

CHAPEL OF NUESTRA SEÑORA DE LA
SOLEDAD +++ A COLLABORATION

KITZIA

HOFMANN

HERBERT

HOFMANN

FELIX

CANDELA

ENRIQUE

DE LA MORA

BY LUCY NAVARRO SP2019

A look into the plastic integration of sculpture and stained glass design for “El Altillo”. With a focus on the alter pieces by Kitzia Hofmann and the sculpture by her husband Herbert Hofmann. The work was a collaboration between Mexican architect Enrique de la Mora and Felix Candela.

Project location:

Coyoacan, San Jose Del Altillo, Mexico City
Avenida Universidad 1700, Coyoacan, 04010
Ciudad de México

Project date: 1955

Collaborators:

Enrique de la Mora	architect
Felix Candela	structural engineer
Kitzia Hofmann	stained glass design
Herbert Hofmann	altar crucifix

Alternate chapel names:

Chapel of Nuestra Senora de la Soledad
“El Altillo”
Capilla San José Del Altillo
Chapelle Notre Dame de la Solitude

Kitzia (1924-1987)

excerpt from *"North American Women Artists of the Twentieth Century: A Biographical Dictionary."*

Born in Mexico, she was initially the student and then the wife of Herbert Hofmann. She specialized in the art of stained glass, her finest efforts are located in Alttillo. The work can be described as a jubilation of color, form in movement. She created many other works in sacred and secular places in Monterrey, Guadalarajar and Cuernavaca. She died in 1987 in the city of her bith. She authored the book Hora Blanca written in 1957.

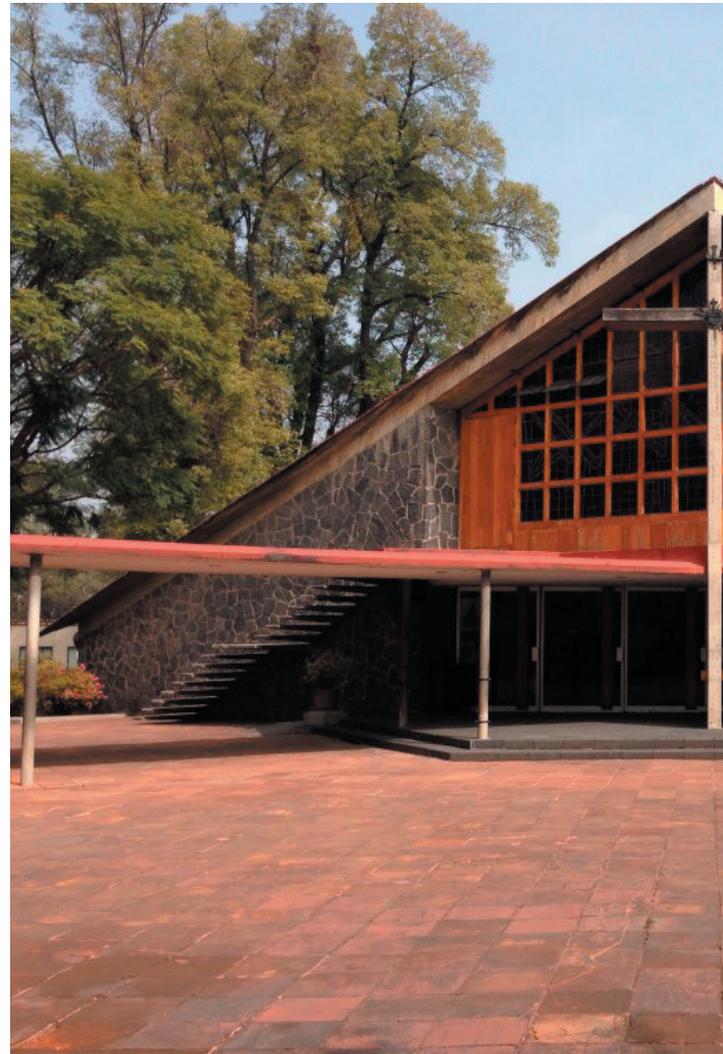
Alternate spelling for Kitzia's last name:

Hofman

Hoffman

Hofmann

Hofmann-Ysenbourg





The Chapel of Nuestra Senora de la Soledad is a remarkable piece of architecture in an area where innovative design is not standard. Its shape, structure, glasswork and the character of its interior, are all aspects that contribute to it's greater relevance. It's innovation, style and architectural character make it a gem in the heart of the city

At the dawn of the fifties, the project was commisioned by Father Pedro Corona Montesinos for the redevelopment of a plot of land that functioned as an old hacienda. The pair of architects choosen were Enrique de la Mora and Felix Candela. This would be the first of several churches they would collaborate on in the incoming years. Along with the architects, Kitzia Hofmann and her husband Herbert were also a part of this incredible team. They were responsible for the plastic intergration and harmony between art and architecture.

A STAINED GLASS WINDOW IS THE FRUIT OF A CLOSE COLLABORATION BETWEEN AN ARTIST, AN ARCHITECT AND A SPECIALIZED CRAFTSMEN.

The architectural program raised the need for three different functions to be solved: the presbytery and altar housing the choir, the area of the congregation and an atrium. The diamond-shaped plant went beyond the basilical plan that prevailed as the classical distribution from the temples of early Christian architecture.

The shape itself was also an unprecedented contribution: the membrane structure generated by the surfaces of the hyperbolic paraboloid, which fuse the shape of a parabola with that of a hyperbole. The Eucharistic celebration of the order, seeking a closer approach with the parishioners, requested the 180 degree turn of the altar, so that the celebrant would face the public. That liturgical form existed incipiently in Rome by then and the architects assumed it as their own. Ten years later it was one of the innovations of the Council that spread through all the spaces of Catholicism. This rotation is integral to the placement of

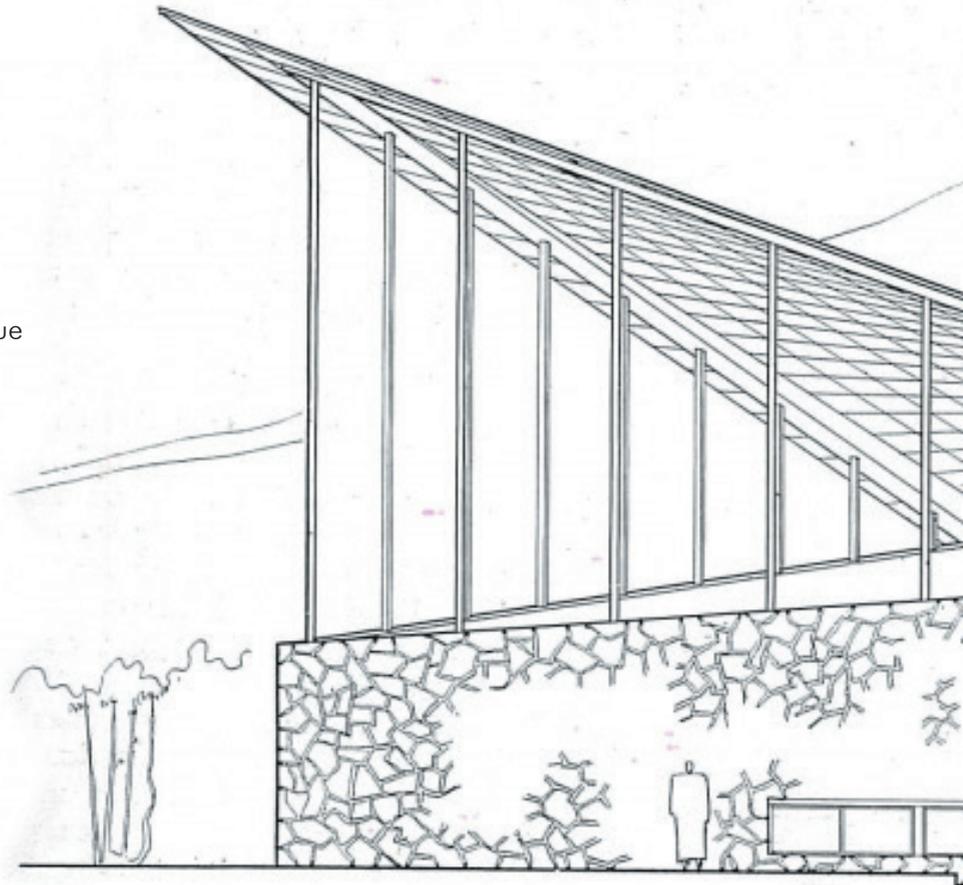
the stained glass window by Hofmann.

