

For immediate release
January 27, 2004

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LUIS BARRAGÁN: An Unbuilt House for the Menil

First exhibition of project by the legendary architect

On View at The Menil Collection February 11 – May 23, 2004

"It is impossible to understand art and the glory of its history without avowing religious spirituality and the mythical roots that lead us to the very reason of being of the artistic phenomenon." – Luis Barragán

HOUSTON— Although he produced no more than a dozen structures over sixty years, virtually all in Mexico, Luis Barragán (1902-1988) became an internationally celebrated architect, praised for his poetic imagination. An engineer by training, he was a self-taught architect, primarily inspired by the work of Jesus "Chuco" Reyes, a primitive painter, and by the popular architecture of Mexico's villages and convents. His gardens, fountains, and plazas are distinguished by articulate spaces composed of natural materials and accented by dramatic uses of brilliant color and light, resulting in metaphysical landscapes that evoke a haunting beauty, ideal for meditation.

Accepting the renowned Pritzker Architecture Prize in 1980, Barragán remarked, "It is impossible to understand art and the glory of its history without avowing religious spirituality and the mythical roots that lead us to the very reason of being of the artistic phenomenon." Given this belief in the metaphysical power of art, so much like Dominique de Menil's own vision of "art as incantation," it is not surprising that Barragán was responsive to her when she approached him in 1984 with the idea of designing a special kind of house.

To be sited between the Rothko Chapel and The Menil Collection, and meant to accommodate up to two guests at a time, this "unbuilt Barragán" would have included various intimately-scaled rooms, such as an "art chapel," a space where one could contemplate a single work of art, and a second-floor library opening onto a terrace and overlooking fountains and gardens.

This little-known project, begun late in Barragán's career and owing much to the influence of his assistant, Raul Ferrera, was never realized. However, a wealth of studies, plans, and correspondence was preserved and now resides in The Menil Collection archives. ***LUIS BARRAGAN: An Unbuilt House for the Menil*** presents for the first time the odyssey of this undertaking in an exhibition that includes the finished model, working blueprints, presentation boards, correspondence, and other primary materials. Displayed together, they honor the vision both of this exceptional architect and of Dominique de Menil.

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is generously supported in part by Mrs. Nancy C. Allen with additional funding provided by the George and Mary Josephine Hamman Foundation, and the City of Houston.

For further exhibition information and images, contact Melissa Brown, tel 713 525 9490 (mmbrown@menil.org).

The Menil Collection is open Wednesday through Sunday, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Admission is free.

FREE PUBLIC PROGRAM, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 7:00 P.M.

In conjunction with the exhibition, ***LUIS BARRAGÁN: An Unbuilt House for the Menil***, The Menil Collection will present illustrated lectures by two prominent Houston architects: "*Barragán: A Personal Reading*," by Carlos

Jiménez (principal of Carlos Jiménez Studio in Houston, associate professor at Rice University School of Architecture, and jury member for the Pritzker Prize) and ***"Barragán: Modernity, Regionalism and Nationalism,"*** by **Rafael Longoria** (principal with Longoria/Peter, professor of architecture at the University of Houston, and founding editor of *AULA: Architecture and Urbanism in Las Americas*).

The program, free of charge and open to the public, will be held in the Menil foyer **Thursday, February 12, 2004, 7:00 P.M.**
For more information, call Anthony Martinez, 713 525 9414.