does a road run for more than 100 meters without a bend or a hill terminating the view (Figure 7). Blocks, such as they are, are amorphous in shape, irregular rectangles at best. At various points along the sides of the streets large pieces of lava rock protrude through the paving; overgrown with moss, ferns, and flowers, they offer reminders of the turbulent landscape upon which the lanes and houses were overlaid. Street names within the development are suggestive of the basic natural and constructed elements constituting it: Fuentes, Crater, Agua, Luz, Cascada, Lava, Roca, Lluvia, Nubes, Colorines (this last is the name of a type of tree characteristic of the Pedregal).

If El Pedregal broke with the grid system preferred by colonial and postcolonial Mexican planners, it nonetheless featured a typically Mexican approach to the separation of public and private zones. In contrast to the recessed thresholds and wide, parklike front lawns of classic North American suburbs, such as Olmsted and Vaux's Riverside, Illinois (1868) (or Mexico's own Chapultepec Heights), most of the houses and gardens at El Pedregal stood behind high walls set flush with the street or sidewalk. In the earliest portions of the subdivision these walls were made of rough, site-drawn volcanic stone, with gray-white mortar sometimes inlaid with small stones in the manner of Aztec masonry. Elsewhere, houses were set behind concrete walls or iron gates. These walled streets gave an element of visual continuity and cohesion to the development and provided a formal link between El Pedregal and the closed street façades of more traditional Mexican neighborhoods. Not surprisingly, they also drew the ire of some North American critics, one of whom described El Pedregal's streetscape as "dull and uninviting . . . disappointing."³⁰ Barragán, however, defended the Pedregal's walls. In 1951 he said, "Streets limited by walls are not objectionable, provided these walls are treated satisfactorily from a plastic point of view with trees, vines and flowers as if they were vertical gardens." Through the addition of "decorative works"—railings, groups of trees, and fountains—one would be able, he said, to create "garden-streets" characterized by "sex-appeal" and an "element of mystery."³¹

Along with the Pedregal house he built for attorney Eduardo Prieto López in 1949–1950, the best indication of what Barragán wanted behind these walls is found in the two



FIGURE 7: Barragán, Avenida de las Fuentes, looking north toward the Plaza de las Fuentes, Jardines del Pedregal. Photo by author

“demonstration” houses and gardens he designed with Max Cetto.³² Built as part of El Pedregal’s promotional campaign, the houses at 130 and 140 Avenida de las Fuentes (originally 10 and 12 Fuentes) were shown to early prospective clients and illustrated in newspaper, magazine, and television advertisements (Figure 8). These houses were to show the region’s potential as a site for garden homes and exemplify the “correct” mode of building there, a mode that “preserve[d] the harmony of the architectural development and the landscape.” While Cetto has often received (or taken) credit for both houses, they should be correctly understood as joint ventures. This is also how Barragán appears to have seen them.³³ El Pedregal was his project after all; he, along with the Bustamantes, was paying the bills and taking the financial risks. Presumably, he would not have employed Cetto to design the demonstration houses if Cetto’s vision had not accorded with, or complemented, his own.³⁴

According to Cetto, the house at 140 Avenida de las Fuentes was the second to be built in El Pedregal, constructed soon after his own 1949 house on Calle del Agua.³⁵ As at 130 Fuentes next-door, one accesses the site from the west, past a high stone wall and a small gatehouse that leads into a large, open, stone-paved patio area (Figure 9). The main house is cubic in form with a multilevel flat roof and cantilevered concrete awnings over some of the windows and doors. The thick, reinforced concrete walls are plastered and variously painted white, pale gray, milk chocolate brown, pale pink,

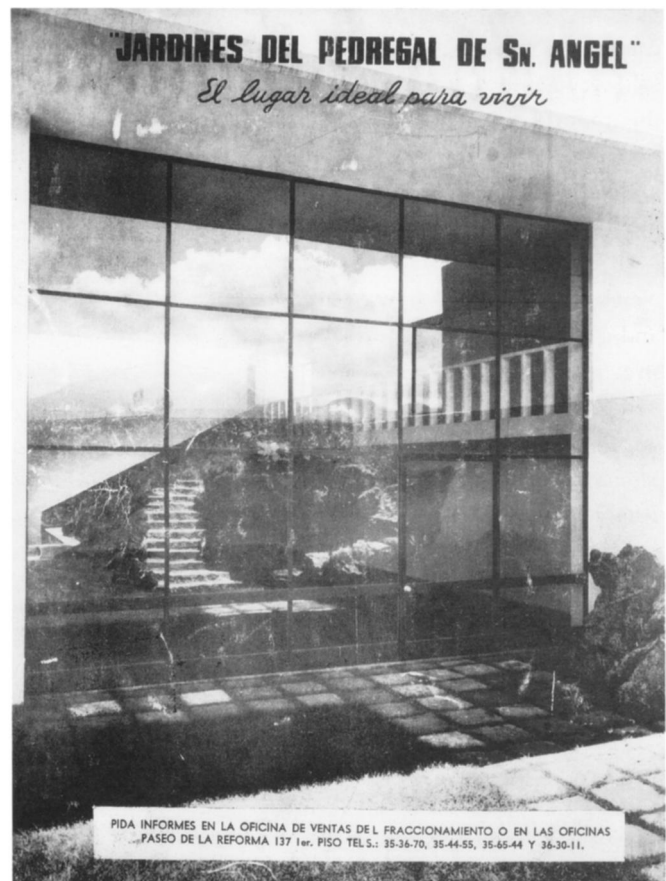


FIGURE 8: Barragán and Max Cetto, 140 Avenida del las Fuentes, Jardines del Pedregal, real estate advertisement from *Arquitectura México*, December 1953

bright yellow, orange, or green; in places they are accented with lava rubble masonry. The mullions of a large, floor-to-ceiling gridded window between the living room and garden are painted bright red. Beyond this, the still, blue water of the swimming pool, the pale gray stone paths, and the rugged purple-black lava formations protruding from soft green lawns complete the site's audacious mix of colors and textures.³⁶ Though the plan of the house at 140 Fuentes is more rambling than that of its neighbor—in part because its site is larger (8,000 square meters) and rockier—the houses are similar in size and arrangement. Both are conceived along strictly orthogonal lines. In each case one enters through a hall providing simultaneous access to a bilevel service wing, a ground-level common dining and living area, and an upper level private bed-and-bath zone. The kitchens are detached and invisible from the dining areas. A distinct feature of the house at 140 Fuentes is its living room, which rises a full two stories, making space for an open stairway that leads to an exposed gallery, four bedrooms, and three baths, and eventually to the servants' quarters and garden area (Figure 10).

“AN ARCHITECTURE EMINENTLY MEXICAN”

There is little in the demonstration houses (apart from the profusion of servants' quarters and a certain boldness of palette) to set them apart from contemporary North American houses of similar cost (in 1951, the house at 140 Fuentes sold for about \$50,000 USD) and progressive tendencies.³⁷ By this time, many of the formal and spatial qualities of the houses—flat-roofed cubic forms, reinforced concrete frames and walls, picture windows, open planning—had become commonplace in Europe, Japan, the United States, and elsewhere in the Americas. For some time, Frank Lloyd Wright, Richard Neutra, and others had been using rusticated stone for walls and hearths while contrasting closed and relatively austere street façades with more open garden façades.³⁸ Yet even before construction was completed, the houses at El Pedregal were characterized in the architectural press as a uniquely Mexican modern architecture. In a 1952 interview with *Arquitectura México*, Noé Carlos Botello, then El Pedregal's business manager, described the development as “an architecture eminently modern and Mexican . . . [in] the most Mexican architectural style . . . [one that] reflects the soul of Mexico.”³⁹ A writer for *The Art Digest* in 1953 concurred, pronouncing El Pedregal “the most complete and daring contribution to Mexico's striving toward a new architecture.” Other commentators followed suit.⁴⁰

What, then, is so specific to the region in El Pedregal's design? If El Pedregal's regional character is not immediately apparent in the forms and fixtures of the model homes, it might be found to derive instead from the site, or rather from the relationship of the buildings to that site. It has already

been noted that this was no ordinary landscape, but one of both peculiar form and rich historical associations. Here was a place where ancient Mexicans had built their homes and temples, where volcanoes had flowed and distinctive local plants took root, where Indians had sought refuge from the Spaniards and early-twentieth-century political revolutionaries from the forces they eventually overthrew. This was a place left undeveloped and untainted by European imperialism. For some in the first half of the twentieth century it came to be seen as the ancient heart of Mexico, potentially, a new Eden.⁴¹ Simply deciding to build *here*, to reclaim *this* land at the moment that Barragán did, at a time when Mexican artists, intellectuals, and politicians were speaking almost obsessively about issues of national character and identity, was itself an act with profound symbolic implications.⁴²

Further issue must be made of the relationship established at El Pedregal between the landscape and the constructions it accommodated. Buildings and gardens—designed elements—were to be secondary to preexisting natural forms, set in harmony with them. Building “gardens and houses which enhance[d] the beauty of the rocks” was, Barragán believed, a problem best resolved through an architecture of simple, abstract forms, forms that whispered rather than shouted their place in the world. As Mary St. Albans reported after meeting with Barragán in April 1946, the “low massive homes [at El Pedregal will be] built of hardened lava and [made] indigenous to their settings. But the main feature will be the garden.”⁴³

At first glance, this emphasis on the garden appears traditional. For centuries in this region, pre-Hispanic and Hispanic gardens had stood figuratively and literally at the center of the Mexican house. With its solid, often windowless, street-side walls, the house was an inward-looking unit, focused on an open-air courtyard or patio. Often filled with plants, with a fountain or caged birds, the patio was a small, well-groomed piece of nature framed by architecture—a garden embedded in the building and circumscribed, rather like an enormous potted plant. The colors, sounds, smells, light, and atmospheric conditions of the world beyond the house entered it through the mediating agency of the patio. This motif remained central to such diverse works of Mexican modernism as Pedro Ramírez Vasquez's National Anthropological Museum in Mexico City (1964) and Enrique del Moral's house for himself, directly across the street from Barragán's house in the Tacubaya district of Mexico City (1948).⁴⁴

The two demonstration houses on Avenida de las Fuentes likewise focused on their gardens and were closed to the world outside by forbidding street-fronting walls. Yet behind these walls the traditional relationship between building and garden was reversed; the gardens surrounded and permeated the buildings; instead of encompassing the gardens, the buildings grew out of the landscape.

