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## TRADITION AND MODERNITY ALONG WITH CULTURAL IDENTITY – MEXICAN ARCHITECTURE OF THE 20TH CENTURY

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### TRADYCJA I NOWOCZESNOŚĆ A TOŻSAMOŚĆ KULTUROWA – ARCHITEKTURA MEKSYKU W XX W.

#### Abstract

The study is concerned with Mexican architecture in the 20th century and the presence of two aesthetic orientations in it – tradition and modernity. The purpose of the analysis is to show how both orientations were used by the creators to shape the national character of architecture that was to build a sense of cultural identity.

The analyzed period was described with the division into 6 cases: from the national style to the architecture of the time of globalization.

Research has confirmed the existence of trends in architectural creativity referring to tradition and following modernity. At the beginning of the century, these two trends were independent. In the next period, certain tendencies connecting modernity with tradition appeared. At the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, the creativity of Mexican architects was dominated by references to global trends. However, the achievements of J. O’Gorman, L. Barragan, T. Gonzales de León and other outstanding architects ensured the distinctive character of Mexican architecture in the 20th century.

*Keywords: Mexican architecture of the 20th century, regionalism in architecture. Modernism, cultural identity*

#### Streszczenie

Opracowanie dotyczy architektury meksykańskiej w XX wieku i występowania w niej dwóch orientacji estetycznych – tradycji i nowoczesności. Celem analizy jest ukazanie, jak obie orientacje były wykorzystywane przez twórców do kształtowania narodowego charakteru architektury, która miała budować poczucie tożsamości kulturowej.

Analizowany okres został opisany w podziale na 6 przypadków: od stylu narodowego do architektury czasu globalizacji.

Badania potwierdziły występowanie nurtów w twórczości architektonicznej odwołujących się i do tradycji i podążających za nowoczesnością. Na początku wieku nurty te toczyły się niezależnie. W następnym okresie pojawiły się nurty łączące nowoczesność z tradycją. Na przełomie XX i XXI wieku twórczość meksykańskich architektów zdominowały odniesienia do światowych trendów. Jednak dorobek J. O’Gormana, L. Barragana, T. Gonzalesa de León i innych wybitnych architektów zapewnił wyrazisty charakter meksykańskiej architektury w XX wieku.

*Słowa kluczowe: architektura meksykańska XX wieku, regionalizm w architekturze, modernizm, tożsamość kulturowa*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Today, in the era of globalization, many inhabitants of the Earth who are aware of this process not only notice its benefits but also certain risks associated with it. These threats relate in particular to the sphere of culture, which, as a result of the development of media and communication techniques, is subject to the processes of unification, duplication of patterns and assimilation of local customs. These phenomena also take place in the field of architecture.

A process of transferring cultural patterns and civilization achievements has occurred throughout the history of mankind. The dynamics of such processes also varied – from evolutionary to revolutionary. On the one hand, the contemporary pace of civilization changes encourages us to experience modernity as a value that signifies progress. On the other hand, it raises the longing for previous achievements, the need to find a key to understand the present through the past or determine our cultural identity.

Architecture is an area of culture in which the history and aspirations of states and nations are recorded in a material form. Therefore, it can be a source of a sense of identity of an individual or a social group, and hence identifying with a specific territory, with the people who live there, with their history and culture.

The purpose of this study is to show – on the example of the last 100 years of Mexican architectural history – references to tradition and modernity as an intellectual and aesthetic orientation shaping the cultural identity of Mexicans.

## 2. TRADITION, MODERNITY, CULTURAL IDENTITY

Two interrelated concepts – tradition and modernity, are usually understood as terms of intellectually opposing orientations of cultural processes. A simplified approach to this difference is to refer them to the timeline: the progress vector is forward and the tradition vector is directed backwards. Both concepts can also have a global and local sense, although modernity is rather associated more with universal patterns, and tradition with a territorially or culturally limited range.

Modernity is a relative concept, thus it is defined in relation to prevailing standards. Something that is perceived as modern at a given time and in a given place may lose its value over time or in relation to another civilization context. Tradition, however, is an absolute description of the state of a particular segment of culture, as verified by the passage of time. History shows many examples of outdated modernity of certain ideas and achievements, and at the same time accumulating them in the form of tradition that is often kept somewhere “in the background”.