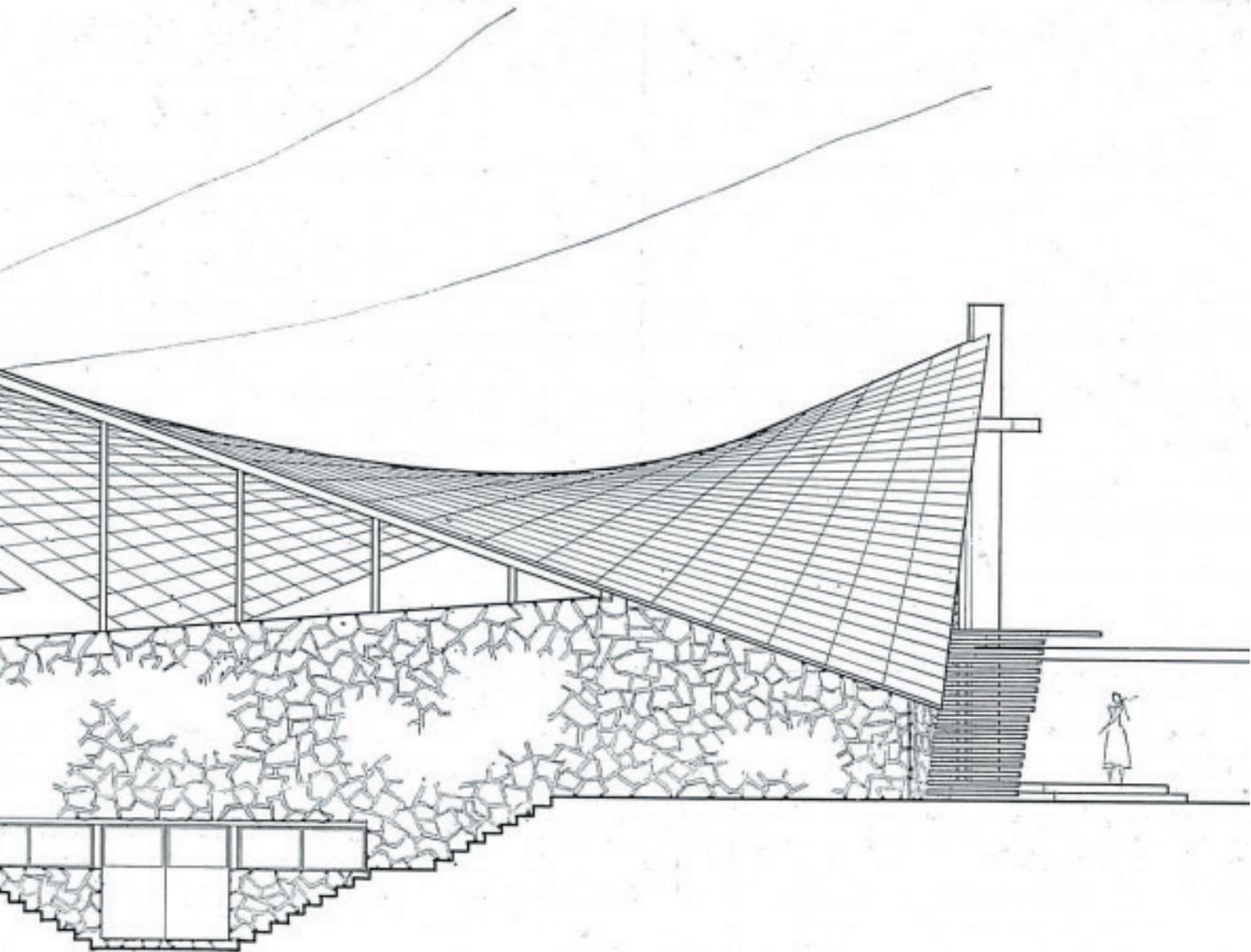
Note: Although Kitzia Hofmann worked as an equal collaborator with Mora and Candela, it was difficult to find any scholarship that credited her work.

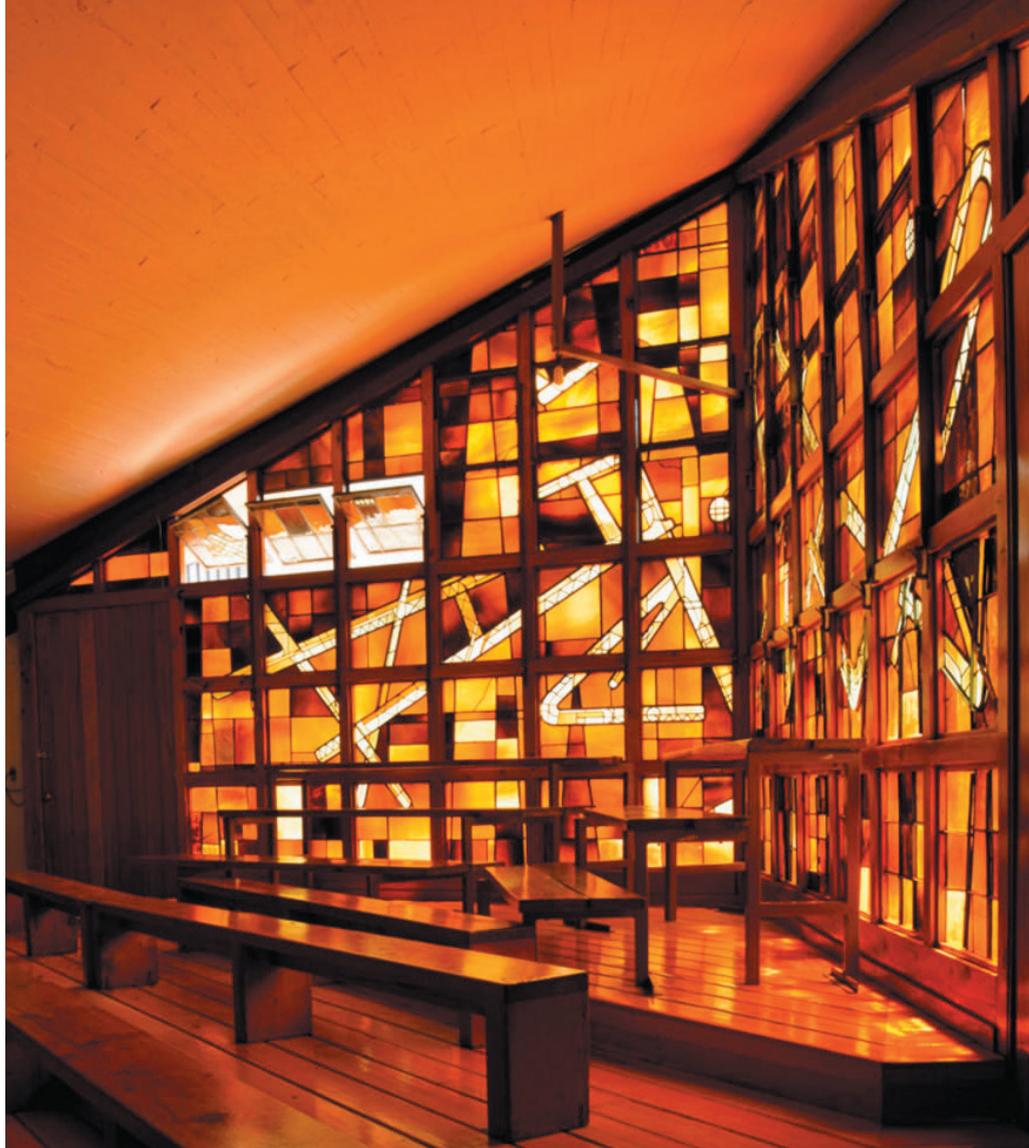




Isolated from the rest of the complex, the access of the chapel transits by the stepping of terraces and platforms. The gradual ascent gives the chapel a unique hierarchy despite its scarce thousand square meters of surface.







