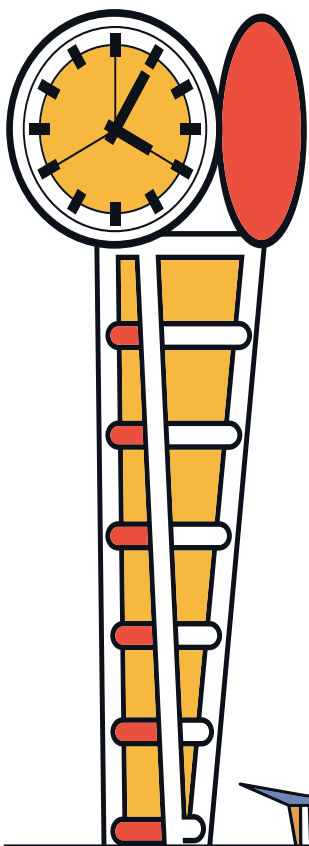


18th International Architecture Exhibition-La Biennale di Venezia

Universidad Central de **Venezuela**
World Heritage Site in recovery
University City of Caracas



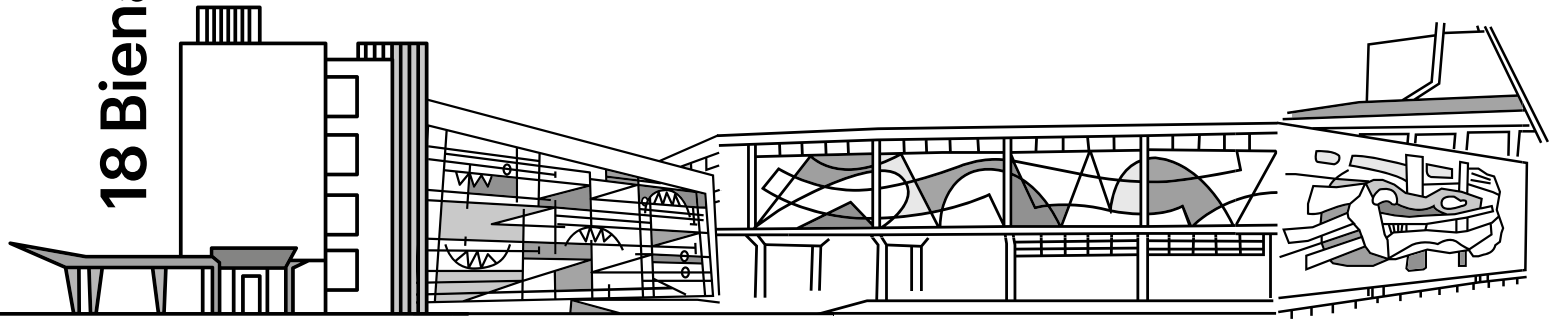
18 Bienal de Arquitectura de Venecia

20 MAY
26 NOV
2023

VENEZUELA



18 Bienal de Arquitectura de Venecia



Pavilion of República Bolivariana de Venezuela
18th International Architecture Exhibition
La Biennale di Venezia
May 20th November 26th, 2023

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Commissioner / Curator

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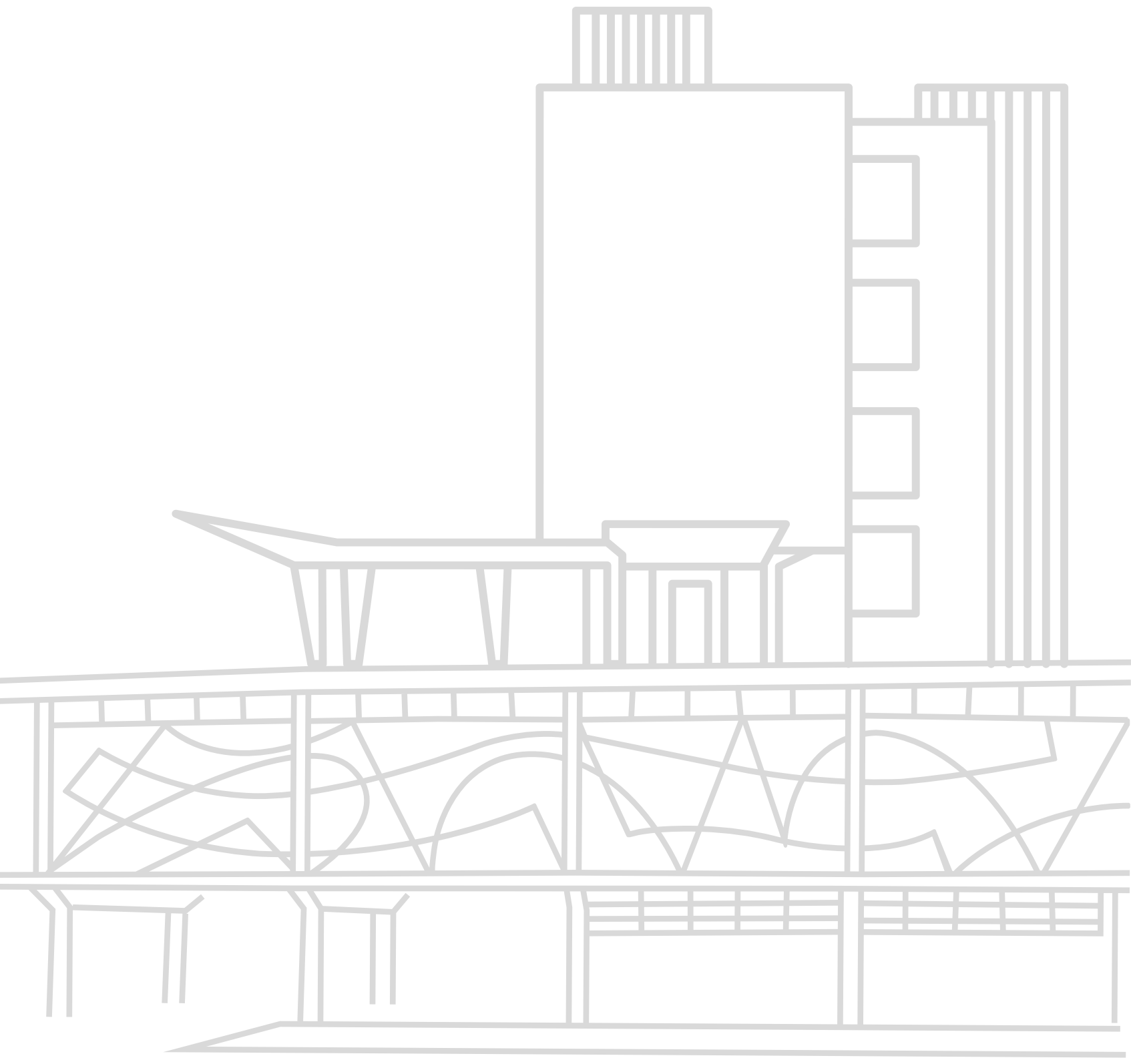
“

La **Arquitectura** es un acto social por excelencia,
arte utilitario como proyección de la vida misma,
ligada a problemas económicos y sociales
y no únicamente a normas estéticas.

(...) Para ella, la forma no es lo más importante,
su principal misión: **resolver hechos humanos.**

Carlos Raúl Villanueva

Universidad Central de **Venezuela**
*World Heritage Site **in recovery***
University City of Caracas



The National Pavilions and the history of the Venezuelan Pavilion in Venice

Paola Posani Urdaneta
Commissioner / Curator

The National Pavilions and the history of the Venezuelan Pavilion in Venice

La Biennale di Venezia is the most prestigious international art and architecture exhibition in the world. It hosts the meeting of more than 60 countries in the Gardens of the Castello in Venice, since its inauguration on April 30th, 1895; 128 years ago.

From 1907 several countries began the construction of their own national pavilions, to present to the world the best of their artistic productions, commissioning the projects to prestigious architects, such as Alvar Aalto, Carlo Scarpa, Bruno Giacometti and Sverre Fehn, among others. Each of the pavilions designed and built are owned by each country and are administered by the respective Ministries of Culture.

It should be noted that Venezuela was the first South American country to build its own Pavilion, being one of the three Latin American countries that has its own Pavilion, along with Brazil and Uruguay. In 1953 the Republic of Venezuela commissioned the design project of the Pavilion to the architect Carlo Scarpa, opening in 1956. Since this date, the Venezuelan Pavilion in Venice is part of that valuable and prestigious patrimonial architectural complex formed by a total of 29 national pavilions.

With 67 years of extensive history, the Venezuelan Pavilion is located between the pavilions of Russia, which dates from 1914 and that of Switzerland which was built in 1952. The Venezuelan Pavilion, which is considered by the international critics as a jewel of post-war Italian architecture, has housed the work of famous Venezuelan artists, such as Reverón, Narvaéz Vígas, Soto, Alejandro Otero, among others. The Venezuelan Pavilion, being a building of high architectural quality and with a constructive design of high level, was declared heritage of cultural interest of the City of Venice, by the Superintendence of Cultural Property of the Venetian municipality.

For its special characteristics, our Pavilion is one of the most appreciated and visited constructions by the international public that attends every year, being specially valued in each of the Biennials.

In 1980 *La Biennale di Venezia* incorporated in its spaces an annual chapter, especially dedicated to Architecture. For 46 years now, the *Architettura Biennale* has become a space for the meeting of the most innovative and important architectural proposals of renowned architects and the new generation of architects from different countries.

The 18th International Architecture Exhibition-La Biennale di Venezia. As a proposal for a better future

The Biennale Architettura 2023 will open its doors on May 20th this year. Under the title: “**The Laboratory of the Future**” this exhibition summons countries for different national efforts to achieve a better world.

According to the curator of the exhibition, Architect Lesley Lokko, after the two difficult years of the pandemic, “Architects are presented with a unique opportunity to show the world what we know how to do best: propose ambitious and creative ideas that help us imagine a more equitable and optimistic future in common”.

With this concept, the Biennale Architettura 2023 proposes a change of perspective with respect to the traditional vision of development. According to the curator “*There is one place in which all these questions of equity, resources, race, hope and fear converge and coalesce: Africa. At an anthropological level, we are all African. And what happens in Africa happens to us all*”, explains Lokko.

Venezuela joins this proposal by attending the Architecture Biennial 2023 with an approach that presents Latin America, like Africa, as a new center of knowledge production, where new narratives are built, tools, spaces and architectural proposals that offer the possibility of building a better society.

Universidad Central de Venezuela World Heritage Site in recovery University City of Caracas

La Ciudad Universitaria de Caracas was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2000, and is considered by international critics as the masterpiece of the Venezuelan architect Carlos Raúl Villanueva. This architect applied the principles of modern architecture to the development needs of our country, adapting architecture to the richness of our climate, our vegetation and the social development needs of Venezuela at the time.

La Ciudad Universitaria de Caracas is a perfectly articulated set of green areas, internal courtyards, covered corridors and high quality buildings where architecture is at the service of social development. All its architecture is designed for educational, recreational, support and health care purposes, which were essential for the development of well-being and quality of life in our country in the 50s.

The Central University of Venezuela represents the materialization of Master Villanueva’s concept of the “synthesis of the arts”, hosting 108 works of national and international great masters, such as: Alexander Calder, Fernand Léger, Víctor Vasarely, Henri Laurens, Jean Arp, Wifredo Lam, Baltazar

Lobo, Oswaldo Vigas, Mateo Manaure, Alejandro Otero, Jesús Soto, Pascual Navarro, Francisco Narváez, Alirio Oramas, and others. All this integration of architecture and art results in an ingenious and brilliant interpretation of the concepts of modern architecture and art, adapted to our tropics, with open, ventilated and protected constructions, appropriate to our climate and geography.