Tradition and modernity are now referred to in the context of discussions on identity in the face of the occurring globalization processes. Identity is an element of an individual’s consciousness (individual identity) and a social group (collective identity). It is a force that unites and allows an individual or a social group to enter into a civilisation context. That is why it is an important component of human consciousness from the point of view of shaping social relations that determine the durability of an ethnic, religious or national group.

Nowadays the issue of cultural identity raises concern of researchers in connection with, among other things, the spread of global cultural patterns.<sup>2</sup> On the one hand, this process threatens local cultures, on the other hand, it radicalizes social attitudes.<sup>3</sup> If cultural identity is recognized as a value at various levels and on different scales of social communities, it requires conscious formation. M. Castells writes that *from a sociological perspective all identities are constructed. The real problem, however, is how, from what, by whom and why they are constructed.*<sup>4</sup> This statement allows us to think about conscious actions and measures tailored to specific social needs.

Identity can therefore be built on the basis of, for example, identifying with a particular cultural tradition or with social aspirations related to progress and modernity.

History shows the emergence of collectivities and the shaping of their identity *as constructing a sense based on certain cultural attributes.*<sup>5</sup>

Identity is expressed through political, social and artistic attitudes that take the form of e.g. patriotism, nationalism, cosmopolitanism or internationalism. Means of expression for such attitudes may include artifacts. Architecture is one of these works which have an ability to influence the social sense of belonging. Architecture as a carrier of cultural values can therefore be a tool for building cultural identity, which determines one of its social roles. Many buildings around the world symbolize the history of nations and express their cultural aspirations or constitute a national good (e.g. Wawel Castle, Eiffel Tower, works of Antonio Gaudi).

In the case of architecture, the concept of cultural identity is often associated with various regionalisms and national styles. This relationship was particularly evident in the second half of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century. Deep political and civilization changes resulted in such trends both in countries aspiring to the role of superpowers and in regions fighting for political and cultural sovereignty. Nowadays, aspects of cultural tradition no longer significantly affect the shaping of architectural trends. However, observing the achievements of modern architects, it can be stated that the architectural space in its formal, construction or functional layer can simultaneously meet the requirements of modernity and refer to tradition too (e.g. the works of Carlo Scarpa, Rafael Moneo or Peter Zumthor). However, these are individual and original achievements of their authors. An architect can manifest cultural identity in his achievements, which, however, do not have to affect the collective social consciousness.

### 3. MEXICO ES A RESEARCH AREA FOR CULTURAL IDENTITY

Contemporary Mexican architecture is the result of a complex civilization process. The choice of this country as a research area results from the fact that it has an extremely rich and expressive culture, also in the field of architecture. Its development over the last 100 years

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<sup>2</sup> *Wanting to be modern, we reject traditional values and look for something 'new'. 'New' is a homogenised version of global culture, offering unified cultural patterns, a unified lifestyle and the same superficial and shallow identity;* Suchocka A., I. Królikowska, *Kreowanie tożsamości kulturowej jako wyzwanie XXI wieku*, Colloquium Wydziału Nauk Humanistycznych i Społecznych, 2014, no. 4, p. 74.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. M. Castells, *Sila tożsamości*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2009.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 23.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 22.

has been associated with the search for cultural identity and position in the world by referring to local traditions and to modern trends in world architecture.

Three major historical periods can be distinguished corresponding to the stages of civilization development of Mexico. The first period before the arrival of the Spaniards to the beginning of the 16th century includes the emergence and extinction of numerous centres of Indian cultures scattered throughout the so-called Mesoamerica. After the Spanish conquest, the second period, lasting nearly three hundred years, began – colonial, during which the invaders developed their culture – also spatial – based on European models. The third period began after gaining independence in 1810. The first hundred years of the young state passed in an atmosphere of social and political tensions and foreign interventions. Architecture was dominated by eclecticism and European historicisms, especially during the porphyry period (Porfirio Díaz dictatorship), preceding the revolution of 1910–1917.

The Mexican Revolution became an impulse for significant civilization changes. Since then, Mexico started building a new state whose policy was to integrate a very culturally and economically diverse society. A new doctrine of the state emerged, emphasizing building a national identity. Architecture, whose task was to meet the huge social needs in the field of construction, has also become one of the tools for building a modern state. It was also supposed to express aspirations of politicians and artists involved in cultural changes.

