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Mitchell/Giurgola Architects, *IBM Westlake*, detail of interior colonaded pedestrian avenue which connects the six main office buildings and features waterways and pergola-covered fountains. While the inner facing of these buildings is white precast concrete, as seen in the model below, the external facing is reddish-brown stucco.

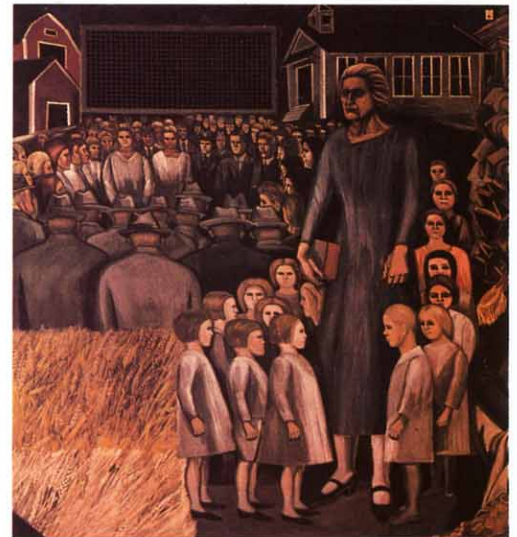
SOLANA: A PLACE IN THE SUN

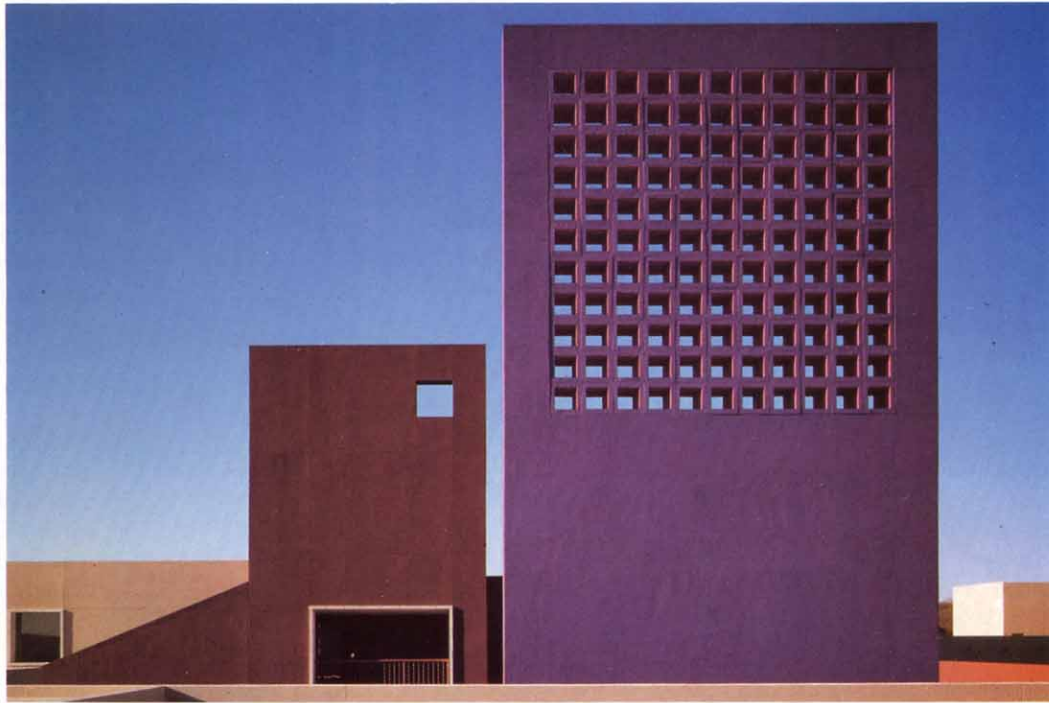
Tony Anella

Mitchell/Giurgola Architects, *IBM Westlake campus (phase I)*, model. Two symmetrical, L-shaped parking structures enclose the orderly campus with six office buildings in block organization at the far end.



José Clemente Orozco, *Angloamerica*, detail of frescoes in the library, Dartmouth College, 1934.