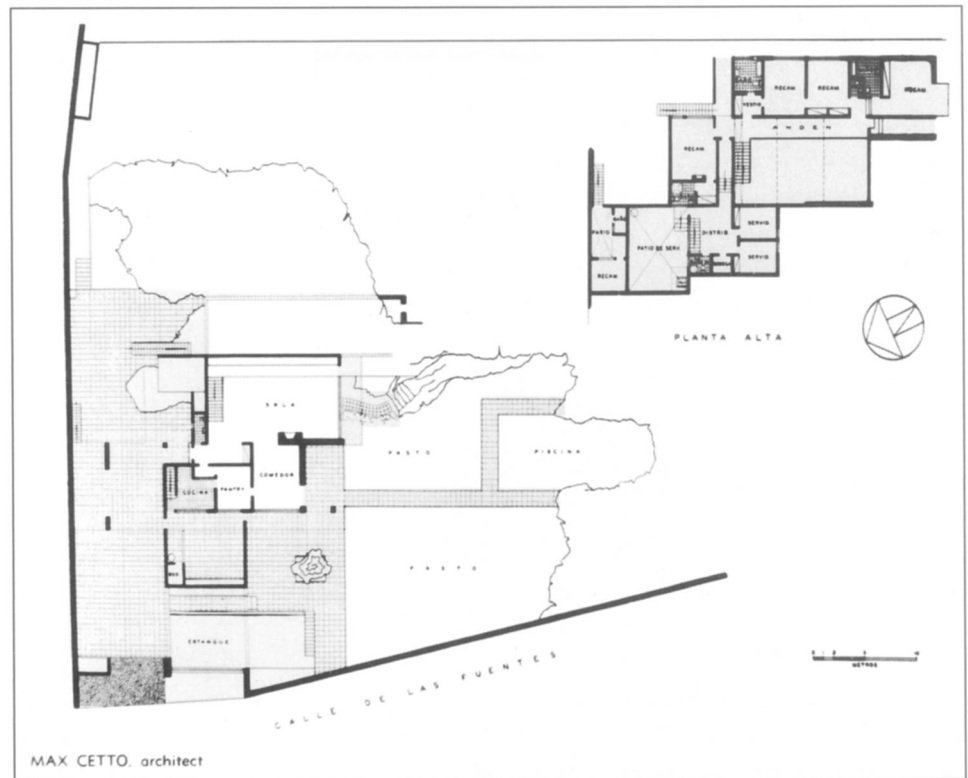


FIGURE 9: Barragán and Cetto, 140 Fuentes, plan of house and garden, from I. E. Myers, *Mexico's Modern Architecture* (New York, 1951)

FIGURE 10: Barragán and Cetto, 140 Fuentes, looking north from garden, from I. E. Myers, *Mexico's Modern Architecture* (New York, 1951)



This is particularly evident at 140 Fuentes, where the effect is one of high drama and expressive force (Figure 11). No longer manicured, enclosed, fragmentary, the garden here is rugged and irregular, punctuated by extensive lava outcroppings, made continuous with the larger environment beyond its walls, with the volcanoes visible in the distance. The distribution of the building is itself largely determined by the preexisting topography: the flat-roofed rectilinear forms ramble across

the landscape, set down directly on the rocks or raised above them on pilotis; lawns, winding paths, and an organically shaped swimming pool were fitted in between the lava outcrops. Originally, a naturally occurring lava wall, rising directly from the site, was to remain in the living room, directly beneath the gallery. (This was either removed quite early or never included in the structure as built; no photos of it have been found.) Cetto spoke of the wall as “the masterkey . . . [it

is] what made the house click.”⁴⁵ This wall was to bring the landscape directly into the house, unifying these two elements into a single whole.

It remains to situate the broader integration that this wall represents, and the architects’ interest in making such a gesture, alongside contemporary trends in modern landscape and architectural design. To do this, it will be necessary to outline the approaches to landscape favored by some of Barragán’s contemporaries, both inside and outside of Mexico, and to indicate his awareness of these. Barragán, who was often described by critics and historians as lacking in professional training and contacts, was in fact cultivated and well connected,⁴⁶ and his formal architectural education was as rigorous and complete as any available outside the capital (at least before 1948, when his friend Ignacio Díaz Morales established the University of Guadalajara’s architectural program). He was deeply interested in and knowledgeable about the art and architecture of his day. His library, which Esther McCoy described in 1951 as the “biggest art library in Mexico,” included thousands of art and architecture books and magazines such as *Espacios* and *Architectural Record*. Among his close personal contacts were prominent and cosmopolitan modernists including photographer Paul Strand, writer Aldous Huxley, artists Diego Rivera and Miguel Covarrubias, and architects Philip Johnson, Buckminster Fuller, and Louis Kahn.⁴⁷ Well traveled, he visited the Exposition des Arts Décoratifs in Paris in 1925 and sought out the work of Le Corbusier. In 1931, he met Le Corbusier in Paris and may have attended lectures by him. In New York during the early thirties, Barragán spent time with Mexican painter José Clemente Orozco and with expatriate Austrian architect and designer Frederick Kiesler, and he made contact with *Architectural Record* editor Lawrence Kocher, who published several of his early Guadalarajan houses. Back in Mexico in the late thirties and forties, Barragán was among the first to welcome and work with the German émigré modernists Max Cetto and Mathias Goeritz. In 1951 he noted the “valuable influence [in Mexico] from many of the architects of California,” in particular, Wright, Neutra, and the architect and industrial designer Raymond Loewy.⁴⁸ He claimed Neutra (whom he had known since the late 1930s) as a close friend and reported having “studied and followed all his works.”⁴⁹ A look at the work of some of these figures will bring El Pedregal’s integration of site and architecture into clearer historical focus.⁵⁰

ARCADIA, INTEGRATION, AND THE FUNCTIONAL GARDEN

It has often been said that the leading architects and theorists of the Modern Movement expressed little interest in landscape and garden design. According to landscape architect and historian Diana Balmori, “there has not been a Modern

movement in landscape per se.”⁵¹ Peter Davey likewise maintains that “the Movement failed to produce a body of theory and practice of gardens which could in any way compare with its achievements in literature, the plastic arts, and architecture.”⁵² For many progressive designers, landscape historian Robert B. Riley suggests, “the garden came to symbolize the dead hand of tradition, a rich man’s toy, an emblem of social irrelevance or outright oppression.”⁵³ Just as modern buildings were to be freed from the dead weight of history, from academic restrictions and applied ornament—made rational, efficient, economic, and by extension, spiritually and morally uplifting—so must their settings be purified.

To this end many modern architects abandoned the *garden* for the *park*, an idyllic, naturalistic setting that, despite its roots in the aristocratic English picturesque landscape tradition, was now ostensibly open to all.⁵⁴ This was a setting whose naturalness, however contrived, denied design and presented the illusion of a pure and primal landscape, only with the rough edges removed: Arcadia, or Eden sans serpents. A classic modern example of this approach is found in the work of Le Corbusier, including portions of his Ville Radieuse (the Ville Verte) project of 1930, where rigorously rectilinear towers rise on pilotis above sweeping lawns, winding paths, and scattered trees (Figure 12). About this time, upon the rooftops of country houses like his Villa Savoye of 1929, Le Corbusier placed terraces, “hanging garden[s] . . . efficient . . . with no maintenance . . . for taking in air.” The sun, space, and greenery made available through these terraces constituted, he said, the setting for “a Virgilian dream.”⁵⁵ Following a 1958 interview with Barragán’s business partner at El Pedregal, a writer for the Mexico City daily *Novedades* concluded that Le Corbusier had provided the inspiration for the city’s by-then famous suburb. “The Gardens of El Pedregal,” he wrote, “pride of our country and admired by all the foreigners that visit us, was planned according to the orientations which the brilliant architect and urbanist Le Corbusier called Tridimensional Urbanism, founded on these three values: Sun, Space, and the Green Zone.”⁵⁶ Barragán’s extensive collection of Le Corbusier’s writings—including first editions of *Vers une architecture* (1923), *Urbanisme* (1925), *Précisions sur un état présent de l’architecture et de l’urbanisme* (1930), and *Quand les cathédrales étaient blanches* (1937)—would seem to bear this out.

Yet Barragán’s idea of Arcadia, like the landscape he chose to work with, differed from anything in Le Corbusier’s experience, and it bore a decidedly American stamp. For many in the Americas, including Barragán, the artificial, pastoral naturalness of landscapes like Le Corbusier’s held far less appeal than the rough-hewn grandeur of the wilderness. Indeed, the American continent’s long-running celebration of their wide, open spaces and breathtaking natural wonders offers one plausible explanation for the relatively dormant state of professional



FIGURE 11: Barragán and Cetto, 140 Fuentes, looking west toward street entrance, from Max Cetto, *Modern Architecture in Mexico* (New York, 1961)



FIGURE 12: Le Corbusier, drawing of the Ville Radieuse/Radiant City, 1930

landscape architecture in the Americas before World War II. Compared to the awesome, “formless” wilderness of Yosemite or the Pedregal, could a private, cultivated landscape seem anything but puny and effete? What man-made garden could compare with the American Eden?⁵⁷ That this was a widely held attitude among American modernists is attested by Henry-Russell Hitchcock’s comments in the catalogue for the San Francisco Museum of Art’s landmark exhibition of

1937, *Contemporary Landscape Architecture and its Sources*, in which he virtually wrote the landscape designer out of business:

One single principle is ultimately sufficient to cover all the various current manifestations of intelligent and aesthetically effective human control over the natural environment: that is, the preservation of all possible values previously in existence in the landscape setting with the addition of only the simplest and most practical provision for specific

human needs. The essence of sound modern gardening is neither design nor planting, but choice of site.⁵⁸