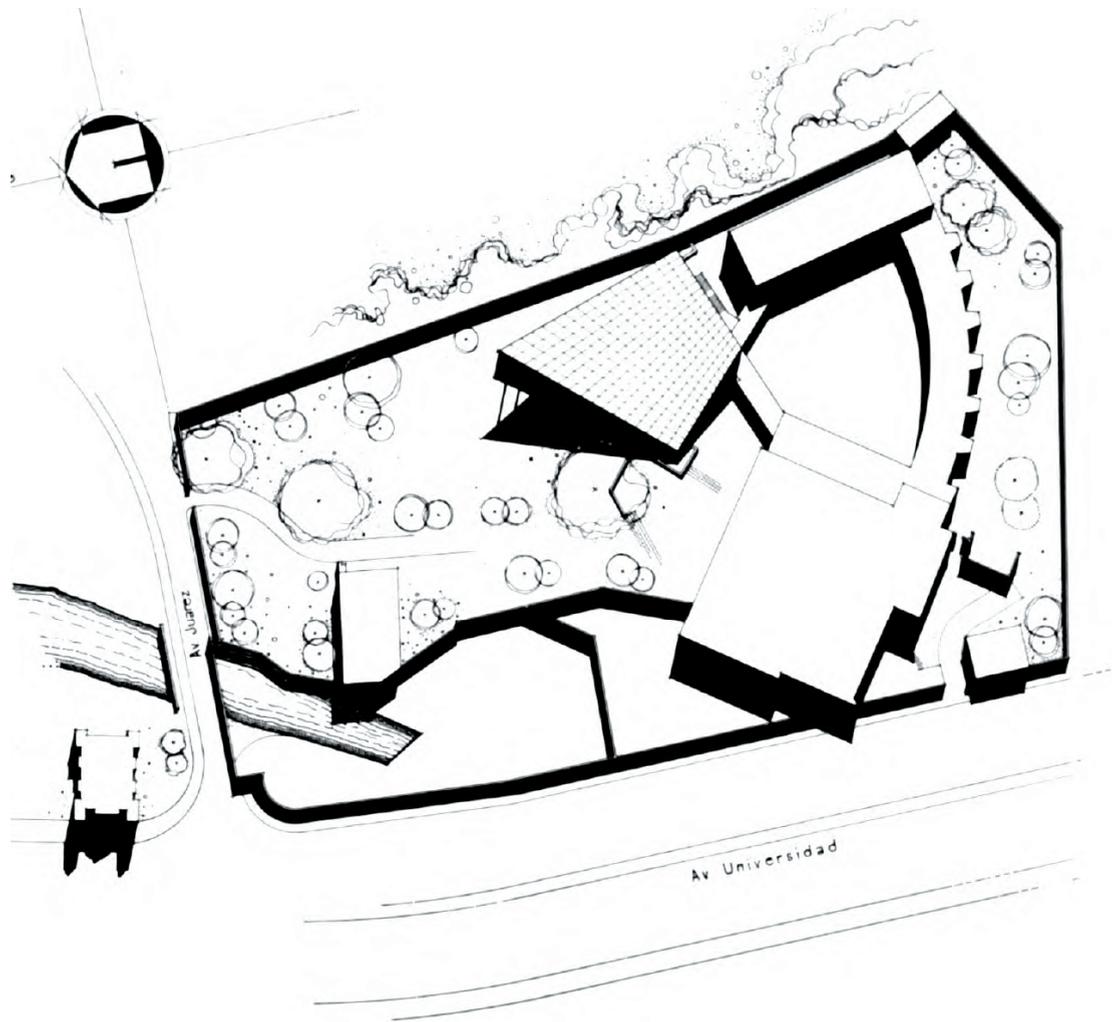


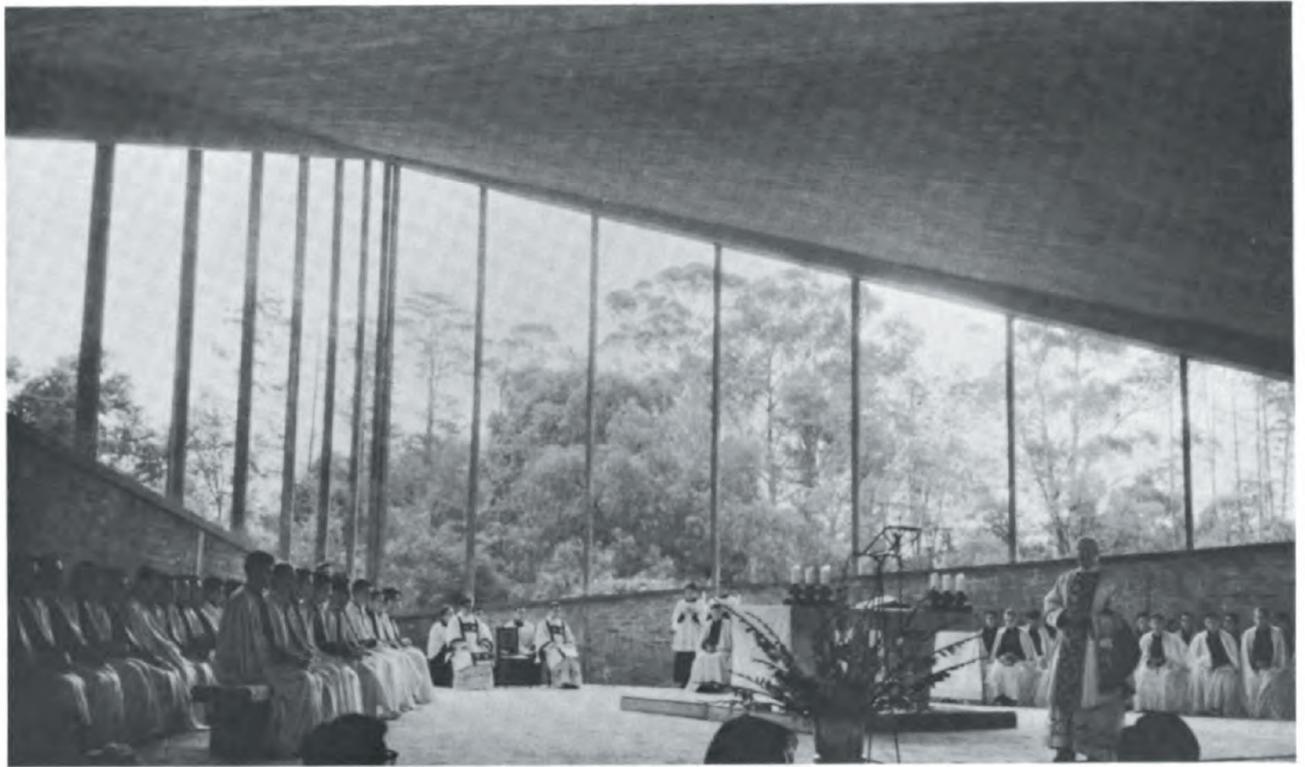


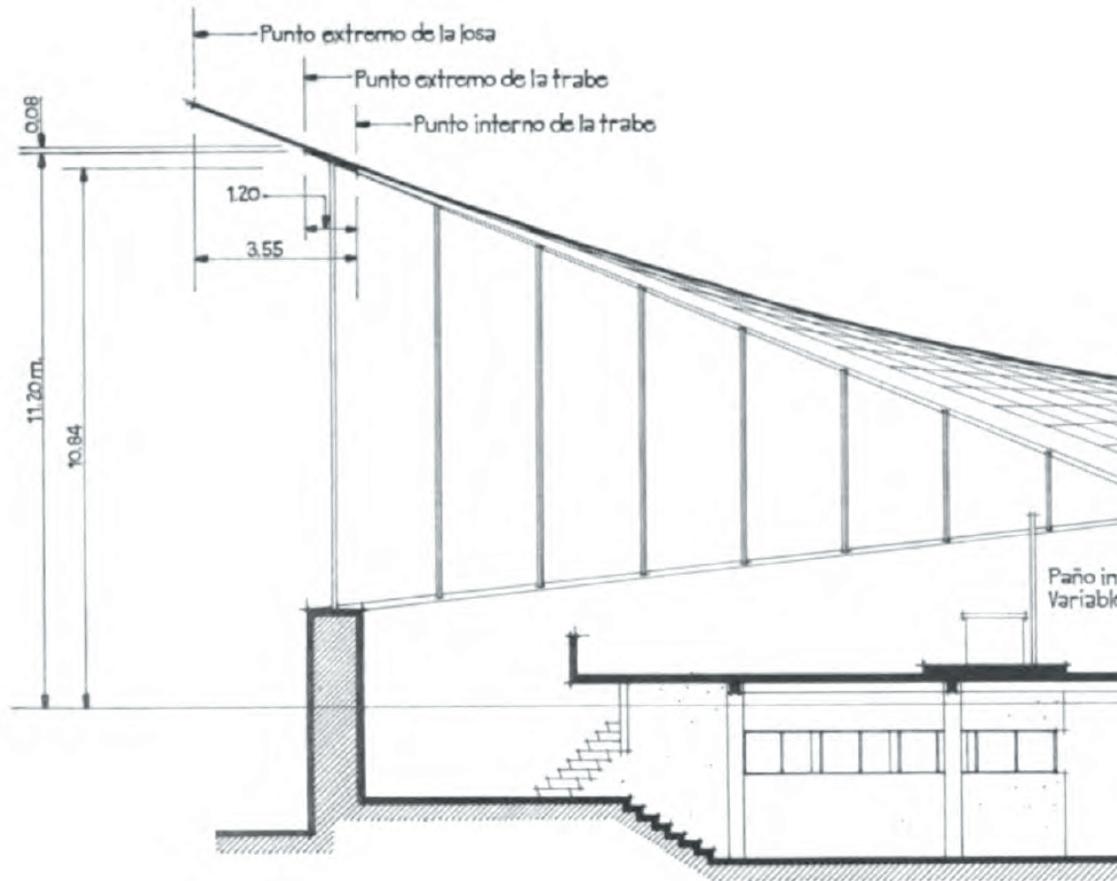


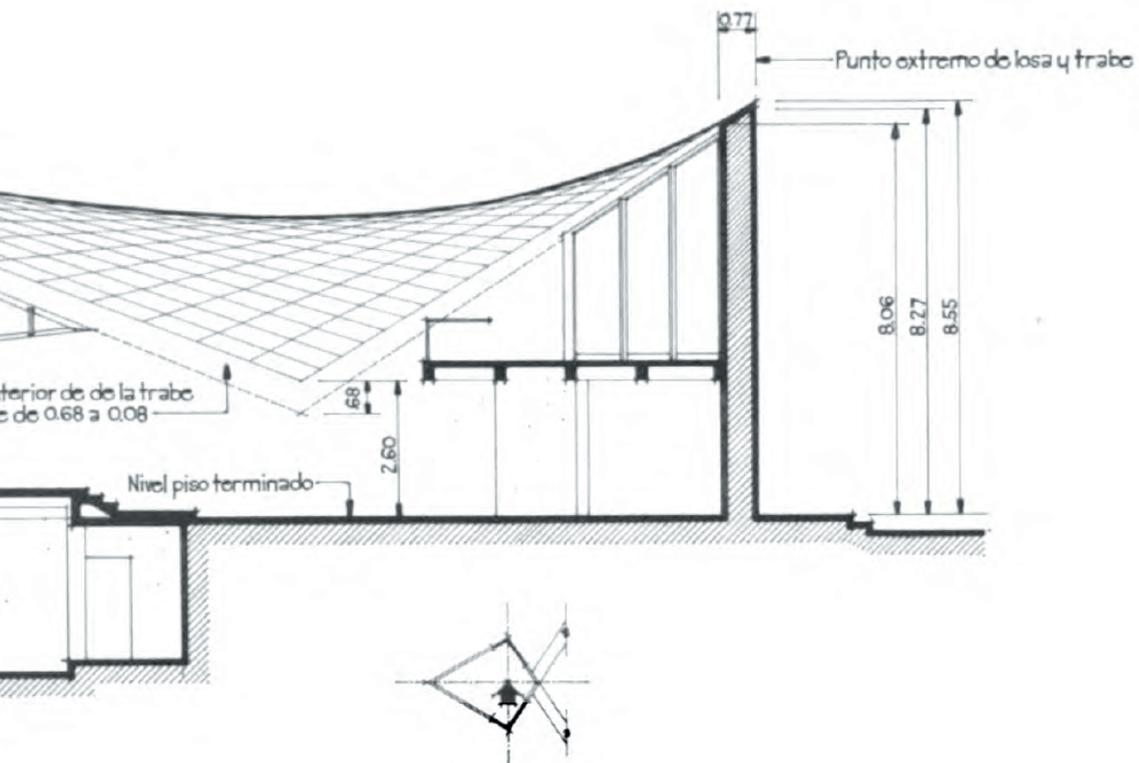
The joint work of Enrique de la Mora and Felix Candela preceded for a decade the changes established in the liturgy by the Second Vatican Council, their work was at the forefront of the world stage.

