

ANSELL
STUDIO

LUIS BARRAGÁN

A Quiet Revolution

‘THE CONCEPTS OF SERENITY, SILENCE, INTIMACY AND AMAZEMENT, ALL THESE HAVE NESTLED IN MY SOUL. THOUGH I AM FULLY AWARE THAT I HAVE NOT DONE THEM COMPLETE JUSTICE IN MY WORK, THEY HAVE NEVER CEASED TO BE MY GUIDING LIGHTS.’

Luis Barragán's influence has been a guiding light for generations of designers. One of Mexico's greatest architects, he is famous for his vibrant use of colours, often inspired by the traditional buildings of his home country. His architecture is renowned for its mastery of space and light and although his constructions are few in number they still play a significant role in the architectural landscape of the 20th century. In 1980 Barragán won the Pritzker Prize, architecture's equivalent of the Nobel Prize, and in 2004 his personal home, Casa Luis Barragán, was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Born in Guadalajara in 1902, Barragán studied civil engineering before taking a life-changing trip to Europe in 1924. On his travels he was exposed to avant-garde design, and became fascinated by the streamlined forms and functionalist design emerging from the Bauhaus movement in Germany and the likes of Le Corbusier and Charlotte Perriand in France. On his return to Mexico he began the first phase in his architectural career. For much of this time Barragán explored the Mediterranean roots entrenched in Mexican architecture, present in the simple, volumetric structures of Spanish colonial buildings.



CASA LUIS BARRAGÁN | MEXICO CITY

Barragán's respect for simple Mediterranean architecture persisted throughout his career, but it was his move from Guadalajara to Mexico City which initiated a new approach to design, as he embraced a functionalist philosophy.

Although Barragán's formative years include his enlightening trip to Europe, it is evident that his youth in the bright and bold Mexican landscape inspired him throughout the course of his life. Barragán's buildings involved a fusion of modernity and traditional materials and practices learned from vernacular Mexican architecture.

Barragán enjoyed blending the foreign with the familiar; he expertly merged the starkness of modern, minimalistic simplicity with local textures, colours, and raw materials. He believed that the most powerful design embraces its surroundings and heritage whilst not getting stuck in the past.

'THE LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE UNASSUMING ARCHITECTURE OF OUR MEXICAN PROVINCIAL TOWNS HAVE BEEN A PERMANENT SOURCE OF INSPIRATION. THE WHITE-WASHED WALLS, THE SOLITUDE OF PATIOS AND ORCHARDS, THE COLOURFUL WALLS OF HOUSES IN THE STREETS, THE POPULAR FEASTS AND PAYASOS, THE SUBTLE SOUND OF FOUNTAINS, THE HUMBLE SIMPLICITY OF EVERY ZÓCALO SURROUNDED BY DARKENED SHADOWS FROM OPEN CORRIDORS.'