Hitchcock's views were predicated on his admiration for the work of Frank Lloyd Wright (subject of his 1942 monograph, *In the Nature of Materials, The Buildings of Frank Lloyd Wright, 1887–1941*). Wright himself, when discussing his "organic architecture" in 1908, had spoken not of landscaping but of siting. He advised that "a building should appear to grow easily from its site and be shaped to harmonize with its surroundings."⁵⁹ He related the low, heavy masses and broad, sweeping overhangs of his pre-World War I Chicago-area houses to the flat, open prairie on which the city was founded. Later, at Fallingwater, his house in Bear Run, Pennsylvania, for Edgar J. Kaufmann, designed in 1936, the link between building and site and the influence of site on architectural form were even more pronounced (Figure 13). Walls made of local stone contrasted with stucco-covered, cantilevered balconies; the built forms spilled out into space like the rocks to which they were moored and the waterfall they surmounted. Amid the rugged natural splendor of Fallingwater's site, a "garden" in any traditional sense, or a cultivated landscape of any sort, was almost unimaginable. Wright emphasized the importance of a "good site," one of "difficult" and singular character, and of associating architecture with this character in a speech before the Association of Federal Architects in Washington, D.C., in 1938. Presenting his "prescription for the modern house" (published in 1941), Wright said:

First, [pick] a good site. Pick that one at the most difficult spot—pick a site no one wants—but pick one that has features making for character; trees, individuality, a fault of some kind in the realtor mind. That now means getting out of the city. Then, standing on that site, look about you so that you see what has charm. What is the reason you want to build there? Find out. Then build your house so that you may still look from where you stood upon all that charmed you and lose nothing of what you saw before the house was built. . . . Architectural association accentuates the character of the landscape if the architecture is right.⁶⁰

In the United States, Wright's system of "architectural association" was advanced during the 1920s and 1930s by, among others, his former assistant, the Austrian-born, Los Angeles-based architect Richard Neutra.⁶¹ Though Neutra rarely addressed garden or landscape design in his writings, he, like Wright, maintained that nature was best when not tampered with too much. For Neutra, what was essential was to maintain a bond between nature, architecture, and human-kind. In 1937, adopting a romantic, mystical tone reminiscent of Wright, Neutra proclaimed that "our relation to the natural setting is a biologically minded appreciation of the soil, in

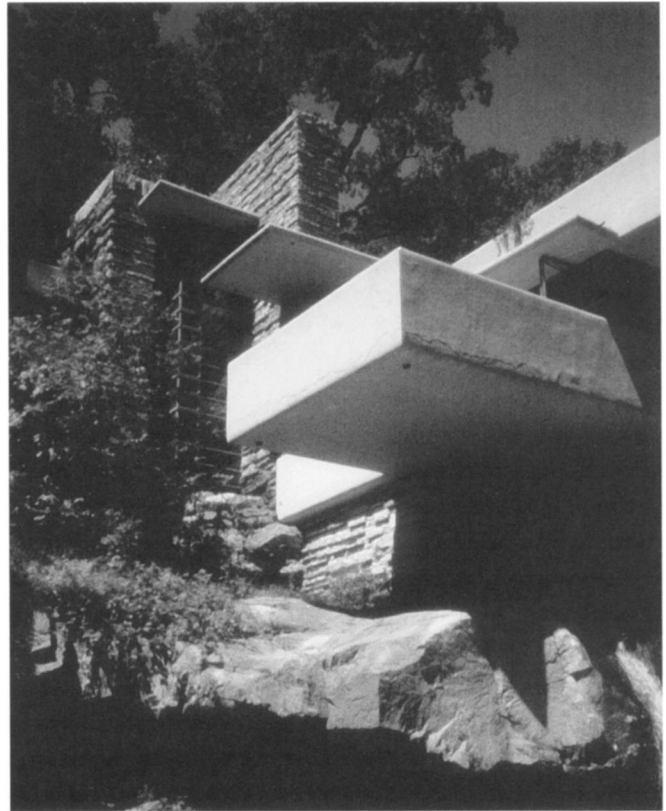


FIGURE 13: Frank Lloyd Wright, Edgar J. Kaufmann House ("Fallingwater"), Bear Run, Pennsylvania, 1936–1937. Photo by author

which all life is rooted and must remain rooted, to succeed."⁶² He continued this theme in his *Mystery and Realities of the Site* (1951), where he wrote, "All our senses are affected by the setting. . . . A great deal of relaxation or irritation derive from it or from the degree of competence with which the architect may have fitted the structure to the setting."⁶³ For the book's introduction, Neutra called upon *Architectural Forum* editor Douglas Haskell, who stated that "in building a house the first step is always to find a site—a piece of ground to which the house will forever after be happily, or perhaps unhappily, wed. . . . There is no way in which the quality of our homes and of our home life can be more quickly raised than by a careful and loving attention to the setting."⁶⁴ By midcentury, such views had become widespread among architects, particularly in the western United States. Along with Neutra, William Wurster (often working with landscape architect Thomas Church), John Yeon, Pietro Belluschi, and Harwell Hamilton Harris mined similar veins (Figure 14). Already by 1944 curator Elizabeth Mock in the catalogue for the Museum of Modern Art's *Built in the USA* exhibition would note that

the modern American house becomes ever more intimately related to the ground and the surrounding landscape. Living space extends into the garden and walls of glass bring the view into the house. The boundary between inside and outside becomes negligible. Sometimes



FIGURE 14: Harwell Hamilton Harris, Ralph Johnson House, Los Angeles, California, 1949–1951. Photo by Fred Dapprich

the garden actually penetrates to the interior, or the house may be set against a rocky hillside. Site irregularities are welcomed.⁶⁵

In 1951, the authors of *The American House Today* went even further, seeing such integration as almost essential to a winning design.

One measure of a successful house is how thoroughly and intimately it relates to its site and to its natural setting. If house and land appear to be a unity—to belong one to the other—it is not mere chance; it is because the architect has sensitively fused the two by adopting the house to the special character of the site. This is true regardless of the nature of the land.⁶⁶

In Mexico, too, the integration of architecture and site became a significant postwar theme, particularly for homebuilders in the Pedregal, where work by Wright and Neutra provided important precedents. Indeed, the influence of these two architects in Mexico was far more pronounced than is generally recognized. For example, architect Juan O’Gorman, since the late 1920s one of Mexico’s most active and radical functionalists, visited Fallingwater in 1939 and soon after became a disciple of Frank Lloyd Wright’s. Abandoning his former idol, Le Corbusier, he now spoke of Wright as “the supreme architect of the century”; he described his own mosaic-covered house, begun in 1951 in a naturally occurring grotto in the Pedregal, as built “within the principles of Wright’s organic architecture” (by which he meant specifically the building’s integration with its site).⁶⁷ Another devotee of Wrightian organicism was Barragán’s collaborator Max Cetto.

In 1938, upon arriving in the United States from his native Germany (where he had studied with Hans Poelzig and worked for Ernst May), Cetto visited Wright at Taliesin East, in Spring Green, Wisconsin; there he requested and received a letter of recommendation from the master. Soon after this, Cetto was working for Neutra on such projects as the 1939 Kahn House, located on a rocky slope on San Francisco’s Telegraph Hill.⁶⁸ Many of Cetto’s most important Mexican works—including the Hotel San José Purúa (with Jorge Rubio) of 1939, built on a rocky hilltop site in rural Michoacán, and his various Pedregal houses (designed with and without Barragán)—share Wright’s and Neutra’s interest in situating architecture within rocky and difficult landscapes.

Neutra deserves further mention here, for many architects in Mexico, including Barragán, were drawn to his work. Neutra was a frequent and much admired visitor to Mexico, and by the late 1940s Spanish translations of his books and articles had been widely distributed there, published in *Arquitectura México*, *Espacios*, and elsewhere. His much publicized Kaufmann House at Palm Springs, California (1946; Figure 15), provided an irresistible model for designers of high-priced modern houses at Cuernavaca, El Pedregal, and other parts of Mexico.⁶⁹ In its austere, straight-lined elegance, its complementary use of rough stone and smooth glass walls, the continuity of its indoor and outdoor spaces, and the way it contrasted and opened itself to the rugged desert setting, the Kaufmann House was soon echoed in Mexican garden houses designed by Max Cetto, Enrique de la Mora, Enrique del Moral, Mario Pani, Juan Sordo Madaleno, Nicholas Mariscal, Victor de la



FIGURE 15: Richard Neutra, Edgar J. Kaufmann House, Palm Springs, California, 1946. Photo by Julius Shulman

Lama, Francisco Artigas, and many others (Figure 16).⁷⁰ Barragán too, when he spoke in 1951 of working “to preserve the harmony of the architectural development and the landscape” at El Pedregal, appears to have been thinking, at least in part, of Neutra. Barragán owned two first-edition, English-language copies of Neutra’s *Mystery and Realities of the Site* (along with several of Neutra’s other books, many of them autographed), and in one of these, the pages describing “A house in the desert” (pp. 32–39) and illustrating the Kaufmann House were folded back and highlighted in ink (presumably by Barragán himself).⁷¹ The flat-roofed, glass-walled, garden-oriented demonstration house at 140 Fuentes is a close cousin of Neutra’s Kahn and Kaufmann houses.

Other sources indicate that Wright’s Kaufmann House in Pennsylvania was also on Barragán’s mind at this time. One of these, a short essay by painter Diego Rivera entitled “Requisitos para la organización de El Pedregal” (“Requisites for the organization of El Pedregal”), spoke of the necessity of build-

ing at the Pedregal in such a way as to preserve and accentuate the region’s natural features.⁷² Through judicious exploitation of these, he said, the Pedregal development might very well become the city’s prime residential district. The project must, however, be carefully managed so as “to assure conservation of the site’s geographic character. . . . Nothing would be gained if the structures destroyed the natural beauty of the place.” Rivera outlined strict conditions that must be imposed upon builders and property owners—conditions corresponding directly to Barragán’s Pedregal building code as recorded by McCoy in 1951. Native rock and vegetation must be protected, while “the California Colonial” style of architecture must be prohibited. Large minimum sizes must be established for lots, with construction taking only a small portion of the land, the rest to be filled with gardens. Streets, planned for maximum efficiency, economy, and beauty, must follow the natural contours of the terrain. For models of development, Rivera suggested studying certain projects recently built in the United



FIGURE 16: Francisco Artigas, Gómez House, Jardines del Pedregal, 1953, real estate advertisement from *Arquitectura México*, December 1955

States, in particular, the “insuperable example” offered by the “works realized on rocky terrain by Frank Lloyd Wright, such as the Kaufmann House in Pennsylvania.”⁷³

Still more direct evidence for Barragán’s interest in Fallingwater appears in a real estate advertisement, possibly designed and almost certainly approved by Barragán, for the Jardines del Pedregal, published in July 1951 in the Mexico City daily *Excelsior*.⁷⁴ Amid two full pages offering property and listing the many advantages of home ownership in “El Lugar Ideal Para Vivir” (“the ideal place to live”), was a drawing showing a modern, flat-roofed Pedregal house with cantilevered balconies, rough-hewn stone walls, *colorines* trees, and a new North American sedan parked out front. No such house was ever built at El Pedregal; the view is entirely imaginary. But the advertisement suggests the possibilities of the site and Barragán’s vision of the ideal building for it: Fallingwater (Figure 17).