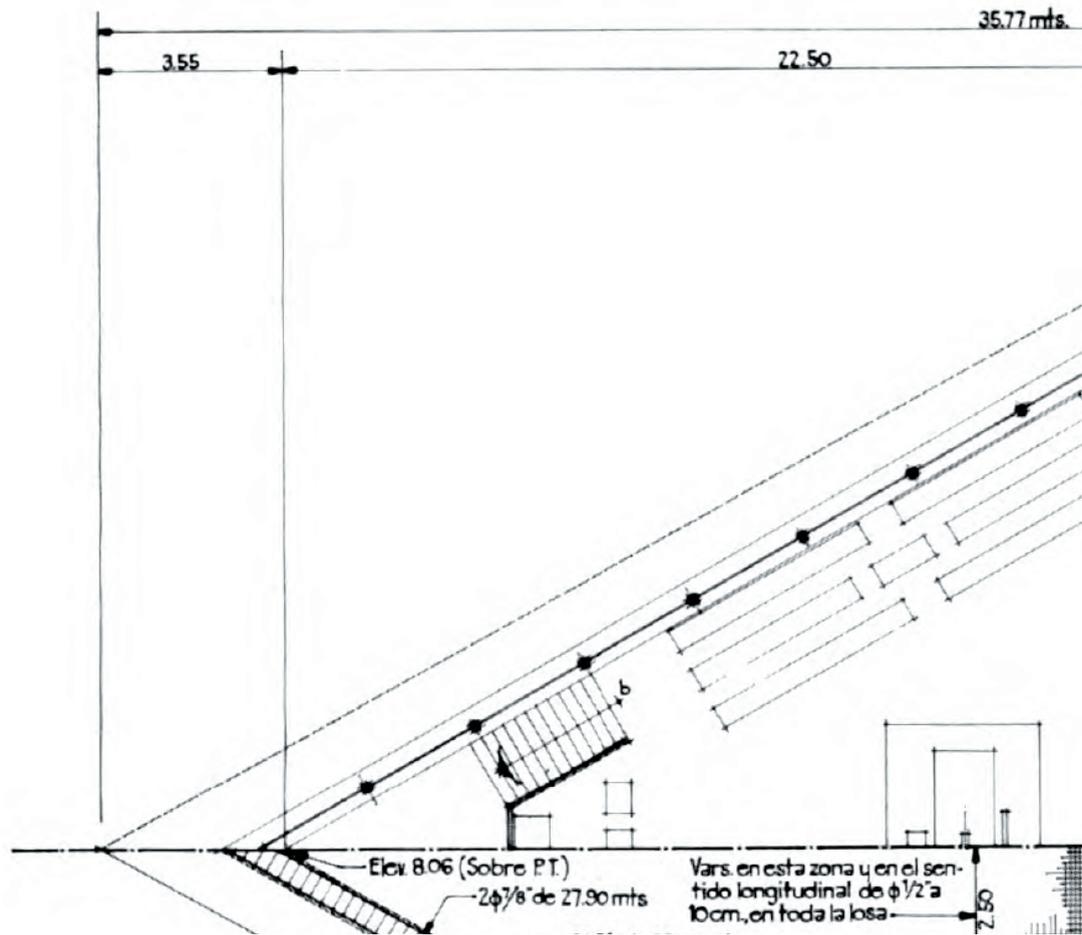
The sacred space was one of the first works where man manifested his intimate and collective aspirations. This architecture, served as a space for the figurative expression of Mexican artisans and the manifestation of the symbiosis of two disciplines.

