

# **The Third Body of Luis Barragán**

Magdalena Picazzo Sánchez



**A break.  
A line.  
A point.  
Bending,  
And the diagonal crossing.**

## A brief introduction, in terms of the line.

A story and a line share the same structure. A line is built by a succession of points “joined together continuously in a row”<sup>1</sup>. A story is built by a progression of events, that are, in the same way, put together as a single story. A line can be told as a story, and a story can be drawn as a line. This text originates from the extended observation of one particular historical line that has been fragmented. The intention here is to redraw the trace that connects the fragments so as to depict an alternative reading of the events, bringing forward characters and connections that have not been brought to focus in previous tellings.

In his study of the genealogy of the line, Tim Ingold suggests that writing and drawing are more closely linked than one might initially suppose. He tracks the word writing to its Old English origin, *writain*, which signifies “to incise runic letters in stone”<sup>2</sup>. This incision is a reductive action characteristic of what he calls traces, a line that is scratched, scored, etched or marked onto a surface. Then, per its original definition, writing *is* drawing. Moreover, the origin of the word shows the relevance of the gesture behind the trace, placing writing and drawing as a single act rather than two fundamentally different actions.

Different gestures create different lines. Ingold names a few, for example:

threads  
traces

cuts  
cords  
sections from bent and broken lines  
ghostly lines  
vapour trails  
strings  
spider webs  
scent trails  
mazes  
loops  
labyrinths  
routes  
knots  
knitting  
brocades  
calligraphy  
text  
scores  
genealogies  
and oral narrations,

to mention a few.

Having recognized the different expressions of the line and the way drawing lines relates to writing stories, this text has been drafted with three of Ingold’s lines as an underlying concept.

The first type of lines that this text will refer to are traces or observable connections. These are the evident, canonical, conventional and documented narratives about a given set of events. The second are invisible or ghostly lines, these are lines without substance, “without a physical counterpart”<sup>3</sup>, that have not been documented or that are not evident or shared as conventions. These may be more closely related to an interpretation than to chronicles. And last, I will refer to the sections created by the breaking and bending of the prior. These classifications will be used to draft a narrative about a set of people that have become inextricably linked. By drawing the story through a different gesture, hopefully, this text will provide a different reading of the events.

Now, its time to introduce the main characters involved in this story, all once invaded by a nostalgic ambition:

- **The Architect**, Luis Barragán, whose ambition was an idea of Beauty.
- **The Associate**, Raul Ferrera, whose ambition was the bequest of The Architect.
- **The Archivist**, Federica Zanco, whose ambition is, too, the bequest of The Architect.
- **And The Artist**, Jill Magid, whose ambition is her own artistic practice, which she achieves through The Architect’s bequest.

After a series of unexpected events, all were progressively joined together by a *ghostly line* during the course of almost a quarter of a century.

By writing this story in the terms of the genealogy of the line, it can be suggested that a ghostly line joined The Architect and The Archivist. This line could only be drawn through The Associate as a middle point. This line between The Architect and The Archivist was bent around 2013<sup>4</sup>. The “morbid” alchemy of contemporary art, as performed by The Artist, reshaped The Architect, or probably more so the idea of him, and changed their relationship from being an invisible link to a physical object. Her gesture (of The Artist) was a diagonal line that crosses over the other two characters and creates an opportunity to question the role of other seemingly secondary actors within this story. In that sense, this story is only an alternative narration of the events as performed by The Artist.

Finally, a disclaimer. This is not quite a story about lines, and it’s not quite a story of the History of Architecture either. It’s probably not even a biography of The Architect. As its all post-mortem, it might be a ghost story. For The Artist, the final consequence of the events are still a pending promise. For the author of this text, its not even quite a story at all. Let us, by honoring the Spanish translation of the word essay, see this text as a trial run, not a definitive recollection of events. A sketch rather than a drawing. Not a ghost story, but the tracing of a *ghostly line*.



## A break

The first event in this story is *the break*. It begins with the death of Luis Barragán in 1988, and the consequent suicide of his associate, Raul Ferrera in 1993.<sup>5</sup>

Barragán had written his testament four years prior to his passing, having already been affected by Parkinson's disease for years. As reported by Adriana Malvido<sup>6</sup>, three clauses of his will determined the faith of "his architectural corpus"<sup>7</sup>.

Clause A entrusted architect Ignacio Díaz Morales to choose an institution dedicated to architecture that would receive the Architect's Library. The chosen institution was the expressly created Fundación de Arquitectura Tapatía Luis Barragán (FATLB), presided by Juan Palomar Vereá, which in a few years would also co-own the house in Tacubaya with the Government of the State of Jalisco.<sup>8</sup>

Clause B determined the personal belongings of the architect were now the property of his godson Oscar González, who subsequently released them to the FATLB.

Finally, clause C resolved all the authorship rights, documents, movies, drawings, designs, sketches, models, and originals produced in the office were left to Mr. Raul Ferrera, Barragán's associate, and colleague since 1964<sup>9</sup>.