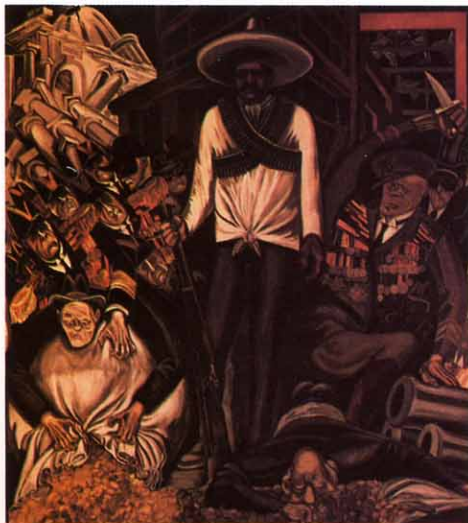




Ricardo Legorreta Arquitectos, office/retail complex at *The Village Center*. Slanting walls complement the landscape and brightly emotional colors punctuate the complex. The purple-stuccoed element is a sculptural “pigeon coop” which stands over a brick-lined pool. As seen in the model below, this element rises in a kind of village plaza.

In the Orozco frescoes at Dartmouth College (1934) two figures stand next to each other. One is a New England school teacher wearing a blue dress, holding a book. The other is a Mexican *campesino* wearing a white shirt criss-crossed with ammunition, holding a rifle. The two stand out in the fresco with similar stature: they are equally heroic. The contrast between them derives from context. Surrounding the teacher is a group of well-behaved students. Next to the students is a golden swath of wheat. Behind them the

José Clemente Orozco, *Hispanoamerica*, detail of frescoes in the library, Dartmouth College, 1934.



orderliness of a town meeting organizes the middle distance of the panel, while in the background a schoolhouse, next to a barn, reiterates the Jeffersonian ideal of American history. Surrounding the *campesino* is anarchy. A caricatured general aims a dagger at the peasant’s back. Old and decrepit oligarchs bloat themselves on sacks filled with golden coin. The panel disrupts into chaos as steel I-beams supplant the stone temples of pre-Columbian Mexico. The juxtaposition evokes Orozco’s perception of the difference be-

tween Anglo-American and Hispano-American history.

A similarly striking juxtaposition of cultural form occurs in the recently completed Westlake Center — called “Solana” — outside of Dallas. Architects Mitchell/Giurgola of New York designed one section and Ricardo Legorreta of Mexico City designed the other. Built for the same client (Maguire/Thomas Partners in joint venture with IBM), on the same site and with slightly different programs, the contrast between these two archi-

Ricardo Legorreta Arquitectos, *The Village Center*, model. Diagonal directions and slanting lines establish an intuitive relationship with the land. Arranged around an enclosed courtyard, the complex is patterned after a prototypical Mexican village.



tures also derives from context. However, unlike the Orozco fresco, where context distinguishes the destiny of the protagonists, at Solana the context remains the same. Solana is located on 900 acres of rolling north Texas prairie, and the land is like a giant *tabula rasa* on which two very different cultural identities, shaped by two very different histories, describe their respective visions of how man is to inhabit the earth.

The Westlake Campus — the part of the project designed by Mitchell/Giurgola — is organized according to a rectilinear grid. Six identical five-story office buildings, two parking garages, a cafeteria building and a computer center impose a regime of the rational on the landscape. The relationship of this regime to the landscape is as arbitrary as it is socially egalitarian. It is also consistent with the vision of the world proposed by the founders of the United States as they were considering how to settle our nation. In 1785 a Land Ordinance was passed by Congress to survey the entire area of the United States into townships of six square miles. The townships were further subdivided into blocks of thirty-six sections of one square mile (640 acres) each. Thomas Jefferson's original plan for Washington, which appears as a checkerboard of square blocks (11 blocks east and west and three blocks north and south) also reflects this vision. Mitchell/Giurgola's design for Westlake Campus translates the vision into an aesthetic founded on a rational need to justify all elements in terms of social utility and economic efficiency. Not only in plan but also in elevation and in the structural expressivism of the architecture's detailing, the rationale that informs Mitchell/Giurgola's aesthetic derives from the same matrix which has governed the development of the United States throughout its history.

If such a rationale of justification informs for Mitchell/Giurgola's aesthetic, an irreverent delight in pure perception is the basis of Legorreta's. "Instead of saying I will make a wall and paint it red," Legorreta said, "I will make something red and it will be a wall." The Village Center and the Marketing Center — the two parts of the project designed by Legorreta — offer patterns of perceptual stimuli designed to create a distinctive presence in the rural landscape. In both parts Legorreta's use of color is intuitive if not exuberantly idiosyncratic. Ochres are contrasted with pink, blues with rose. And walls stand in the landscape as formal elements of poetic composition, having no need to justify themselves in terms of anything so prosaic as function or structural efficiency. They celebrate existence with Mexico's flair for the fiesta: a spectacle of primary color oscillating between a shout and a silence.