The exhibition of Venezuela at the 18th International Architecture Exhibition-La Biennale di Venezia: *Universidad Central de Venezuela Patrimonio de la Humanidad en recuperación* (Central University of Venezuela. University City of Caracas World Heritage Site in recovery), will serve to show the world to re-read and rethink architecture from the approach reflected by Villanueva, inspiring new generations of architects to conceive the idea of architecture as an element of change and social development. It is a Venezuelan proposal for the world, which responds to Latin American geography and idiosyncrasy, which creates tropical cities, with our Latin American landscapes and cultural values, being an example and a model to develop for the construction of a better society.

Because of the importance of the Central University of Venezuela for the world, the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro Moros, created on July 2nd, 2021, the Presidential Commission for the Recovery of the University City of Caracas, which after the necessary evaluations and diagnoses began the works for its recovery. In order to respond to State policies in relation to the protection of heritage, the Presidential Commission proposed an innovative working methodology that allowed developing, simultaneously, different fronts of work in different buildings on the University Campus which is on the UNESCO World Heritage list. For this purpose, teams of professionals, advisors and inspectors from different areas such as restoration, landscaping, engineering and restoration, and maintenance of works of art were organized.

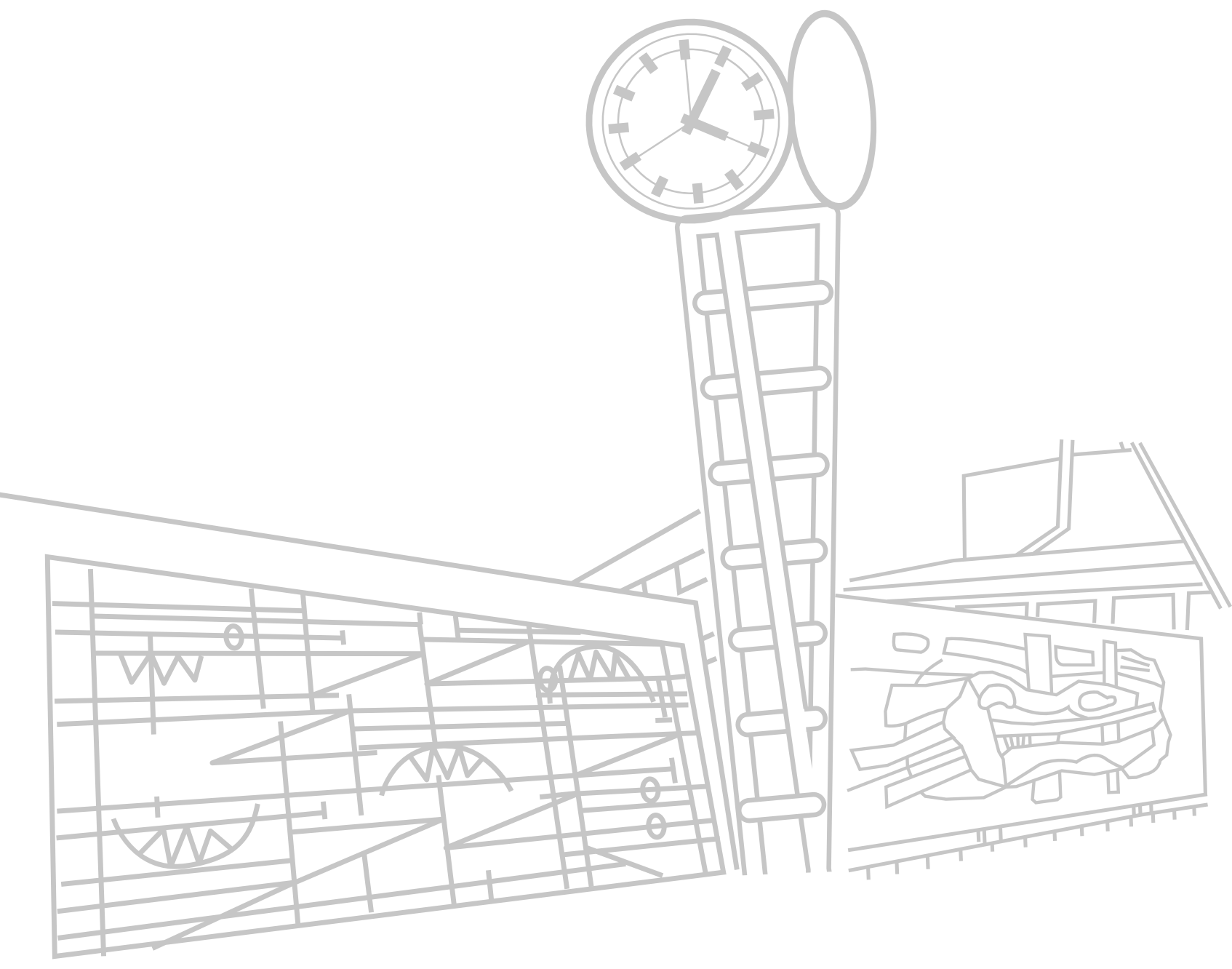
Due to the complexity to understand the different levels and scales that make up the content of the exhibition, it is proposed that the assembly proposal, the museography will be based on devices and interactive digital screens, with different scales that allow to understand the different scales of the totality of the University City of Caracas and its architectural details without losing the integral sight.

The exhibition will highlight and recreate, with different museographic devices, all the work done in the University City of Caracas through the recovery process, restoration and, in some cases, reconstruction and recycling of buildings, which, by its change of use over the years, merited the reuse of the original construction for existing use. In the tour that will take place in the exhibition, it will be highlighted the poor state of conservation in which the University was, prior to the appointment of the Presidential Commission and the work of the technical team and the measures implemented to preserve the original architectural values.

We will show, with comparative images, original plans and current photos, as a Latin American country takes back the value of modern architecture, recovering its splendor, its original values, its spaces and especially the modern utopia of the university city that resurfaces to serve as a guide to the future, in the hands of one of the most important exponents of the world architecture as it is the master Carlos Raúl Villanueva.







Caracas and its University City

Newton Rauseo

Utopia and dialectics, intrinsic factors in the production of space¹

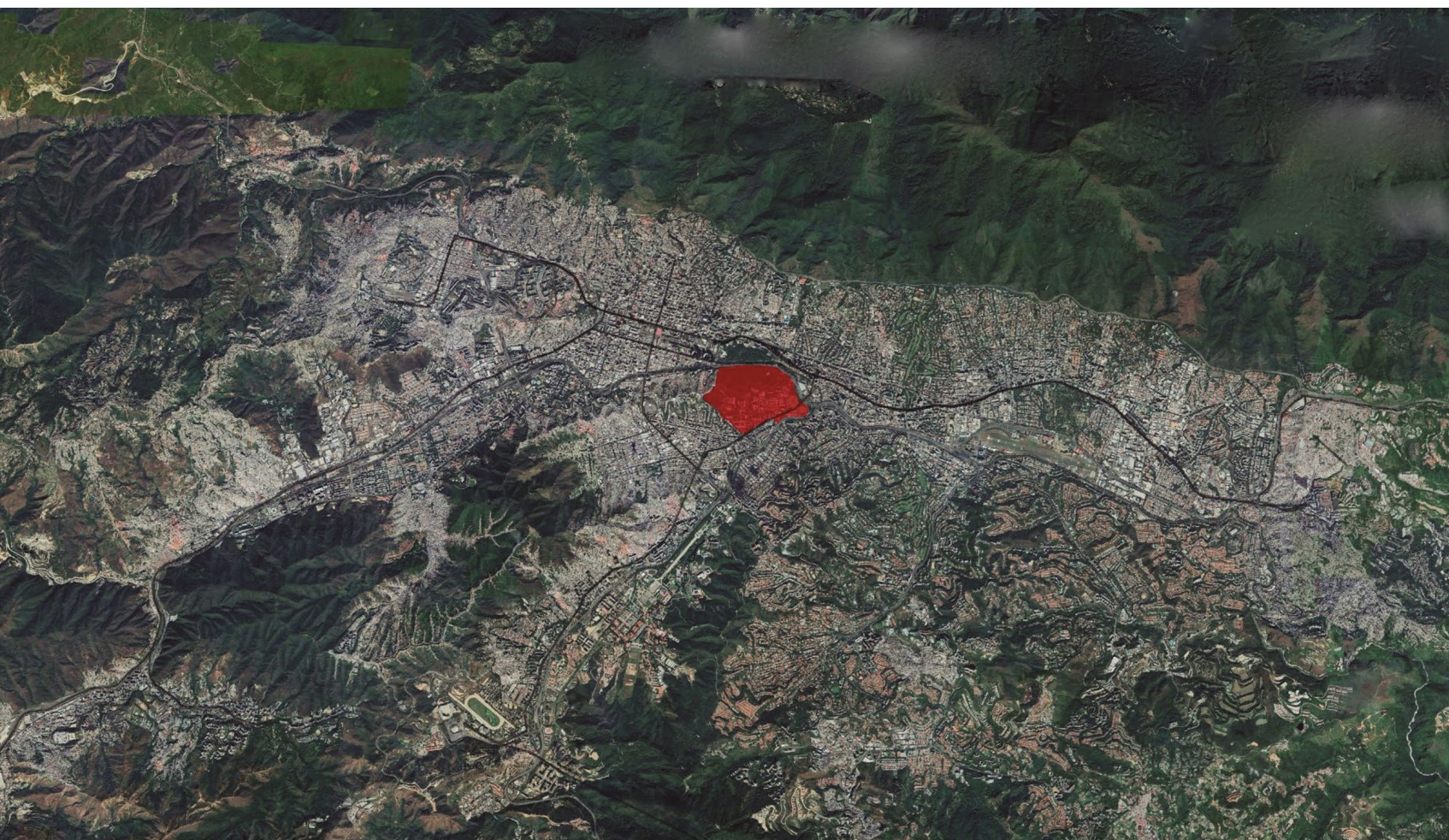
The city's development in Venezuela during the twentieth century responded to the capitalist system's structures, where the market economy and ideas of modernity marked social practice. This did not stop the impetus of contradictions that arose in society: political changes; urban population growth; demand for jobs, housing, and services. The oil economic income -together with industrial and commercial income- consolidated and was important for the phenomenology of urbanization. Capital benefits the State and the Civil Corporations (official entities with power over the production means and the labor force), which assume the challenge of the modern Latin American Nation to exhibit advances of Western development (of European-American paradigms) liberal-positivist of order-progress-civilization. The cities crystallized architectural-socio-cultural utopias with symbols and ideological orientations that transcended reality, producing, dialogically, a transforming effect of the existing historical order. Caracas received an appreciable percentage of economic income, which influenced its development, and favored the production of urban types ("*ensanches*", urban extensions) with differentiated social spaces: residential (urbanizations, neighborhoods), services, industrial, as a phenomenological expression of processes of change; the liberal State being the main protagonist in imposing its urban plans and regulations. In the 1940's the government addressed the educational services and decided to build the headquarters of the Universidad Central de Venezuela, UCV; which provoked, in the socio-political environment, a tolerant opening to the dialectic of the physical-spatial modernity of Western architects and the International Congresses of Modern Architecture, CIAM. Paradigms such as "garden city", "integration of the arts", "campus", etc., take shape with a social sense in the University City project elaborated by the Venezuelan Carlos Raúl Villanueva as the main architect.

If the city is materiality, the complex physical-social morphological spatiality of the *Ciudad Universitaria de Caracas* challenges the modernist-CIAM utopia: materializing reality of urban-architectural space by 'extension'; enhancing the natural environment; connecting with 'doors' the surrounding areas; exalting the national culture; empowering with 'synthesis', 'innovation', 'integration', 'evolution', 'reformulation', open spaces (vehicular roads, pedestrian corridors and squares -open, covered-, gardens, parks) and constructed spaces (student residence, social services: education, health, culture, sports); combining architecture, landscaping, and plastic arts (national, foreign) with avant-garde designs and aesthetic-technical-functional quality. All of them, urbanization elements. Villanueva creates a "tropical" garden city, modern, with its own internal features. It offers both physical educational space in faculties, schools, and institutions, as well as recreational space: Plaza Cubierto complex (Aula Magna, Concert Hall) and auditoriums in the faculties; Botanical Garden, hill-valley-forest as a recreational-educational city park; sports complex (Olympic Stadium, University Stadium, Indoor Gymnasium, Multiple Sports Center: swimming pools, gymnasiums). In addition, academic spaces (clinics, laboratories, workshops, libraries) for research and social outreach services. In this way, physical and non-physical spaces

¹ We briefly address some relevant aspects to contextualize the content of the headline.

were established and merged, such as: the social (e.g. admission of the Venezuelan nationality, forging citizen identity under paradigms of freedom, equality, community); political (e.g. democratic reciprocity professor-student-employee in the management of governing decisions); economic (e.g. production of humanistic, scientific, technological knowledge for socio-productive activities); cultural (e.g. cultivating knowledge, customs, arts). With time, the UCV became the heart and social nerve; but its physical-cultural activity was not accepted as a paradigm by official plans because it does not respond to the mercantile interest of the urban-real-estate-construction market. Caracas lost a historical moment for a better daily life with an urbanistic model of social character.