During the last hundred years of Mexican history, the slogans of tradition and modernity have been intermingled in the process of shaping national identity. Not all of these concepts have been and are perceived antagonistically. F. Gonzalez Gortazar, an architect, sculptor and writer, understands tradition as a movement, process – sequence, a total of previous steps. *Moreover, each of these steps constituted modernity in its time: tradition is the sum of modernity. Modernity, our modernity, is not a break with tradition but on the contrary: it is its extension and its result.*<sup>6</sup>

This relativity of modernity is illustrated by the tradition of the ancient *talud-tablero* building system, which was an effective way of erecting large forms of platforms, pedestals of temples and pyramids. At some point in time it must have been a modern idea. Later it spread in time and in space throughout all over Mesoamerica and transformed into tradition. In the 20th century, more than 400 years after the conquest and destruction of Indian cultures, spatial forms reminiscent of *talud-tablero* building structures returned as a symbol of tradition.

Huge ethnic, social and economic differences were not conducive to the sense of national community of the people of Mexico. At the beginning of the 20th century, a political will of the new government initiated the processes of building the identity of Mexicans based on the achievements in, among other things, the sphere of culture. Architecture and visual arts – those rooted in tradition and those following modernity – were supposed to build a sense of Mexican cultural identity. As a result, they became a distinguishing feature of the original culture. However, during the 20th century, trends unifying civilization were growing in the world, which also affected Mexico. In recent decades, there have been voices of scholars and creators reminding the need to protect national culture. F. González Gortázar, in his reflections on identity, tradition and what is ‘Mexican’ wrote: *Culture is our face (I mean it belongs to*

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<sup>6</sup> F. González Gortázar, *Arquitectura, pensamiento y creación*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Facultad de Arquitectura, México 2004, p. 139.

each of us and everyone together), our identity, our foundation, our strength, our roots and our wings.<sup>7</sup> This slightly pathetic tone, however, expresses the belief of many contemporary Mexican intellectuals about the need to redefine the basic goals of national culture in relation to global civilization processes.<sup>8</sup>

Famous Mexican architect A. Hernández wrote: *Architecture is an historical bridge, a communicating dialogue, and a formal language of history demanding to be a decisive factor of our cultural identity through the use of collective memory.*<sup>9</sup>

#### 4. AESTHETIC TRENDS IN MEXICAN ARCHITECTURE IN THE 20TH CENTURY

Analyzing the history of Mexican architecture of the 20th century, examples of implementations can be found that relate to these two trends under consideration, i.e. referring to tradition and exposing modernity. They expressed the idea of creating a national character of architecture in line with the concepts of the so-called ‘Mexicanity’<sup>10</sup> and at the same time a desire to develop and make progress. The above statements can be documented by describing the achievements of Mexican architects over the last 100 years.

The six trends or phenomena as highlighted below in the development of Mexican architecture will explain the relationship between tradition and modernity in constructing cultural identity.

##### 4.1. IN SEARCH OF NATIONAL STYLE

As early as at the end of the 19th century, there appeared examples of the use of artistic elements in architectural composition which derived from pre-Columbian art.<sup>11</sup> However, it was only the atmosphere of revolutionary changes that contributed to the abandonment of the porphyry era’s academicism and a more explicit reference to its own architecture from the past.

The national style which developed in the second decade of the 20th century was called nationalism (*nacionalismo*). José Vasconcelos, Minister of Public Education, spoke about a *great cultural project* whose elements were visual arts and architecture as well as about nationalism as a cultural doctrine expressing achievements of the revolution and the *historical nature of Mexico*.<sup>12</sup> J. Tito Acevedo, one of the theoreticians of changes, said that *Mexican*

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 151.

<sup>8</sup> L. Arizpe, a Mexican anthropologist, in her work *Culture and identity. Mexicans in the global era* says that recently there has been a strong desire to rebuild identity and create new identifying codes as a response to globalization; L. Arizpe, *Cultura e identidad. Mexicanos en la era global*, Revista de la Universidad de México, Nueva época, 2011, no 92, p. 71, <http://www.revistadelauniversidad.unam.mx/9211/arizpe/92arizpe4.html> (access: 2019.06.17).

