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Modernity And The Architecture Of Mexico



Synopsis

Since the mid 1970s, there has been an extraordinary renewal of interest in early modern architecture, both as a way of gaining insight into contemporary architectural culture and as a reaction to neoconservative postmodernism. This book undertakes a critical reappraisal of the notion of modernity in Mexican architecture and its influence on a generation of Mexican architects whose works spanned the 1920s through the 1960s. Nine essays by noted architects and architectural historians cover a range of topics from broad-based critical commentaries to discussions of individual architects and buildings. Among the latter are the architects Enrique del Moral, Juan O'Gorman, Carlos Obregón Santacilia, Juan Segura, Mario Pani, and the campus and stadium of the Ciudad Universitaria in Mexico City. Relatively little has been published in English regarding this era in Mexican architecture. Thus, *Modernity and the Architecture of Mexico* will play a groundbreaking role in making the underlying assumptions, ideological and political constructs, and specific architect's agendas known to a wide audience in the humanities. Likewise, it should inspire greater appreciation for this undervalued body of works as an important contribution to the modern movement.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Nine essays by noted architectural historians cover a range of topics from broad-based critical commentaries to discussions of individual architects and buildings.

Edward R. Burian is a practicing architect based in Tucson, Arizona, whose writings and professional practice focus on the American Southwest and Mexico. He was educated at Yale and the University of Southern California and has taught at several schools of architecture in the American Southwest.

While I will not go in depth about this volume for lack of time, I can say that this is a great book for anybody interested in the fascinating relationship that Mexico has had with Functionalist and Modernist architecture throughout the 20th century, and which continues today. Some of the essays are invaluable, such as Burian's take on O'Gorman and his dichotomies and apparent contradictions, which lay the ground for understanding a lot of the anxieties at the start of the Modern architectural movement in Mexico. The interview with Alberto Pérez-Gómez is a fascinating read and a unique document since that great theoretician, while being Mexican, has never dedicated much of his work to expressing his thoughts on Mexican architecture. Some of the other essays are very valuable as well, while one or two dwindled in their quality, as another reviewer stated, Kalach's essay on Ciudad Universitaria's Stadium is weak, but then again, nobody has ever credited Kalach for being a great writer. All in all, do acquire this book if you are interested in the subject.

I am a dutch architect that has been living in Mexico for over thirty years, and I believe that this is probably the best book on modern mexican architecture that I have read. Of course not all the essays have the same quality. The best is the Mendez Vigata essay which I would rank as essential reading for anyone interested on mexican public architecture or to anyone interested in the relationship between architecture and politics. The Perez Gomez interview, the Arredondo, Curtis, Mereles, Burian's O'Gorman essay (there is not much information about that great mexican painter and architect elsewhere), and the Mijares (a personal view of Obregon's architecture from one of the greatest mexican architects) are very good. The essay on Juan Segura written by Antonio Toca, who is one of the most important architecture historians in Mexico, is dissapointing. Probably the worst is the Kalach essay on the Ciudad Universitaria Stadium, this was a real dissapointment since Kalach is one the one of the most interesting young architects in Mexico. So, if really have an interest in mexican architecture don't let the couple of mediocre articles included prevent you from enjoying this otherwise rare and wonderful book.

While an important and little written about topic, this book fails to deliver the valuable information in

a readable manner. The language is dull and boring, and the writing is dry. It is very difficult to sit with it for an extended period of time. While the author attempts to address critical issues in Mexican architecture he over complicates the relevant information with the rhetoric. The noble attempt to provide dialogue with influential authorities on the subject by way of interviews seemed tainted. This was because his questions were not open ended and were often worded in a leading manner. It was as if the author was trying to draw out the response he desired from the subject. While Burian's writing was lacking, some of the articles written by others contained in the book were more appealing.

I think this is the best book on modern Mexican architecture that I have read. Unfortunately most of the books currently available on the architecture of that country are lacking on theoretical and historical data, this one is the exception. There isn't much that I can add to the "Mixed bag of riches" review, but I think that this is a book that will not let anyone down .

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