If society produces the city, the city also produces society. The UCV and its University City, with the aforementioned resources, contribute to creating a city and society. Before the vortex of quantitative practice (use-exchange, supply-demand, cost-benefit, etc.) of the capitalist system/consumerist society, the qualitative practice of the UCV (utopian-dialectic-phenomenological) produces space (physical-social-political-economic-cultural), reaches modernity with a dynamic method, with its own organic-evolutionary model, with human content. It satisfies the needs of the masses, or social market, with cognitive-creative power; it materializes urbanity in the tropical territory and complex society. Its methods of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption were projected to the country as intellectual services, social practices, and material products through humanistic, scientific, and technological paradigms. Those were, at the same time in a dialectical way, rebellious, defiant, protestant paradigms with testimonies and arguments of social justice; in order to question ideologies, thoughts, and viable processes toward structural social changes. The *Ciudad Universitaria de Caracas* (World Heritage by UNESCO) is an urban aesthetic subject-object, a habitat that forges complex modernity, a historical-cultural experience; the result of a society that has not overcome social injustice, a utopia to be achieved through paradigmatic-dialectic changes in the process towards a new system. Hence the importance of its preservation. Las 164 ha de la Ciudad Universitaria de Caracas, sede de la Universidad Central de Venezuela en el contexto urbano de la Caracas actual.



Las 164 ha de la Ciudad Universitaria de Caracas, sede de la Universidad Central de Venezuela en el contexto urbano de la Caracas actual.



The tropical reason in Villanueva

Carlos Pou Ruan



1

It was in 1949 when Carlos Raúl Villanueva began to break with the “*beauxartian*”, symmetrical, and monumental condition of the master plan of the *Ciudad Universitaria de Caracas*. From that moment on, Villanueva’s architecture experienced a paradigm shift regarding the potential of reinforced concrete, which allowed him to assume not only a new aesthetic but also a new ethic, where the structural element would become a new protagonist of his architecture.

With the Olympic Stadium Villanueva abandons, definitively, the architectural schemes he had been developing in the medical area of the University City, which had been present in his architecture since the Gran Colombia School (1939), and incorporates the expressive possibilities of concrete as a protagonist of the modern spatial equation. His architectural production begins to dematerialize the limits of the architectural object, working with light and shadow in a way that had no precedent in our spatial and constructive tradition. Villanueva establishes, with absolute originality, new codes in the way of using reinforced concrete, as important for the architectures of our geography as were Le Corbusier’s famous 5 points for the European Modern Movement.

2

With the Central Complex of the *Ciudad Universitaria de Caracas* (1954), Villanueva takes a step further and confirms a new design sensibility associated not only with reinforced concrete but also with architectural values, providing an assertive interpretation of the climatic and environmental context. In the *Plaza Cubierta*, the intense brightness and shadows of the tropical vegetation, together with the sculptural and mural presences, in opposition to the neutrality of the perforated blocks, the horizontal roof, and the circular concrete columns, produced a spatial experience that blurred the notions of inside and outside that existed in our conception of living spaces.

Villanueva, in his idea of a modern city in the tropics, proposed streets, patios, and plazas as spaces protected from the intensity of light, and defined for the architecture an unprecedented prolongation in the landscape, converting these spaces into a varied symphony that, when united with the structural dimension of the buildings, reminds us that, for our architecture, the Caribbean tropics can be interpreted, at the same time, as an aesthetic category.

3

Among the aspirations that most strongly stimulated the modern ideas that Villanueva learned at the School of Fine Arts in Paris, were those that promoted structures that, based on features granted by technology, would “*universally*” resolve their adaptation to each context. Also popular in Villanueva’s studies were other assertions which, based on the rationality of industrial processes, postulated phrases such as “*form follows function*”.

These were very specific ideas that characterized rationalist architecture throughout the twentieth century. Some architects, through programmatic analysis, emphasized the “*objectual*” condition of

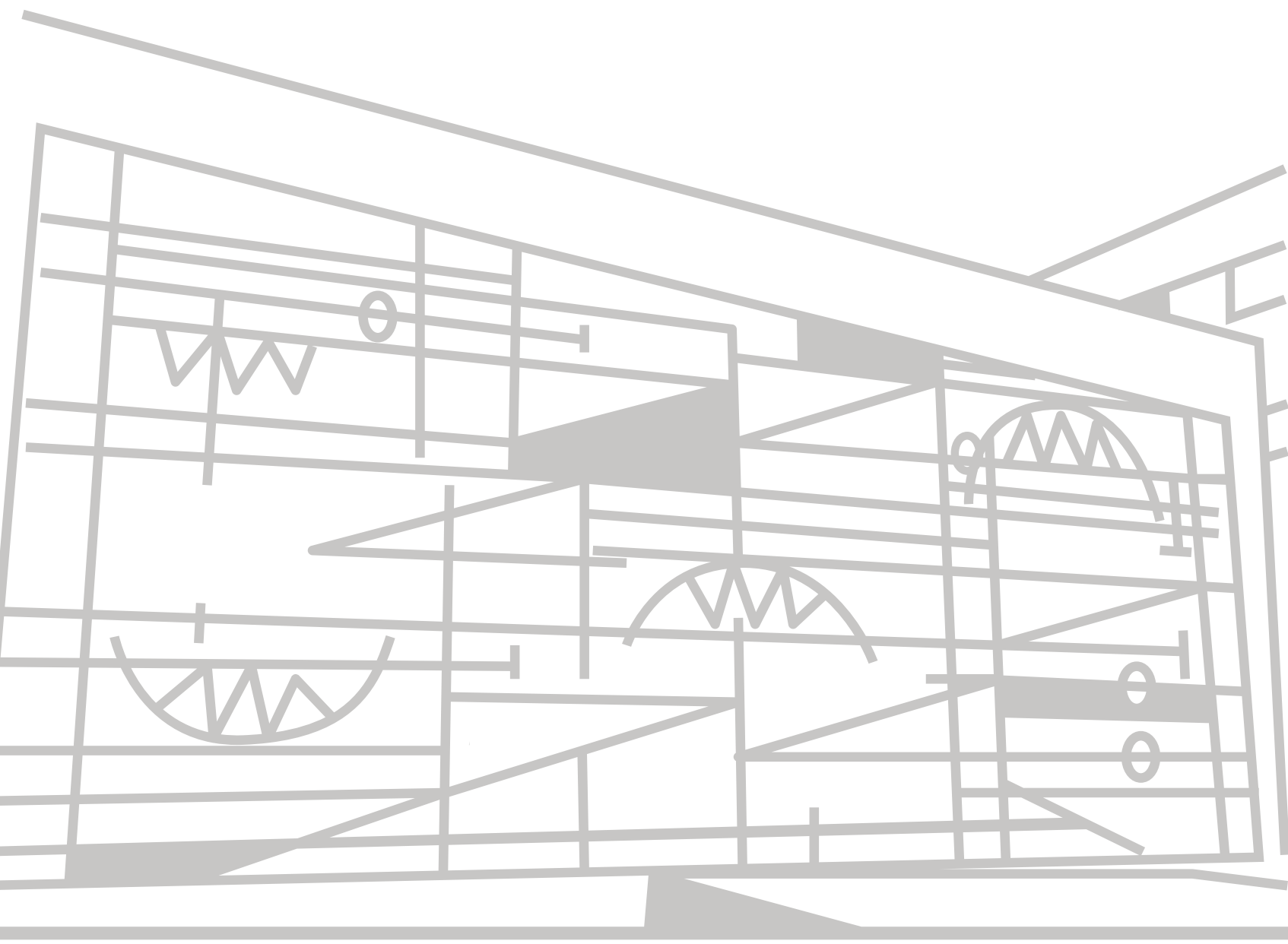
architecture, while others abandoned the path of “figurative composition” and moved into the territory of “project abstraction”. These architectural principles were derived not only from a great faith in industrialization but, above all, from the belief that technology was politically and culturally neutral.

4

With globalization, the hegemonic domination strategy of capitalism continues to promote the standardization of consumption not only through the elimination of physical and material frontiers but above all through the dissolution of the historical, social, and identity roots of populations. In this way, the mechanics of modern design has no greater possibility of subverting these values than through a critical use of the creative instrument. Perhaps it is by mentioning aspects of our culture, in its unique and unrepeatably conditions, that a statute of emancipation, of anti-hegemonic and countercultural rebellion is confirmed in the architectural project, as suggested, for example, by the theories on “*appropriate modernity*” that were formulated in Latin America, at the end of the last century, as a response of the peripheral cultures to the dominant Euro-centric logic.

This reinterpretation of modernity’s principles is expressed, with considerable interest, in what Villanueva suggests with the *Plaza Cubierto*. This extraordinary piece of Venezuelan architecture was conceived, contradictorily, in the context of a mediocre reality submerged in the oil rentier model, dominated by the automatic repetition of the consumption patterns coming from the North. Villanueva made an enormous effort to leave as a testimony the elements of his own cultural vision, which today allows us to affirm that these spaces are the closest thing to what every Venezuelan has in his mind as an architectural synthesis of our tropics, as a spiritual resonance of our climate, as an emotional emblem of our cultural geography.





Colors in the Ciudad Universitaria de Caracas C.U.C.

Henrique Vera



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The use of color and polychromy in architecture

has always been a means to highlight and enhance. Carlos Raúl Villanueva acquired extensive knowledge of the correct use of color and polychromy in classical architecture during his Beaux-Arts training.

In 1928, once definitively established in Venezuela, impressed by the tropical light and the country, he began a personal process that will lead him to reinterpret and update what he learned in order to apply it to his projects. From this process, he takes the traditional components of our architecture (the use of courtyards, internal gardens with lots of vegetation, lattices of wooden panels, and windows protected with grilles and shutters to guarantee ventilation and bright colors) and progressively transform and incorporates them into his architecture.

In his first completed projects, those that William Niño A. includes in his characterization of the Maestro's work as belonging to the "First Moment, the fall of eclecticism 1929-1938"¹, apart from their marked neoclassical character, the buildings are lacking in color.

Between 1939 and 1949, it is evident that Villanueva progressively abandons the academic and initiates, among other strong changes in his architecture, the greater use of color, taking advantage of his expressive qualities. He wrote in his Teaching Notes that colors could be used to "order; organize plastic effects; change volumes or replace them; accentuate profiles or refine them. To decrease distances, to increase them; to modify true proportions and change dimensions"².

Belong to this stage his early proposals for the Campus of the *Ciudad Universitaria de Caracas C.U.C.*, the University Hospital and the buildings of the medical group that complement it, as well as the *Francisco Pimentel* School Group and the Redevelopment of *El Silencio*. Although these buildings initially had no color, murals and sculptures were incorporated.

Photographer Luis Felipe Toro (1881-1955) left a record of the recently completed buildings, some with their unfinished friezes, others already painted. In this photographic record, the immense white mass of the Clinical Hospital stands out, which made the Maestro uncomfortable. For this reason, he asked Mateo Manaure, a renowned artist, to conceal this building by applying color to it. The change was remarkable.

