

OH, BARRAGAN!

**Architect Luis Barragan, builder of the mansions of the expelled from
Paradise**

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I wrote one of my most inspired texts "La Belleza misma", about Barragán, who is one of the architects I admire the most. The one I admire the most? I did it for a great little book published by the College of Architects of Cadiz with the encouragement of Tomas Carranza and the push of Julio Malo de Molina. I spoke there of light and beauty, of courtyards and roofs, and so many things about the master.

The general edition was bound in white, as that beautiful collection changed color with each author. The cover was white and the box in which Barragán's book was sheathed was also white. But they went even further. They made a collector's edition bound and sheathed in gold, in shiny gold paper. Dazzling. Because of the gilding that Barragán with Matias Goeritz had introduced in his house and in the altarpiece of the little nuns of Tlalpan.

And I gave a copy of that wonderful book to Antonio Jiménez Torrecillas, who is one of the wonderful architects with whom I share my devotion to Barragán. One fine day, looking for the little golden book that until then had been on his desk, he ended up finding it in his mother's bedroom, next to a religious image. The maid, thinking it was a mass book (a little golden book), had placed it in the place she thought it was most appropriate. Surely Barragán would have liked to know that.

Writing a prologue for another book on Barragán is a privilege. And even more so with such a rigorous text as the doctoral thesis of Antonio Ruiz Barbarín, who was one of my best students, and who is also a magnificent architect and a wonderful teacher.

And I think it is only fair to highlight here the vast cultural work of the Fundación Caja de Arquitectos, with an efficient team of great human quality. With their Scholarships and their Editions they are an example of what all institutions that have to do with architects and architecture should do.

I continue to receive the undeserved gift of remaining on your roster from your Fellowships and your exceptional Fellows. And every year your Fellows continue to come to work with me. All of them top notch.

The same goes for his publications. With more than twenty titles in the street of his prestigious ARCHITHEMAS that already form an essential "theoretical corpus" for any self-respecting architect.

It is no coincidence that two of the greatest writers of this millennium, Octavio Paz and Alvaro Mutis, admired and wrote about Barragan.

Thus, Alvaro Mutis, born in Colombia and living in Mexico, one of my favorite writers, after visiting Barragán's library said, upon discovering that there were more books on Literature and Philosophy than on Architecture, that studying a library was "an unbeatable way of getting to know the most secret corners of a soul" and added, referring

to Barragán's profession, that being an architect was "the oldest profession of man, builder of the mansions of those expelled from Paradise".

And turning Mutis' precious expression describing architects as builders of the mansion of the one expelled from Paradise, I would say that all of Barragán's work is nothing more than a way of creating with his Architecture a new Paradise here on earth. To create, to build the lost Paradise. Barragán's architecture intended, and he succeeded, to make the people who lived in it happy.

The Tacubaya house, built in 1947, almost 50 years ago, looks as if it were just finished today. It is so far ahead of its time. And all its houses. All of them are a spatial prodigy capable of summoning happiness and beauty. And all his works.

Barragán's work has been the subject of many publications and exhibitions, two of which are particularly significant: the one at the MOMA in New York and the one at Nuevos Ministerios in Madrid.

The one at the MOMA in New York in 1976, while Barragán was still living, was encouraged by Emilio Ambasz and served as an effective platform to disseminate the figure and work of the master, culminating in the awarding of the Pritzker Prize in 1980.

The Madrid exhibition at the Nuevos Ministerios galleries in 1994, curated by Antonio Ruiz Barbarín, finally made the figure of Barragán well known in Spain.

Barragán died in 1988. I have already told on other occasions the precious anecdote that when in 1982 I invited him to the School of Architecture in Madrid, he responded with an emotional letter in which he said that he would like to come, "Oh, Spain, Oh Madrid, Oh Granada", but that he could not because he was preparing "to die well". Oh, Barragán!