Barragán did not wish for his house and belongings to become an object that perpetuated his fame. According to Palomar, "he established a public character only to what he affirmed was his most precious material belonging: his library."<sup>10</sup> This is ironic considering that his House would become the most public and accessible of all of Barragán's assets. But coming back to the story, the remaining bequest was divided between 25 heirs in. This group was made up by his friends, nephews, and the people who cared for him and for his house. Luis Barragán never married or had children.

As Oscar González, Barragán's godson, donated The Architect's belongings to the FATLB, the library and personal effects merged into a single "collection", causing the *corpus* to be determined as two separate entities. In this case, the whole of what was entrusted to the FATLB -which now held the majority of Barragán's inheritance- can be called the first, and *Personal Body* of Luis Barragán.

Many of his remaining heirs wished for the assets to be liquidated so they could obtain their corresponding sum. Others, specifically those involved in the FATLB, made a significant effort to take care of the library and fulfill Barragán's wishes to make it public and accessible. In 1989 Palomar had already moved Barragán's book collection into the Foundation's headquarters

in Guadalajara, and in 1992 obtained the Rockefeller-Bancomer scholarship to continue with the classification and study of the library. On the other hand, Raul Ferrera disagreed with the terms of the will and sued for the total of the assets, arguing that The Architect owed him a sum much larger than what he had obtained as a bequest.

The Architect's growing presence in the international media might have been the motivation for him to formally delegate the management of copyrights to his younger colleague Raul. Thus happened the legal constitution of *Luis Barragán y Raúl Ferrera Arquitectos, S.C.* in 1979<sup>11</sup> Barragán, who was already suffering from his disease, would have delegated the young Ferrera with any issue regarding publishing rights of his work and of the



Luis Barragán and Raúl Ferrera in the studio at Tacubaya, 1969. Photograph by Rene Burri, from The Barragan Foundation.



projects they undertook together. Having someone in charge of administrative management, Barragán was able to focus his energies on his creative endeavors. According to Malvido "since then (...) Ferrera became a fierce defender of the authorship rights"<sup>12</sup> of the Architect, an assignment that would transcend both Associates.

Presumably, the sum that Ferrera demanded was whatever value he deemed equivalent to the profit Barragán earned from copyrights during his lifetime, thanks to his duty as a defender. For this, he started a legal battle that lasted until 1993. In parallel he also pursued legal action against other figures that had used Barragán's name and image in the past, for example, Emilio Azcárraga Milmo (1930-1997), owner of the Latin-American TV conglomerate *Televisa*, for any profits made through the exploitation of Barragán's image as portrayed in a 1985 exhibition in the Museo Tamayo, and the National Institute of Fine Arts (Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, INBA) for the use

of Barragán's name and *oeuvre* in a homage to Armando Salas Portugal, among others.

Raúl Ferrera's material ambition for the total of Barragán's estate is the breaking point of this story. As he fought relentlessly for the rights he assumed over the assets, he also "flagrantly contradicted himself" in two of the trials<sup>13</sup>. For this he might have to face being convicted. Nonetheless, the succession's attorney asked him to cease and desist, and let the succession take its natural course. Ferrera signed the agreements, and then, in a tragic turn of events, decided to take his own life. Rosario Uranga, Ferrera's widow, had become the legal heir of the whole of what was produced in Barragán's and Ferrera's practice: the Archive, as it has been called, or in terms of this text, the second body of Luis Barragán, i.e., his *Body of Works*.

2. The Body of Works

She proceeded to offer the Archive to the FATLB, which had recently managed to partner with the Government of Jalisco and of Mexico City to buy the house in Tacubaya from other heirs. In light of their recent investment, the members of the FATLB were not in the financial terms to pay the millionaire sum that Uranga was asking for. They contacted the National Institute of Fine Arts in an attempt to keep the Archives in Mexican territory. Without an offer from the FATLB or INBA, Uranga consigned the Archive to Max Protetch's gallery in New York in 1995, who would try to sell it as individual pieces.

In another unforeseen a Swiss businessman bought the whole of the collection as a wedding gift for his partner. This turn of events is the start of the next part of this story. **The break** had concluded, and as the Archive traveled to its new home in Basel, to a bunker designed by Frank Gehry, a second part of the post-mortem biography of Luis Barragán had started to take place.

Luis Barragán and Raúl Ferrera in the studio at Tacubaya. Photograph taken from Pablo Aguilar, "La Muerte del Arquitecto" in Arquine.



## A line and a point.

Long before his death, Barragán got to see and enjoy the international recognition of his characteristic architectural expression. He established his signature style by applying what can be called “the ethics of the rancher and the aesthetics of the rural”<sup>14</sup> to his practice as an architect from 1927 to 1936, and then again from 1940 until his last works in the late 1970s in the company of Raul Ferrera. This expression is now a recognizable architectural grammar that has been integrated into the global understanding of Mexican heritage, a subject of which Barragán is quite the protagonist<sup>15</sup>. That is what this essay regards as *the line* of the history of Mexican architecture, which will be described with more detail in the coming paragraphs.