<sup>9</sup> A. Hernández, *Arquitectura imaginada, proyectos no construidos*, Arquine, México 2013, p. 14.

<sup>10</sup> The term ‘Mexicanity’ appeared at the beginning of the 20th century and expressed the will to look for national and cultural identity; E.X. de Anda, *Historia de la arquitectura mexicana*, Editorial Gustavo Gili, Barcelona 2006, p. 165.

<sup>11</sup> *Pabellón Mexicano* is an example at the Universal Exhibition in Paris in 1889, designed by A.M. Anza, A. Peñafiel.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 168.

*architecture should abandon European eclecticism and explore its own history in search of artistic resources, through which it will become a consequence of the many-century legacy of its own country. A combination of new techniques and traditions will create truly Mexican architecture.*<sup>13</sup>

The neo-colonial style, which was inspired by *plateresco* and baroque architecture characterized by rich stone decorations and ceramics became the main trend. One of the significant creators of this period, F. Mariscal considered neocolonial architecture as *the image of cultural identity*.<sup>14</sup> Within the national style, there were also trends called *neoprehispánico*, *neoindigenista*<sup>15</sup> or *neomaya*<sup>16</sup> which referred to the Indian past. They were most often manifested in the form of ornaments and details referring to pre-Hispanic art (e.g. *Frontón México* building, 1929, designed by J. Capilla, Ill. 1).

At the end of 1920s, Art Decó style reached Mexico from the United States, adapting pre-Hispanic motifs in its stylistic layer (e.g. heads of Indian gods in the interior of the Palace of Fine Arts designed by F. Mariscal, 1932). In contrast, the re-import of colonial designs from California<sup>17</sup> in the 1930s was called a Californian style. It became popular especially in the capital of Mexico, but until today decorative structures of this type are used in residential and service facilities all over the country (residences, restaurants, hotels).

#### 4.2. MURAL AS A FORM OF ARTISTIC EXPRESSION IN THE ARCHITECTURAL AND URBAN SPACE

A clear sign of new times in the culture of Mexico was the movement of muralism emerging in the 1920s. Paintings painted on walls of buildings were supposed to promote new political and social ideas associated with the program of building a modern state. The social narrative of murals had a long tradition in Mexico. Both in pre-Hispanic and colonial times, paintings on walls of public buildings (temples, churches) enabled communication with the illiterate Indian society. The movement of muralism was to perform the same role.

If the discussed artistic phenomenon refers the sphere of painting in any way, murals which were placed in architectural and urban spaces had a significant impact on their composition and perception. Large-scale painting compositions in the visual layer to a large extent referred to the Mexican tradition, especially pre-Hispanic. However, the scale of artistic activities gradually took on a modern dimension. The first murals were located in the interiors of colonial buildings (e.g. Palacio Nacional and Ex Collegio de San Ildefonso in Mexico City). Since the 1930s, they have also become a frequent element of the composition of new architectural implementations – public buildings (e.g. schools, hospitals). A complex of murals in the newly constructed campus of the University Town of the largest Mexican university, Univerdad

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 166.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 167.

<sup>15</sup> A representative example is the Mexican pavilion at the international exhibition in Seville in 1929, designed by M. Amábilis; M. Rodríguez Viqueira, *Introducción a la Arquitectura en México*, Limusa, México 2009, p. 103.

<sup>16</sup> N. Gutiérrez Ruiz, C.A. Novelo Zapata, *La arquitectura neomaya en Yucatán: en búsqueda de la identidad nacional*, Arte y Sociedad, Revista de Investigación, 2013, no. 4, <http://asri.eumed.net/4/arquitectura-neomaya.html> (access: 27.06.2019).

<sup>17</sup> California is an area annexed by the USA in the 19th century. In the first half of the 20th century many buildings referring to the so-called *Spanish Colonial Revival* architecture were erected there.

Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), which originated in the early 1950s, became an example of a modern combination of modernist architecture and art (Ill. 2).

