

The central Post Office

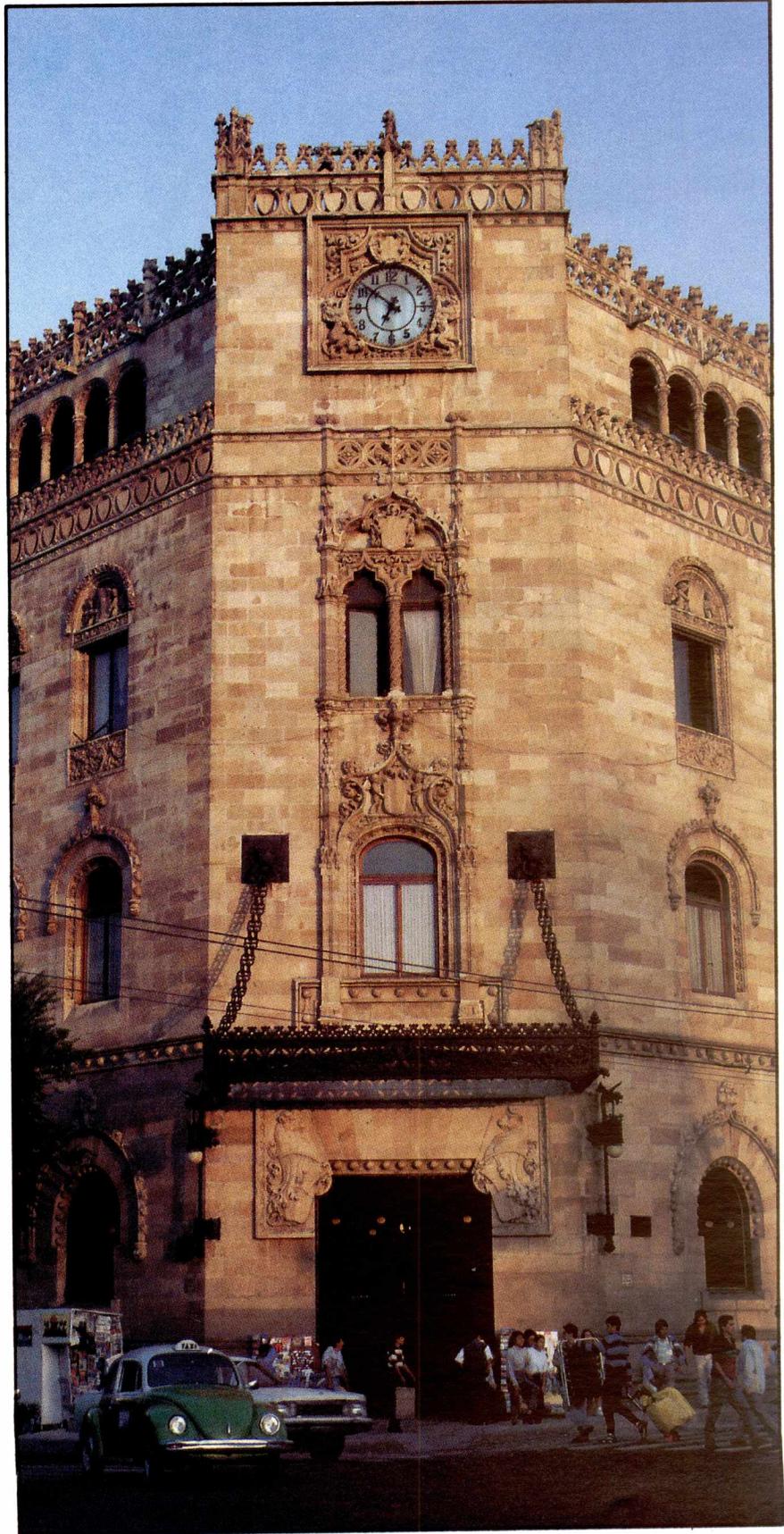
Mexico City's main Post Office is the Palacio Postal, a veritable architectural jewel which stands opposite the Palace of Fine Arts and covers an area of 4,476 square yards.

Designed by the Italian architect Adamo Boari and the military engineer Gonzalo Garita, the Post Office was built in accordance with its purpose and the space available. It was inaugurated in 1907 by President Porfirio Díaz.

Opinions on the buildings's architectural style vary. However, most would agree that it bears the influence of the Spanish plateresque style, combined with a certain eclecticism reflected in the predominance of Gothic elements such as cresting and zoomorphic gargoyles on the roof, merlons, fleurons and pinnacles crowning the turrets, and the false ogee arches over the raised arches of the windows of the first and second storeys.