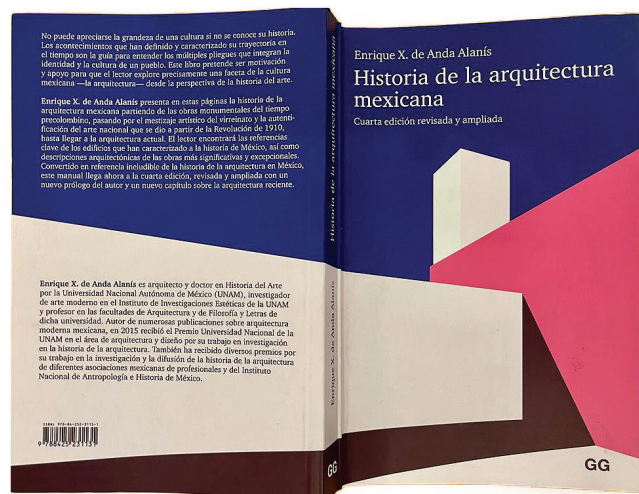
Despite being an important reference for his country, the depiction of Barragán within the Mexican history of architecture is not as homogeneous as it may seem to be. A quick revision of “*Historia de la Arquitectura Mexicana*”, a book by Dr. Enrique X. de Anda, reflects the historical separation of Barragán’s work

within the national context. De Anda’s book has been widely used as a reference for undergraduate students and even for the general, unspecialized public due to its accessible language, lack of academic format, and overall friendly presentation of the history of architecture. The task undertook by its author was ambitious. He started with a revision of the settlements of the original civilizations based all over the current Mexican territory, and ended in the contemporary movements of the 90s. For its 4th edition, extended, revised, and republished in 2019, he even made an additional stretch into the 21st century.

In the preface, De Anda claims to:

“be situated within an interdisciplinary scope, with a focus directed to the culture generated by the relationships between collective imaginaries, political power, debates on the different versions of modernity, the symbols, the meanings, and the discussion between abstraction and figurativism”<sup>16</sup>

The challenge of drawing a connection between the remains of a civilization from 2000 BC and the corporate architecture of 2016 is obvious, to say the least. Yet, De Anda achieves a logical progression that links one event to the other in a seemingly smooth path. From the original settlements to the first high-rise projects in Mexico City, every point of the line drawn by De Anda carries an idea from its predecessor. It can be argued that even modernity, which is commonly understood as the rejection of tradition, fits seamlessly into this progression of events.



Front and back cover of De Anda’s book, 4th edition. An illustration of the terrace at Tacubaya is used as a cover.

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Index detail, *Historia de la Arquitectura Mexicana* by Enrique X. de Anda, 4th edition. Point n. 5, "The Rejection of Functionalism" is highlighted in blue.

Ironically, it's only when reaching the topic of Luis Barragán that De Anda mentions a dismissal or denial.

"*The Rejection of Functionalism*"<sup>17</sup> is the title under which the book introduces the Emotional Architecture, a term coined by Mathias Goeritz in his 1953 Manifesto<sup>18</sup>, that recognizes the "high spiritual concerns of (the) time" and aims to provide "plastic integration to provoke a maximum emotion to the modern man". Despite their known professional and personal proximity, De Anda makes a clear distinction between Goeritz's Emotional Architecture and Barragán's work, which is analyzed as a detached event. The coverage is brief, only one and a half pages long, and it is almost completely dislocated from the progression defined by De Anda.

Moreover, in these couple of pages, the author claims that Barragán's work is the start of the Mexican architecture

renewal and the original Mexican stance against "the tyranny of the straight angle" seen in functionalism. By doing this, he disregards (most notably) his previous description of the hyperbolic paraboloid concrete shells designed by Félix Candela and the forthcoming essay on the concrete plasticism of Teodoro González de León and Abraham Zabludovsky in the 80s. More than being a problematic contradiction, the dismissal of two important stages that indeed challenged modernist guidelines is a symptom of the compartmentalization of Mexican architecture; or, in other words, the detachment of Barragán as a parallel point in Mexican architecture rather than within the continuous line of events. Understanding Barragán as a parallel event, that is detached yet representative of the national identity, has created a distorted reading of his work and of his personal life.

This image of Barragán had already begun to be established after the international exposure of his work in the 1976 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art of New York, the 1980 Pritzker Architecture Prize, and other relevant events. By 1995, the year when the first edition of De Anda's *Historia* was published, the mystic persona of Luis Barragán was already well established within the global context of the discipline. Coincidentally, that was the same year Max Protetch sold the entire Barragán estate to the Swiss businessman Rolf Fehlbaum.

The events that had taken place to that date would confirm whatever belief was created around The Architect as a figure surrounded by mystery, solitude and silence. More importantly to this argument, they would also reinforce the isolated place Barragán held within the collective imaginary of the discipline. In terms of the line, the chronological succession of the events related to Barragán (in his personal and professional life) would be sealed within a single enclosing line, placing his history (and historiography) as a point that exists in parallel to the continuous line of Mexican architectural history. Furthermore, by being acquired by a Swiss company, the Archive had been literally isolated and enclosed, now miles away from its origin.



## Bending

1994. Rolf Fehlbaum and his wife, back then fiancé, the historian Federica Zanco visited México to know the work of Luis Barragán.