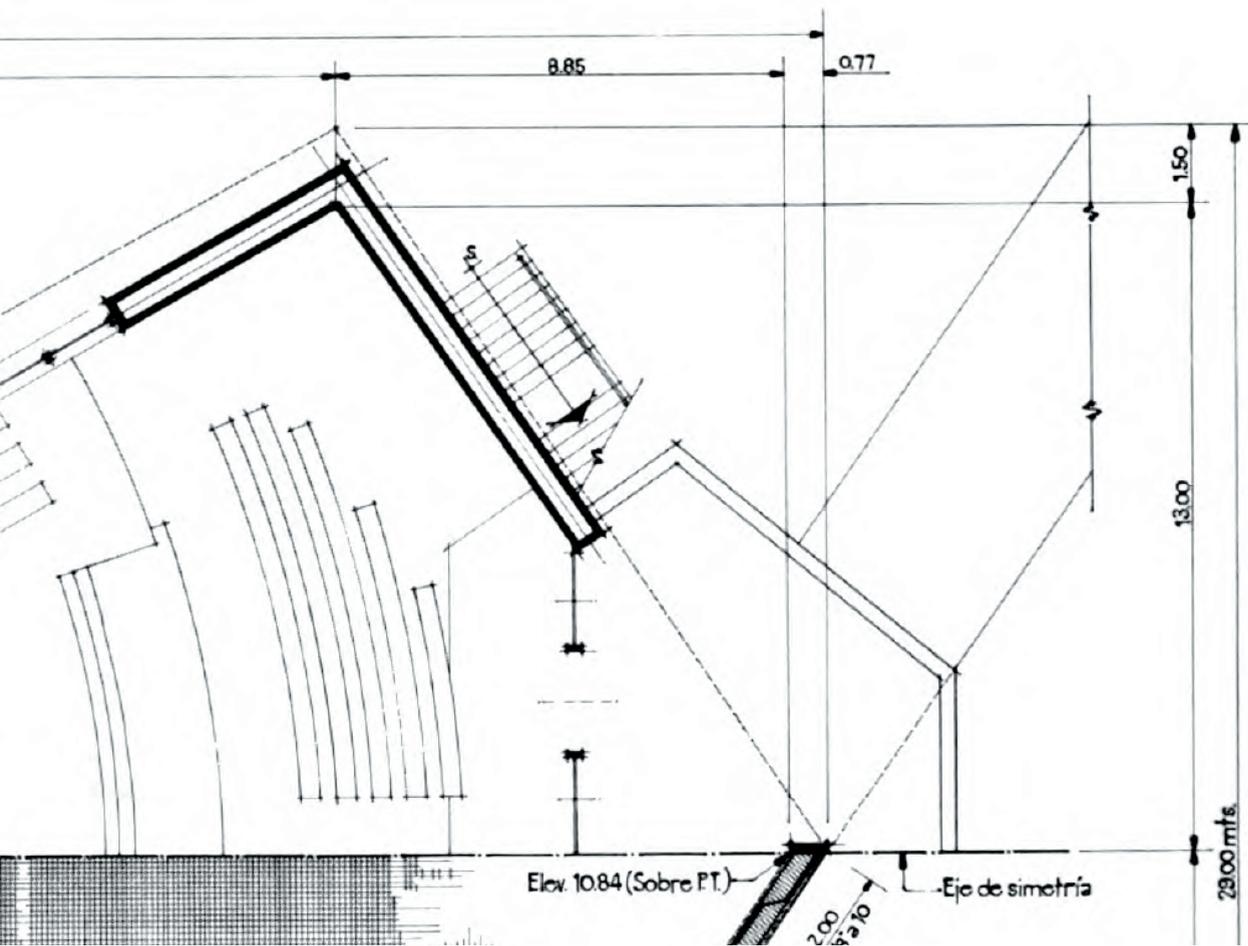


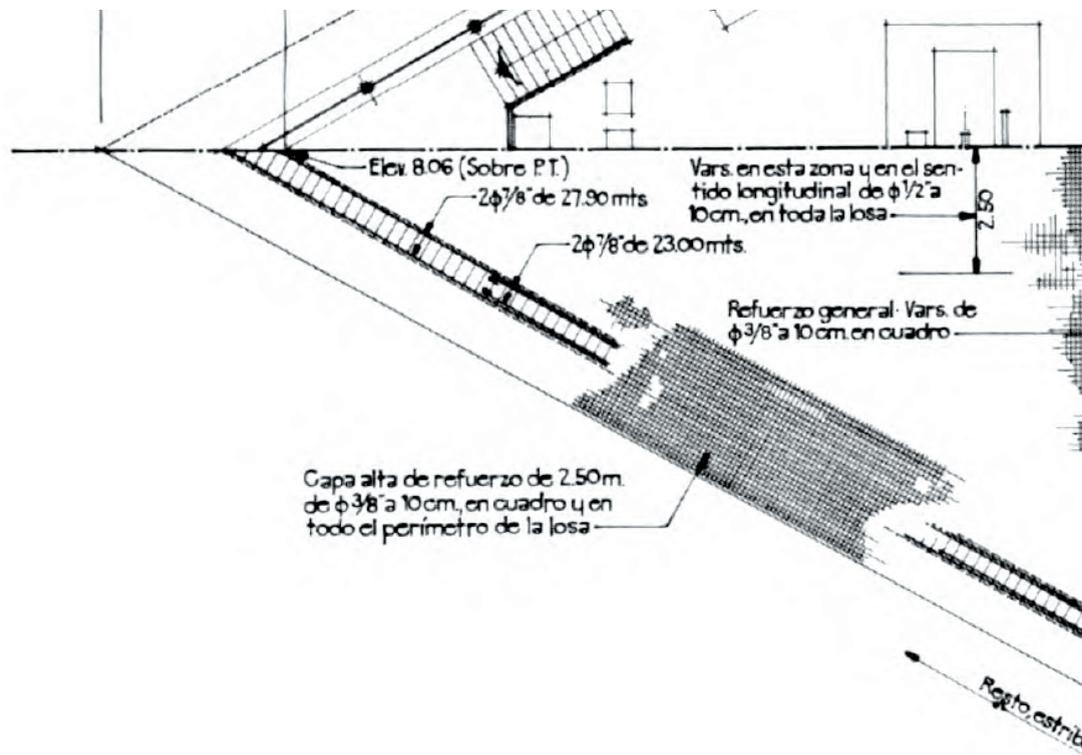


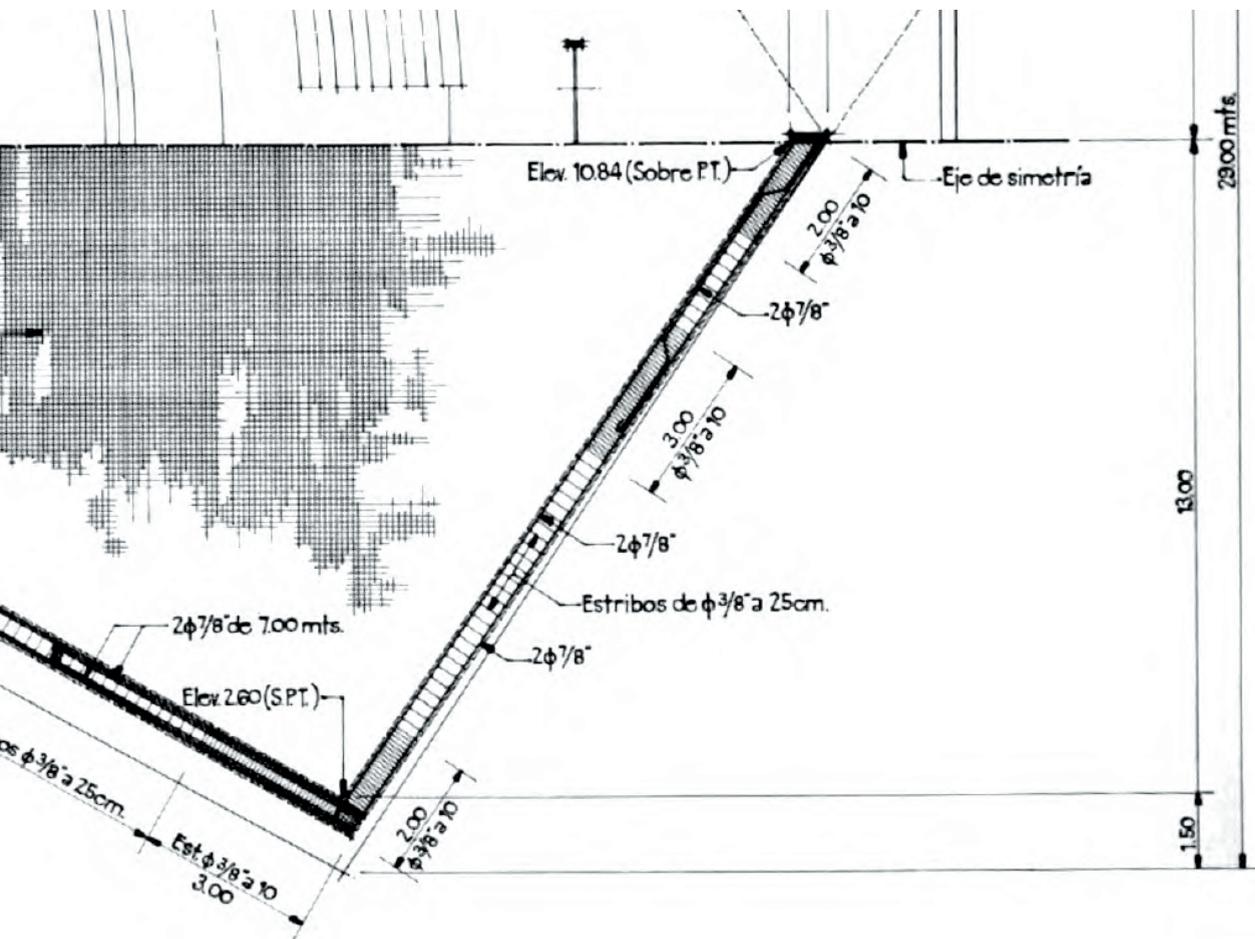












El Altillo's large stained glass windows are of special interest for their bold composition within the stained glass technique in Mexico. Placed in a wide space, with sharp corners behind the altar, the stained glass window of the attic evokes a jubilee of colors and forms in movement that dominate the chapel entirely.

The central theme of the stained glass dominated by the blue, gold and red tints, is that of a dove that in light lines spreads its wings across the width. It is an allusion to the Holy Spirit, the Epiphany and an imposing creation that imprints space with its filtered light, a halo of introspection.

The figure of the Virgin that presides over the presbytery represents the formal will of modern sculpture with some reminiscences of Gothic art due to the slenderness and dull tone of the form. It's no coincidence, Herbert Hoffman's sculpture is located near that of his wives.

It is also the processional cross and the atrium that intelligently resolves the access space to the chapel.