LUIS BARRAGÁN

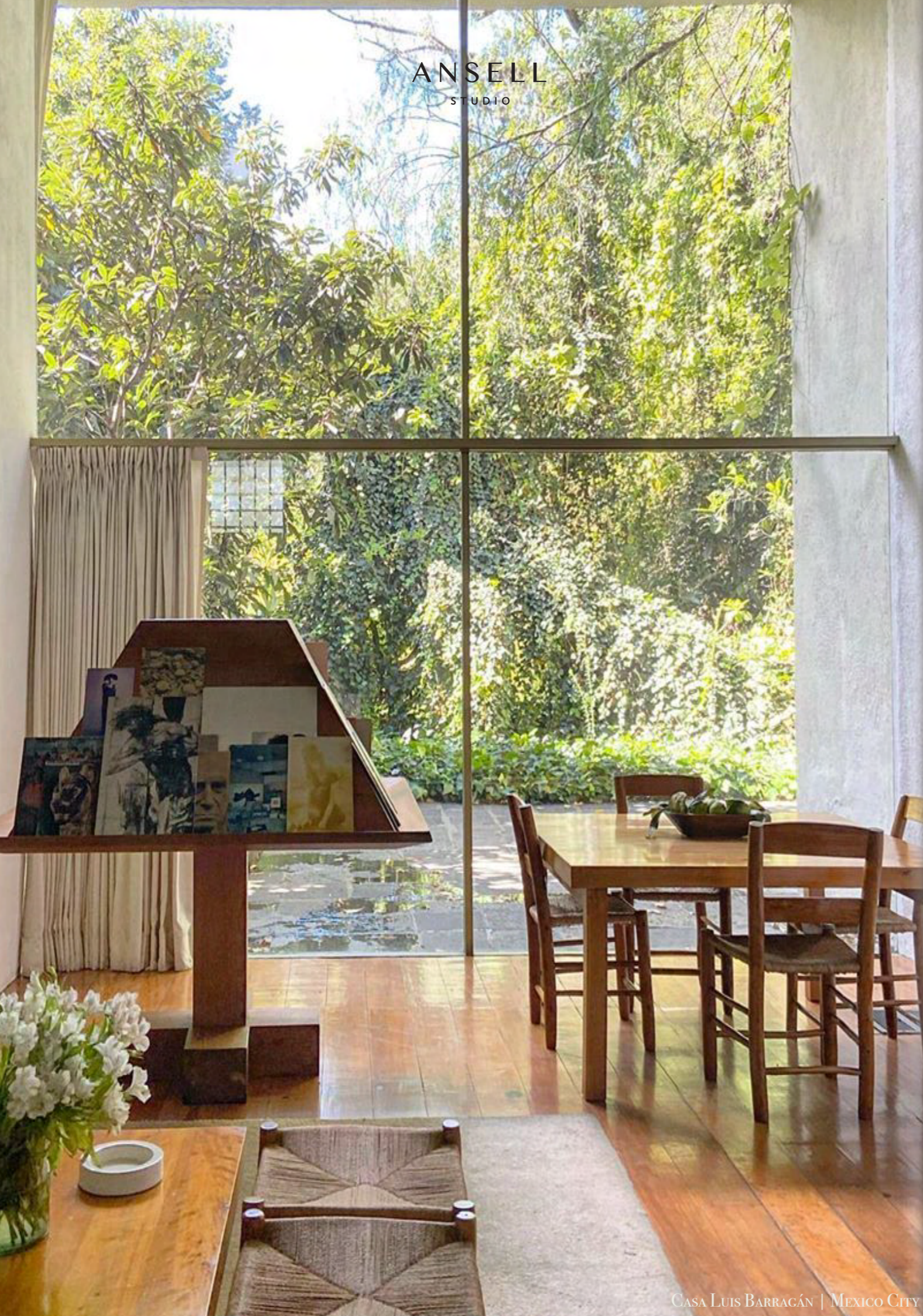


Barragán initiated an architecture composed of calmness and serenity, that some describe as a ‘quiet revolution’. Though Barragán agreed with much of the Corbusian school of thought, he strongly believed that a home should not be a ‘machine for living’, as asserted by Le Corbusier. Instead he aimed to create what he termed ‘emotional architecture’. He insisted that ‘any work of architecture which does not express serenity is a mistake.’