The Portuguese architect Alvaro Siza had suggested to the couple that "if they wanted to see some of the best architecture in the world"<sup>19</sup> they should visit México and ask about Barragán. At this point, the Fundación de Arquitectura Tapatía was working on the preparations for opening the House and Studio as a museum, and doing all the necessary restorations to reach the requirements this goal implied. (It's important to keep in mind that the House would be granted the UNESCO World Heritage status in 2004, meaning that many conservation works were in order even 10 years prior.) As for the other signature Barragán buildings, it is hard to know in which conditions they operated around the time, but it's not hard to assume the Fehlbaums found a way to pay a visit to most of them.

Regardless of the House not being open to the public, "a known architect" insisted to Juan Palomar that he granted a visit to the italo-swiss couple. Despite Palomar's refusal, the architect insisted until he had no choice but to accept the couple and show them around Tacubaya. They toured the house and then sat down to talk and have lunch in the San Ángel neighborhood. Tequila was shared among the visitors, per the Mexican custom.<sup>20</sup> According to Palomar, the couple was stunned by the House.

They brought up the subject of the Archive and the release of the authorship rights of the Architect, a vague concept that is still, to this day, subject of debate. They made no comments after learning the unfortunate story of Ferrera and the Archives. They did, however, travel to New York the next day and acquired the whole collection from Max Protetch.

This is *the bending* of this story's line. With the break, the Body of Works became detached from the Physical Body. That was definitive. However, the acquisition of the Barragán state by Fehlbaum and Zanco is more of a subtle fold, it "created creases rather than cracks"<sup>21</sup> in the development of the story. As time went by, these "imaginary" creases, along with the physical distance between the Archive and the people who are interested in consulting it, have made the Barragán Archives a virtually inaccessible collection.

Allegedly, (although its been affirmed by the next character of this story) Fehlbaum "gifted" the 2.5 million dollar Barragán collection to Federica as a wedding present. The next couple of years would be marked by important developments that expanded their agency on Barragán as a historical figure<sup>22</sup>:

- In 1996, The Barragan Foundation (sans accent) was founded in the Vitra headquarters in Basel by its director Federica Zanco.
- In 1997, the BF acquired Armando Salas Portugal's collection of negatives and photographs titled "*La Arquitectura de Luis Barragán*".
- In 1998, Ray and Rolf Fehlbaum submitted an application to trademark the name "Luis Barragan" in the United States. The application would be accepted and the name registered in the year 2000.
- And in 2001, Federica Zanco edited and published the book "*Luis Barragan, The Quiet Revolution*".

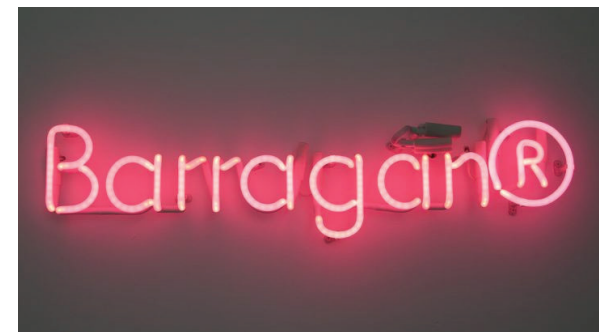
From its establishment in 1996, the Barragan Foundation had a somewhat aggressive approach to handling the copyrights that came with it Ferrera's part of the bequest. What these rights implied was not made explicit in the beginning, but they tried to exercise their agency of the rights towards, for example, the photographs and videos that are taken by the visitors of the House and Studio. Also, the Foundation has kept the Archive under a completely hermetic seal. For years now they have announced a coming publication of what can be assumed is the Archive's catalogue. This publication is not yet in the radar, but recently, maybe due to the publicity obtained through the work of the US-American artist Jill Magid from 2013, they have started to released information and images of the content of the Archives on their website. More importantly, they have made their copyrights terms very explicit.

In their Frequently Asked Questions section they provide a clear guide to the common doubts the public has on the access to what they call "Luis Barragán's architectural legacy"<sup>23</sup>. They state that they have no association with the owners or managers of any of the Buildings designed by Barragán, yet, the public use of any photographic or video material derived from these buildings must be obtained through ProLitteris, "the official collecting society for copy royalties"<sup>24</sup>

They claim to "welcome creativity and encourage" any approach to Barragán's work through art, but suggest seeking legal advice for any kind before making any reference to the work of Luis Barragán or Armando Salas Portugal. More importantly, (at least for to the person writing this) they suggest that anyone interested in studying the works of Luis Barragán or any particular aspect of his work should first refer to the contents of 8 publications that might be available in the market or public libraries. Further research can also be done, they suggest, via their website. Physical access to the archives may be granted in a case-by-case basis. And, of course, If any given researcher was to obtain access, they should be able to visit the premises of the Vitra Campus,

Multiple concerns have been raised during the lifetime of the Barragan Foundation. The academic concern for accessibility is quickly dismissed by their suggestion of selected bibliography. But even those who manage to produce critical takes on the work of Barragán (assuming they do find one valid research topic that does not overlap with the suggested bibliography) face the issue of how to illustrate their work accurately and acquiring the rights to reproduce photographic images. Creative solutions arise, such as the digital rendering of projects to demonstrate certain spatial features designed by Barragán instead of using the photographs by Armando Salas Portugal or any other photographer. However, the main problem is probably the inaccessibility and physical distance between the scholars who have a "natural" affinity towards the works of Luis Barragán and the Archive.