Its fundamental seal is an abstract crucifix with its stations marked by texts, symbols and a large perforated wall that merges with the landscape.

The building that stands between slender trees, is a quiet volume planted firmly on the lawn, volcanic stone walls and mud floors. The stillness of its exterior shape resembles, in its profile, a bird that takes flight. Sixty years after its opening, it maintains the fresh spirit of modern and sober creation immersed into the landscape

This chapel is a living example of a contemporary stained glass window conceived in parallel with architecture. A close collaboration between artist and craftsman, Hofmann worked hand in hand with hand in the glass workshops with models and one to one replicas.

The stained glass window also controls natural light and paints the space in amber and blue tones, raising the warm feeling inside the chapel. The roof helps to distribute the acoustics evenly throughout the space either from the center, where the altar is located or from the longitudinal vertices

The parishioners in this way perceive the world as a single horizon, in accordance with the missionary condition of the community. The transparency of the envelope presents the continuous horizon as an omnipresent infinity. Although the different elements of the cult are present, the spatial experience aims

more at making consciousness of creation, in its condition of the existential context of man, as a sacred space. The fact that the chapel was built for the novitiate of the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit and its seminarians, undoubtedly facilitated the location of the altar in an exempt manner, which would facilitate not only the officiating of the Mass versus populum but also the active participation of the community in the Eucharist.

**EL ALTILLO IS A SPACE WHERE THE
FIGURATIVE EXPRESSION AND THE
MANIFESTATION OF THE SYMBIOSIS OF
MEXICAN CULTURES EXIST.**



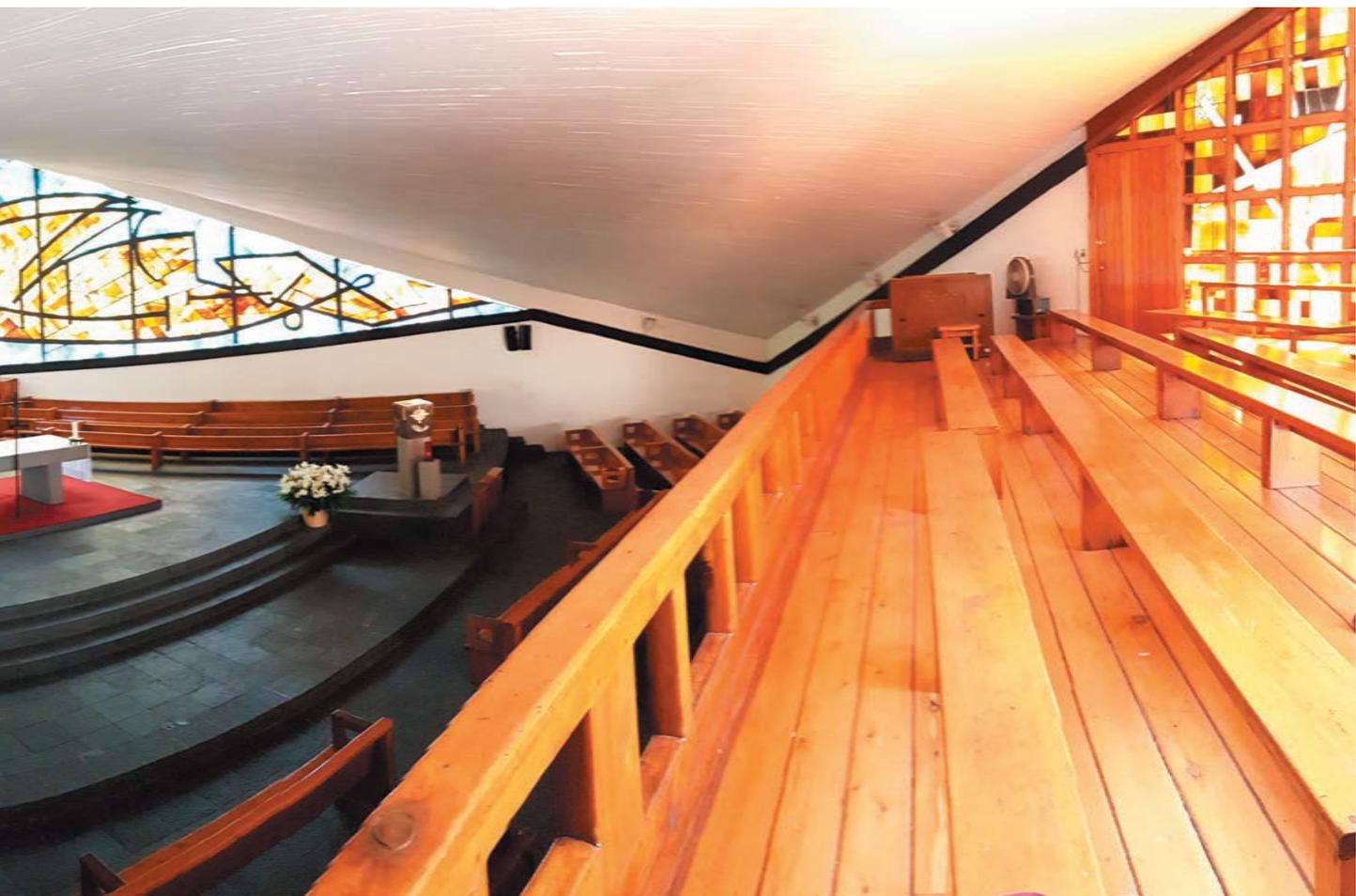






In addition to solving the roof economically, these geometric shapes give the building multiple benefits. Architecturally, the fact of not having columns helps to have a floor free of visual obstacles that allow the altar to be placed in the center and in view of everyone.





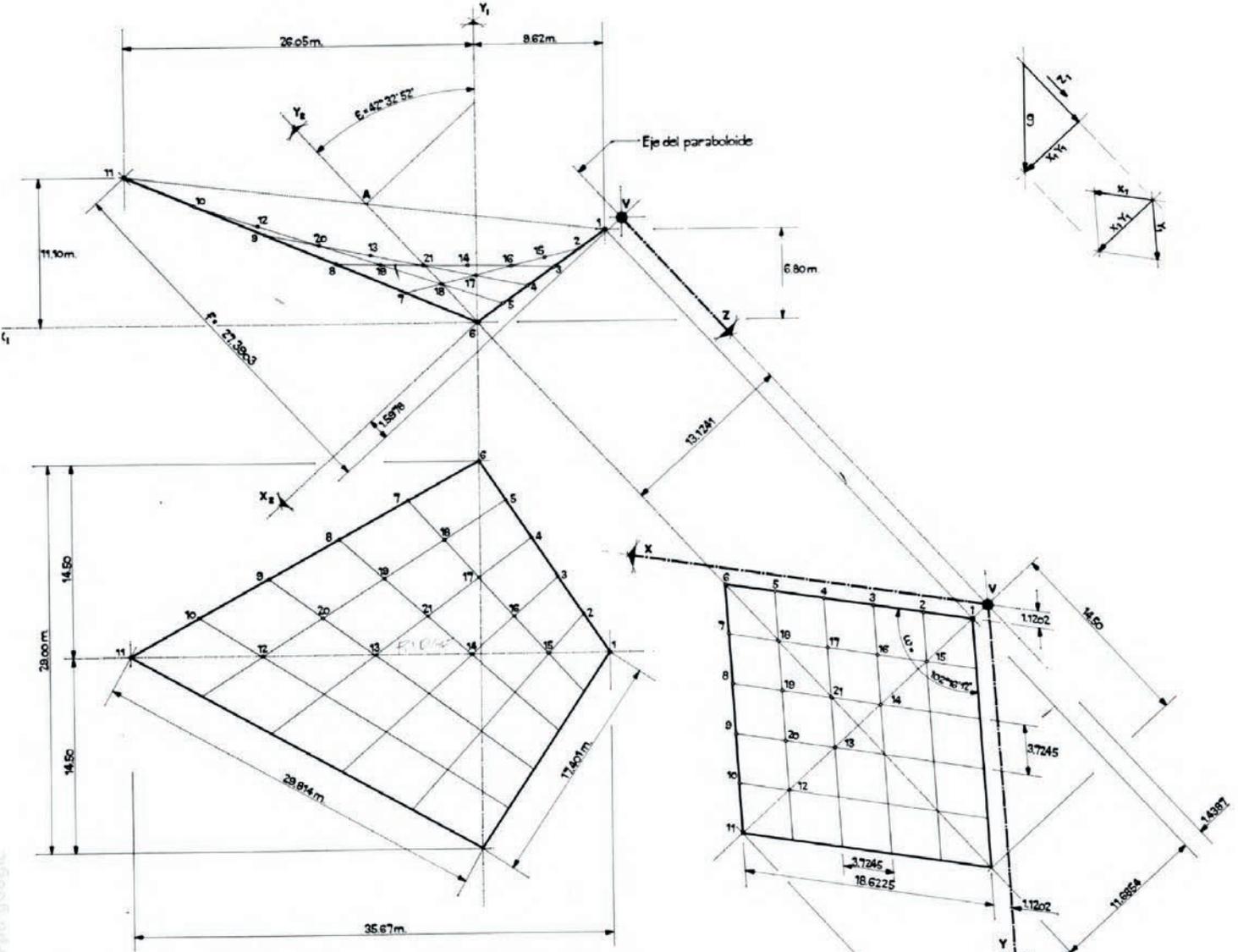
For Candela, the concept for el Altillo chapel was completely different than the Chapel, La Milagrosa which he had previously constructed. This was the simplest of hyperbolic shapes. The plan was unconventional but successful, while the thinness of the shell against the massive stone walls incited Richard Neutra to remark:

**"IN HERE ONLY AN INCH
AND A HALF SEPERATES
YOU FROM DIVINITY."**

Rhomboidal in shape, it is roofed by a graceful doubly-curved leaf 118 ft long by 92 ft wide. It stands in the quiet setting of an old garden and a patio, bordered on two sides by colonial buildings, part of a seminary of the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit. An ingenious plan was designed to allow participation of the entire congregation which, during worship, is naturally concentrated

on the altar. An elevated platform above the entrance—reached by steps flanking the exterior walls—supports an organ and choir. Materials of the chapel were kept as simple as the structural concept. Floors were laid with a variety of black stone called "recinto." Exterior walls are also of volcanic stone of a rougher character and not so black.

Concrete surfaces throughout were left unfinished. The roof has been likened to a single sheet of paper twisted gently in the wind. Supported at its lower corners, it springs out in cantilever to each apex. Since the thrusts of the cantilevers are unequal, the shorter arm is fastened to concrete walls and the vertical cross at the entrance works in pure tension. The steel window mullions provide secondary support to prevent either upward or downward deflection, as might be caused by temperature changes.





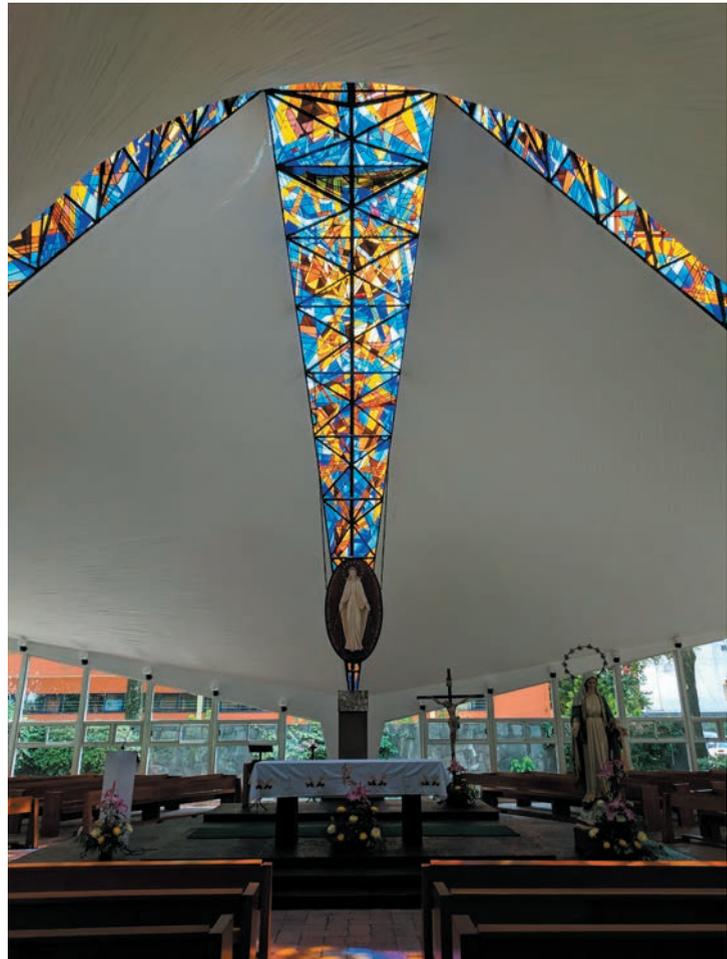




The Chapel of the Sisters of Charity is fundamentally different as far as functions are concerned, although it has the same architectural qualities as El Altillo.

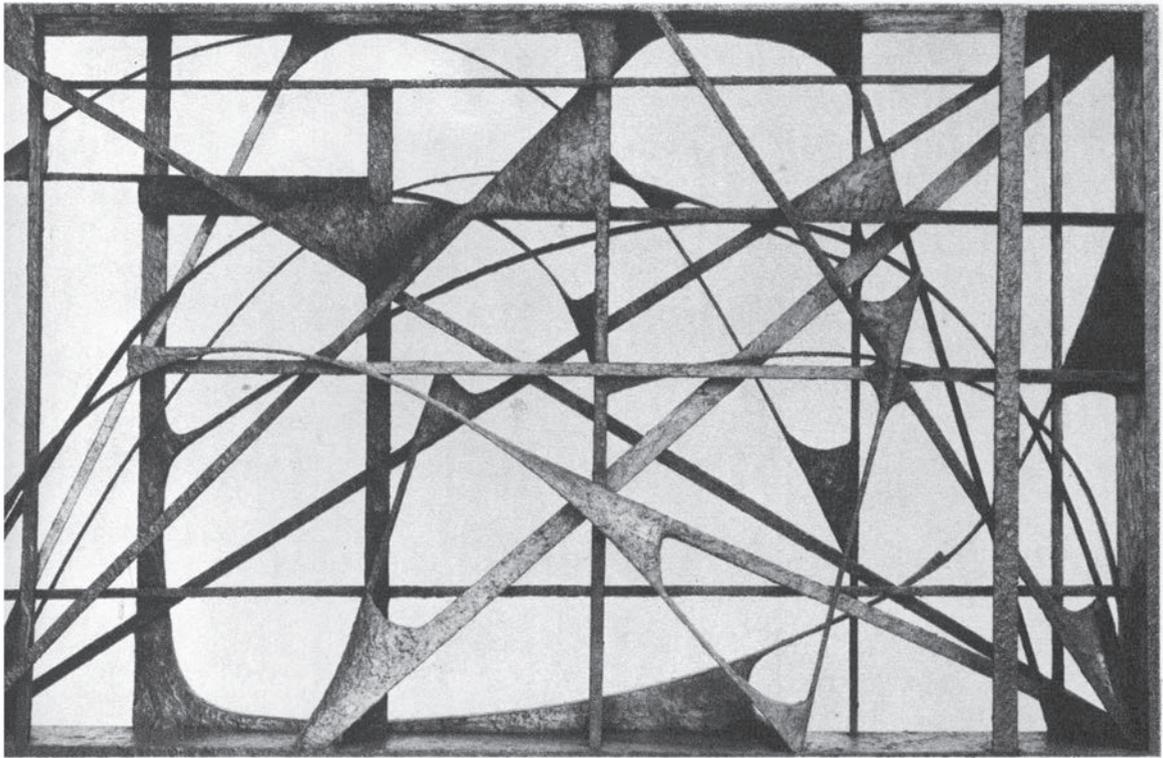
In order to strive for transparency and inclusivity, the plan was adapted aimed at preserving a complete intergration with nature. In the case of El Altillo, masses were held before the stained glass window were installed and the congregation was surrounded by trees around the chapel. Once the stained glass was applied, the atmosphere of the interior was radically changed.

Therefore for this chapel, parishoners felt strongly that nature must play a part in the celebration of mass. Because of these requests, you can see that Hofmann's work is limited to the ceiling and the seems where the thin shelled roof structure meets.