Although the ideas of Le Corbusier, Wright, and Neutra carried considerable weight in the Americas after World War II, they did not go unchallenged. Even before the war, voices were raised against the disparate sorts of “nature worship” advocated by Le Corbusier and by Wright and Neutra. In an essay of 1940, Joseph Hudnut, dean of Harvard’s Graduate School of Design, stated that he was “out of sympathy” with

the “romantic” notions of garden design propounded by historians and architects, including Hitchcock and Neutra. Referring to their contributions to the 1937 *Contemporary Landscape Architecture and its Sources* exhibition catalogue, Hudnut wrote:

... gardens are something more than extensions of nature. . . . Certainly a harmony between the modern house and its site is more evident when the site, like the house, has escaped both romance and an oppressive formality; but a deep or persuasive unity cannot be attained when one and not the other has submitted to a conscious control of form. Therefore I do not despair of gardens which are, like houses, *designed*.⁷⁵

Hudnut spoke of a “principle of unification,” whereby the spaces of house and garden “are parts of a single organism.” He predicted that one day landscape architects “will wish to awaken” to the idea that the house is, or should be, “only a sequestered part of [the] garden.”⁷⁶ Hudnut held up “functionalism” as a key principle for ordering the landscape. By this he meant neither economic determinism, nor antiaestheticism, nor the “pure” utilitarianism of someone like Hannes Meyer (one-time Bauhaus director and resident of Mexico between 1938 and 1949). In Hudnut’s view, functionalism must address not just practical patterns of usage but also less tangible



FIGURE 17: Real estate advertisement for the Jardines del Pedregal from *Excelsior*, 8 July 1951

spiritual and intellectual needs. A garden designed according to these principles might express the central values of the culture that made it. "Our gardens, like our houses," he wrote,

must be conditioned upon use. They must be conditioned also upon topography and techniques, and they must take into account the need of men for play and illusion; but if they are to attain any enduring command of our imaginations, they must also be conditioned upon qualities more universal in character. They must conform to our vision of the world and to our need for order and completeness in that world. There are no processes of rationalization which are likely to eradicate from men the desire to translate into their environment this spiritual need. The shape and arrangement of the site, no less than the constructed forms of the house, will—if subject to our control—proclaim that ancient aspiration. The modern man, like his forbears, will remake nature in his own image.⁷⁷

Hudnut's views on landscape were informed by those of Christopher Tunnard, the British-born landscape architect and theorist whom he hired in 1939 to help modernize Harvard's Graduate School of Design. Otherwise a great admirer of Le Corbusier, Tunnard took issue with what he called Le Corbusier's "dangerously stultifying . . . nature worship." In his *Gardens in the Modern Landscape* Tunnard declared that "nature unadorned [is] not enough." He advised making the modern garden, like the modern house, ever more rational, accessible, restful, comprehensible, and economically feasible. The garden, said Tunnard, must be functional, "planned in accordance with human needs." (He did, however, urge readers to remain respectful of the site, which he called "the landscape architect's chief arbiter of design.")⁷⁸ And because gardening is in essence "an art of the people," designers should ignore "fashionable gardens" and instead seek inspiration from vernacular landscapes.⁷⁹

The themes discussed by Hudnut and Tunnard—the "principle of unification," the "functionalist" garden, gardens as constructed, culturally communicative entities, the important example of vernacular landscapes—would have a profound influence on their students at Harvard, most notably Dan Kiley, James Rose, and Garrett Eckbo, who, along with the slightly older Thomas Church, developed a new type of domestic landscape architecture. Widely adopted in California, this was predicated on outdoor living, on visual and functional interaction between indoor and outdoor space, and on the blending of traditional and modern forms and materials. Efforts like Church's Dewey Donnell garden in Sonoma County (1948) and Eckbo's Goldman garden for a house in Encino designed by Neutra (1951; Figure 18) proceeded from the belief that landscapes should be both functional (adjusted to human needs) and regional (sensitive to and expressive of local climate, geography, and vegetation). These architects drew upon sources similar, in some cases identical, to those

that interested Barragán and his colleagues Enrique del Moral and Max Cetto: Hispanic patios and mission gardens, the integrated modernist houses and landscapes of Wright and Neutra, the forms and implied space of Cubist and Surrealist paintings.⁸⁰ Writing in 1941, Eckbo echoed recent statements by Hudnut and Tunnard:

Specific local conditions contribute the individual, unpredictable, irrational, at times surrealist components of the design, and it is their careful study which produces solutions of individual integrity. . . . Forms produced today, no matter where or by whom, are completely successful only if they express their own background of time, place, and people. We have to look about us to discover the spirit of the twentieth century world. . . . the main source of inspiration should be in those regions where man and nature have met, mingled, but seldom completely dominated one another—that is, the rural landscape.⁸¹

MODERNISM MADE MEXICAN

It is clear that Barragán's architectural vocabulary changed after 1940. If this was due to his dissatisfaction with his own earlier work, to the stimulation he received from the Pedregal landscape, and to his interaction with people like Max Cetto, it was also related to his awareness of broader contemporary trends in architecture and in landscape theory and practice. The original houses and gardens of El Pedregal should be seen as part of this larger background of forms and ideas, much of which Barragán—along with other Mexican architects like O'Gorman, del Moral, Pani, and Artigas—was acquainted with through reading, travel, and personal and professional contacts. Like Le Corbusier's villas, the houses of El Pedregal were set within a sort of "Virgilian dream," a new suburban Eden offering healthful living amid open space, fresh air, greenery, and functional modern architecture. With its gates and guards, its high walls and high prices, Barragán's upscale subdivision may have been less socially mixed than was the Ville Radieuse, but it grew from a related utopianism, a parallel belief in modern architecture's ability to engineer and improve the human condition.

Nowhere was this more apparent than in Barragán's comments on the functionality of gardens:

Architects must have gardens to be used as much as the houses they build, to develop the sense of beauty and the taste and inclination toward the fine arts and other spiritual values. . . . Such a garden leads a man to the common use of beauty as much as the use of our daily bread, and causes man unconsciously to fall in an atmosphere of spontaneous meditation without any effort and with reduced nervous tension. . . . Such a garden helps so much in the development of personality and in avoiding standardization of the mind.⁸²

Thus Barragán's functionalism, like that of Le Corbusier, Neutra, and Hudnut, was intended to address both material and spiritual needs. In addition, just as for Hudnut, Tunnard,



FIGURE 18: Richard Neutra (architect) and Garrett Eckbo (landscape architect), Goldman House, Encino, California, 1951. Photo by Julius Shulman

Church, and Eckbo, Barragán's gardens were to extend the usable space of the building's interior—or, more radically, the building could be seen as but a covered extension of the garden, providing a place where residents could congregate to eat or talk or escape company in order to read, work, or meditate. The garden would be enclosed by walls but open to the sky, a cloistered piece of earth offering refuge from public life and the breakneck pace of the modern world. It should promote serenity, individuality, and good taste.

Moreover, just as for Eckbo and some of the others already discussed, Barragán's architecture was to be both modern and localized. Like Eckbo and Tunnard, Barragán turned for inspiration to the rural landscape and the local vernacular, to "the beauty of streets lined with walls and fountains, like Pátzcuaro" (a picturesque, colonial-era town near the city of Morelia). "In the design of my houses," he told Esther McCoy, "I have attempted to state new relationships between modern materials and the popular house of the villages and farms of

my country."⁸³ For example, in the Prieto López House of 1949–1950, one finds merged with the reinforced concrete walls and broad sheets of glass, evocations—in the high, open-beamed ceilings and the low, plain, blocky wood furniture (designed by Barragán and built by local craftsmen)—of Spanish colonial-era convents and haciendas. It is telling of Barragán's aesthetic caution that such an approach was not taken with the Pedregal demonstration houses. Believing that historicizing elements "properly" and subtly used could lead to good effects, Barragán also concluded that their misuse would destroy his plans for El Pedregal; the demonstration houses there were to provide models of good and appropriate contemporary architecture for people of (presumably) less aesthetic refinement than himself, and in these houses he wanted no cause for confusion, no license for the spread of the despised California Colonial.

The demonstration houses, then, were made Mexican not by their references to historic and vernacular architectural