As for the artistic uses of "Barragán's legacy", the debate carries much more nuances. In 2003, an artist from the United States of America visited the House and Studio for the first time. This visit would unravel the next, and probably not the final, part of the post-mortem story of Luis Barragán. Here, as it will be briefly covered, the discourse of Archival theory gets intertwined with copyright law, artistic appropriation and the events regarding Barragán's succession, adding to this series of curious incidents.



Neon sign from the 2017 exhibition at MUAC, UNAM. Photograph by Devon Van Houten Maldonado. From [hyperallergic.com](http://hyperallergic.com).

## The Proposal: A Diagonal Crossing

After learning about the Archive controversy in a visit to the House and Studio, US-American artist Jill Magid was struck with curiosity for Luis Barragán and Federica Zanco. She proceeded to contact Ms. Zanco to request a visit to the Archive to conduct artistic research with the support of Art Basel Parours.<sup>25</sup> According to Daniel McClean, Zanco denied the petition "on the grounds that they were" struggling for closing a major publication on the archives" and therefore that "it was completely unable to allow access to the collection" at that time."<sup>26</sup> The refusal of access would be the origin of Magid's series of performances, installations, visual iterations and artworks that reference the series of event described in this story, which she has explored in her artwork.<sup>27</sup>

Works such as "Women with Sombrero" (Art in General 2013, Yvon Lambert 2014, Museo de Arte de Zapopan 2014), "Homage" (RaebervonStenglin, 2014) "Quartet" (South London Gallery, 2014), "Ex-Voto" (LABOR, 2016), "The Proposal" (Kinst Halle Sankt Gallen 2016, San Francisco Art Institute 2016), and "A letter always arrives at its destination" (MUAC, 2017) are occasions in which Magid has explored her interest in the "artistic" legacy of Luis Barragán. It can be questioned, however, how much of an artistic legacy the Body of Works of Barragán is, rather than a cultural asset or an architectural registry.

As a whole, "The Barragán Archives" is a powerful and witty critique to the specific case it refers to. Magid's artistic practice

has been fueled by a struggle with privatized power, surveillance and, in a way, *archival matters* from her early works in the later 90s. Copyright law enforcement by a corporate entity becomes the perfect ground for her critique. The nature of contemporary art allows her to pose concerns out in the open without any need for a critical apparatus. In that sense, even from the beginning she assumes herself in an ongoing conversation with Vitra and replies to the denial she was given to visit the Barragán Archives. This reply is her first project in the series, titled "Der Trog", which translates to *through* in English or *bebedero* in Spanish, is an architectural model that proposes the construction of a replica of Barragán's 1959 water fountains in the Vitra corporate campus. Along with a replica of Barragán's reading lectern, this project was a first attempt at questioning how far does the ownership of the Archive (and its subsequent copyrights) can be practically implemented.

Her endeavor was far from over. After "Der Trog", Magid engaged in correspondence with Federica Zanco trying to establish



"Der Trog" detail . From [jillmagid.com/projects/the-barragan-archives](http://jillmagid.com/projects/the-barragan-archives)

a collaboration between them to link the "artistic research" she was pursuing with the FATLB (which had been open and welcoming in every sense) and the Barragan Foundation. Zanco refused, and also reminded The Artist how the Foundation was protected by ProLitteris, and that any kind of reproduction of Barragán's works would lead to legal action against her.

Magid went on to show "Women with Sombrero" in Art in General in 2013, receiving an interesting commentary by Randy Kennedy in the New York Times. Having her proceedings publicly exposed, Zanco had brought a PR emergency to Vitra and to the Foundation. From that point on, Magid affirms Zanco's tone changed into a more friendly and even intimate tone. Magid wrote her letters by hand, Zanco replied via email, and despite never receiving a positive to any invitations or requests to



Facistol, a replica of Barragán's lectern, covered in a blanket. Installation from the 2017 exhibition "A letter always arrives at its destination." at the MUAC UNAM. From [jillmagid.com/projects/the-barragan-archives](http://jillmagid.com/projects/the-barragan-archives)

collaborate, it seemed The Artist and The Archivist were building a relationship around the idea of The Architect.

