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Study of Chicano/Mexican Architecture in the Modern World

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Abstract

Although sometimes overlooked, Latino/Chicano architecture is all around us and continues to influence modern structures today. From early century megalithic architecture to the baroque cathedrals and even to the Modernism movement, Latino architects have played a large role in establishing beautiful works of art and attributing to modern day architecture. In this paper I will address the influence Chicanos have had on modern day architecture. Tracing back to the Stone Age, Latino architecture can be discovered, though primitive it shows some of the earliest examples of their designs. As time progressed, Latino architecture was influenced by the Romans, Moors, Celts and even natives such as the Aztecs and Mayans as well as many others, spawning the Romanesque, Mudejar, Puuc, Castros and other styles that were practiced and still are practiced by Chicano/Latino architects. Chicano architecture is prevalent in the U.S. in areas such as the Olvera Street Market in LA and Old town in San Diego and in many cities and towns across North America. Using published works on architecture and architectural magazines, I will explain the influence Chicano/Latino architecture has on the U.S. and beyond.

Keywords: attributing, discovered, published and influence

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Chicano/Mexican Architecture in the Modern World

Mexican architecture has been around since the megalithic structures can be discovered, today Mexican and Chicano architecture can be observed worldwide. The influence of Chicano/Latino architects on modern architecture is very prevalent, as is Mexican architecture throughout history. In this paper, I will address the contributions of Mexican architects throughout history and the influence Chicanos have on architecture today.

First of all, one must be familiar with influential Chicano architects. There are many Chicano architects that play pivotal roles in contemporary architecture, one of the more famous of these is Luis Ramiro Barragan Morfin. Morfin was born March 9th, 1902 in Guadalajara, Mexico and graduated from the Escuela Libre de Ingenieros. He studied as an engineer in his home town, while he took on additional work to gain the title of architect.(Luis Barragan, 2002) He was very involved with the more modernist movement of architecture and he believed a lot in “emotional architecture”. One of his more famous works is that of the San Cristobal Estates, which were constructed in the 1960s. Barragan is often said to have been a minimalist as many of his works would suggest, however the use of color often brings out debate, as most minimalist architecture does not use color.(Firshein, 2012) One other influential architect is Rafael Moneo. Moneo was born May 9, 1937 and is a Pritzker Prize winning architect. He spent time as the Chairman of Design at Harvard and has many influential works here in the United States. His most famous works include the Cathedral of our Lady of the Angels, which was built in Los Angeles in 2002 and features post-modern architecture.

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Next was the Davis Art Museum at Wellesley College in Massachusetts, which was completed in 1993.(Biography, 1996) Overall, many Chicano's attribute to many great architectural feats everyday, however not every one of them becomes famous, but maybe one day their works will.

Next, I wanted to include works of architecture in the U.S. that feature Chicano/Mexican styles of architecture in their designs. Mexican style architecture is not limited to South America it has spread all across the globe, even here in Spokane, Washington I have observed Spanish colonial revival homes all over the South Hill, even my old elementary school, Hutton elementary, has a very Chicano style aesthetic to it. One very famous Chicano style area is El Pueblo de Los Angeles. It is located in one of the oldest parts of Los Angeles and features numerous historic Chicano sites including the Plaza, La Placita Church, Olvera Street, Avila Adobe, the Pico House and many other historical buildings. El Pueblo de Los Angeles is a very influential Chicano location in the U.S., not only for it's preservation of Chicano culture, but also because it is a living museum that maintains a romantic vision of old Mexico through its very Mexican style architecture. Old Mexico can be experienced through El Pueblo's brick buildings enclosing Olvera Street and on the small vendor stands lining all the corners of the area. At the center is the living embodiment of Chicano culture, colorful pinatas, hanging puppets, Mexican pottery, serapes, mounted bull horns, oversized sombreros and a life sized stuffed donkey. El Pueblo de Los Angeles attracts almost two-million tourists each year and the area has quickly become a very popular tourist location due to its authenticity and very focused method of preserving Spanish culture and beautiful

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architecture.(Deioma, 2011) Another very important preservation of Chicano/Mexican style architecture is that of Balboa park in San Diego. Many of the buildings that line the streets in the park are designed in with a mixture of European/Spanish architecture that heavily influenced early Chicano works. The buildings also heavily draw from the early Spanish colonial architecture, examples of these styles are prevalent in the rich ornate designs of the buildings. Some of the buildings that show this rich culture and architecture are the Casa de Balboa, the California Bell Tower and adjacent San Diego Museum of Man, the San Diego Museum of Art, the Museum of Photographic Arts, the San Diego Art Institute, the San Diego Model Railroad Museum, the San Diego Natural History Museum, the San Diego History Center, the Reuben H. Fleet Science Center, and the Timken Museum of Art. Other features along El Prado include the Reflection Pond, the latticed Botanical Building, and the Bea Evenson Fountain. Next to the promenade are the San Diego Air & Space Museum and the San Diego Automotive Museum. All of these attractions in one way or another draw from Spanish architecture and Spanish colonial architecture styles.(Balboa Park, 2014) These attractions bring millions of tourists each year further expanding the viewership of these beautiful forms of Chicano architecture. These are just two examples of the influence Chicano architecture has had in the U.S. today, there are areas of Chicano culture and architecture like this all across the U.S. and across the world, Chicano style architecture has influenced many styles of architecture and can be viewed almost anywhere.

