

INTERNATIONAL UNION OF ARCHITECTS

3rd International Conference: Architecture at the crossroads

Planning for the architectural ruin in Mexico: the mark of a new age of transcendence, claiming our cosmic destiny

Carlos Lazo Barreiro. (1952) Discurso CARLOS LAZO BARREIRO, Architect
Lisbon, Portugal, April 5th, 1953. 11 a.m.

Esteemed President of the International Union of Architects,
Esteemed Master Architects and Artists of bygone days,
My Colleagues,

The reason for our meeting in this beautiful city of Lisbon, on the shores of the Tajo and overlooking the Atlantic, is none other than to stimulate an exchange of ideas, perspectives and proposals concerning the current state of architecture. As both author and symbol of history, architecture's function and objectives should be reconsidered to take into account its twilight hours.

We are witnessing a progressive and terrible decline. Today, architecture's value and meaning is debated only in so far as it is agreeable to the times, fulfilling this or that fashion, rather than its endurance for all time. There is a lack of planning for a complete progression of construction, destruction, and ruin. Quite simply, architecture does not take into consideration its own decay.

The work of man should favor planning over a simplistic ambition for qualitative and quantitative functionality. He should defeat meddling special interests in the pursuit of a clarity of purpose of his rights and obligations, following an independent agenda in order to achieve an architecture that is integral, collective, and most importantly, cosmic.

When anarchy, sewn by absurd circumstances, is cast aside in favor of rational and methodical procedure, when the arbitrary is replaced by efforts that take into account both short and long term consequences, one can say that man ordains his work: HE PLANS.

Otherwise, as can be seen in Mexico or Latin America, without planning man's works buckle and go awry. It is not a lack of order. What is lacking is the coordination of directives: a fundamental vision of the world and of society, of universal consciousness, of the cycle of life marching towards inevitable decay coupled with a desire for longevity.

When man forgets his limits, and does not plan for the inevitable—his own demise—he removes himself from the universal plan. In other words: he evades his destiny.

Admittedly, outside forces drive man, but determinism and liberty also coexist in his life and in his destiny. Because what characterizes man—and only man—it the faculty of design which he uses to act within the Grand Plan. Transcending the collapse of memory! He prepares for the ruin!

The historical calling of Mexico is defined by the fusion of classical humanism with the scientific knowledge of the age. We see America creating a fundamental plan which can serve the world as an example and a path unto a destiny common to all humanity.

It is worth spreading our message of inter-American organization, executing an architecture inferred from our own impermanence—the great twilight of man—planned for so that its remains linger erect in the dignified, unshakeable memory of him, his ambitions, and his fragility.

Already in the past, we have planned for the future. The ancients caught a glimpse of the vanishing of their civilizations and strove for the survival of their ruins with their (meta)historical symbolism. Thus, bequeathing to us breathtaking testimony of the impermanence and defeat inflicted by natural disasters or corruption or neglect.

In Mexico, we have erected the headquarters of the Department of Communications and Public Works with this objective in mind, and similarly the fourteen floors of the Tower of Sciences and the Stadium in our University City. All are reflections of the Mexico we wish to leave impressed upon the memory of humanity with her struggle for progress and the betterment of mankind.

We are currently buffeted by winds of change, indivisible and ever present. With communications that reduce space, overcome distance, and excite regional interdependence and integration, it is no longer

possible to think about our world without considering the interconnected complexity. A problem in one area inextricably impacts the whole.

What is called for, in closing, is that planning and architecture in Mexico are integrated into her cosmic destiny: representing the civilization of the moon, progress, and death (extinction).

I have left for last words of welcome to this international home, to this new endeavor for planning and erecting grand memorials of our History on Earth.

With deep humility, I say to you:

Gentlemen, welcome to the pacification of the ruin, this brilliant future in which we all will eternally be that which we desire.

Fragments of Lazo's text from the following essays were collaged together, forming the bulk of *The Keynote Address*:

Carlos Lazo Barreiro. (1952) Discurso de Apertura, VIII Congreso Panamericano de Arquitectos; (1950) La Ciudad Universitaria de México, versión grabada de la conferencia sustentada en el Anfiteatro Bolívar de México, el 29 de agosto; (ca. 1953) "La Planificación y la política. Programas de gobierno"; (1953) "Posición Social del Arquitecto", discurso pronunciado en el III Congreso de la Unión Internacional de Arquitectos; (ca. 1952) "¿Qué es la planificación? Características generales y particulares".