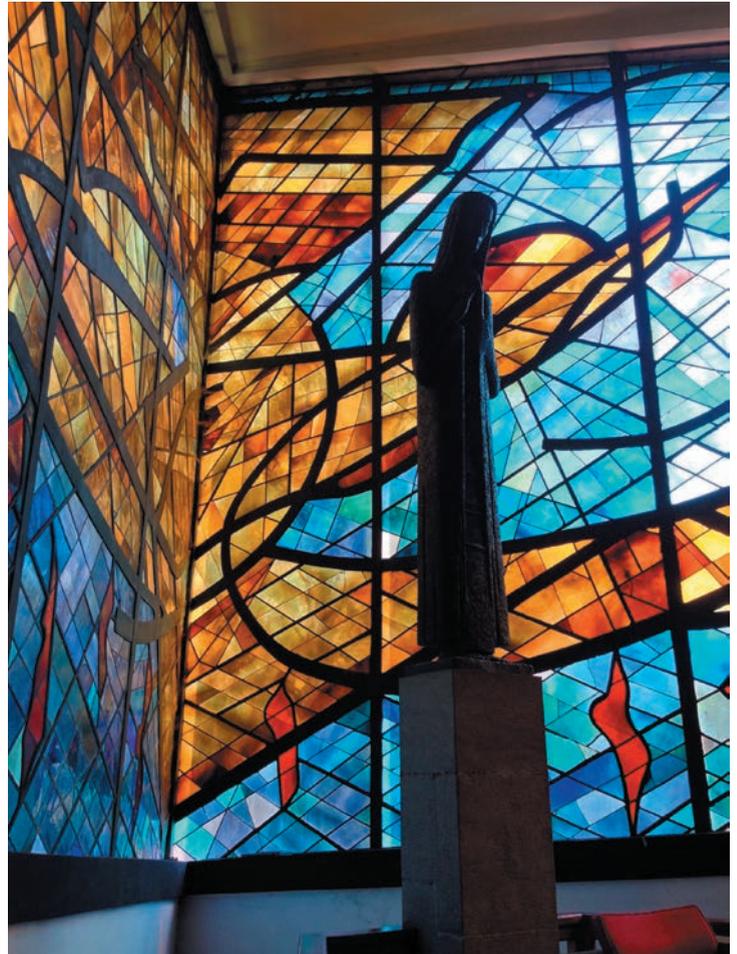
Painting by Kitzia Hofmann
titled Figuras Nocturnas

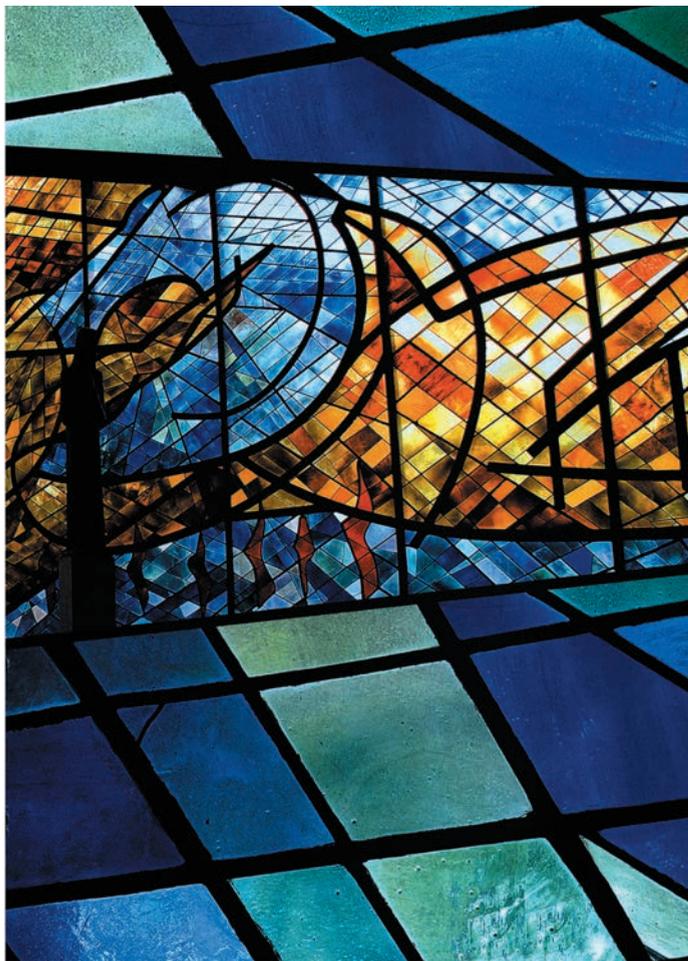


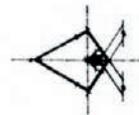
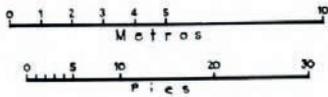
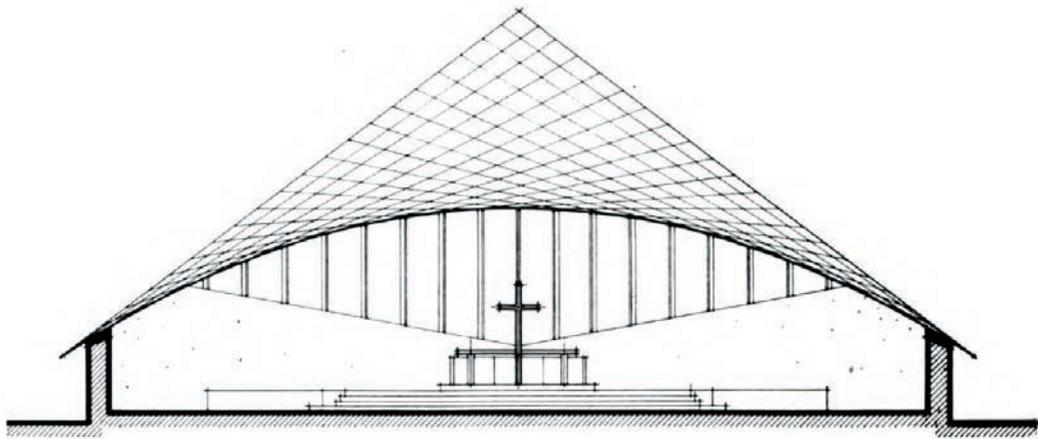
Sculpture by Herbert Hofmann Ysenbourg
titled Composicion

The piece's combination of glass and concrete breaks with tradition. It represents the holy spirit in the symbol of the dove and dazzling light, in predominantly yellow orange hues against a blue background with red flames. Playing with the width of lead channels Hofmann had them converge toward the heart of the panel. Supported by the regular structure of the metal frame, the glass pieces are a clever mixture of antique and machine made glass, their variable density letting in different intensities of light.

The thick metal armatures black outlines around the flying dove emphasizes its amber color. The other stained glass piece above the entrance irradiates a clear fiery yellow in harmony with the luminosity of the main composition.











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Religious architecture has undoubtedly been a recurring throughout history human subject. Over time, it has given rise to innovation and bringing materials to their limits, has marked trends and has even changed the way we approach space. Although, these spaces impress us by their monumentality, others marvel us by the way they show the mastery of structures and geometries such as the Chapel of San José el Altillo .

El Altillo is a clear example that in Mexico there are works that show that when structure and architecture work together, both benefit. Also the temple has great value for the spatial quality that exists behind a deep geometric understanding , an excellent constructive technique and a control of space.

TO BE CONTINUED...



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Information about Kitzia Hofmann was very limited and even after meeting with Avery librarians we only managed to dig up few details about her work.

Images:

Thank you to Professor Carranza for allowing me to use his images of El Altillo and San Vicente.

<https://en.wikiarquitectura.com/building/chapel-of-nuestra-senora-de-la-soledad/>

Plans and Sections from Candela/The Shell Builder

Chairman's Report 20 June 1967

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My report covers the Society's activities from June last year until today. Our financial year as you know always ends on December 31st and our Honorary Treasurer will be dealing with our financial affairs in his report. During the period January to December 1966 our two buyers, Anthony Lousada and Loraine Conran, spent £5,101. 10. 0 between them on their choice of 21 paintings and 10 pieces of sculpture. This year our two buyers are Bryan Robertson and Derek Hill who, although due by rotation to retire at this meeting, are naturally invited to complete their task.

At the last Annual Meeting we were very sorry to have to say farewell to Peter Meyer who had been our Honorary Treasurer for so long but who, also by rotation and together with Eardley Knollys, retired from the Committee. We were pleased to elect James Melvin from our Committee to act as Honorary Treasurer.

In October last year, in response to many requests from members, we organised a second trip to Mexico. Thirty fortunate members who participated were handsomely entertained throughout the country, but particularly in Mexico City where gallery owners and private collectors gave receptions in their honour.

They were privileged to visit Mr and Mrs Rufino Tamayo and to see Tamayo's most recent painting. In Cuernavaca they were entertained and met by Mathias Goeritz, the architect/sculptor, and also by Kitzia Hofmann Ysenbourg, the stained glass artist and her sculptor husband. Work by these artists was amongst commissioned works on public buildings seen by members during the trip.

A great deal of time was naturally spent in the magnificent new Anthropological Museum in Mexico City. This acted as a perfect introduction to the many fine archeological sites the party was to see on their subsequent extensive tour through Mexico. Half the party were also able to visit Guatemala, which by all accounts was a most rewarding experience.

This year, for the first time since 1960, we will not be venturing abroad owing to the currency restrictions, but are planning a weekend in Bath and a week in Scotland instead. Many members have asked us to plan a trip to India and we are at present making the necessary enquiries for a possible trip in 1968. In November, soon after arriving back from Mexico, Miss Vogelpoel took 60 members to Manchester for what proved to be another most successful weekend trip following upon the lines