



Wall of Light Cubed in the courtyard of the 1968-built Cuadra San Cristóbal by architect Luis Barragán.

the report

Architect Luis Barragán's Mexican Modernist Masterpiece to Host Its First Art Exhibition

Cuadra San Cristóbal's famous pink-hued walls are opened to the public for the first time, and set in a dialogue with contemporary abstract art

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Photography by Felix Friedmann

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For the first time, architect Luis Barragán's pink-walled masterwork of Mexican modernism is open to the public—as a gallery space. Cuadra San Cristóbal, built by Barragán in 1968 for the Egerstrom family in [Mexico City](#), is most visually famous for its courtyard, a design of sweeping geometric volumes in earth tones and pink hues. Now, the modernist ranch is playing host to contemporary artwork. In consultation with the Egerstrom family, curator Oscar Humphries has installed paintings and sculptures by Sean Scully, creating a dialogue between the artist's "emotional abstraction" and the architect's "emotional architecture."



Brown Silver Tower by Sean Scully is a Cor-Ten steel sculpture set at the entrance of the Barragán-designed courtyard. "Sean would say, 'the work is the work,'" said curator Humphries. "But in this context, Barragán's architecture accentuates the existing architectural element of the Cor-Ten sculpture."

The show, which runs through March 24, is a "combination of a place that people know but don't know—they haven't been able to visit—and an intervening with contemporary art," said Humphries. Scully's sculptures of Cor-Ten steel and volcanic rock sit in the courtyard while his series of gestural geometric paintings hang in the horse stables. Because gallery-style lighting was not installed, the works of art are constantly in flux in natural light, changing color and casting shadows throughout the day to achieve the same intent as Barragán's architecture. "The layout of the space dictates where you have to put things," Humphries explained of his curatorial strategy. "The courtyard needed monumental sculpture; anything else would have been dwarfed by Barragán's massive hyperchromatic pink walls."



A series of paintings of aluminum panels by Sean Scully are displayed in the horse stables at Cuadra San Cristóbal. "In a way, it's a humble place, but by putting great art there, you elevate it," comments Humphries.

Though artist and architect were set in context by the curator, they share a common inspiration: Mexico itself. After studying the work of the Bauhaus Group and Le Corbusier while in Europe, Barragán returned to his home country and opened a practice with a style that would come to define the Mexican modernist movement—a certain rebellion against the idea that modern structures should always be white and outward-looking. During trips to Mexico in 1981 and the 2000s, Sean Scully found inspiration in the country's pre-Columbian structures: stone pyramids with a great spiritual presence. "It's interesting to see such contemporary objects in such a historic environment," comments Humphries. "We're all a little tired of the white walls of the art fair."