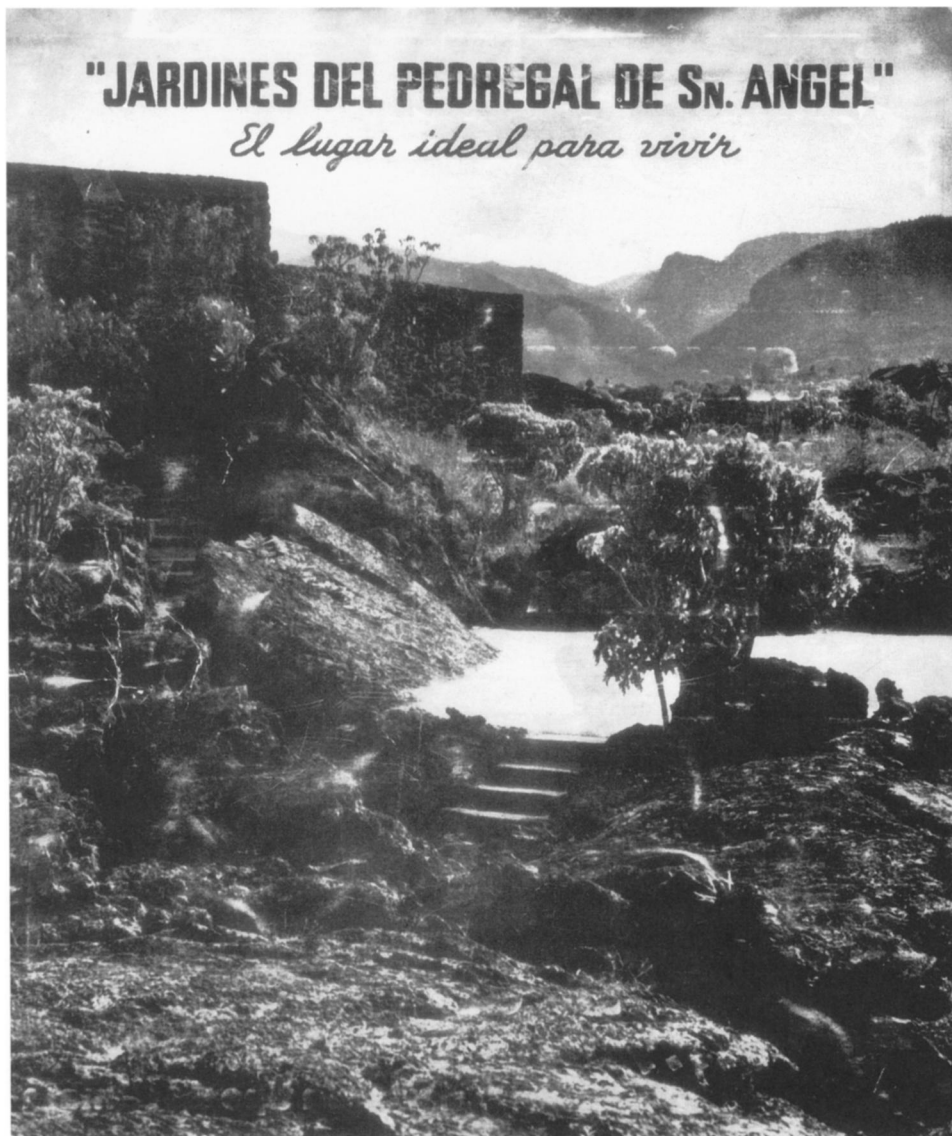


FIGURE 19: Barragán, Jardines del Pedregal, real estate advertisement from *Arquitectura México*, March 1953. Photo by Armando Salas Portugal

forms but through their expressive rootedness to a particular place, the character of which was echoed in the gentle sweep of their low, rambling cubic masses. “As a landscape affects the individual,” Barragán told McCoy, “so should it influence a house.”⁸⁴ In developing this particular line of thought, Barragán was more affected by contemporary North American architectural organicism than by the example of Mexican vernacular building. Wright’s and Neutra’s emphasis on linking architecture and native landscape, seen in designs like Fallingwater and the Kaufmann Desert House, was decisive in revitalizing Barragán’s thinking during the late 1940s. Their examples helped him to step beyond the overt historicism and the International Style borrowings of his previous work toward the site-specific regionalism for which he would later become famous.

CONCLUSIONS

Along with the geographically contiguous and contemporaneous University City, El Pedregal has been widely understood as

the first bloom of a distinctly Mexican modernism, where historicism and the International Style were absorbed into new vocabularies of glass, concrete, and local stone, roughly textured cubic masses, brilliant colors, and abstruse references to local culture and landscape.⁸⁵ In the photographs of Armando Salas Portugal, through which El Pedregal is best known, one sees the project—its concentrated play of light, shadow, water, and wall; its rooms and patios sparsely accented by locally made handicrafts and furniture; its sometimes startling juxtapositions of elements old and new, man-made and natural, local and imported—as a series of stage sets for unspecified yet solemn rituals, thick with silence, time, and gravitas (Figure 19). Later works by Barragán—private houses like those for Antonio Gálvez (1955) and Francisco Gilardi (with Alberto Chauvet, 1976), subdivisions like the Jardines del Bosque (1955–1961) and Las Arboledas (1958–1961; Figure 20), the projects with Mathias Goeritz (the chapel for the Capuchinas Sacramentarias del Purísimo Corazón de María in



FIGURE 20: Barragán, Las Arboledas, Mexico City, 1958–1961. Photo by author

Tlalpán of 1954–1961, and the Satellite City towers of 1957)—carry these themes forward. “Like Borges,” Ambasz wrote, “Barragán is the author of one archetypal story inexhaustibly reformulated.”⁸⁶

This seems true up to a point. But El Pedregal was in many ways a transitional work rather than, as Ambasz and others have suggested, the first full flowering of Barragán’s maturity. The relationship established there between house and landscape was to change in projects that followed. Barragán’s postwar gardens, including that designed for his own house (begun in 1948 but subsequently reworked), seem to have been intended less for direct use than for viewing from relatively detached architectural interiors (Figure 21).⁸⁷ The functional garden at 140 Fuentes was thus supplanted by the garden as framed picture. This idea is prefigured in the Corbusian roof terraces of the 1930s, but whereas the roof terraces featured “borrowed” scenery, Barragán’s later “framed” gardens used elements controlled by Barragán himself. Nothing in Barragán’s oeuvre after El Pedregal (particularly its demonstration houses) would so powerfully express the integration of building with site. Although site remained a determining factor in later works like Las Arboledas and Los Clubes (1963–1969), none of these locations possessed the Pedregal’s inherent, natural drama. This, if nothing else, accounts for a greater coolness and restraint in the later designs. El Pedregal’s singularities were the product of the distinctive nature of the site and the collaborators involved with Barragán (particularly Cetto); but they were also determined by ideas very much in the air at that moment, outside as well as inside Mexico.

This has not been sufficiently recognized. Enrique de Anda argued correctly that after 1945 Barragán “imitated no one.”⁸⁸ Yet, too often words like these have been taken to mean that the architect’s postwar themes and concerns were so purely native, or so utterly idiosyncratic, filtered through memory and identity, as to have been exclusively his own. As a result, Barragán’s sources, methods, and products, which late in life he described as emerging from “a process of madness,” have been made into a mysterious and largely hermetic affair.⁸⁹

The reasons for this reading of Barragán’s architecture devolve, I think, from a Janus-headed romanticism, one that is both nationalistic and exoticizing. For Mexicans, sensitive to foreign invasions (military, economic, touristic) and appropriations both real and figurative, this has involved the protection of Barragán as an important cultural property. De Anda, writing in 1989, claimed that Barragán’s work corresponds to “no architectural currents or tendencies foreign to him.”⁹⁰ For non-Mexicans, such a reading of Barragán’s work implies legitimizing an “other” by asserting, even exaggerating, its very otherness: Barragán as mystic Mexican monk. This understanding of Barragán has fostered an image of the man as a native genius, self-taught, isolated, otherworldly, renowned for his bright colors and his spicy Latin talk of God and death and beauty, rather than for his professionalism, his shrewd business sense, and his connections to an international avant-garde.

Barragán’s architecture has little need of such protection. There is no question that his work demonstrates a remarkable synthesis and absorption of diverse elements, resulting in spaces and forms of protean grace, originality, and evocative-



FIGURE 21: Barragán, Barragán House, Tacubaya, Mexico City, 1948, view toward garden from living room. Photo by author

ness. My intention here has been to deepen understanding of that work by repositioning it within a field of internationally circulating ideas and possibilities of which it was once a part. This action should in no way lessen the significance of the architecture or weaken its “magic.” The alchemy of artistic creation, the mysterious transmogrification of variegated elements into a new and synthetic whole, might well remain in place. The architecture only grows stronger as we broaden the base of its sources and its points of contact.

Notes

For their generous advice and assistance, I wish to thank Paul V. Turner, Meredith Clausen, Marc Treib, Wanda Corn, Mark Hoversten, Carol H. Krinsky, Federica Zanco and the Barragán Foundation in Basel, Switzerland, and my readers at the *JSAH*. All translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

¹ Quotation (previously unpublished) is from a transcription of an interview with Esther McCoy, in the Esther McCoy Papers, Archives of American Art,

Washington, D.C. Excerpts from the interview appeared in McCoy, “Jardines del Pedregal de San Angel,” *Arts and Architecture* 68 (August 1951): 21.

² According to architect Juan Palomar, “The Pedregal de San Angel remains a landmark in Barragán’s aesthetic journey, and generally speaking, in Mexican art of this century.” Palomar, “The Alchemist of Memory,” *Artes de México* 23 (1994): 94. For architectural historian Carlos González Lobo, El Pedregal was one of the “two most important projects of contemporary architecture in Mexico” (the other being the contiguous and contemporaneous University City, which involved more than 100 architects including, possibly, Barragán). González Lobo, “Luis Barragán,” *Mimar* 12 (June 1992): 59. Kenneth Frampton claimed that it was here that “Barragán began to emerge as a landscape architect of international stature.” Frampton, “The Legacy of Luis Barragán,” *Columbia Architecture, Planning, Preservation Newsline* 5 (November–December 1992): 4. Barragán himself called the project “my most interesting and important work.” Quoted in Andrea O. Dean, “Luis Barragán, Austere Architect of Silent Spaces,” *Smithsonian* 11 (November 1980): 154.

³ This is one of only two public lectures that Barragán is known to have given. The other was his often quoted Pritzker Prize acceptance speech on 3 June 1980. The text of the 1951 speech was printed as Luis Barragán, “Gardens for Environment: Jardines del Pedregal,” *Journal of the A.I.A.* 17 (April 1952): 167–172. The Pritzker speech was published as “Barragán on Barragán,”

Archetype 2 (Fall 1980): 30–31.

⁴ For example, in 1952 one Mexican journalist wrote: “The essential thing, from our point of view, is the realization, in Mexico, of an alliance between modern structures and adapted landscape, so perfectly resolved in its Mexican character that, from any of its aspects, it shouts to the visitor: you are in Mexico.” Margarita Nelken, “El Arquitecto y Paisajista Luis Barragán,” *Hoy*, 26 April 1952, 44–45. More recent discussions of Barragán as a regionalist architect appear in Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*, 3rd ed. (London, 1992), 314–320; and William J. R. Curtis, *Modern Architecture Since 1900* (Englewood Cliffs, 1983), 331–333.