Magid's critical approach was, until this point, quite effective in posing uncomfortable questions about the power relationships that come with artistic collections. On one hand, the Barragan Foundation claimed agency over "the legacy" through a path materialized in fees. On the other, The Artist claimed agency by portraying objects that barely suggested the shapes of "the legacy". To this point, the critique was focused on the bureaucratic method that the Foundation imposed to someone who is interested in using the archive as a visual reference in an artistic project, i.e., someone in the same place as Jill Magid. However, in what has been called "morbid" but can also be seen as an act of alchemy, Magid found a way to address one of the issues that were previously identified here as the key problematics of the Archives: their expatriate status. Around 2015, Magid begins working on her project titled "The Proposal", thus drawing a line that crosses over this story diagonally, and generating The Third Body of The Architect, or, the Artistic Body of Luis Barragán. 3. The Artistic Body

The starting point of "The Proposal" is the original gesture that positioned Fehlbaum and Zanco as owners of Raul Ferrera's part of the bequest left by Luis Barragán: a wedding gift. In this complex performance, Magid offered Zanco a diamond ring. In return, Federica would accede to return the Archives to Mexican territory, releasing them into an institution that would make it available for students, researchers and the general public. The scandal came, of course, with the fact that the diamond on the ring was made out a quarter of the total of The Architect's remains, obtained through a collaboration with members of the Barragán family and the Government of Jalisco. The proposal was not accepted, and Zanco replied to Magid via email telling her she had "*turned her into a fictional character, and that her real existence was irrelevant to Magid's project*".<sup>28</sup>

The critical aspect of Magid's work cannot be denied. Hers is an intricate series of performances and artistic actions that rely on shock value and mediatic impact. As an artistic project, it benefits from the isolated existence conceptual art can have. Either in a museum, gallery, or in the artist's mind, conceptual art can simply exist, taking whatever it needs from any source, and establishing a conversation with whomever, or whatever, it deems fit.

However, during her work on The Barragán Archives, Magid placed the whole of Barragán's history—with all of its different dialogues—even further into a separate point as if it was only an artistic object. She even recognizes Barragán as an artist, not as a person that dedicated his life's efforts to pursue architecture as a way of living. As a consequence, it can be argued that Magid created the Artistic Body of Luis Barragán, not only as an artistic object, but also, as a historical category. This Third Body is not only a reference to his material remains being—physically and metaphorically—pressed into an artistic shape. The Artistic Body is the understanding of Barragán as an isolated point within the line of Mexican Architectural History. Even more so, it is the detachment of Barragán as a figure that connects to architecture, and the establishment of him as a figure of Art.

Once again, there are multiple problematic aspects for this event. It can be argued that in order to make a critical comment about the events previously described one must understand Magid's work as an artistic project, but without releasing

it completely into an a-critical void. In that sense, the first commentary was made by the celebrated Mexican novelist Juan Villoro, who recognized Magid's honorable efforts for "rescuing" the Archive for its Mexican audience in a 2016 column<sup>29</sup>, but called her out for not even trying to imagine what the "so-called protagonist" of this story would think of such proceeding.

While Villoro's claims are true and suggest understanding Barragán from his catholic context. However, he falls for Magid's bait and considers Barragán in terms of The Proposal, as an artistic figure and not a historical one. Doing this, he ignores the underlying issue: the Body of Works, the professional archives, the set of documents, movies, drawings, designs, sketches, models, and originals that are now (and since 2000) subject to trademark and copyrights law.

As an institution, the Barragan Foundation is the ultimate authority on Barragán's Body of Works. Following that line of thought, both the Archives held by the BF in the Vitra Headquarters and "The Barragán Archives" as a collection of artistic events have become the Barragán *arkheion*. Jacques



2.02 carat diamond, blue, uncut, on a silver ring with the inscription "I am wholeheartedly yours" (soy sinceramente tuyo). As exhibited in the MUAC UNAM, 2017.



Derrida traces the meaning of "archive" (as a documentary collection dedicated to an institution of historical figure) to the Greek *arkheion*, which refers to the residence of the *archons*, the people who command and guard. In the 1994 lecture "Archive Fever", Derrida states that these guards "have the power to interpret the law" and that by entrusting a collection to them, "these documents in effect state the law: they recall the law and call on or impose the law."<sup>30</sup>