From the point of view of our considerations, it is significant that in the following decades Mexican murals, apart from their artistic and compositional values, continued their mission to propagate ideas and values building the identity of Mexicans by referring, *inter alia*, to the Indian past, historical events, artists and national heroes. Architecture became a tool of such a policy due to the implementation of the idea of artistic integration – combination of architecture and visual arts.<sup>18</sup>

### 4.3. FUNCTIONALISM AS AN EXPRESSION OF MODERNITY

Apart from the national style, functionalism became the second direction of changes in Mexican architecture after the revolution. In the 1920s new architectural ideas reached Mexico from Europe by means of magazines and publications.<sup>19</sup> Functionalism became an opportunity to manifest civilization changes in favour of modernity. A new design methodology and a reinforced concrete technology enabled the government to implement its ambitious plans to meet the needs of construction for social purposes, primarily for education and healthcare.

Young architect Juan O’Gorman (1905–1982) became a great propagator of the new trend. His first implementations, which were inspired by Le Corbusier’s creative activity, *i.e.* his own house (1929) and a house-studio for painter and muralist Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo (1931–32) constituted the beginning of the aesthetics of modernism in Mexico (Ill. 3). In the following years, he designed numerous schools and other public facilities. The buildings were characterized by an economical play of orthogonal bodies and restrained architectural detail. This new ‘raw’ artistic form of buildings became a symbol of modernity.

The subsequent years saw many architectural implementations which were designed by a new generation of architects who put into practice the ideas of functionalism. Simple objects such as houses for workers (designed by J. Legarret, 1933) and large public facilities such as the National Institute of Cardiology (designed by E. Yáñez, 1937) were constructed.

One of the most spectacular achievements in this trend of creative activity is the already mentioned UNAM University Town complex. The monumental urban layout of the E. del Moral and M. Pani project was implemented by many teams of architects in the years 1948–1952.<sup>20</sup> As it was mentioned above, the modernist layout is characterized by a significant participation of murals in the architectural composition. The most distinctive object in this respect is the University Library which is covered entirely with a mural mosaic of coloured pebbles – a work by J. O’Gorman, which illustrates the history of Mexican culture (1948–50, Ill. 4). The first skyscraper in Latin America – Latin American Tower (designed by A.H. Álvarez, 1948–56, height 182 m), which was located on the outskirts of the Historical Centre of the City of Mexico, also became a prominent symbol of modernity.

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<sup>18</sup> The idea of artistic integration originated in Mexico in the 1930s. Its promoter E. Yáñez claimed that artistic integration was a way to achieve national expression in architecture; R. López Rangel, *Enrique Yáñez en la cultura arquitectónica mexicana*, Limusa, México 1989, p. 83.

<sup>19</sup> For instance, *L’Architecture Vivante*, Bauformen, book by Le Corbusier *Vers une architecture*; V. Jiménez, *Juan O’Gorman, vida y obra*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Facultad de Arquitectura, México 2004, p. 13.

<sup>20</sup> M. Rodríguez Viqueira, *op. cit.*, pp. 118–122.

Implementations in the spirit of functionalism were not completely devoid of historical context in Mexico. For example, in the urban composition and monumental spaciousness of the central courtyards of the University Town, G. Lopez Padilla sees similarities to a large religious centre from pre-Hispanic times – Monte Albán.<sup>21</sup>

Another interesting layout is a large residential complex called Nonoalco Tlatelolco in Mexico City designed by M. Pani in 1957–64. The Square of Three Cultures has become an important symbolic element of this layout. In the space of the monumental interior, which is surrounded by modernist apartment blocks, the material symbols of three periods of Mexican culture were compositionally combined, i.e. the remains of pyramids of the pre-Hispanic city of Tlatelolco, the monastery and church of de Santiago from the Spanish colony period and the modern tower block – Torre de Tlatelolco (designed by P. Ramírez Vázquez, 1960–66).

#### 4.4. INSPIRATIONS OF THE PAST IN THE PERIOD OF LATE MODERNISM

The aforementioned references to the past had no formal consequences in architectural structures. It was only at the turn of the 1970s that architects who were educated in the spirit of modernism showed a desire to be inspired by ancient Mexican architecture. G. López Padilla associates this trend with postmodernism developing in the world at that time. In the case of Mexico, formal searches turned to tradition, especially pre-Hispanic.<sup>22</sup> These were attempts to transpose the spatial composition of historic bodies into the language of modern architecture.