It was at this time that Villanueva learned of the innovative use of color and the use of *brise soleil* in modern Brazilian architecture through Philip Goodwin's book.³

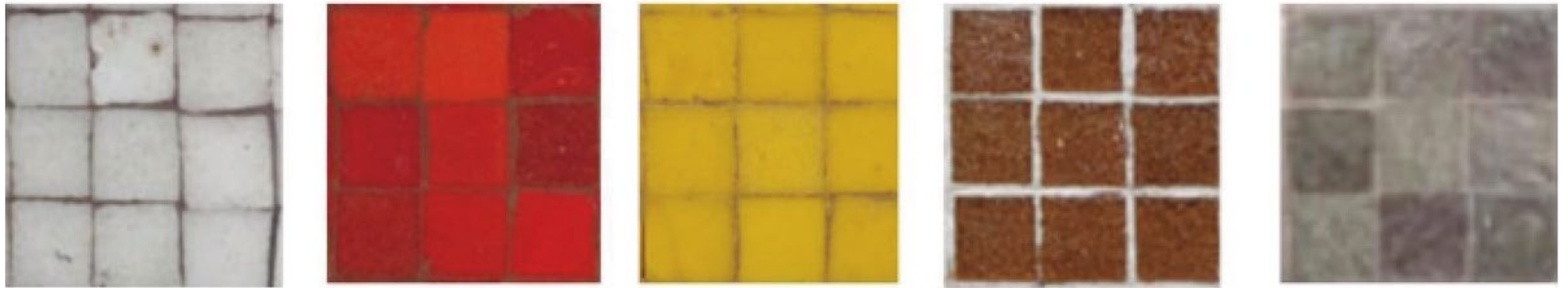
It was at this point that Villanueva rethought a series of profound changes such as an organic proposal for the C.U.C. campus. From the initial proposal, he kept only the compositional core with the location of the Clinical Hospital and the sports stadiums at the ends. In developing the Administrative-Cultural complex, he fully developed the integration of the arts (coordinating with the artists so that their work would be in function of the architectural elements that compose the

1

2

3

work), incorporating the chromatic tradition that “was based on what was considered typical in terms of spatial, chromatic and proportional values; and the use of landscaping and the color of the different native species in a complementary way to his architecture”.⁴

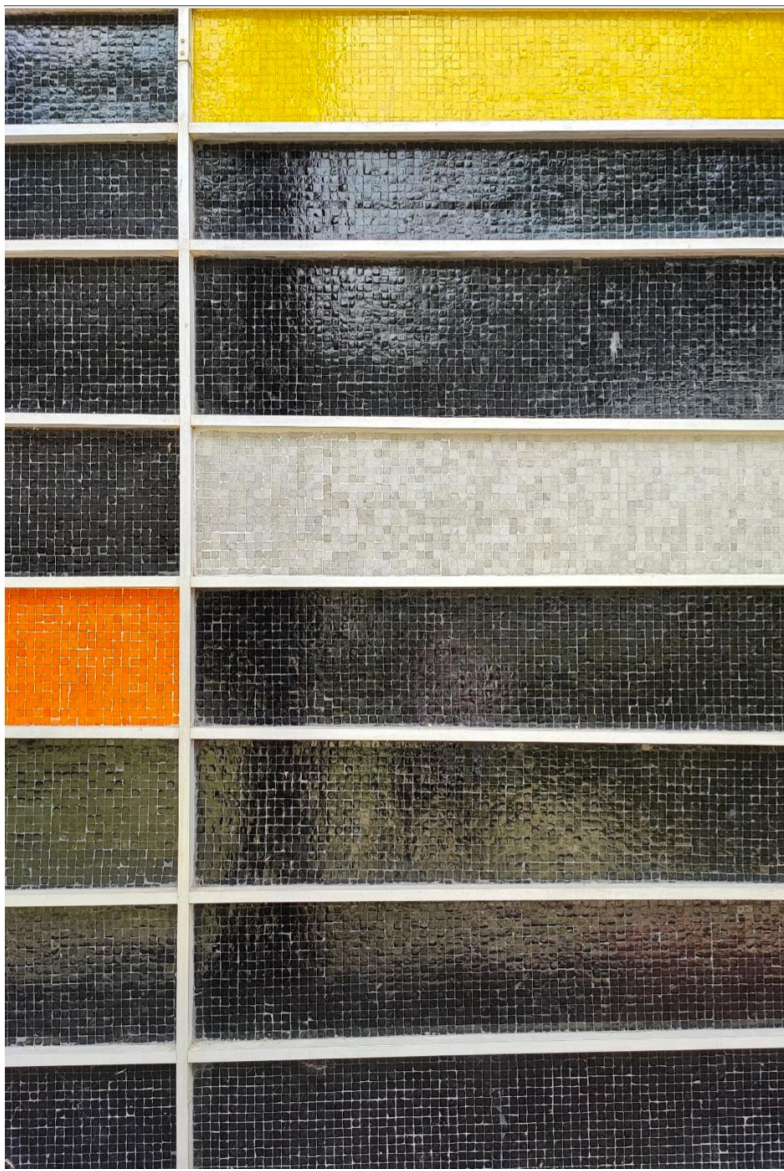


During this period of construction effervescence in the country, characterized by the demand for materials, equipment, and accessories not produced in the country or not in the required quantity, glass mosaic was imported from Italy as a possibility for covering facades and walls, a durable material resistant to climatic changes, fast and efficient to install, offered in a wide range of colors, which was immediately adopted by Villanueva.

Juan Pedro Posani, one of Villanueva collaborators since 1949, related that together with Villanueva and Mateo Manaure, they visited all the buildings already constructed in the university campus, with the color samples of the glass mosaics in their hands, deciding which color should be used on the corresponding façades. It should be noted that Villanueva requested, in some cases, to modify the plain colors offered, mixing them until the desired shades were obtained.

During the design process of several of the buildings, Villanueva decided which colors he would use on the façades (as a perfect chromatic complement to the reinforced concrete of the exposed structures), on the walls, in some cases even painting on concrete, as well as on the interior walls. He also requested the intervention, in addition to that of Manaure, of renowned Venezuelan and foreign plastic artists who participated in the C.U.C. project. to give color to the façades of some of the buildings: Omar Carreño the facades of the Faculty of Odontology; Mateo Manaure, who in addition to making the polychromy of the Clinical Hospital, colored the facades of the *Paraninfo* and created a bronze mural on a black background for the facade of the Industrial Technical School; Pascual Navarro, covered the main facade of the Concert Hall; and Alejandro Otero, added color to the Auditorium of the Faculty of Engineering and to the facades of the Faculties of Pharmacy and Architecture that integrate the C.U.C.





The Maestro Villanueva, firmly believed that art and “color represents an immense force ...(that) is as powerful as a floor plan and sections are to determine a space”⁴⁵, and that the architect can delegate to “an artist the choice and areas of application of colors to the architectural object to modify its spatial effect from an external point of view”⁵.

These statements lead us to point out that “the lack of knowledge of the importance of color in Villanueva’s architecture is manifested in the lack of maintenance of the colors of his work”⁶, which is why the Recovery Plan of the C.U.C. has emphasized the meticulous restoration of the original colors with which this Venezuelan patrimonial work was originally designed.

¹ W. Niño, L.E. Pérez O, J.P. Posani, E. Niño A, photographs P. Gasparini. *Carlos Raúl Villanueva- un moderno en Suramérica*. National Art Gallery. 1999

² Exhibition “Teaching Notes of Carlos Raúl Villanueva” made in 2007 as part of the celebration of the 65th anniversary of the creation of the School of Architecture of the UCV by the Villanueva Foundation, the Coordinación de Extensión, the Luis Jiménez Damas Foundation with the sponsorship of Petróleos de Venezuela La Estancia.

³ Philip L. Goodwin *Brazil Builds- architecture new and old, 1652-1942*. The Museum of Modern Art., Nueva York, 1943. The Brise Soleil, despite having been created by Le Corbusier for an unbuilt project for Barcelona, was used for the first time in the Ministry of Education and Health of Rio de Janeiro in 1942 (Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer).

⁴ Villanueva, Carlos Raúl. Selected texts. Caracas: Information and Documentation Center of the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of the UCV, 1980.

⁵ Juan Pedro Posani. *La Ciudad Universitaria de Caracas en la obra de Carlos Raúl Villanueva*. International Seminar on Modern Heritage, “Una herencia reciente Ciudad Universitaria de Caracas Patrimonio de la Humanidad”, Universidad Pontificia Católica de Chile, in Santiago de Chile. 2003

⁶ D. Danés, Maj. Pizarro, J. Ibañez y F. Marcano. *La Ciudad Universitaria de Caracas como laboratorio de color: Policromía en la obra de Carlos Raúl Villanueva*. European Journal of Architectural Research, No. 5, 2021