The fact that the Post Office is frequently associated with the Palacio de Monterrey in Salamanca on the one hand and the Doge's Palace in Venice, on the other, reinforces this building's characterization as eclectic.

From 1956 to the present, the third and fourth floors of the building

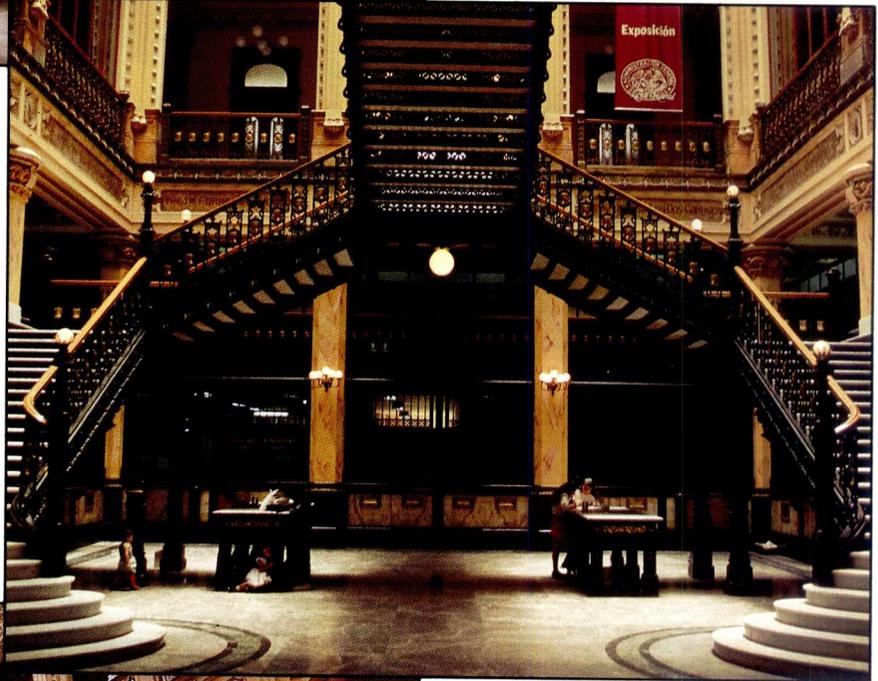
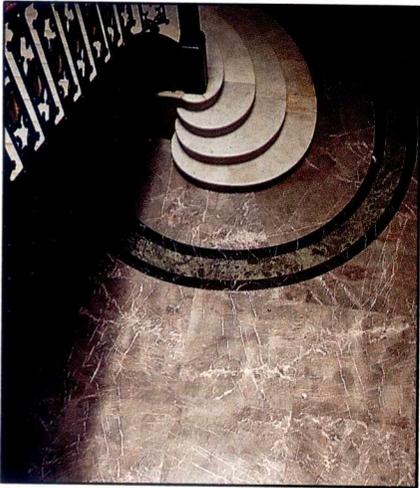




have been leased to the Banco de México. The Mexican Postal Service has its offices for attending the public on the ground floor. Post-office boxes are located in the mezzanine, while the second storey holds a library, hall and museum.

Architecture

The Post Office's four façades are astonishingly similar, both as regards the materials employed in their construction and the combination of ornamental elements used in their design.



The building's main façade looks out onto Tacuba Street. An arch was built over its only entrance, above which the large windows of the second and third storeys can be seen.

