

## The Nest of Quetzalcóatl: The Organic Architecture of Javier Senosiain

Organic architecture seeks to create a dialogue between the physical space and the surrounding, natural environment. One of the precursors of this school of thought in our country was Juan O'Gorman (see our article, in which we discussed how he turned a cave into his home). O'Gorman commented:

“...architecture becomes the harmonic instrument between man and the environment where the work is executed, between the building and the surrounding landscape ...”

O'Gorman was influenced by several seminal figures in the canon of architecture, including the American Frank Lloyd Wright, the Spaniard Antonio Gaudí, and the Mexican Javier Senosiain, all of whom inspired O'Gorman to develop his own form of organic architecture, creating dialogues between the structures he created and their surrounding, natural landscapes. He does so by creating an organic structure that mimics a lush garden, full of colors and textures, which complements the enveloping terrain.

The organic habitats he created were all the more readily achieved, in part, thanks to revolutionary, moldable materials—leading to the innovation of ferro-cement, the predecessor of reinforced concrete, which could be molded and even sculpted. It could be employed almost as a plasticine, allowing for all kinds of imagined forms to become reality, to help give organic architecture a foundation. This material and this process allow for boundless, fresh perspectives to take shape, creating opportunities for spectacular and stunning design. And adding to that arsenal of materials is yet another miraculous one—plastic!



The great head of Quetzalcóatl, Naucalpán, State of Mexico

With the freedom to build houses that could seamlessly co-exist with nature, architects could now allow their imaginations to take flights of fancy. Senosiain focused on a project, "The Nest of Quetzalcóatl," which he was able to execute because of these new resources and technology. This nest grows, develops, and matures in an area of five thousand square meters. The land has a rugged topography, so it was necessary to use these characteristics to better harness the space and green areas. The gardens were respected, considering the slopes and depressions; 98% of the area—whether elds or forest—was left free.

Senosiain took advantage of the natural terrain, using waterfalls and caves, and developed a surprising and charming architectural project. Natural streams form a peaceful reservoir, and there is water pumped through an imposing snake's mouth, and cascades in the form of an arch into the center of the pond. (See image).



The Nest of Quetzalcóatl

This ingenious system makes it possible to reclaim all the water used in the Nido de Quetzalcóatl and take it to a treatment plant, where it is recycled again for watering the garden and for maintenance activities.

The property inspires the viewer in countless ways. One of the areas I liked the most was the greenhouse. Senosiain used stained glass to create a multicolored dome, which allows the plants to bathe in the sun, grow, and enjoy optimal conditions for their development. In this greenhouse, there are plants of all kinds from cacti to bromeliads. The design reminded me of a kaleidoscope with its multicolored glass designs and patterns.





Multicolored greenhouse dome in the Quetzalcóatl Nest



Interior of the greenhouse

Senosiain was inspired by the colors of Mexico in how he put his palette to work in his designs. We are made further aware of this in the following image, which reminds us of the fantastic work done by the Huicholes (in Jalisco and San Luis Potosí) with their intricately beaded chaquira. In countless ways, the soul of Mexico is alive in this project.



Panoramic view, Nest of Quetzalcóatl

The name Quetzalcóatl refers to the combination of two animals: the bird and the snake, which according to the pre-Hispanic worldview, alludes to the transformative process that the snake undergoes, shedding its skin. The analogy underlines the transition in agriculture as well, as the earth transitions from rainy to dry weather.

Historian Enrique Florescano observed:

“...the green feathers of the quetzal that cover the body of the snake was a symbolic representation of the moment in which the dry season was substituted by the green clothing of the vegetation. The earth, represented by the rough skin of the snake, was covered by the green leaves of the corn, and this wonderful agricultural phenomenon took form, in the Mesoamerican imaginary, of a feathered snake...”