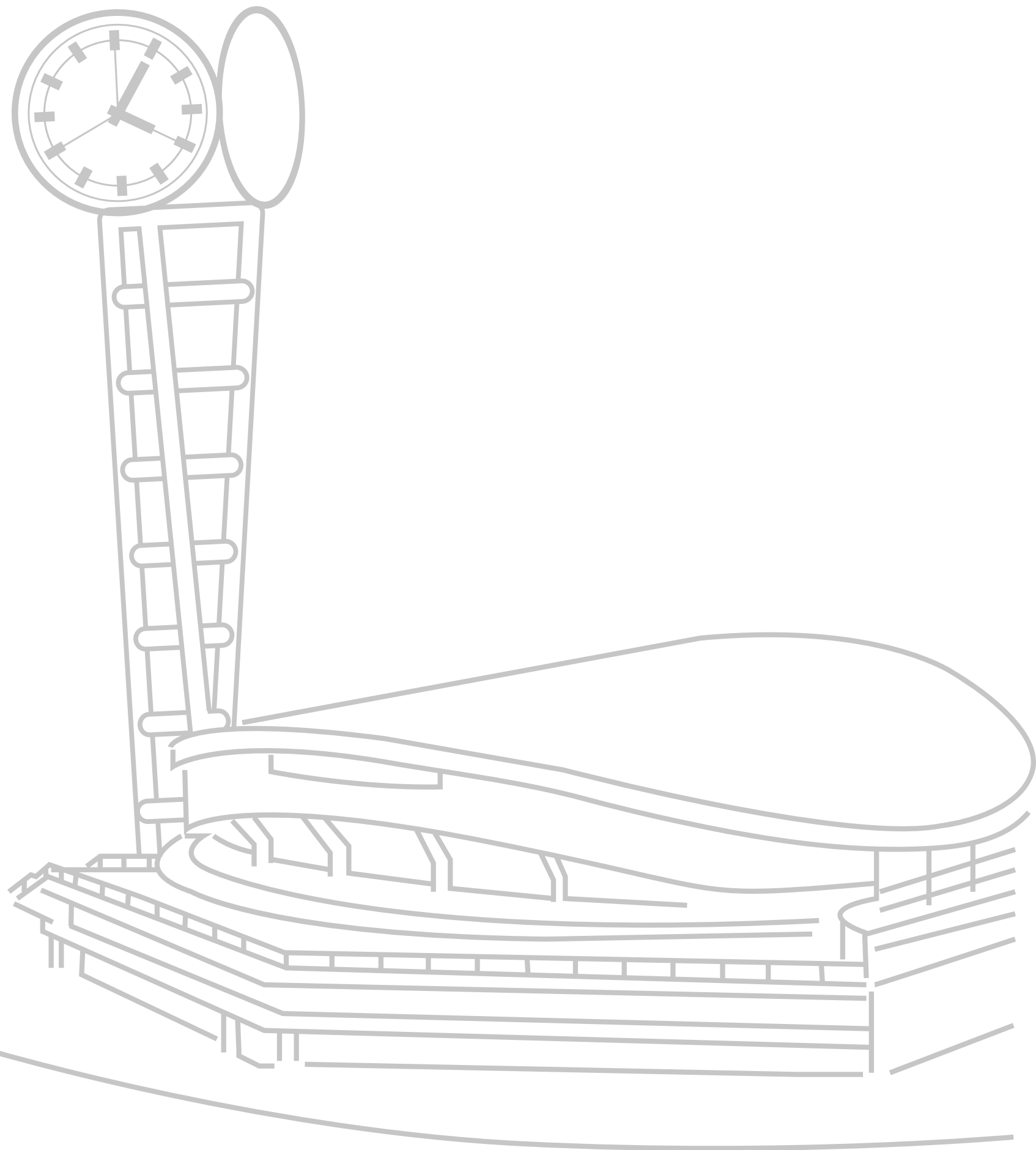
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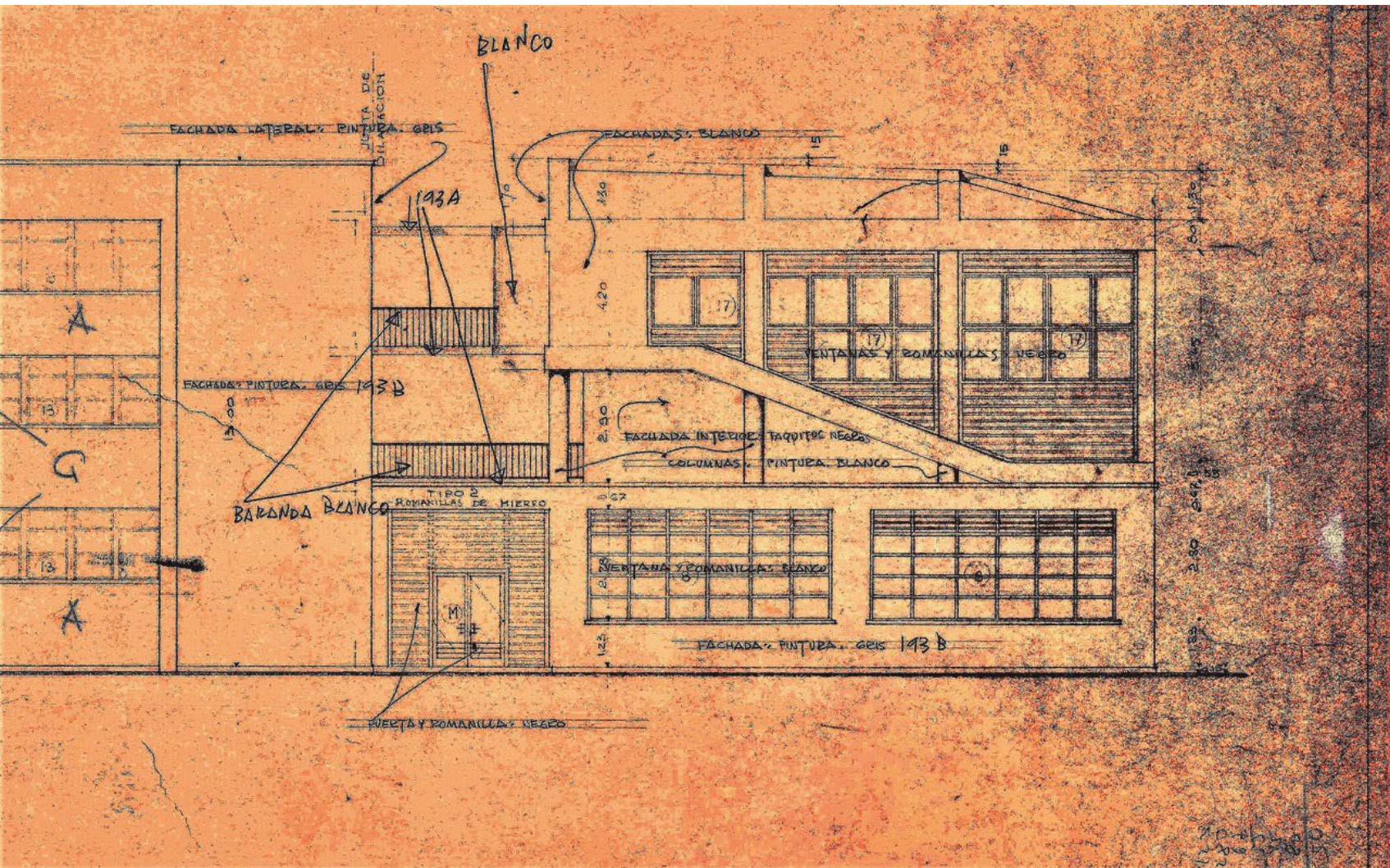






Restoration of the Ciudad Universitaria de Caracas

Lesmes Castañeda



Conservation intervention criteria

The different actions of conservation intervention in the Ciudad Universitaria de Caracas are obviously aimed at preserving the buildings, open spaces and works of art for future generations. At the same time, the intention is to improve the conditions of its spaces for academic, research, cultural and administrative functions planned in the original project.

Obviously, the materials, structures and facilities have suffered deterioration due to the different environmental and human agents that affected them, and the objective of their conservation is to restore the original characteristics. The work currently being carried out is directed towards this end. The waterproofing of the roofs, the restoration of enclosures and interior finishes, the extensive maintenance of the internal and external spaces, as well as the recovery or updating of the various facilities.

However, without detriment to these works, it is equally important to preserve the spatial qualities that constitute the fundamental values that led this campus to be considered a National and World Heritage Site.

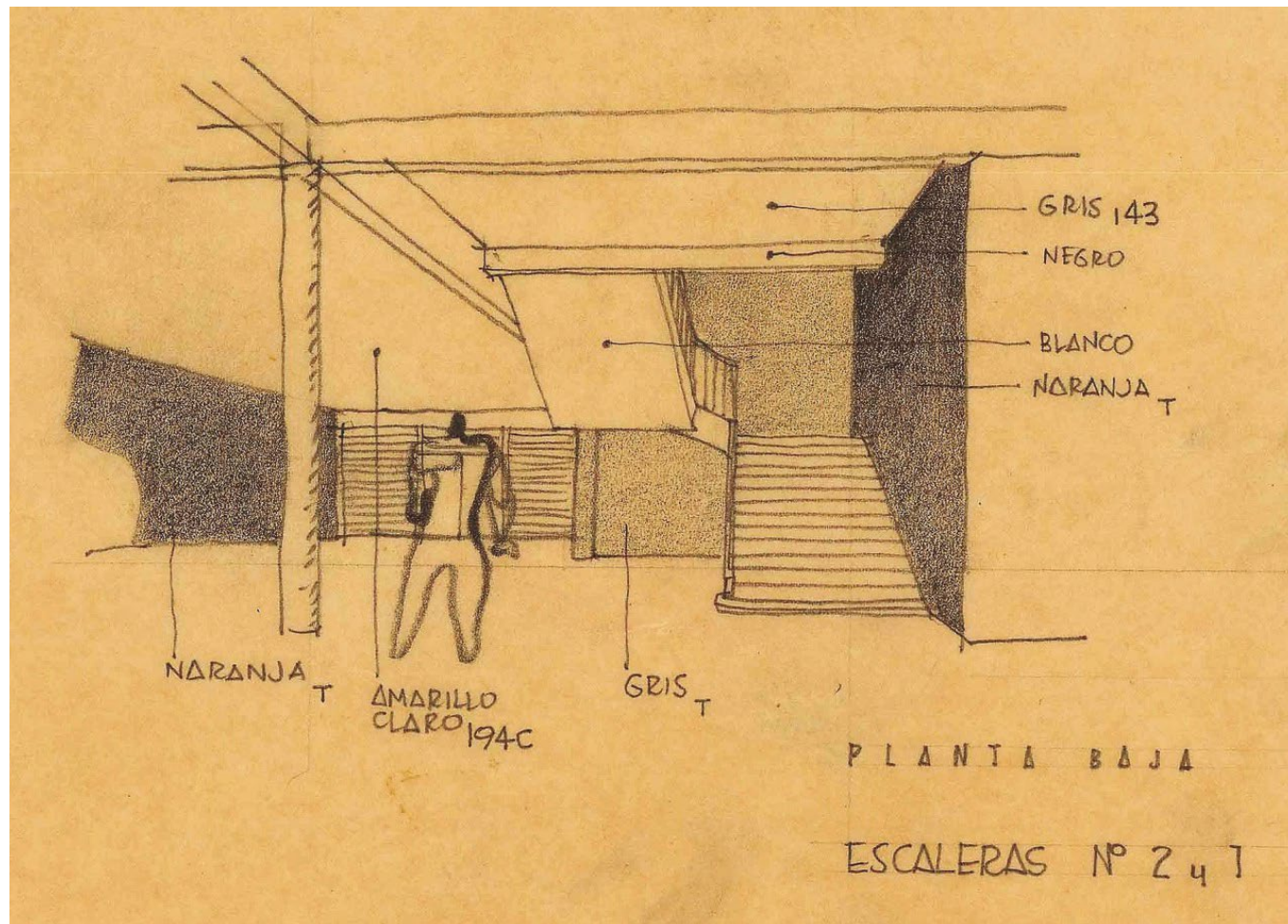
In this sense, a large part of the conservation interventions have been oriented to restore the image and scale of the internal and external spaces, the fluidity and connection between them throughout the urban complex, honoring the values indicated by Unesco in the text of the criteria adopted for its nomination as a World Heritage Site: *“The Ciudad Universitaria de Caracas... is an example of an open and ventilated solution, appropriate to its tropical environment”* (ICOMOS 2000).

Examples of these actions include the elimination of false ceilings that had reduced the height of many spaces, the restitution of the original internal and external chromatism of the buildings, the restoration of natural cross ventilation in classrooms, laboratories, and public spaces, the removal of enclosures that blocked public circulation in halls and corridors or the reading of the works of art that adorn them, the elimination of aggregates, waste, and facilities that damage the image of the buildings and the open areas, a sort of necessary and profound “spatial prophylaxis”.

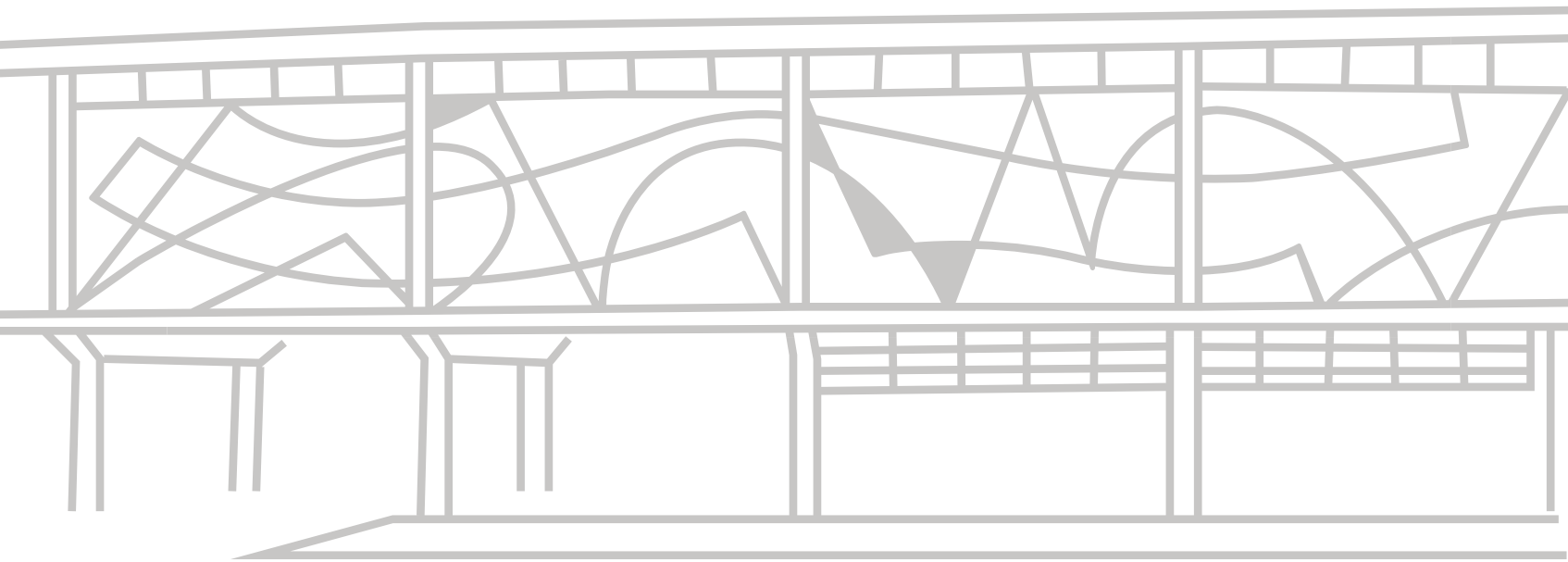
Particular attention has been given to the intervention on the fundamental infrastructures of the university campus, without which the functions of the buildings cannot be fulfilled, such as water supply, rainwater and sewage drainage, electricity, gas, and other specific facilities that for some buildings were considered essential, such as water vapor, vacuum, oxygen supply, etc.