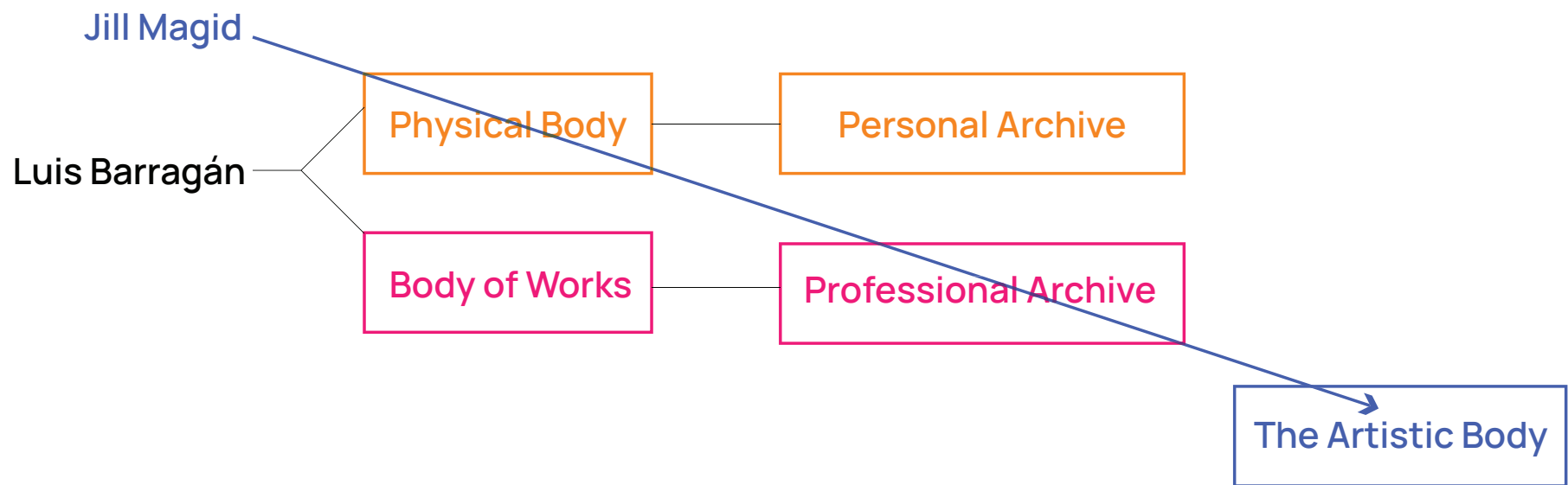
As figures of authority, Zanco and Magid have the political power of the history of Barragán because they have control of his history and of the archive. Their Archive is exactly what Foucault states in the *Archaeology of Knowledge*, that "(it) is *first the law of what can be said, the system which governs the appearance of statements as unique events*".<sup>31</sup> Magid created a rupture, creating a definitive Third Body (or Artistic Body) of Barragán and placing it in a further place within the line of Mexican architectural History. Zanco, by holding on to the Archive with such apprehension, blocks any kind of new approaches to the elements of the collection.

For someone who is interested in identifying the points, lines, creases, bends and breaks that relate to the story (and the history) of a figure such as Luis Barragán, the Archive becomes a primary source. However, the archons of Barragán, so infected

with the Archive Fever, block any possibility of entering the realm of true historical research. We are left with stories like this. A series of events, one after the other, that seem more as gossip than history. More importantly, we are left to wonder if the contents of this particular Archive are worth the dying for, as Ferrera did, or for becoming an antagonistic figure that permits the spread of misinformation and speculation rather than knowledge and productive debates.

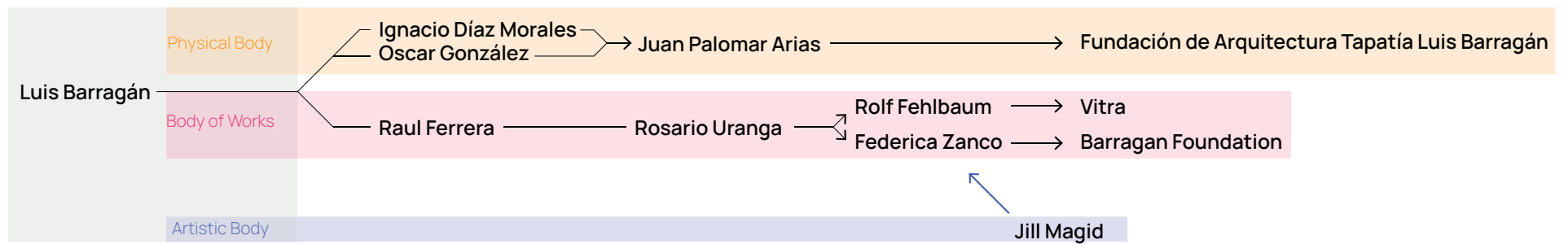
The three bodies of Luis Barragán are a line that guides the post-mortem story of the most celebrated figure of Mexican architecture. To define these entities, the author did not need to physically consult the archives held by the Barragán Foundation. This is a construction made from fragments, open-sourced ideas that are publicly available, not hidden under a Swiss bunker. It can be argued that the real archive is exactly that: the common knowledge. In the case of Architects, their real archive may be the actual buildings. In any case, let us close with a long quote by Jacques Derrida, who here appears to be talking about what is happening to the characters of this story: all inextricably linked together, joined on a ghostly line of nostalgic ambition, or of the *mal d'archive*.

"We are en *mal d'archive*: in need of archives. Listening to the French idiom, and in it the attribute "*en mal de*," to be *en mal d'archive* can mean something else than to suffer from a sickness, from a trouble or from what the noun "*mal*" might name. It is to burn with a passion. It is never to rest, interminably, from searching for the archive right where it slips away. It is to run after the archive, even if there's too much of it, right where something in it *anarchives* itself. It is to have a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement. No desire, no passion, no drive, no compulsion, indeed no repetition compulsion, no "*mal-de*" can arise for a person who is not already, in one way or another, en *mal d'archive*"<sup>32</sup>



A simple drawing of the diagonal line.

Connections and flows within the story of the Three Bodies of Luis Barragán.