Adding onto the influence of Chicano architectural styles in the U.S. is the growing trend in the Southwest United States of the Spanish Colonial revival style of

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architecture that is highly reminiscent of the Spanish Colonial Styles that are prevalent in San Diego's Balboa park and now many urban neighborhoods of the Southern U.S.. Starting in the 1930s, a simpler style of Spanish Colonial revival was adapted to many residences in San Diego's Mission Hills, they used a simpler, more rustic design for the homes. The Bankers Hill area of San Diego began to use more elaborate designs, using lush and colorful plantings set off by plain white walls. Typically these homes featured a smaller entry with a gated front entrance that lead into a courtyard.(Streer-Porter, 1989)

As time progressed rows and rows of Spanish style homes began to appear on the streets of San Diego. The key piece of material involved in the building of Spanish styled homes is the ceramic tile. The Red tile roof is the cornerstone of the Spanish style that essentially defines the look. Many of the best examples of these homes can be found in Santa Barbara, which after a 1925 earthquake began to build many of the residential homes using the simpler Spanish revival style. Many include Moorish styled fountains, the Moors also had a heavy effect on early Chicano architecture.(Spanish Colonial, 2004) Although the Spanish Colonial Revival style is most popular in Southwestern states in the U.S. there are still examples of it in other areas as well, as it is a growing style and is rapidly becoming more popular.

Next, Chicanos have many different styles of architecture and also draw their many forms of architecture from various cultures throughout history. To begin, here a few examples of various styles of Chicano architecture: Romanesque, Megalithic, Mudejar, Puuc, Castros, Spanish Colonial, Spanish Colonial Revival, Churrigueresque, Neoclassic, Herrerian, Oasisamericano, Modernist, Post Modernist, Minimalist,

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Hacienda and many more. One of the first Mexican styles, after the Megalithic era was the Puuc styles which can be seen in the Chichen Itza pyramids. These Puuc styles grew from the Mayan/Aztec designs of buildings. Surprisingly today we can see styles reminiscent of Puuc in one of the tallest buildings in Mexico, the Torre Mayor. The next major influence on style comes from Spain when it began coming to "New Spain". With the arrival of the Spanish in South America the introduction of architectural theories of classical order and Moorish influence arrive and begin to take shape in Mexico.

Religion played a large role in the development of architectural styles in Mexico, mostly due to the fact that the Spanish built ornate and majestic monasteries back in Spain.

The Spanish influenced the colonial and romanesque styles that were highly prevalent when Spain first colonized Mexico. The Spanish projected models unique to its kind, that were the basis for the evangelization of the indigenous population, marking their ideology within the architectural style of tequitqui, which was essentially a masonic style. A few years after that, the baroque and mannerism styles are introduced in large cathedrals and buildings in more populated areas of Mexico, whereas in the less populous areas, the hacienda style began to emerge, these haciendas followed a more Mozarabic style. The cathedrals in Mexico are great examples of the maderera style that began to take shape during this colonial period. Coming into the 15th century, there was a shift in style and cathedrals and other major buildings began to predominately be built with Plateresque styles and late Gothic styles. After the Gothic period the styles shifted and culminated with the Spanish Baroque which was expressed through the Churriguereesque style of architecture, as well as the Herrerian style and New Spanish

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Baroque, incorporating indigenous polychrome elements. In the late 1780s the Spanish Baroque style ended and the Neo-classical style began to take shape and take over as the dominant architectural style in Mexico. The Neo-classical style maintained popularity throughout the 1800s, however very little was built during this time due to political issues. Fifteen years after the end of the Mexican Revolution in 1917, the government began giving approval for federal housing, educational, and health care building programs. This began the modernism and post modernism stages of architecture. Although, in the 1930s architecture based on Mayan design was very popular as well.(Zacks, 2008) The development of modern architecture in Mexico bears noteworthy parallels to its North American and European counterparts, but Mexican architecture has several unique traits that challenge the ideas of the existing modern architecture. During post revolutionary times, the idealization of indigenous and traditional ideas began to effect architecture as many architects attempted to reach into the past and retrieve what had been lost in the countries attempt to modernize. Like previously mentioned, one of the tallest buildings in Mexio, the Torre Mayor, took some of it's design ideas from Mayan temples of the past. As architecture reaches today, functionalism, expressionism and other types of architecture are now leaving their mark on the ever changing architecture in Mexico and the effect it has beyond it's borders.(Mexico:History, 2013) Throughout history, Chicano architecture was mainly influence by the Spanish in the renaissance era, bringing the baroque and herrerian styles, however native architecture was one of the first influences and has still influenced

numerous buildings today. Religion was also a big part of the development of Chicano
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architectural development as seen in cathedrals and other large buildings. Today much of modern Chicano architecture is influenced by Europe and North America, but is infused with Mexican stylistic elements.

Mexican and Chicano architecture is important because it has left the presence of man in the Mexican territory. Important archeological finds are of great importance for the explanation of early man and modern man. Mesoamerican civilizations have achieved great stylistic development and proportion to human and urban scale. Other than archeological importance, architecture is just like paintings and sculptures. It is an art form and a form of cultural expression. Therefore through the continuance of use and exploration of Chicano architects today, an art form and a culture is preserved and that is why Chicano influence in the U.S. and beyond is important, to preserve culture. Cultural diversity is very important and through architecture cultural diversity is concrete and nearly timeless.

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