⁵ Barragán, “Barragán on Barragán,” 30–31. Recent studies of Barragán’s life and work include Louise Noelle, *Luis Barragán: Búsqueda y Creatividad* (Mexico, 1996); Antonio Riggen Martínez, *Luis Barragán: Mexico’s Modern Master, 1902–1988*, trans. Christina Bennett (New York, 1996); Raúl Rispa, ed., *Barragán: The Complete Works* (New York, 1996); Ignacio San Martín, ed., *Luis Barragán: The Phoenix Papers* (Tempe, 1997); and José M. Buendía Júlbez, Juan Palomar, and Guillermo Eguarte, *The Life and Work of Luis Barragán* (New York, 1997). Notable among earlier texts are Emilio Ambasz, *The Architecture of Luis Barragán* (New York, 1976); and Luis Barragán et al., *Ensayos y Apuntes Para un Bosquejo Crítico: Luis Barragán* (Mexico, 1985).

⁶ Enrique de Anda, for example, states that after 1945 Barragán “imitated no one,” that his work corresponded to “no architectural currents or tendencies foreign to him.” Enrique de Anda, ed., *Luis Barragán: Clásico del Silencio* (Bogotá, 1989), 130.

⁷ As a large-scale, comprehensively planned commuter subdivision, El Pedregal responded to unprecedented postwar Mexican economic and population growth. Consisting primarily of single-family, architect-designed, modernist houses, it was extraordinary in Mexico (and rare anywhere at the time it was built), and might well be seen against a background of earlier North American and European urbanism and landscape design. See Keith Eggner, “Luis Barragán’s El Pedregal and the Making of Mexican Modernism: Architecture, Photography, and Critical Reception,” Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1995, 78–85.

⁸ To be sure, Marc Treib lists the “integration of house and garden” as the last of his six “Axioms for a Modern Landscape Architecture.” Marc Treib, ed., *Modern Landscape Architecture: A Critical Review* (Cambridge, 1993), 59.

⁹ Barragán took his civil engineer’s diploma from the Escuela Libre de Ingenieros on 13 December 1923. In a 1962 interview he recalled that to receive an architectural degree from the Escuela Libre, civil engineering graduates had only to take a few more classes—drawing, composition, and art history—and submit a thesis. He remembered completing his coursework, submitting his thesis, and gaining his mentor’s approval. The Escuela Libre, however, closed while Barragán was traveling in Europe, and so he did not receive the diploma he deserved. “Agustín Basave approved my thesis; I have his approval. But then I went to Europe, and did not look after my studies; so, upon returning from Europe, where I’d stayed a year and a half, the Faculty of Architecture had disappeared.” (See Alejandro Ramírez Ugarte, “Entrevista con El Arq. Luis Barragán,” in de Anda, ed., *Clásico del Silencio*, 221.) Still, this did not prevent Barragán from calling himself an architect and building or remodeling upwards of twenty-five houses, a city park, and perhaps two cinemas and a pair of small churches before 1936. By 1943, if not earlier, he was signing his letters “Arq. Luis Barragán” and using the titles “Arquitecto” or “Ingeniero y Arquitecto” on his office stationery. He dismissed the Free School’s architectural program, in 1962, as “a very primitive thing,” but in his 1968 curriculum vitae he claimed proudly to have “made his professional studies and received the degree of civil engineer and architect in 1925.” (A copy of Barragán’s c.v., signed and dated 14 August 1968, is in the Fundación de Arquitectura Tapatía in Guadalajara.) Barragán’s situation as an unlicensed architect was hardly unique: in 1945 *Architect and Engineer* reported that there were no more than 250 registered architects in all of Mexico; yet hundreds, perhaps thousands, of engineers and others with less training than Barragán were designing buildings and calling themselves “arquitecto.” See William Arthur Newman, “Glimpses of Architecture in Modern Mexico,” *Architect and Engineer* 162 (September 1945): 46.

¹⁰ Barragán’s life and work prior to El Pedregal, and the political and cultural contexts in which he operated are discussed in Fernando González Gortázar, ed., *La Arquitectura Mexicana del Siglo XX* (Mexico, 1994); Eggner, “Making of Mexican Modernism,” 19–44; Riggen Martínez, *Luis Barragán*,

17–66; and Edward R. Burian, ed., *Modernity and the Architecture of Mexico* (Austin, 1997).

¹¹ A student of Hans Poelzig’s, a one-time employee of Ernst May’s and Richard Neutra’s, and a charter member of CIAM, Cetto carried impressive modernist credentials. See Keith Eggner, “Expressionism and Emotional Architecture in Mexico: Luis Barragán’s Collaborations with Max Cetto and Mathias Goeritz,” *Architectura—Journal of the History of Architecture* 25 (no. 1, 1995): 77–94; and Suzanne Dussel Peters, *Max Cetto, 1903–1980: Arquitecto Mexicano-Alemán* (Mexico, 1995).

¹² Landscape historian Dorothée Imbert describes Le Corbusier’s manner of composing “certain points of terrace plantings in reference to an element in the distant landscape.” She relates this to the Japanese concept of *shakkei*, that is, “borrowing” remote scenery via architectural framing. Imbert, *The Modernist Garden in France* (New Haven, 1993), 148, 163, 173, 238. (On a similar tendency in the work of Mies van der Rohe, see Catherine Howett, “Modernism and American Landscape Architecture,” in Treib, ed., *Modern Landscape Architecture*, 27.) Ferdinand Bac offered Barragán another source for this device. “To make the best of topographical features,” Bac wrote in 1925 in reference to his house and garden, Les Colombières, in Menton, France, which Barragán visited in 1931, “we chose precise parts of distant landscapes and invited them up into the orchard, where their beauty could provide us with the finishing touch.” Quoted in Michael Racine, Ernst J.-P. Boursier-Mongenot, and Françoise Binet, *The Gardens of Provence and the French Riviera*, trans. Alice Parte and Helen Agarathé (Cambridge, 1987), 293. Said Barragán in 1951, “A landscape that is held and framed with a proper foreground is worth double.” Barragán, “Gardens for Environment,” 172.

¹³ In a 1962 interview he claimed he almost quit the architectural profession at this time (Ramírez Ugarte, “Entrevista,” 225). Built and documentary evidence indicates that Barragán did continue working during these years, but that he later sought to deny this work makes clear his dissatisfaction with it. For a listing of projects from this period, see Noelle, *Búsqueda y Creatividad*, 239–240.

¹⁴ First published in “Dos Jardines en México, D.F., Arq. Luis Barragán,” *Arquitectura México* 18 (1945): 148–155.

¹⁵ Mary St. Albans, “The Gardens of Pedregal,” *Modern Mexico* 18 (April 1946): 11. Vivid descriptions of both gardens were published by journalist Salvador Novo in the Mexico City newspaper *Mañana* on 5 July 1944. Of San Angel, Novo wrote: “Already one Sunday I had visited the land that he [Barragán] has just finished decorating on San Jerónimo, near the fortress of Don Maximono. It is a site of about 15,000 meters [Novo’s estimate is off by some 6,000 square meters], walled with stone, with great pieces of *pedregal* [lava rock] in its interior. Instead of designing a traditional garden, Luis has made great planes, some with *tepetate* [earthen or gravel] floors, from whose golden surfaces sprout broken and pathetic old trees. If one climbs up a group of rocks via the imperceptible little stairway that he has constructed, he may contemplate another plane whose floor is made of crushed bricks, with other groups of old trees. Grass has been treated to heighten the colors of the nearby rocks, carried right up to their base and imparting to them a glorious sense of drama. There are one or two deep, black mirror pools and in the center [of one] is a broken statue, wrecked Narcissus, that one may contemplate among the clouds and the branches of that impressively serene place. The enormous wall has been oxidized so that the colors of the stone have bonded with that of the mortar; its large expanses are opened by the small surprise of a yellow window, and another of blue, another of green.” Reprinted in Salvador Novo, *La Vida en México en el Período Presidencial de Manuel Avila Camacho* (Mexico, 1965), 177–179.

¹⁶ “Durante esos años ya me ocupé de realizar algunos jardines de mi propiedad que me entretuvieron mucho . . . entonces los jardines me dieron un cierto nombre, una cierta facilidad para desarrollar algunos trabajos en especial en fraccionamientos, entonces precisamente un jardín que hice en la orilla de El Pedregal que ya tenía parte de lava dentro de él, me dió la idea de la utilización de El Pedregal para casas y jardines y en esa forma fue como nació El Pedregal.” Quoted in Ramírez Ugarte, “Entrevista,” 225.

¹⁷ See Manuel Gamio, “Las Excavaciones del Pedregal de San Angel y la Cultura Arcaica,” *American Anthropologist* 22 (1920): 127–143; and Byron Cummings, “Ruins of Cuicuilco May Revolutionize Our History of Ancient America,” *National Geographic* 44 (August 1923): 202–220.

¹⁸ In an official government publication of 1952 it was described as a place “where the most remote of our Mexican ancestors—the ‘Pedregal Man’—

lived, loved, suffered and died, leaving us his fossilized skeleton as the root of Mexico, zealously guarded by the fire made stone." Raúl Carranca Trujillo, "Valoración de la Ciudad Universitaria," in *México: Realización y Esperanza*, ed. José Alcazar Arias et al. (Mexico, 1952), 318. For further discussion along these lines, see Eggener, "Making of Mexican Modernism," 46–52 (see n. 7).

¹⁹ "Según los indios, el Pedregal está lleno de nahuales monstruosos y de terribles brujas, de modo que pocos son los indios que de noche se atreverían a caminar por esos lugares. . . . El Pedregal de San Angel se puede llamar como la escuela primería de la brujería." Francisco Fernández del Castillo, *Apuntes Para la Historia de San Angel y sus Alrededores: Tradiciones, Historia, Leyendas*, 2nd ed. (Mexico, 1987), 149.

²⁰ On the Pedregal's dangers, see "Mexico's Pedregal Gardens," *House and Home* 2 (October 1952): 127. On the artists and writers attracted there, see Clementina Díaz y de Ovando, *La Ciudad Universitaria de México, Reseña Histórica 1929–1955* (Mexico, 1979), 115–117. Rivera had long been fascinated with the Pedregal region. One North American writer told how the painter took him, "through a pet road of his own . . . through one of the most desolate regions of the world, the area known as the Pedregal—the Stony Place." Joseph Henry Jackson, *Mexican Interlude* (New York, 1936), 165–166.

²¹ Born Gerardo Murillo, this seminal figure in Mexican twentieth-century art, according to art historian Leopoldo Castedo, "symbolically repudiat[ed] the past [by] changing his Spanish name to Atl, which means 'water' in the Náhuatl tongue." Castedo, *A History of Latin American Art and Architecture*, trans. Phyllis Freeman (New York, 1969), 224.