The conservation of the artworks is a separate chapter, as they represent one of the most relevant characteristics of this *Ciudad Universitaria*. Conceived under the principle of the “Synthesis of the Arts”, integrated into the architecture, more than a hundred pieces, and created by relevant national and international artists, come to configure at an international level, one of the most important open museums of contemporary art.

The conservation intervention on artworks has required a different approach, involving the participation of different specialists depending on the elaboration technique used in each one of them. The starting point is to preserve the original image of the artwork, working on the material that may have suffered some kind of deterioration.



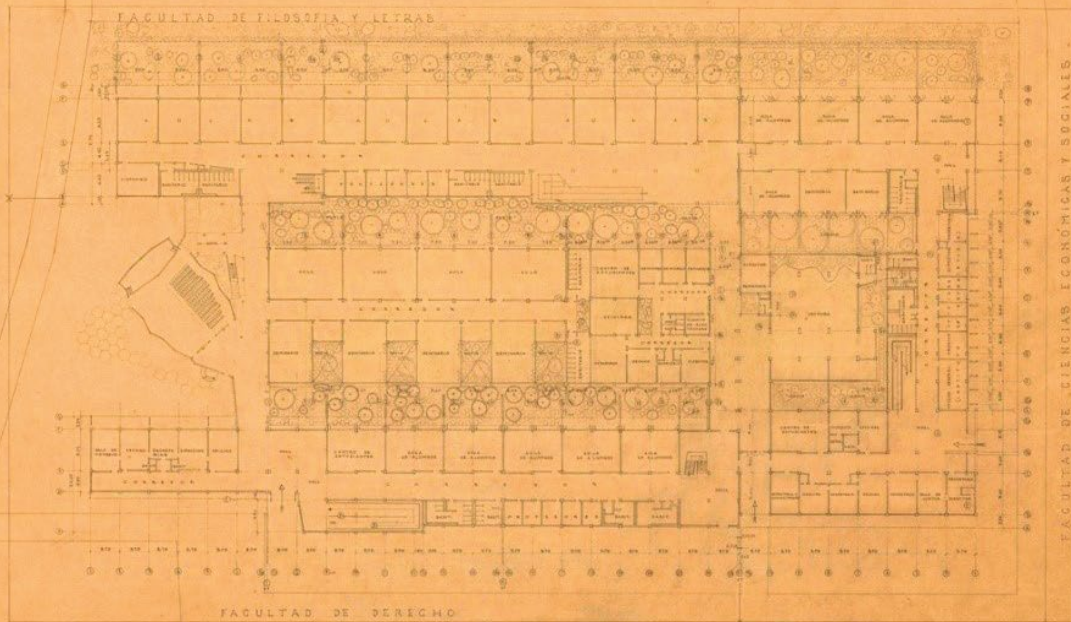




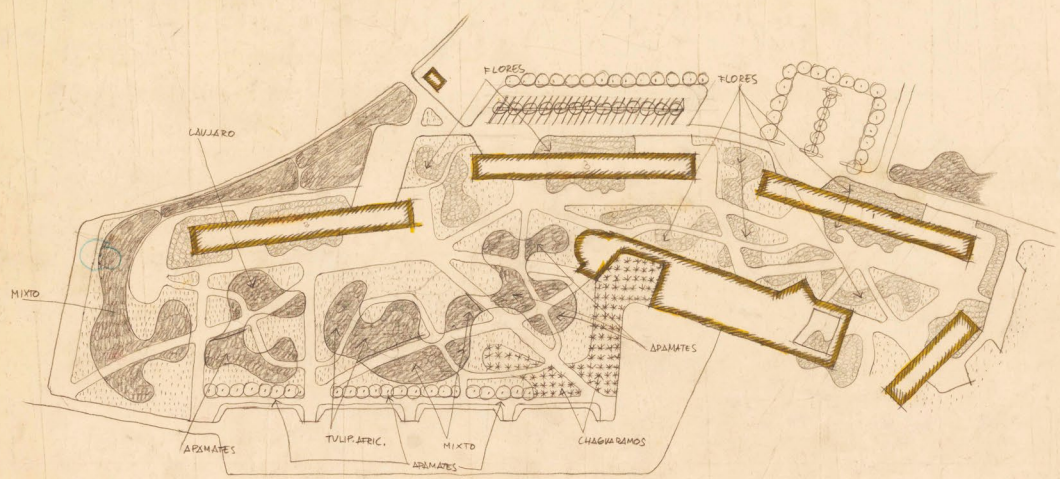
The value of landscaping in the Ciudad Universitaria de Caracas

Aguedita Coss Lanz¹

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 CIUDAD UNIVERSITARIA
 DEPARTAMENTO DE PROYECTOS
 VIVIENDAS ESTUDIANTILES
 JARDINES
 AREA 1: 10000 METROS CUADRADOS
 FECHA 3 ABRIL 1958
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 EJECUTADO POR: [Signature]

The *Ciudad Universitaria de Caracas*, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2000, was designed under the conceptual parameters of the organic space of the Modern Movement, conceived within a campus-like scheme, which turns its extensive green areas into the perfect platform for the achievement of the Synthesis of the Major Arts. The valorization of these spaces begins by recognizing that they were landscaped by Carlos Raúl Villanueva and his team, with the support of Venezuelan botanical advisors. This awareness marks the first step in understanding their integral planning and landscaping principles.

The landscaping proposal for the green areas of the campus was handled at different scales, from the urban scale, with the planting of a forest that includes a floral collection of around three hundred species belonging to more than forty botanical families, going through the intermediate and smaller scales with the internal gardens and patios located on the first floors of the different buildings, demonstrating the skill of Maestro Villanueva in the use of green spaces of different proportions at the same time.

That is why interpreting this project only from the integration of architecture and artworks is not enough. It would be necessary to incorporate an element that Villanueva, in his brilliant way of playing with the ethereal, turned into an important component of this communion, such as landscaping, which is capable of generating colorful and sonorous open spaces, with vegetation conjugated into rhythms and façade backgrounds, allowing the tangible to stand out and merge. The elements of tropical nature that coexist in its green areas; the light, humidity, and freshness provided by the vegetation, as well as the rain and the different shades of the sky that change during the day, were incorporated into the interior spaces of the architecture. As well as the effects of light and shadow on walls and floors through the perforated walls which, in addition to being a resource for ventilation and illumination, also serve an aesthetic function.

Reviewing the landscaping plans of the university campus, it is evident that landscaping had the same value as architecture and artworks in Villanueva's vision. This is evident in the large spaces such as: "*Tierra de Nadie*"², "*El bosque*"³ and the Plaza Cubierta⁴. It is also evident in the typology of the internal gardens of the lower buildings of the Faculties of Humanities and Engineering, as well as in the first floors of the prismatic buildings (Architecture, Odontology, and Pharmacy). In Villanueva this trinity is based on the architecture in perfect harmony with artworks and has the void as its background within the stone surfaces, lawns, and patios as its scenery, in addition to the surrounding landscape that frames it.

The diffusion of these values and their documentary heritage is of utmost relevance to help recognize and preserve this valuable property. Only in this way would it be possible to avoid inappropriate developments in the green spaces and to ensure that they remain preserved for future generations, consistent and in harmony with the original criteria.

2 Urban planning in the southern part of the Aula Magna. Plan N° – 22-A. Collection ICU.

3 Student Housing and Gardens. Plan N° 17-1A-U6. Collection –ICU.

4 Plaza Cubierta Gardens. Plan N° 14b-A-4 1ª and Plaza Cubierta Gardens and Rectorate Plan N°14 b – A – 4 b. Collection –ICU.

SINTESIS DE LAS ARTES
PLANTA PLAZA CUBIERTA, JARDINES,

ARQ. C. R. VILLANUEVA

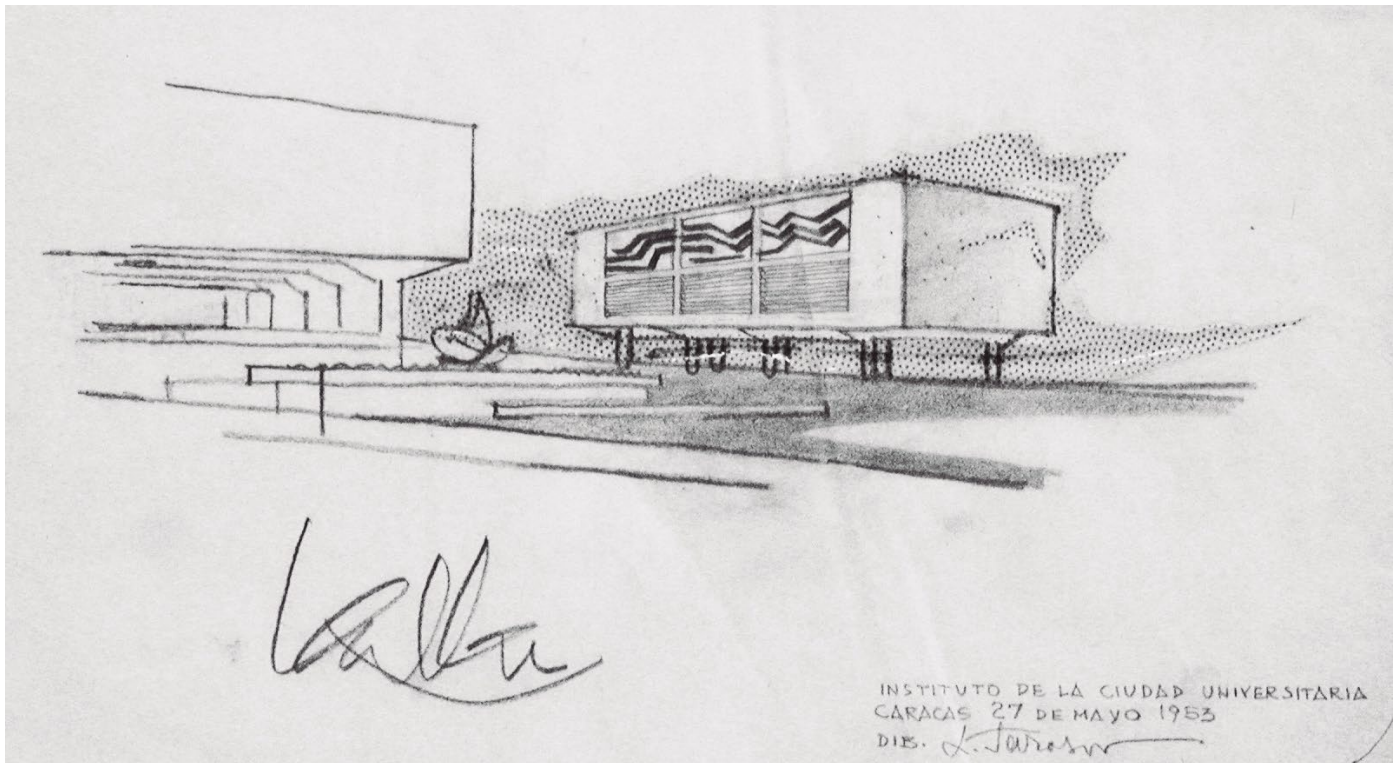


FECHA	MODIFICACIONES
27/05/53	Se modifica el plano de la cubierta del edificio de comunicaciones para dar lugar a una terraza.
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- ACABADOS EN EL PISO - Nº 1

INSTITUTO DE LA CIUDAD UNIVERSITARIA
Plaza Cubierta
Jardines.