One of the first examples was the Mexican Folklore Ballet School of Mexico (designed by A. Hernández, 1968), whose form resembled the architecture of a pre-Hispanic temple. A layout on a larger scale is the military academy – Heroico Colegio Militar (designed by A. Hernández, M. González Rul, 1976). In both examples, different in scale, formal similarities to the massive blocks and spatial arrangements of large pre-Hispanic layouts such as Monte Albán or Teotihuacán can be found. On the other hand, large sloping wall surfaces refer to the ancient *talud-tablero* structure system mentioned above.

Similar inspirations with pre-Hispanic buildings can be seen in the architectural composition of the works by architects T. Gonzales de León and A. Zabłudovski. In particular,

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<sup>21</sup> G. López Padilla, *Nueva arquitectura mexicana. Tendencias entre siglos*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Facultad de Arquitectura, México 2011, pp. 132–134.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 129.

- III. 1. Frontón México, designed by J. Capilla, 1929, Mexico City (photo by LM)
- III. 2. Mural by D.A. Siqueiros on the UNAM building, 1952, Mexico City (photo by LM)
- III. 3. House-studio of D. Rivera and F. Kahlo, designed by J. O’Gorman, 1931–32, Mexico City (photo by LM)
- III. 4. University Library of the UNAM, designed by J. O’Gorman, 1948–1952, Mexico City (photo by LM)
- III. 5. Colegio de México, designed by T. Gonzáles de León and A. Zabłudovsky, 1974–76, Mexico City (photo by LM)
- III. 6. Torres de Satélite, designed by L. Barragan, M. Goeritz, J. Reyes Ferreira, 1957, Mexico City (photo by LM)
- III. 7. Hotel Camino Real, designed by R. Legorreta, 1968, Mexico City (photo by LM)
- III. 8. Soumaya Museum, designed by F. Romero, 2010, Mexico City (photo by LM)



three implementations from the 1970s, i.e. the *Infonavit* institution seats, *Colegio de México* (Ill. 5) and the Rufino Tamayo Museum recall the remains of temples and palaces of ancient Indian cultures due to their horizontal massive blocks with a small number of holes. Raw wall structures, which were made in the technology of hammered concrete, additionally increase the effect of age of the structure.<sup>23</sup>

Even more obvious are the analogies to historical forms in the case of museums and service centres at archaeological complexes. These projects were made by both T. González de León and A. Zabludovsky (Chichen-Itza, 1985–87, El Tajín, 1991–92) as well as by A. Hernández (unrealized projects of museums in Yaxchilan and on the so-called Mayan Route from 1996–2010).

The University Cultural Centre (CCU), which was built in the south of Mexico City in the second half of the 1970s, also belongs to the trend of historic references. Monumental concrete bodies of objects<sup>24</sup>, which are immersed in the volcanic landscape, bring to mind structures from the distant past. A large landscape composition of *Espacio Escultórico* resembling a megalithic temple circle which was realized in the vicinity of the building complex can be recognised as an aesthetic point of this trend of creative thinking.<sup>25</sup>

Apart from references to pre-Hispanic architecture, projects inspired by colonial architecture were created in later years. T. González de León and A. Zabludovski designed a new part of Banamex Bank seats in the historic centre of Mexico City (1989). Using a formal synthesis language, they created a building that blended in with the historic colonial context of the city. The final effect is, however, of a stage design character. Similarly, architects A. Quijano Axle, R. Ancona Riestra and J.C. Zoreda Novelo used the idea of a colonial palace structure in the modern implementation of El Olimpio Cultural Centre in Merida, Yucatan (1999).<sup>26</sup>

#### 4.5. MEXICAN EMOTIONAL MODERNISM

Parallel to the trends described, at the turn of the 1950s, works that marked a new trend in Mexican architecture were created. The creator of this trend was Luis Barragán (1902–1988) who within the frames of modernism – as G. López Padilla states – found a way to transform his most personal and most intimate experiences into architectural spaces.<sup>27</sup>

In 1947, Barragán designed his own studio house which became a kind of creative manifesto. In the composition of the building consisting of simple bodies and large planes of colours, the play of light and spatial relations in the interiors were of significant importance. A work with a smooth and surprising structure was created which was considered revolutionary in the history of housing space design.<sup>28</sup>

German artist, Mathias Goeritz, who settled in Mexico after the Second World War, contributed to the shaping of the new trend of plastic arts. In 1953, he built the El Eco Experimental Museum in the capital city of Mexico – a facility offering exhibition space and at the same

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. J.M. Larios, *La composición arquitectónica en la obra de Teodoro González de León*, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana – Unidad Azcapotzalco, México 2009.