The silence is behind the walls, and this is

the essential difference between Legorreta's work and the architecture of Mitchell/Giurgola. Ultimately, for all their irreverence and apparent frivolity, Legorreta's walls *enclose*: they are the masks behind which Mexico hides its suspicion of a world instinctively regarded to be dangerous and unpredictable. And ultimately, for all their rigidity and conceit, Mitchell/Giurgola's walls *liberate*: they are the matrix which allows the expression and inventiveness of diverse individuals in a free society.

The six identical office buildings Mitchell/Giurgola has designed turn outward toward the landscape. Arcades surround the base of the buildings while on the upper floors the perimeter is a wide corridor that gives everyone a view out towards the prairie. Each of the Mitchell/Giurgola buildings is as egalitarian in spirit as was the historic opportunity to acquire a 160-acre homestead, and each results in a similar settlement pattern on the land. The space between these buildings is the same as in the street grid of a typical western strip city.

In contrast, Legorreta's Village Center, arranged around an enclosed courtyard, is patterned after a Mexican village. The courtyard provides the social focus of a prototypical Mexican plaza. Instead of a cathedral, city hall, and market arcade, Legorreta places office buildings, a hotel, and a retail center. Despite these programmatic variations, however, the Mexican concept of ideal order is preserved.

According to Octavio Paz, writing in *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (1950, 31-32) on life and thought in Mexico:

"... The predominance of the closed over the open manifests itself not only as impassivity and distrust, irony and suspicion, but also as love for Form. Form surrounds and sets bounds to our privacy, limiting its excesses, curbing its explosions, isolating and preserving it. Both our Spanish and Indian heritages have influenced our fondness for ceremony, formulas, and order. A superficial examination of our history might suggest otherwise, but actually the Mexican aspires to create an orderly world regulated by clearly stated principles."

Paz's words, first published in 1950, predict Legorreta's work at Solana. The Marketing Center, Legorreta's other building, is a low structure with large stucco walls, small windows and five interior courtyards. The building turns in on itself towards these courtyards — precincts where the man-made order of geometry prevails. The courtyards are the places where the human relationships that are established between colorful walls and crisp geometrics create an orderly world regulated by identifiable principles. Only carefully-framed views to the surrounding landscape are allowed; and these are com-

posed to complement the formalism of the interior.

In his essay "Thoughts on a Non-Arbitrary Architecture," Karsten Harris (1983, 16) makes the following statement:

"... One task of architecture is still that of interpreting the world as a meaningful order in which the individual can find his place in the midst of nature and in the midst of community. Time and space must be revealed in such a way that human beings are given their dwelling place, their ethos."

Solana embodies two very different interpretations of the world and how to dwell in it. The design decisions made respectively by Mitchell/Giurgola and Ricardo Legorreta represent choices that, according to Harris, communicate particular ideals of "being in the world." If Mitchell/Giurgola's architecture is addressed to the need for rational control (which is meant to liberate the individual), Ricardo Legorreta's architecture addresses itself more to the need for formal control (intended to protect the individual within the closure of the community). Each is conditioned by a different cultural past. Together they join at Solana to pose an essential question.

Much has changed in this country since 1785 when Congress first adopted a rational, scientific matrix as the basis for our settlement of the continent. If nothing else, we no longer abide the frontier perception of the land as a surfeit to be systematically exploited for individual gain. Our deteriorating environment causes us to rethink the way we customarily inhabit the earth. We have become suspicious of technocracy, and the arbitrary solutions of rationalism, per se, are no longer convincing. The contrast between Mitchell/Giurgola's utopian rationalism and Legorreta's communal formalism illuminates this point. Yet, in the end, the north Texas prairie is not Mexico and Legorreta's formalities become formulas which nevertheless lead us to question the appropriateness of our North American understanding of dwelling, given our changed environmental perceptions.

Like the juxtaposition of images in Orozco's fresco, the juxtaposition of architecture at Solana offers a rare glimpse of crystallized culture. That two such different architectural visions would be allowed on the same site for the same client is a testimonial to more enlightened development. That two such disparate cultural expressions should occur at the same place and at the same time also represents a remarkable opportunity, and we are able to ponder in fundamental terms the implications of how human beings choose to build on the earth. □

Tony Anella is an architectural writer living in Los Angeles.