²² Barragán, "Gardens for Environment," 168. An early, aborted scheme for the development, signed by Contreras, was published with a brief article entitled, "A Cargo del Arquitecto Carlos Contreras, El Pedregal de San Angel en el Distrito Federal," *Novedades*, 3 July 1949, 22. (Printed on the same page is Rivera's essay "Requisitos para la organización de El Pedregal," discussed below; see n. 72.) Beyond this, no further evidence for Contreras's role has been found. His archives in Mexico City were reportedly destroyed by a fire in 1993.

²³ On the early critical reception of El Pedregal, see Eggener, "Making of Mexican Modernism," 145–148.

²⁴ Barragán, "Gardens for Environment," 170–171 (see n. 3).

²⁵ Alfonso Pallares, "El Pedregal," *Espacios* 4 (1949/1950): n.p.

²⁶ McCoy, "Jardines del Pedregal," 21 (see n. 1).

²⁷ Barragán, "Gardens for Environment," 171.

²⁸ On city planning in twentieth-century Mexico, see the excellent overview by Alberto González Pozo, "Las Ciudades: El Futuro y el Olvido," in *La Arquitectura Mexicana del Siglo XX*, ed. González Gortázar, 197–217.

²⁹ Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias* (New York, 1987), 145–148.

³⁰ Bleecker Marquette, "Imaginative City Planning in Mexico," *The American City* 65 (August 1950): 85.

³¹ Barragán, "Gardens for Environment," 170. The high, concealing walls and blank façades of Barragán's architecture are usually explained with reference to traditional Mexican residential design patterns, the sanctity of the family unit, and the architect's stated emphasis on issues of privacy, solitude, and meditation. Alongside these themes, I would argue that El Pedregal's walls and gates, and the guards and guardhouses often placed beside them, evince both a substantial concern for security and a measure of ostentatiousness. Walls, gates, and guards not only protect property but also assert its value, its need for protection. Indeed, the security and exclusiveness of this gated, guarded community were among its major selling points; Barragán's advertising campaign for El Pedregal placed considerable emphasis on these issues and on those design features that addressed them. See Eggener, "Making of Mexican Modernism," 125–132 (see n. 7).

³² Long closed to visitors, the demonstration houses are known almost exclusively through photographs and plans published at the time of their construction. See "Habitación: Obras Recientes de los Arquitectos Luis Barragán y Max Cetto," *Espacios* 8 (1951): n.p.; Max Cetto, "Bauten in Einer Lavalandschaft Mexicos," *Baukunst und Werkform* (nos. 1–2, 1954): 37–56; and Alberto Sartoris, *Encyclopédie de l'Architecture Nouvelle: Ordre et Climate Américains* (Milan, 1954), 411–413, 540–546.

Prior to its publication by Ambasz in *Architecture of Luis Barragán* (1976), the Prieto López House was less well known than either of the demonstration houses. According to the former chief of Barragán's studio, Alejandro Margain, construction there began on 3 May 1949 (author interview, 26 January

1994). Prieto López had asked Barragán for a dwelling comparable to the latter's own 1948 house in the Tacubaya district of Mexico City, and like the Tacubaya house, the Prieto López House adapts formal elements from Mexican convent and hacienda architecture: high, open-beamed ceilings, pegged pine flooring, and unadorned, roughly plastered, reinforced concrete walls, here painted white or pink or yellow. Large windows on the building's east side overlook a swimming pool set amid clumps of rugged lava and native vegetation, and (before the view was blocked by newer houses) the new Ciudad Universitaria complex about a mile away. Barragán was also responsible for designing the building's simple, blocky, waxed pine and mahogany doors and furniture, which were built by local craftsmen, and for selecting such other furnishings as the silver candelabras and carved wood figurative sculptures.

³³ Evidence of this is provided by the buildings' inclusion in Ambasz's catalogue (*Architecture of Luis Barragán*, 118), a project with which Barragán was directly involved.

³⁴ Cetto alluded to his subordination in a previously unpublished letter to Esther McCoy, dated 5 June 1951, Esther McCoy Papers. Of the house at 140 Fuentes, he sounded almost disdainful. "This house has to be understood as a commercial proposition. It has been constructed immediately after our own [Cetto's house at 130 Agua] as the second building in the Pedregal in order to: 1) promote further investment in that development; 2) to sell it profitably, with the ground on which it stands (8,000 m²). Both aims have been achieved successfully, but with certain architectural sacrifices, which I don't hesitate to expose for your personal information." He pointed to the building's "loud and propagandistic showiness . . . not exactly my trademark . . . but . . . suit[ed] to] the general taste of this country." The implication seems to have been that Barragán had the final say about what happened at El Pedregal, and he wanted "to sell it profitably," even at the cost of "certain architectural sacrifices."

³⁵ *Ibid.* Because of the many formal similarities between the demonstration houses, description here will be limited to the house at 140 Fuentes, the older and more widely published of the two. On Cetto's house at 130 Agua, see Eggener, "Expressionism and Emotional Architecture," and Dussel Peters, *Max Cetto* (see n. 11).

³⁶ Information on colors comes from Cetto's 5 June 1951 letter to McCoy, and from the text and rare color photographs published in Jacques and François Gall, "L'Opération Pedregal," *Connaissance des Arts* (15 March 1956): 62.

³⁷ The cost estimate of the house at 140 Fuentes comes from Marian Berdecio, who with her husband, painter Roberto Berdecio, purchased the property in 1951. Telephone interview, 7 January 1991.

³⁸ See Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social History of American Housing* (Cambridge, 1985), 254–255; and "Planning the Post War House," *Architectural Forum* 80 (January 1944) 75–80, (February 1944): 69–74, and (March 1944): 79–84.

³⁹ ". . . una arquitectura eminentemente moderna y mexicana . . . [en] el estilo arquitectónico más mexicano . . . [que] refleja el alma de México." "Los Jardines del Pedregal," *Arquitectura México* 39 (1952): 341.

⁴⁰ Maria Lukin, "Letter from Mexico," *Art Digest* 27 (August 1953): 9. For additional period references, see the bibliography in Ambasz, *Architecture of Luis Barragán*, 125–126.

⁴¹ An unidentified writer for *Espacios* praised the project by linking it to the ancient city of Cuicuilco, "grandfather of the pueblos": "And when the shadowed footsteps of man arrived to inhabit what until yesterday was uninhabitable; when the gaze of modern woman was integrated with the poetic rhythm of the landscape; when the child of Mexico let go his first laugh in his brand-new Pedregal home and his jubilation was heard as a sign of life and happiness—finally! Cuicuilco, grandfather of the pueblos, felt reborn in the human work of eternal Mexico." "Paisaje, Jardinería, y Arquitectura en los Jardines del Pedregal," *Espacios* 17 (1953): n.p. See also Carranca Trujillo, "Valoración de la Ciudad Universitaria," 318 (see n. 18).

⁴² See, for example, Octavio Paz, *El Laberinto de la Soledad* (Mexico, 1950); Manuel G. Salazar, "Sobre el Nacionalismo en el Arte," *Espacios* 9 (1952): n.p.; the essays by Samuel Ramos, Leopoldo Zea, and Emilio Uranga, collectively published as "El Mexicano en Busca del Mexicano," in *Cuadernos Americanos* 57 (no. 3, 1951): 87–128; and the many essays published in Alcazar Arias et al., eds., *México: Realización y Esperanza*. For a contemporary North American perspective on these and similar writings, see Gordon W. Hewes, "Mexicans in Search of the 'Mexican': Notes on Mexican National Character Studies," *The*

American Journal of Economics and Sociology 13 (January 1954): 209–223. A more recent study of this subject is Roger Bartra, *The Cage of Melancholy: Identity and Metamorphosis in the Mexican Character*, trans. Christopher J. Hall (New Brunswick, 1992).

⁴³ St. Albans, "Gardens of Pedregal," 29 (see n. 15).

⁴⁴ Tim Ostler, "To Serve, Honour and to Lead: the Architecture of Pedro Ramírez Vasquez," *World Architecture* 50 (October 1996): 66–105; William J. R. Curtis, "The General and the Local: Enrique del Moral's Own House, Calle Francisco Ramírez 5, Mexico City, 1948," in *Modernity and the Architecture of Mexico*, 115–126 (see n. 10).

⁴⁵ Cetto, "Letter to McCoy," 5 June 1951. Elsewhere Cetto complained that "the whole idea lost its organic continuity" once the stone was removed from the design. After that, the building "no longer accommodated itself to the topography of the rocks." "Statement from Max Cetto," 1951, Esther McCoy Papers; and Max Cetto, *Modern Architecture in Mexico* (New York, 1961), 180.

⁴⁶ Henry-Russell Hitchcock once described Barragán as "not trained as an architect, indeed with no technical training at all." Hitchcock, *Latin American Architecture Since 1945* (New York, 1955), 183. Ambasz later called him an "autodidactic architect who learned the profession by direct experience and through the works of artist friends and architectural writers." Ambasz, *Architecture of Luis Barragán*, 105. The truth of the matter was different (see n. 9).

⁴⁷ On Barragán's library, see McCoy, "Notes for Barragán Story," 1951, Esther McCoy Papers. Since 1994, Barragán's extensive library, with thousands of books, magazines, and article files, has been under the curatorship of the Fundación de Arquitectura Tapatá in Guadalajara. Particular strengths include medieval and religious art, modern art (works on and by Picasso, Miró, Dalí, de Chirico, Balthus, Rouault, Matisse, Klee, Kandinsky, Orozco, Rivera, Covarrubias), modern literature (especially Mexican, French, and Spanish), modern architecture and garden design, and vernacular art and architecture. For a discussion of the contents of Barragán's library, and his use of those, see Alfonso Alfaro, *Voces de Tinta Dormida: Itinerarios Espirituales de Luis Barragán* (Mexico, 1996). On Barragán's social milieu, see Adriana Williams, *Covarrubias* (Austin, 1994).

⁴⁸ Barragán, "Gardens for Environment," 171 (see n. 3).

⁴⁹ "Yo tuve el honor de tener a Richard Neutra como amigo. . . Yo he estudiado mucho a Neutra y lo he seguido en todos sus trabajos." Quoted from a 1976 interview in Elena Poniatowska, *Todo México* (Mexico, 1990), 26–27.