<sup>24</sup> CCU includes, inter alia, a huge concert hall *Nezahualcōyotl* (designed by Arcadio Artis Espriu, 1976) and *Biblioteca-Emeroteca Nacional* (designed by Arturo Treviño Arizmendi, 1978); M. Rodríguez Viqueira, *op.cit.*, p. 143.

<sup>25</sup> *Espacio Escultórico* was created by a team of six outstanding Mexican sculptors in 1976.

<sup>26</sup> G. López Padilla, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 114.

<sup>28</sup> *Guía casa Luis Barragán*, Fundación de Arquitectura Tapatía Luis Barragán, México 2008, p. 44.

time being a work of art itself. On this occasion, Goeritz announced the artistic manifesto of emotional architecture, which became the ideological motto of a group of artists – painters, sculptors and architects.<sup>29</sup> He proposed a new strategy for the integration of arts, different from the earlier idea of artistic integration. A similar approach to architecture and art brought Barragan and Goeritz closer, which resulted in friendship and cooperation in the future. Their first joint implementation was Torres de Satélite – colourful towers at the entrance to the new Satélite housing estate in the north of Mexico City (1957, Ill. 6).

In the following years, Barragán created works of architecture that made him one of the most remarkable Mexican artists of the 20th century.<sup>30</sup> His achievements – an important component of Mexican culture – are not numerous and his works are usually of a small scale, e.g. the chapel of the Capuchin Order (1955), single-family houses Casa Gálvez (1955) and Casa Gilardi (1976), a house with the Los Clubes stud (1964–69), all in the city of Mexico.

The trend, which was created by Barragán and is now perceived as very Mexican, did not derive directly from the national tradition. The architect introduced into his work the entire ‘emotional’ spatial and artistic experiences connected with childhood and youth. These included both images of the native state of Jalisco and memories from travels abroad. From Europe and North Africa he brought, among other things, knowledge of Mediterranean tradition, Franciscan mysticism, traditional Maghreb architecture and lessons of eastern aesthetics.<sup>31</sup> His style, however, was not appreciated from the beginning and was even considered to be a stage design or pretending. As F. González Gortázar writes, *when we look at the architecture of Barragán, we believe that we look at popular folk architecture, although no similar architecture has ever existed.*<sup>32</sup>

However, the direction marked by Barragán turned out to be the right way for many architects to develop Mexican architecture by combining modernity with a climate of tradition. Barragan’s successors include, inter alia, A. Attolini Lack, J. Sordo Madaleno and A. López Baz. But the most famous continuator of Barragan’s idea became R. Legorreta (1931–2011) who designed objects on a much larger scale, also in the international arena, i.e. hotels, museums, universities, office buildings, etc. In his creative activity he exhibited a formal play of bodies and a strong role of colour (Ill. 7). The scale of the Legorreta + legoretta design office’s activities is evidenced by the project documentation on the company’s website (about 160 implementations on five continents).<sup>33</sup>

#### 4.6. NEW ARCHITECTURE IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION

In the second half of the 20th century, apart from the two trends discussed above, which referred to tradition in different ways, objects continuing the modernist line were implemented. Simple geometric blocks of skyscrapers – hotels and office buildings – made the city centre

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<sup>29</sup> M. Geritz stated in a manifesto that man of the 20th century is overwhelmed with functionalism, logic and utility. That is why *‘only by experiencing real emotions in architecture can man perceive it as art’*; Ch. del Castillo, D. Miranda, *Guía Goeritz*, Arquine, México 2015, p. 185.

<sup>30</sup> In 1980 L. Barragan received the Pritzker Prize as the second winner in the history of this highest architectural distinction.