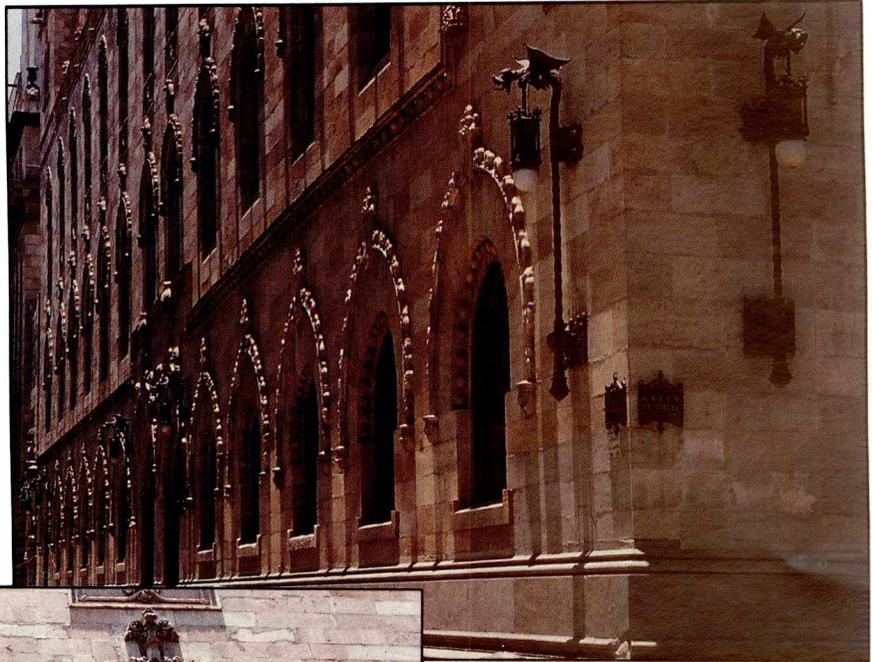
The west façade, facing the Palace of Fine Arts, has four entrances, two of which are occupied by the outside mail boxes.

The presence of eight shells or scallop-shaped moldings under the second-storey windows, and one on either side of the national coat-of-arms, distinguishes this side from the other three. The shells are in the

opposite position to the allegorical, religious ones so common in the plateresque period.

On the east facade, facing the Palacio de Minería and La Condesa Lane, there are two Gothic-style pillars on either side of the entrance to the service courtyard. In the middle there are two fanciful depictions of griffins standing guard, in the medieval style.

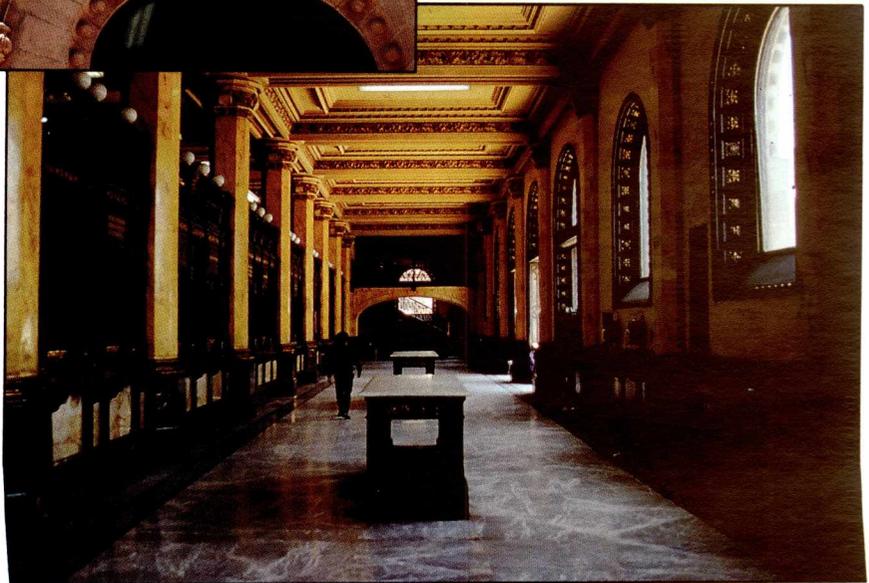
The south face, located in an area that makes it almost impossible to see, is the most modest of all. It has two projecting turrets, whose windows are decorated in a similar



manner to those of the north-east section. The top still contains the parapet of the unbroken balcony.

The pan-coupé has a very Mudéjar-style entrance door, with its distinctive panel, featuring two large oxen at either end, under empty coats-of-arms. At the top stands a splendid national coat-of-arms. The animal and plant images in the arch above the entrance turn out to be the most interesting feature, since they suggest a strange sort of allegory associated with the postal service.

Knotted serpents, rabbits, dogs, cactus and acanthus leaves are some



Mexico's National Council for Culture and the Arts was created in December 1988 to meet the cultural needs of a country that has grown and diversified, and that urgently requires better services in a field of crucial importance for the all-round development of a nation and its people: culture and the arts.