⁵⁰ My focus here is on Swiss-French and Anglo-American landscape architecture discourse. On links between Barragán's work and German Expressionist art and architecture, see Eggener, "Expressionism and Emotional Architecture," and Dussel Peters, *Max Cetto* (see n. 11).

⁵¹ Diana Balmori, "Defining the Boundary, Defining the Modern," *Progressive Architecture* 72 (August 1991): 95. Nor was there, until recently, much interest in modern landscape architectural history as a field of academic study. As recently as 1993, Marc Treib wrote that "the story of modern landscape architecture remains to be told." Treib, ed., *Modern Landscape Architecture*, viii. Along with Treib's, other books attempting to redress this situation include Stuart Wrede and William Howard Adams, eds., *Denatured Visions: Landscape and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1991); Monique Mosser and Georges Teyssot, eds., *The Architecture of Western Gardens* (Cambridge, 1991); Jory Johnson, *Modern Landscape Architecture: Redefining the Garden* (New York, 1991); Philip Pregill and Nancy Volkman, *Landscapes in History* (New York, 1993); Peter Walker and Melanie Simo, *Invisible Gardens: the Search for Modernism in the American Landscape* (Cambridge, 1994); and Therese O'Malley and Marc Treib, eds., *Regional Garden Design in the United States* (Washington, D.C., 1995).

⁵² Peter Davey, "The Rebirth of the Garden," *Architectural Review* 186 (September 1989): 31.

⁵³ Robert B. Riley, "From Sacred Grove to Disney World: The Search for Garden Meaning," *Landscape Journal* 7 (Fall 1988): 140.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 138–140.

⁵⁵ Le Corbusier, *Precisions: On the Present State of Architecture and City Planning*, trans. Edith Schreiber Aujame (Cambridge, 1991), 97, 139. The best discussion of Le Corbusier's approach to landscape is found in Imbert, *Modernist Garden in France*, 147–183. See also Anthony Sutcliffe, "A Vision of Utopia: Optimistic Foundations of Le Corbusier's 'Doctrine d'urbanisme,'" in *The Open Hand: Essays on Le Corbusier*, ed. Russell Walden (Cambridge, 1977), 223.

⁵⁶ "Los Jardines del Pedregal, orgullo de nuestro país y admiración de cuantos extranjeros nos visitan, fueron planeados con las orientaciones de lo

que el genial arquitecto y urbanista Le Corbusier calificó de Urbanismo Tridimensional, fundamentado en estos tres valores: Sol, Espacio, y Zona Verde." "Arquitectura Tridimensional: Sol, Espacio, y Zona Verde," *Novedades*, 96 July 1958: 12.

⁵⁷ On the Eden myth in American literature, see R.W.B. Lewis's *The American Adam* (Chicago, 1955).

⁵⁸ Henry-Russell Hitchcock, "Gardens in Relation to Modern Architecture," *Contemporary Landscape Architecture and its Sources*, ed. G. L. McCann Morley (San Francisco, 1937), 15.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Frederick Gutheim, ed., *Frank Lloyd Wright on Architecture* (New York, 1941), 34. In his early Chicago-area houses Wright often employed landscape architect Jens Jensen, whom he praised as "a native nature poet . . . a true interpreter of the peculiar charm of our prairie landscape" (Gutheim, *Wright on Architecture*, 90).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 245–246.

⁶¹ On the California landscapes of Neutra and his countryman Rudolf Schindler, see Marc Treib, "Aspects of Regionality and the Modern (ist) Garden in California," in *Regional Garden Design in the United States*, 26 (see n. 51).

⁶² Richard Neutra, "Landscaping, A New Issue," in *Contemporary Landscape Architecture and its Sources*, 22.

⁶³ Richard Neutra, *Mystery and Realities of the Site* (Scarsdale, 1951), 16.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶⁵ Elizabeth Mock, *Built in the USA: 1932–1944* (New York, 1944), 22.

⁶⁶ Katherine Morrow Ford and Thomas H. Creighton, *The American House Today* (New York, 1951), 78.

⁶⁷ O'Gorman quotes are from Clive Bamford Smith, *Builders in the Sun* (New York, 1967), 18; and Juan O'Gorman, "An Intent of Realistic Architecture," *Espacios* 25 (1955): 31. On Wright's influence in Mexico, see Keith Eggener, "Towards an Organic Architecture in Mexico," in *Frank Lloyd Wright: Europe and Beyond*, ed. Anthony Alofsin (Berkeley, forthcoming). On O'Gorman's work, see Edward R. Burian, "The Architecture of Juan O'Gorman, Dichotomy and Drift," in *Modernity and the Architecture of Mexico*, 127–149 (see n. 10). On O'Gorman's visit to Fallingwater, see Antonio Luna Arroyo, *Juan O'Gorman* (Mexico, 1973), 138. More than Wright's system of ornament, his geometrized abstractions of natural forms, his demand for unity between building and furnishings, his ideas about truth in materials and form's expression of function—all components of his organicism—it was Wright's call for the integration of building and site that engaged O'Gorman. Noting the importance of integration, while taking a swipe at Barragán, O'Gorman's wife, Helen, wrote to Esther McCoy on 15 October 1962: "I do know that [Juan] considers the [Pedregal] house a sort of thesis on what he considers . . . so important: the integration of the building with the setting, which he [finds] so lacking in the houses built in Barragán's project of the Jardines del Pedregal." Esther McCoy Papers.

⁶⁸ Dussel Peters, *Max Cetto*, 105–109 (see n. 11).

⁶⁹ The house was first published in Mexico in Mauricio Gómez Mayorga, "Casa en el Desierto, Richard Neutra, Arq.," *Arquitectura México* 30 (1950): 276–280.

⁷⁰ For illustrations of the work of these architects, see I. E. Myers, *Mexico's Modern Architecture* (New York, 1952); and Cetto, *Modern Architecture in Mexico*.

⁷¹ This is found in Barragán's library at the Fundación de Arquitectura Tapatá in Guadalajara (see n. 47).

⁷² Diego Rivera, "Requisitos para la organización de El Pedregal," *Novedades*, 3 July 1949, 22. Rivera's essay is discussed further in Keith Eggener, "Diego Rivera's Proposal for El Pedregal," *Source: Notes in the History of Art* 14 (no. 3, 1995): 1–8, though the author was at that time unaware of the 1949 *Novedades* publication. The question of the proposal's origins, whether it was initiated by Rivera or solicited by Barragán, remains open. Ambasz, after speaking with Barragán, claimed that Barragán's plans were "anticipated in an essay by the painter" (*Architecture of Luis Barragán*, 11). Given the date of their publication, however, it seems possible that Barragán, with an ever keen eye toward publicity, invited the famous painter's remarks (which might even have been scripted by Barragán himself) as an aid to the development's promotion.

⁷³ "None of the inconveniences [of building in the center of Mexico City] exist at El Pedregal, and if they can preserve the climatological advantages, without destroying the geographic characteristics that they produce, the Pedregal can be turned with great advantage into the finest residential area in the city of Mexico. . . . The conditions necessary to conserve it are as follows: 1) The

authorities of the country must fix, in accordance with the property owners or the businesses interested in El Pedregal, a type of minimum lot that assures the conservation of the geographic character of the site. They would have to indicate that only one-sixth of the surface of the lot be used for construction, with the lot being no less than 10,000 square meters. 2) Nothing would be gained if the structures destroyed the natural beauty of the place. . . . Respecting material conditions, the works realized by Frank Lloyd Wright on rocky ground in the United States, like the Kaufmann House in Pennsylvania, provide an insuperable example of the possibilities in the proposed conditions." Rivera, "Requisitos para la organización de El Pedregal."

⁷⁴ *Excelsior* (8 July 1951): 22A–23A. In 1962, Barragán claimed full responsibility for El Pedregal's publicity through 1953. Ramírez Ugarte, "Entrevista," 225.

⁷⁵ Joseph Hudnut, "Space and the Modern Garden," *Bulletin of the Garden Club of America* (May 1940): 18; reprinted in Christopher Tunnard, *Gardens in the Modern Landscape* (London, 1938).

⁷⁶ Hudnut, "Space and the Modern Garden," 22.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 20–21.

⁷⁸ Tunnard, *Gardens in the Modern Landscape*, 78–79, 80, 107.

⁷⁹ Christopher Tunnard, "Modern Gardens for Modern Houses," *Landscape Architecture* 32 (January 1942), 64.

⁸⁰ For more on the work of these designers, see Treib, "Aspects of Regional-ity," 5–42 (see n. 61); Dorothee Imbert, "Of Gardens and Houses as Places to Live: Thomas Church and William Wurster," in *An Everyday Modernism: The Houses of William Wurster*, ed. Marc Treib (Berkeley, 1995), 114–137; and David C. Streatfield, "Where Pine and Palm Meet: The California Garden as a Regional Expression," *Landscape Journal* 5 (Fall 1985): 61–74.

⁸¹ Garrett Eckbo, "Outdoors and In: Gardens as Living Space," *Magazine of Art* 34 (October 1941): 425.

⁸² Barragán, "Gardens for Environment," 169–170 (see n. 3).

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 170; McCoy, "Jardines del Pedregal," 23 (see n. 1).

⁸⁴ See n. 1.

⁸⁵ No Mexican architecture before or since these projects has received so much attention in the Mexican and international press. On the critical reception of El Pedregal and the Ciudad Universitaria, see Eggener, "Making of Mexican Modernism," 136–163 (see n. 7).

⁸⁶ Ambasz, *Architecture of Luis Barragán*, 91 (see n. 5).

⁸⁷ This point was made by González Gortázar, ed., *Arquitectura Mexicana*, 170 (see n. 10).

⁸⁸ De Anda, *Clásico del Silencio*, 130 (see n. 6).

⁸⁹ Quoted in Mario Schjetnan Garduño, "Luis Barragán, Influential Lyricist of Mexican Culture," *Landscape Architecture* 72 (January 1982): 74–75.

⁹⁰ De Anda, *Clásico del Silencio*, 130. A thoughtful alternative view from Mexico is provided by Antonio Toca Fernández, "The Work of Luis Barragán: Looking and Seeing," in *Barragán: The Complete Works*, 13–19 (see n. 5).

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