## Notes

- 1 Tim Ingold, 'Traces, Threads and Surfaces', in *Lines: A Brief History* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2007), 40.
- 2 Ingold, 'Traces, Threads and Surfaces'. 43.
- 3 Ibid., 47.
- 4 In 2012 Jill Magid, a US-American artist and writer visits Casa Barragán for the first time. Guided by its former director Catalina Corcuera, Magid learns the "controversial legacy story". See 'Timeline', in *The Proposal: Jill Magid*, Critical Spatial Practice 8 (Berlin: Sternberg press, 2016), 156–62.
- 5 Barragán is known to have passed in his bedroom at the Casa Estudio in the Tacubaya neighborhood in Mexico City. When reporting the death of Raul Ferrera, he is said to have committed suicide in Tacubaya. Presumably, this means he ended his life in the studio downstairs. This is not a fact that is commonly disclosed, for example, during a tour of the Casa Estudio museum.
- 6 Adriana Malvido, 'Poeta Del Espacio', *La Jornada*, 10 March 1998, <https://www.jornada.com.mx/1998/03/10/barragan.html>.
- 7 Daniel McClean, 'Jill Magid and Luis Barragán's Legacy', in *The Proposal: Jill Magid*, Critical Spatial Practice 8 (Berlin: Sternberg press, 2016), 57.
- 8 Ignacio Díaz Morales was a student at the Escuela Libre de Ingenieros along Barragán and then became the founder of the School of Architecture of the University of Guadalajara.
- 9 'Chronology', Barragan Foundation (blog), accessed 14 January 2023, <https://www.barragan-foundation.org/luis-barragan/chronology>.

- 10 Palomar Juan, 'La Biblioteca Peregrina', in *Barragán por Palomar*, 1st Edition (Guadalajara, México: Artlecta, Impronta Casa Editora, 2022), 106.
- 11 SC, Sociedad Civil or Civil Association.
- 12 Malvido, 'Poeta Del Espacio'. Original: "Raúl Ferrera sí aceptó el legado. Cinco años antes, en 1979, se había formado la sociedad Luis Barragán y Raúl Ferrera Arquitectos, SC. Desde entonces, y según múltiples testimonios orales y documentales recogidos, Ferrera se asumió como feroz defensor de los derechos autorales de Barragán; el mismo maestro tapatío, ya muy enfermo, había asignado esa función a su socio para poder concentrarse en su labor creativa."
- 13 Palomar Juan, 'Herencias y Tribulaciones'.
- 14 Magdalena Picazzo Sánchez, 'In Search of the Photographic Architecture of Luis Barragán', Final Essay, Historical Evidence and Representation: Architecture Photography (London: Architectural Association School of Architecture, January 2023).
- 15 The House and Studio was inscribed as World Heritage in 2004. According to Palomar, a key person for this achievement was Georges Zouain who was at the time subdirector of the World Heritage Fund of UNESCO. Around that time Zouain was advising the government of San Luis Potosí in Central México to inscribe its historic center into the list and offered to advise the FATLB *pro bono*. See Juan Palomar, Amigos, Ayudas, Gestiones"
- 16 Enrique X. de Anda, 'Prólogo a la cuarta edición', in *Historia de la arquitectura mexicana*, Cuarta edición revisada y ampliada (Barcelona, España: Editorial Gustavo Gili, SL, 2019), IX.
- 17 De Anda, 'El Rechazo al Funcionalismo'.

- 18 Mathias Goeritz, 'Manifiesto de la Arquitectura Emocional 1953', *Museo Experimental El Eco* (blog), 29 July 2015, <https://eleco.unam.mx/manifiesto-de-la-arquitectura-emocional-1953/>.
- 19 Palomar Juan, 'Reporte al Tapatío'.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Ingold, 'Traces, Threads and Surfaces'.
- 22 Per the recollection of events described in *The Proposal: Jill Magid*, Critical Spatial Practice 8 (Berlin: Sternberg press, 2016), 156–62.
- 23 'FAQ', Barragan Foundation (blog), accessed 14 January 2023, <https://www.barragan-foundation.org/luis-barragan/chronology>.
- 24 'Home', accessed January 1, 2023, <https://prolitteris.ch/>.
- 25 'Timeline' *The Proposal: Jill Magid*,
- 26 McClean, 'Jill Magid and Luis Barragán's Legacy'.
- 27 Nikolaus Hirsch and Hesse McGraw, 'Locating Legacy. Jill Magid in Conversation with Nikolaus Hirsch and Hesse McGraw', in *The Proposal: Jill Magid*, 2.
- 28 Christopher Michael Fraga et al., eds., *Jill Magid: una carta siempre llega a su destino: los Archivos Barragán = a letter always arrives at its destination: the Barragán archives*, Primera edición, MUAC 056 (Ciudad de México: MUAC, Museo Universitario Arte Contemporáneo, UNAM : RM Editorial, 2017).
- 29 Juan Villoro, 'Anillo de Compromiso I Juan Villoro', *El Colegio Nacional* (blog), n.d., <https://colnal.mx/noticias/anillo-de-compromiso-juan-villoro/>.
- 30 Jacques Derrida and Eric Prenowitz, 'Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression', *Diacritics* 25, no. 2 (1995): 9, <https://doi.org/10.2307/465144>.
- 31 Michel Foucault and Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 1st American ed., World of Man (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972).
- 32 Derrida and Prenowitz, 'Archive Fever'. 57.