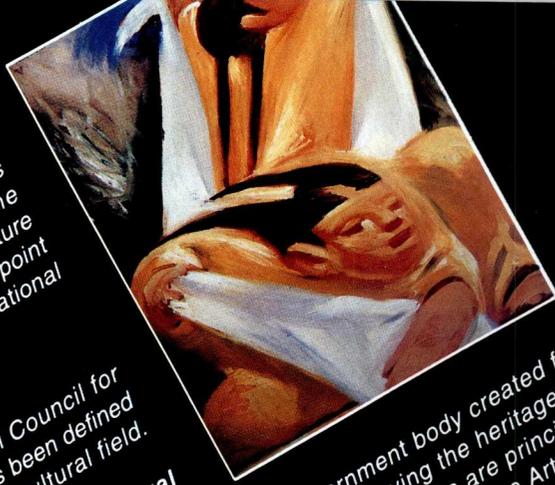
After a study of the population's requirements in this area, the federal government decided to gather various institutions and administrative entities under the coordination of a sole body, whose aim is to make culture available to all. The government is thereby able to point all efforts in the same direction and introduce a national cultural policy.

ACTION PROGRAMS

In order to attain the goals of the National Council for Culture and the Arts, a set of programs has been defined to guide the different state bodies in the cultural field. These programs are:

Preservation and Promotion of Our Cultural Heritage. Archeological monuments are mainly the concern of the National Institute of Anthropology and History. The Institute is a government body created for the purpose of researching and preserving the heritage of pre-Colombian cultures. Artistic monuments are principally the responsibility of the National Institute of Fine Arts, a public body created to promote and support the arts.

The program seeks a wide-ranging mobilization of efforts to promote and safeguard our cultural and material heritage. To this end, the National Commission for the Preservation of the Cultural Heritage has been established, and the registration of all the nation's cultural possessions has begun. **Program for Encouragement of Artistic Creativity and Promotion of the Arts.** This program consists of organizing and putting into effect national plans to support theater, music and

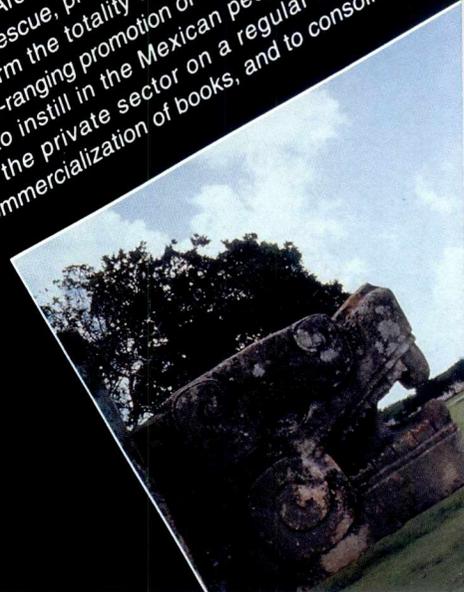
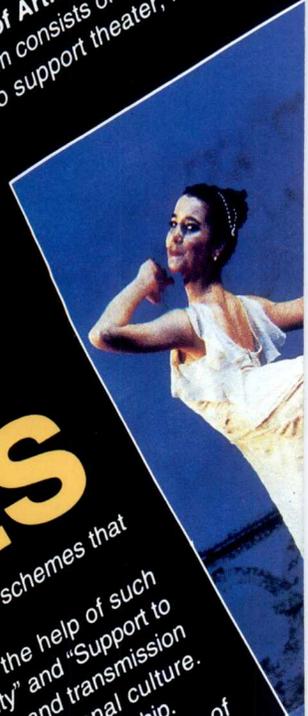


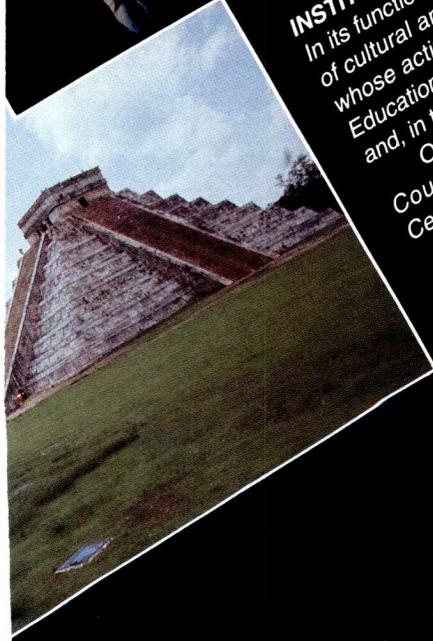
The National Council for Culture and the Arts

dance, as well as to promote visual arts, architecture and literature by drawing up schemes that allow each association to participate.

Program for Preservation and Promotion of Popular Cultures. With the help of such programs as "Support to Popular Culture in the Metropolitan Area of Mexico City" and "Support to Urban and Community Cultures," we seek to promote the rescue, preservation and transmission of popular, rural and urban cultures, which together form the totality of our national culture. Significant support is given to a national fund for the wide-ranging promotion of craftsmanship.