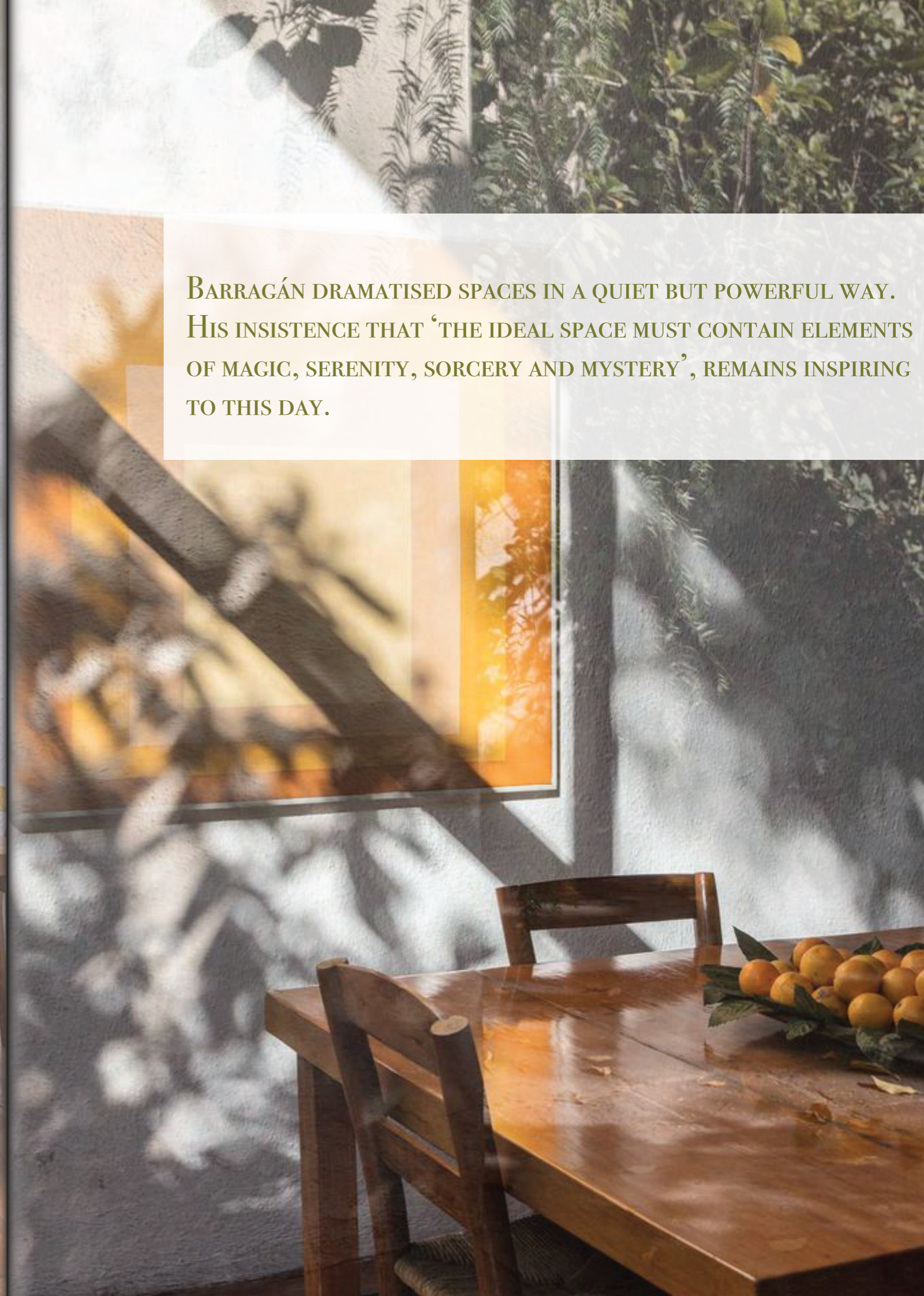
A crucial part of this ‘quiet revolution’ was the importance he placed in bringing the natural world inside. He explained, ‘I don’t divide architecture, landscape and gardening; to me they are one.’ This becomes evident in Barragán’s own home Casa Luis Barragán, as conventional distinctions between outside and inside dissolve; gardens grow into rooms, and rooms grow into secret gardens. Barragán placed the windows in his home so that the branches of the trees rest against them making one feel as though they are in a natural environment.

Casa Luis Barragán is the perfect representation of the Barragánian philosophy; it masterfully fuses the traditional with the modern, subtlety with generosity. Over time, Barragán’s hometown of Guadalajara has become an artistic epicentre of Mexican design—with many houses becoming testament to the aesthetic set by Barragán. Mexican poet Octavio Paz asserts that Barragán’s work was inspired by two words, ‘the word magic and the word surprise’, and indeed his surprising juxtaposition of vibrant colours and the ways in which he constructs spaces so that natural light illuminates the room, is mesmerising.

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BARRAGÁN DRAMATISED SPACES IN A QUIET BUT POWERFUL WAY. HIS INSISTENCE THAT ‘THE IDEAL SPACE MUST CONTAIN ELEMENTS OF MAGIC, SERENITY, SORCERY AND MYSTERY’, REMAINS INSPIRING TO THIS DAY.



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