<sup>31</sup> *Guía casa Luis Barragán*, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

<sup>32</sup> F. González Gortázar, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

<sup>33</sup> <http://legorretalegorreta.com/> (access: 19.06.2019)

of Mexico similar to many other metropolises in the world. In the 1960s and 1970s a number of buildings that referred to the international style were constructed.<sup>34</sup> Later, also T. González de Leon changed the character of his architecture by designing, inter alia, monumental skyscrapers which are original author's creations but at the same time form part of international stylistic tendencies. The creative activity of the next generation of Mexican architects is also developing in this direction.

One of the most important representatives of the new generation of Mexican architects is E. Norten (born in 1954) who has been managing TEN Arquitectos office for over thirty years. He successfully designs and implements facilities in Mexico, the United States and other places in the world.<sup>35</sup> W. Rybczyński defines his work as rational architecture. He writes that *his buildings are characterized by their architectural rigor, technical refinement, and sense of coherence*.<sup>36</sup> He describes Norten's style as minimalist modernism.

The internationalization processes of Mexican architecture gained speed at the end of the 20th century. Due to the development of information technologies, globalization processes were intensified, including the sphere of information exchange. New means of communication facilitated the acquisition and transmission of information as well as they enabled more effective promotion and competition on international forums. The young generation of architects took advantage of new opportunities and underwent globalization processes watching the creative activity of *starchitects* and trying to appear on the international market. It can be assumed that for them modernity is about being updated with new global trends and astonishing others with new, primarily formal solutions, because the visual side of projects and implementations is best promoted and sold.

M. Rojkind, F. Romero and F. Escobedo belong to young architects who stand out due to their originality and creative activity, including in the international arena. Rojkind designed, e.g. The Nestlé Chocolate Museum in Toluca (2007), the seat of the Nestlé Company in Queretaro (2009) and the Liverpool department store in a shopping centre in Mexico City (2011). The objects have interesting and dynamic forms, but the ones that could be created by an architect in any country of the world. Similarly, Romero fits into international trends. He is the author of the Soumaya Museum in Mexico City (2010), whose soft and unique form of the building is closer to the aesthetics of the architecture of Zaha Hadid or Frank Gehry than to Mexican tradition (Ill. 8). By contrast, Escobedo designed La Tallera complex in Quernavaca (2010), which is a cultural centre in the former studio of the famous muralist D.A. Siqueiros. Thanks to the use of panels with fragments of the artist's murals in the composition of the front of the layout, a dynamic form resembling the architecture of deconstructivism was created.

## 5. SUMMARY

The analysis of trends in Mexican architecture over the last one hundred years confirms the occurrence of two aesthetic orientations – tradition and modernity. In the 1920s and 1930s,

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<sup>34</sup> M. Rodríguez Viqueira, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

<sup>35</sup> A. Hernández Gálvez (ed.), *TEN Arquitectos / Enrique Norten. Los límites de la forma / The limits of form*, Arquine, México 2012.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 25.

the trends related to them were parallel and independent. In the next period, there appeared tendencies to combine modernity with tradition. Finally, in the last decades at the turn of the 21st century, modernity and following global architectural trends have dominated the work of Mexican architects.

Despite a special social and political situation existing in Mexico, there is an analogy to the processes which occurred in the world within the last one hundred years, i.e. from national styles and regionalisms, through the revolution of modernism, up to unification and the time of individuality in the era of globalization.

In the case of Mexico, the presented periods and trends of architecture development show the ways Mexicans sought their identity trying to refer to tradition while keeping up with progress. This is demonstrated by the work of J. O’Gorman, L. Barragan, T. Gonzales de León and other outstanding architects who gave the expressive character to Mexican architecture in the 20th century.

At present, Mexicans are discussing their identity, but they no longer have problems with identifying its sources. That is why the younger generation of architects does not feel the need to highlight their national and cultural separateness (or identity), especially since in a globalized world professional competition rewards individuals more than groups of creators. Today, the ‘Mexicanity’ of architecture boils down to the regional staffage which is mainly used by the tourism industry. Contemporary Mexican architecture follows the latest global formal trends, methods of design and technologies of implementation. Modernity has beaten tradition without eliminating it but reducing it to the role of a stage design that serves to maintain the image of Mexican culture in the world and maintain the sense of cultural identity of Mexicans themselves.

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