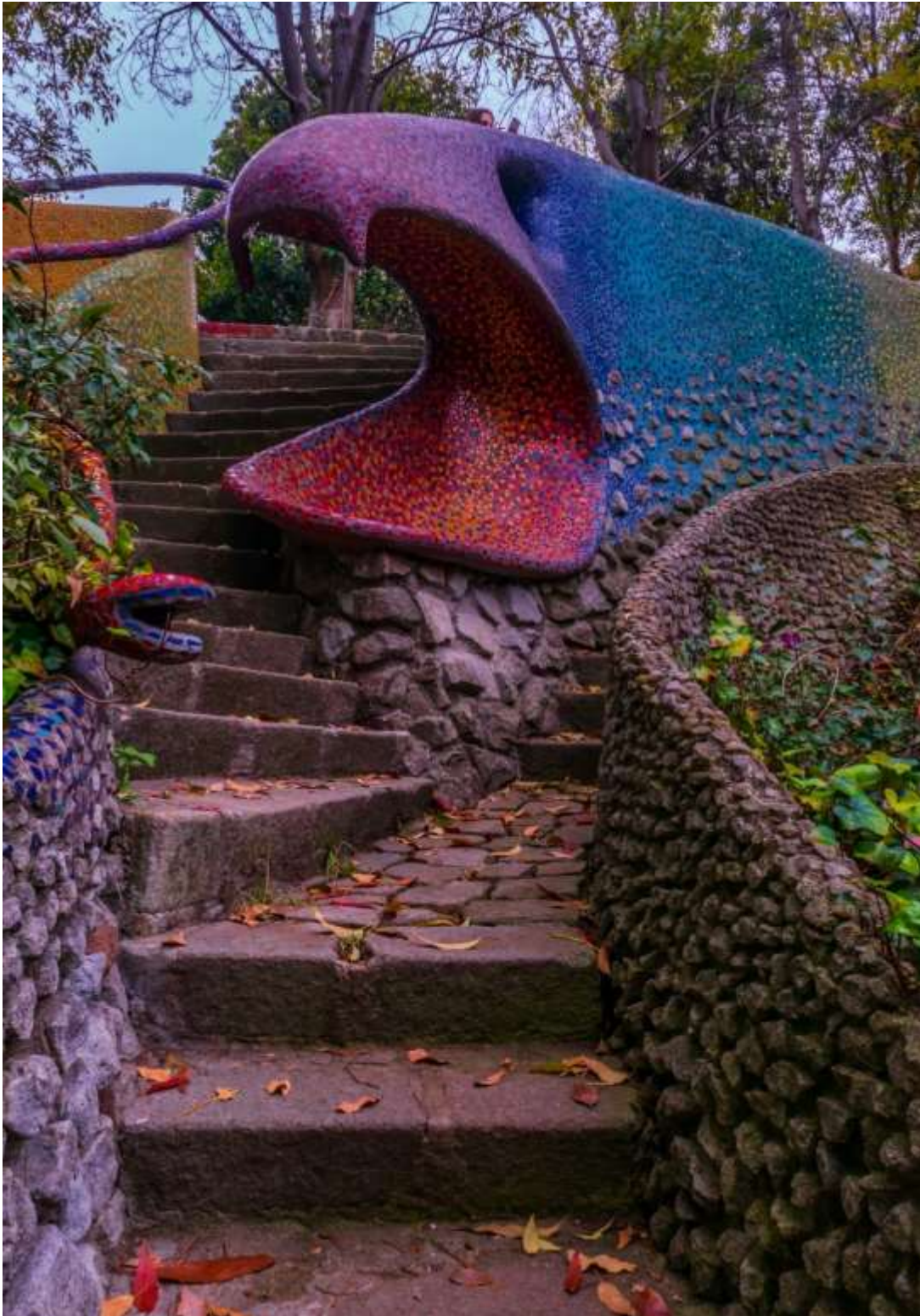
Another interesting facet of Sensosian's work is the use of local materials, such as tezontle, the reddish material we see on the left in this photo.

Tezontle is a volcanic rock made from pumice, sand, and magma, red in color, and spongy, with a deteriorated appearance; occasionally, it can become a hard rock. It is a fairly light, porous stone with bubble formations. Hence, its spongy appearance. It is perfect for storing heat, and is neither permeable nor insulating.

Sensosian used tezontle quite successfully, taking advantage of not only the geography and terrain, but, also, of the material that was native to the area.

Quetzalcóatl's Nest invites the viewer to engage in a dialogue between architecture and the environment. The commanding snake and its curved facades give life to seven other long and slender reptiles. With this rhythm, a voluptuous serpentine is achieved and a natural play of forms, symbols, and colors result, allowing us to feel that architecture like a second skin.

I urge you to discover this unforgettable space, so evocative and surprising; it will not leave you indifferent.





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