Promotion of Books and Reading. We plan to instill in the Mexican people a love of reading, to carry out co-publishing projects with the private sector on a regular basis, to establish an effective system of distribution and commercialization of books, and to consolidate and develop the national network of libraries.





Culture through Audio-Visual Media. In the field of cinema, we have organized an effective scheme to cultivate talent and provide the necessary resources for the production and co-production of high-quality films, in addition to optimizing distribution and exhibition of domestic and foreign films. A video-library program has been started. With regard to electronic resources, we aim to broaden, modernize and improve their capacity, orienting them towards the transmission of programs that promote our cultural heritage, literature and music, and those that encourage the creation of new forms and values in the national culture.

Education and Research on Culture and Art. We intend to restructure and strengthen professional training in the various areas of the arts, to encourage research, and to train teachers as promoters of culture.

Coordination of Strategic Projects and National Vocation Activities. We support specific activities through the continual functioning of the following projects:

- Decentralization of cultural services.
- Culture for young people.
- Culture for workers.
- Culture and science.
- Culture and the environment.
- Cultural and institutions of higher education.
- Cultural exchanges.
- Modernization of cultural legislation and institutions.
- Professional training of those working in cultural fields.
- Events and special historical projects.
- Museums.
- Cultural industries.
- Audio-visual productions.

INSTITUTIONS MAKING UP THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR CULTURE AND THE ARTS

In its function as coordinator of a broad range of efforts, and in order to encompass the diversity of cultural and artistic activity, the Council relies on the help of several institutions and groups whose activities are very distinct. The following institutions are affiliated to the Council: Radio Education, a cultural radio station; Fondo de Cultura Económica, an important publishing house; and, in the audio-visual field, the Mexican Institute of Cinema and Channel 22.

Other organizations that promote the culture of our people are also coordinated by the Council, such as the National Society for Promoting Craftsmanship, the International Cervantine Festival and the Tijuana Cultural Center.

Other groups (such as the above-mentioned National Institute of Fine Arts and the National Institute of Anthropology and History), together with five administrative offices, are in charge of particular aspects of culture and art, such as libraries, publications, popular culture, and the Frontier Program.

It is also important to note the creation of the National Fund for Culture and the Arts—an organization established by the Council in order to attract and administer funds to promote the rescue and preservation of our heritage, etc. Monies are collected from the public and private sectors and from all those who wish to favor cultural enterprises and the work of writers, painters, sculptors, musicians, playwrights and thinkers, all of whom are devoted to some of the most urgent tasks on our cultural scene.

**OUR BEST
TO THE
WORLD**



Consejo Nacional
para la
Cultura y las Artes



of the features making up this iconography. There is an unusual predilection for coats-of-arms, 205 of which are scattered over the building's four faces and *pan-coupé*. This predilection has been attributed to the architect, Adamo Boari.

The inside of the building is remarkably functional, even for today. The ground floor is devoted to service to the public. Spacious corridors lead users across marble floors to the appropriate counter. Above the Mexican marble counters, the iron and

bronze grilles produced by the Pignone Foundry are worthy of note. In 1973, this fine bronze work was covered in black oil paint, and the details of its adornments and moldings painted in bronze dust, as a result of which its original beauty and sheen were lost.

The splendid double staircase enables one to enjoy, from any height, the beauty of the first patio, whose design was influenced by the Spanish plateresque style.

Although rarely visited, since it is the service courtyard, the second patio is the only example of a structure containing a *dado*. The intrados in the glass soffit shows a strong late English Gothic influence.

On the second floor, the hall boasts a beautiful soffit of projecting panels decorated with acanthus foliage, against a background of tiny apples. The tempera paintings, completed by Bartolomé de Galloti in 1905, are the hall's most interesting feature.

The treasures of the Post Office

In addition to the paintings by Galloti, the Post Office houses other treasures, such as a large collection of objects related to the history of the postal service in Mexico, the country's entire stamp collection, as well as bibliographical documents and documentary archives of the post office's history.

The Post Office Museum, located on the second storey, includes a perambulating wheel, odometers, a selection of mail boxes, franking machines, sticks of sealing wax, pens and inkwells.

The Post Office library contains nearly seven thousand five hundred volumes covering most aspects of the postal service and a collection of official newspapers from the 19th century onwards. It also has approximately eight hundred documents on aspects related to the Post Office and Mexican history ❧

Maricarmen Velasco
Staff Writer.