Autores: C. R. Villanueva
Escala: 1:200
Fecha: 27/05/53
Hoja: 14 de 44



INSTITUTO DE LA CIUDAD UNIVERSITARIA
CARACAS 27 DE MAYO 1953
DIB. C. R. Villanueva

For the environmental restoration of the *Ciudad Universitaria de Caracas*, we have tried to maintain the balance between all the elements: buildings and property surfaces, lawn areas, trees, and their associated fauna, as well as the mobility and safety of the people who pass through the campus. At the beginning of the restoration work, we found a situation of several years of deferred maintenance, which affected the green areas and trees, which presented a large-scale proliferation of parasites. Eradicating this infection with the appropriate phytosanitary treatment was the only thing that could guarantee the survival of the property forest. We had also to remove a large number of palm trunks and standing dead trees in order to replace them, verifying the absence of birds' nests. As well as, we transplanted or removed some trees that grew spontaneously very close to buildings, putting at risk the heritage value of the complex. To compensate for all these actions, we have reforested inside and outside the campus according to the national regulations in force, under the supervision and endorsement of the official entity (MINEC)⁵.

Our goal was to restore, with the necessary adaptations, the original landscaping project as reflected in the ICU plans⁶, recovered and disclosed through a line of research developed for more than twenty years, which has produced publications⁷, specialization⁸, Master's⁹ and Doctorate¹⁰, degree works, giving theoretical support to the planning and management of the green areas of the campus.

We focused on working as an interdisciplinary team with an integral vision and scientific-technical criteria, giving value to the landscaping and urban forest planted in the 1950's, and creating the conditions for its maintenance to be sustainable over time.

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Cairns' decision

Javier Cerisola



On the 2nd of December 2000, gathered in the Australian coastal city of Cairns in the South Pacific, the members of the Committee entrusted by UNESCO with the meticulous and arduous task of selecting among the vast heritage built by mankind, those exceptional examples necessary to safeguard for future generations, pronounced what for Venezuelans was an urgent decision: the *Ciudad Universitaria de Caracas*, modern headquarters of the 300-year-old *Universidad Central de Venezuela*, was included in the World Heritage List.

Four decades passed between that solemn and long-awaited annual event and the creation of the unique project, built without interruption in the middle of the 20th century throughout eight different national governments and eleven different university authorities, always under the extraordinary vision and direction of Carlos Raúl Villanueva, a Venezuelan architect with a European background.

The UNESCO experts at that 24th Session, based their verdict on two of the fundamental criteria established by the organization for the inclusion of a local property in the valued global selection: for representing a masterpiece of human creative genius and, at the same time, for being a coherent and prominent example of a particular phase of the civilization's material history.

The good news came seven years after the first inclusion in the same list of a built heritage located in Venezuela, the historic center of the colonial city of Coro and its port of La Vela. Two different periods, two histories, and two enclaves created from the assimilation of the place and the climate as the main conditioning factors of the architecture.

The idea of building a campus for the old University began to emerge in 1942. The intention was to bring together the various departments distributed all over the city of Caracas in accordance with the needs arising from demographic growth and the consequent educational demands of a country that was approaching modernity, after the dynamic economic and cultural turnaround resulting from the irruption of the oil industry. During these years, other similar cases of construction of large new university campuses in Latin America took place in Bogota and Mexico City, which has been on UNESCO's World Heritage List since 2007.

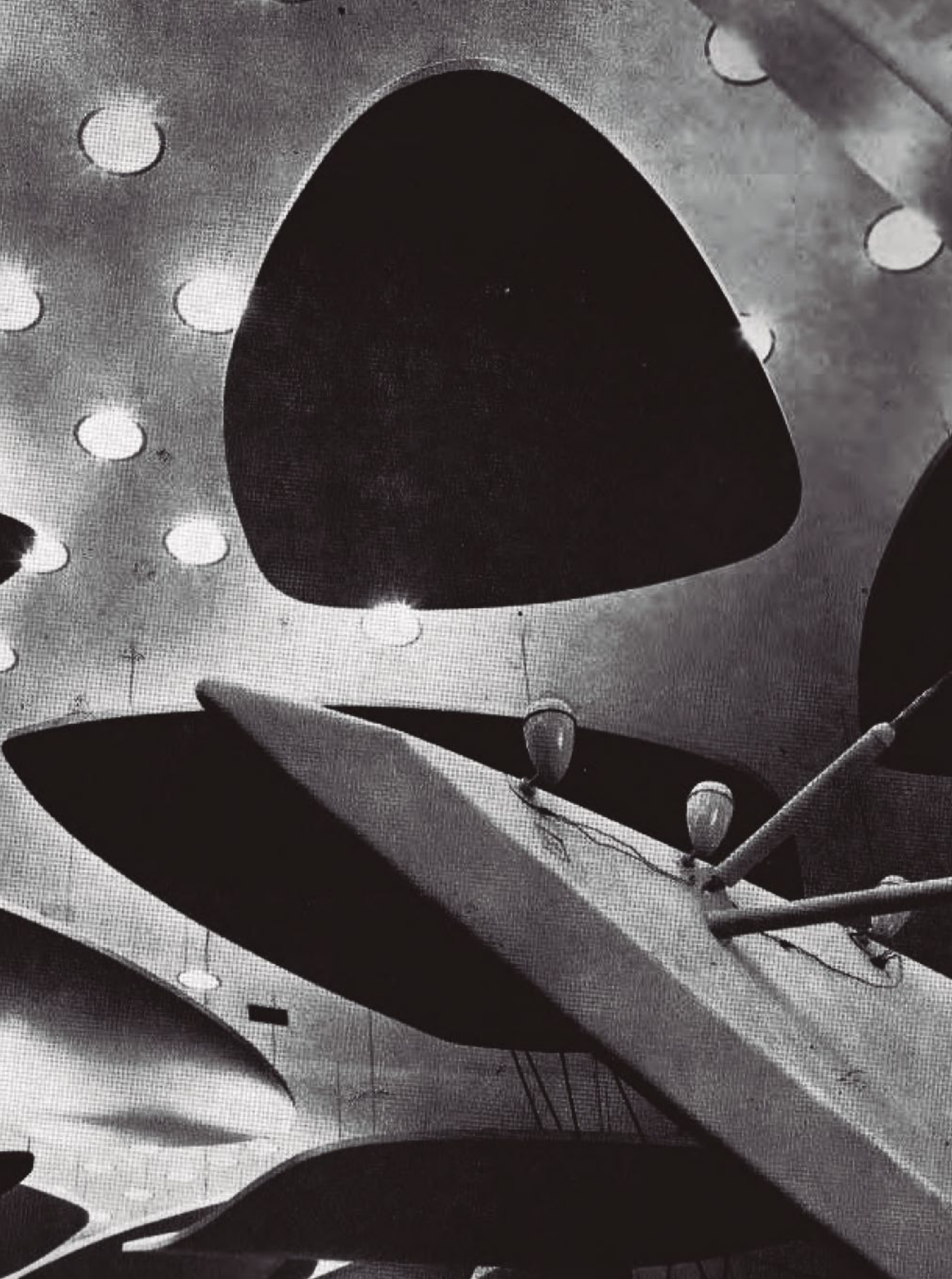
The organizational starting point of the new university complex goes along with the main demand that it was seeking to meet. Training doctors and nurses was, for the Venezuela of those years with a booming economy and a governmental class with a strong modernizing spirit, a demonstration of understanding of the national priorities: public health and education. The campus began to be organized from the imponent structure of the University Hospital and the adjacent facilities that were needed to provide the scientific and modern training of the new medical professionals.

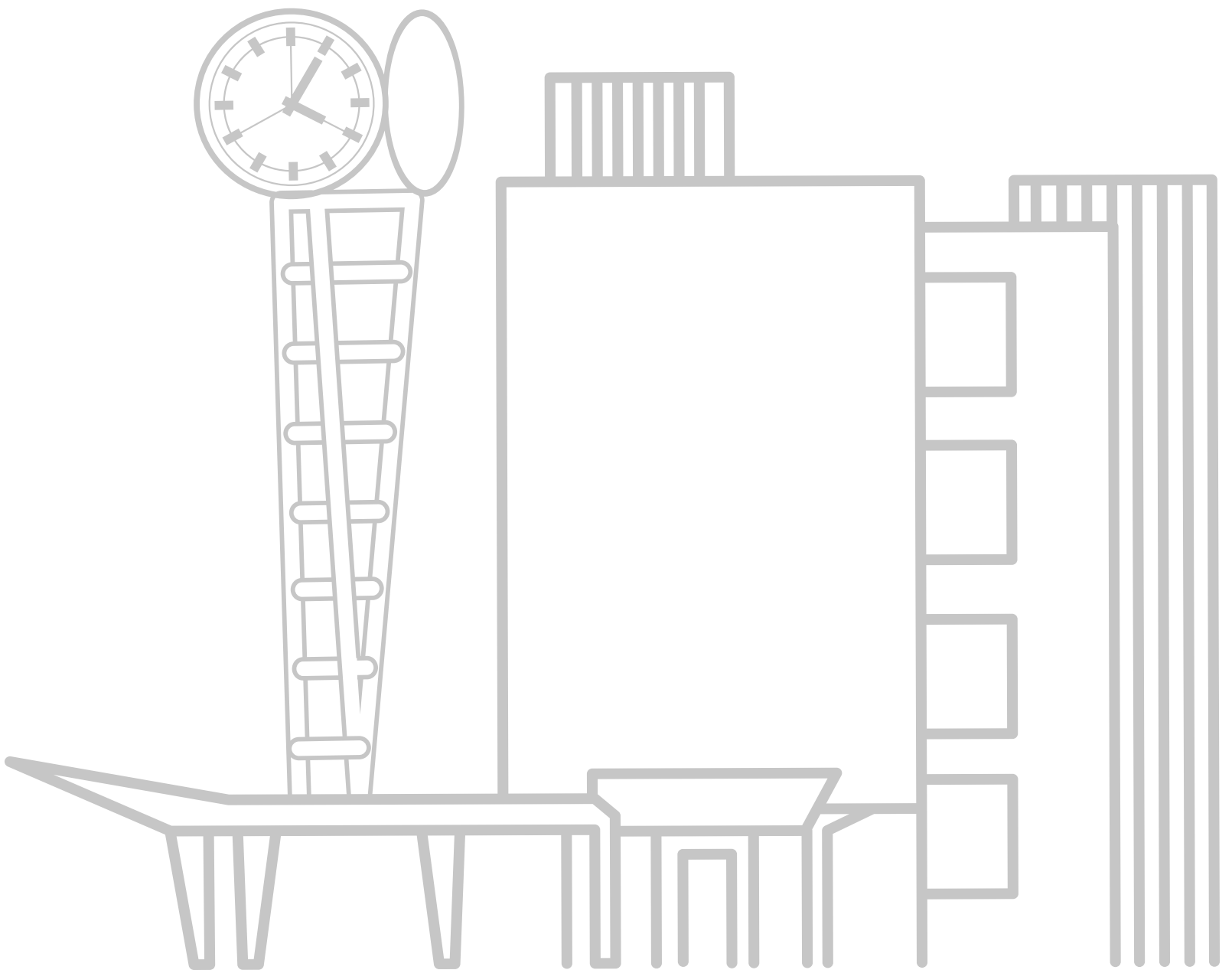
The other faculties, schools, and campus departments that needed to be built on the spacious and centrally located land in the capital city chosen for the University, would be organized in a variable and adjustable way over time from the initial Villanueva's rigorous academic ideas. From the axial and orthodox schematism of *Beaux-Artian* roots of the first plans of the Maestro, to the organic and deliberate dynamism achieved in the central zone of the complex and other locations during the 1950s, emerges acceptance and growth. There is a prodigious, free, and creative association

of international modern ideals adapted to the different functional specificities of the complex and to a poetics of light and the tropics.

From the beginning, art has been an essential part of Villanueva's design program. The desired *synthesis* between architecture, painting, and sculpture, in a symbiosis capable of producing unique living experiences, which is present in the research of other modern artists, achieves in the *Ciudad Universitaria* a persistent chronological record and accomplishments of truly universal dimension. National artists of recognized talent and international personalities of wide trajectory were invited by Villanueva to incorporate their works on the campus. Otero, Narváez, Manaure, Vigas, among others, shared with Léger, Arp, Vasarely, Pevsner, Laurens, spaces, moments and different results in this research culminated in an extraordinary way in the central complex composed by the Rectorate, the Library, the Plaza Cubierta and the Aula Magna. It will be inside the Aula Magna, the highest expression of concrete construction, where the experience of *synthesis* reaches exceptional levels with the incorporation of Alexander Calder's so-called acoustic cymbals. Designed on demand and conceived in an inseparable way for the morphology and function of the great auditorium, these elements - *The Calder's Clouds* - sacrifice autonomy and protagonism in favor of a sublime interior atmosphere, adding their voice to what is probably the most successful space of the entire national architectural experience.

The culmination of Carlos Raúl Villanueva's research for an architectural modernity that conciliates its constructive, formal, and urbanistic variants with the dimension granted by the extraordinary tropical condition of Venezuela and that concern for the integration of the arts, is what the experts gathered in Cairns recognized in the *Universidad de Caracas* as a universal contribution.





Medical Institutes

Alfredo Mariño Elizondo



Considered by architectural critics as transitional buildings between the *Escuela Gran Colombia* (1939), the urbanization of *El Silencio* (1941), the Industrial Technical School - ETI (1946-1947), and his masterpiece of the central complex of the Rectorate, *Plaza Cubierta*, Aula Magna and Central Library (1952-1953), these buildings underline the ambivalent character of the architecture and the urban approach of this first stage, which is basically characterized by:

- The role, in urban terms, played by the buildings of the Institutes of Experimental Medicine, Anatomy and Clinical Hospital, as fundamental structuring elements of the urban relations of the first campus designs of 1943 and 1944, based on the use of symmetry as a resource of organization and centralized hierarchization of the plan, an overall approach whose *academic* roots are attributed to the Beaux Arts training of Carlos Raul Villanueva.
- The character of “spare units” attributed to the buildings of the Institutes of Anatomical Pathology and Tropical Medicine, since their peripheral location is not dependent on the main system of axial relations of the aforementioned complex.
- The *modern* approach to the architecture of the six buildings is functionally and formally resolved, in contrast to the *academic* character of the urban approach.

Considering this perspective, a possible re-reading of this first stage should start from the assumption that Carlos Raúl Villanueva (Carlos Raul Villanueva) does not have a dissociated conception of architectural space and urban space. On the contrary, his conception fully coincides with what, years later, Bruno Zevi (1948-1976. p 28) will define as the double responsibility of every work of architecture: simultaneous creation of “the internal spaces, completely defined by each architectural work, and the external or urbanistic spaces, which are delimited by each of them and their contiguous ones”. This idea is confirmed by the first images of the *campus* ideation process, present in the overall plans of 1943 and 1944, where the buildings of the Clinical Hospital, the Institute of Experimental Medicine, and the Institute of Anatomy, which structure the urban spatial conception of the campus in neoclassical language, appear prefigured in plan with the same characteristics that would later be developed in the executive project, between 1945 and 1947, by the independent technical engineering firm of Pardo, Proctor, Feeman, Feeman & Mueser, Consulting Engineers, with the architectural advice and supervision of Carlos Raul Villanueva. This is clear evidence that by 1943 the early prefiguration responds to the existence of a complete development of the architectural blueprint, simultaneous with the development of the urban plan for the *campus*.

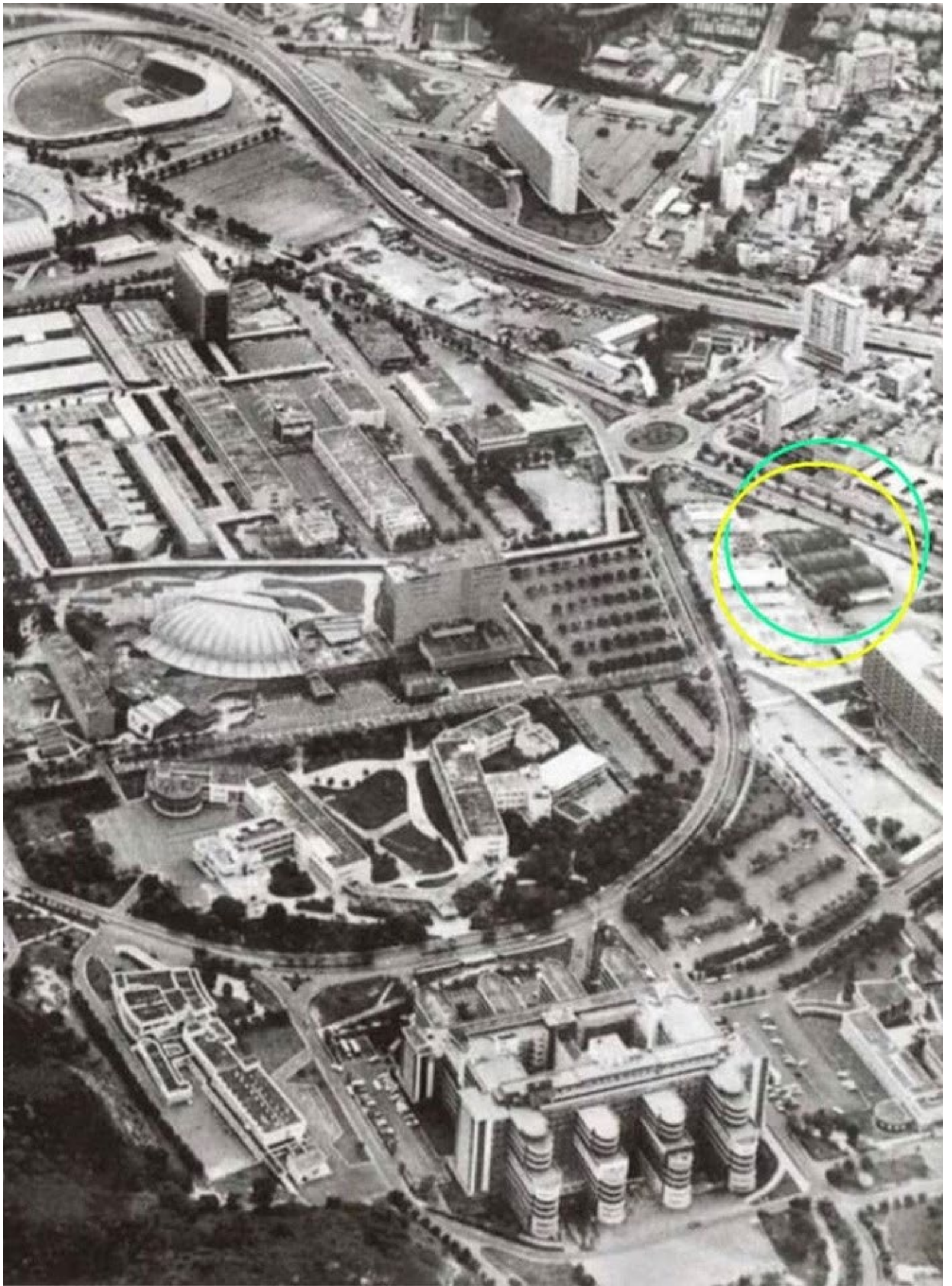
This reinterpretation requires a radical change in the critical reasoning. Instead of considering this first stage as a process that begins with an academic urban conception, by using a modern language of architecture, it should be seen as part of a fully modern architectural research process, which, for circumstantial reasons, uses urban terms in academic language.

From this perspective, the six buildings of the first stage, including the special case of Hygiene, do not constitute a *parenthesis* within Carlos Raul Villanueva's architectural search but are part of its *patient research*, as a common thread and without a solution of continuity.

This development has among its most significant previous links the fundamental experience in terms of education and modern architectural language of the *Escuela Gran Colombia* of 1939; the architectural and urban experience of *El Silencio* of 1941, from which he rescues the fully modern architectural language with which he makes explicit the environmental relationship of the internal courtyards and the houses. From 1946-1947 Villanueva experiences the synthesis of the Industrial Technical School in which, taking inspiration from the *Escuela Gran Colombia*, he articulates the functions of housing, services, administrative areas, laboratories, and natural environment, using open spaces and the covered corridor as an articulating element, and explores the technological possibilities of concrete and steel for the solution of the larger spaces, such as the dining room and the laboratories.

In this process of architectural reflection, the academic conception associated with the ideation process of the urban complex approach of the *Ciudad Universitaria de Caracas*, can be described as what Giulio Carlo Argán (1973. p17) calls an **architecture of composition** which will evolve into the fully modern conception of **architecture of formal determination**. The architectural synthesis that is already present in the ETI is nourished by the experience of the process of exploration of the structural possibilities and language of concrete, through the design of the covered walkways (1948), and of the University Stadiums (1949-1952). In addition, Villanueva's parallel exploration of the dining area and social spaces of the School of Nurses building (1953) will result in the architectural and urban synthesis of the buildings of the central administrative and cultural area in 1952 and 1953.





In relation to this process of urban spatial *composition* and with the criticisms formulated about a relative lack of unity between the central complex, composed of the buildings of the Clinical Hospital and the institutes of Experimental Medicine and Anatomy, and the supposedly “free” institutes of Pathological Anatomy and Tropical Medicine, the architectural critics coincide in underlining the generically neoclassical roots of the first stage of the *Ciudad Universitaria de Caracas*, associated with the use of symmetry as a resource of organization and hierarchy of urban planning represented in the buildings of the Clinical Hospital and the institutes of Experimental Medicine and Anatomy.

On the other hand, not much is said about the properly *classical* sense with which are conceived the four buildings of the medical institutes, including those of Pathological Anatomy and Tropical Medicine, as an integral part of the relations between unity and urban totality of this first stage of the 1942-43 plan.

The ideation of these buildings responds to what Sigfried Giedion, (1971- 1975. p.3) defines as the final stage of the ***first conception of space***, which culminates with Greek architecture where buildings stand as *volumes* of radial spaces, interacting through presence, where the *colonnade* of the Greek temple, generator of shadow, plays a determining role.

The colonnade in the buildings of the Institute of Pathological Anatomy and Tropical Medicine can only be considered as part of this precise architectural and urban intention, which must be interpreted as an effort to recompose a totality conditioned by the disproportionate presence of the Clinical Hospital building, which Villanueva was unable to balance completely through the relationships with the institutes and, for this reason, he applies the disintegration of the presence of the Clinical Hospital assigned to Mateo Manaure (1954) through the use of color.

It should be pointed out, without suggesting that this is a literal and direct reference, that for Giedion this first conception of space already expresses a new way of life, the democratic way of life; a sense that coincides with the appreciation of the architecture of the *Ciudad Universitaria de Caracas* by Sibyl Moholy-Nagy (1964, p.35) as “...*a means that will stimulate the student to improve himself, without rejecting the democratic spirit... to create an image of university life whose realization could only be fulfilled in the future*”.

In the case of the School of Medicine, this future is clearly associated with its conception as a faculty based on research institutes, responsible for theoretical-practical training, which is nourished by the development of scientific research; while practical-theoretical training takes place mainly at the Clinical Hospital.

It is not clear, from the above architectural considerations regarding the medical buildings, whether it is perceived that the essential content has been designed, far beyond professional training, to be one of the fundamental pieces in the construction of a full scientific development of the country, a basic condition of all modernity that, after 80 years, we are still far from achieving.

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