

## The Panama California Exposition.

The two features of the Panama-California Exposition at San Diego of particular interest to architects are its dissymetry and picturesque plan and the use of a single architectural style--that of Spanish America.

At San Diego a frank attempt has been made to break away from the type of plan that was created in America by the Chicago Fair and which has been followed by practically all of our subsequent expositions. They were all quite reminiscent of Beaux-Art 'Grand Prix' with well defined axes, large open places surrounded by balanced colonades and above all a simplicity that gave one a view of everything at a single glance.

The San Diego plan has I think more the character and charm of a real and living city. Just as our past fairs has lead to the enthusiasm for the monumental that has created our many new civic centres so the San Diego Fair may be a factor in arousing a public interest in that variety and picturesqueness that lends so much charm to the cities of Italy and Spain. In it, the large places, such as the Plaza de Panama, gains in force through their contrast with the long tree-lined El Prado by which it is approached--and the varied interest of half seen patio. After all the charm of the Italian cities are the more intimate side of their city plans,- the by-ways with their little shops, the occasional drinking fountain at a street corner, the glimpse of some secluded garden through a half open gate. The San Diego Fair has the varied symmetry and underlying order of the Latin cities, without the squalor of the crowded quarters; it is that glorification of the romantic in city planning.

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The dominant note of the composition is the picturesque mass at the one entrance--the permanent group of buildings. It is approached by a many arched bridge which crosses a deep canyon. The permanent buildings are grouped around a plaza but 110 feet wide--so small in fact that it might properly be called an entrance court. This gives access to El Prado, the main avenue of the Fair through its backbone--(Description of other features of plan.)

All of these main avenues and open places with their excellent planting--as well as this group of buildings and its approach across the Puente Cabrillo are to form a permanent part of the new 1400 acre park that dominates the centre of the City of San Diego. So the plan of the Fair was studied not only in relation to its use this year but also so that after the temporary buildings had disappeared their should remain the nucleus of a great formally planted domain somewhat in the spirit of the great estates of France.

This view taken from an areoplane gives some idea of the relation of the exposition to the city.

This is the main gateway to the Plaza de California--quite reminiscent with its approach of a portal to Toledo.

A view of the Prado. But before I speak further of the exposition I must say a word of the choice of the style of architecture.

The architectural style of our fairs in the past has had no particular significance. Our really American architectural inheritance has been found too limited in its uses. In the East the Colonial style has lacked the force and adaptability that seemed necessary for the gigantic displays of our Fairs. When the style of architecture was first considered it was natural that the Missions of California should



have been thought of as models. But their style was found too limited in its resources. So the Spanish Colonial style of Mexico, of which our Mission style was an outgrowth, was decided upon, not only because of the historical significance of that style in California but because it is well suited to the climate and also has the gayety and colour so necessary for a Fair.

I have brought these few views of Mexican architecture-- so that you might have more clearly in mind the main characteristics of the architecture from which the buildings of the San Diego Fair were inspired. They have the essential features of all Spanish architecture: the contrasting of great surfaces of blank wall with occasional spots of luxuriant ornament; the love of bright colour shown in the painting and gilding of sculpture and ornamental motives and the use of polychrome tiles. These are used not only on domes and towers but sometimes to cover large parts of the facade, while the large constructive forms, particularly vaults and domes, are frankly and simply expressed, the ornament, as in the work of the Orient, is rather an incrustation, a mere surface decoration, than a pretence at logical construction.

The style used in Mexico was seldom the Plateresque which would have been too delicate for the native workman to execute and had already been practically abandoned in Spain itself; but the Churrigueresque with its ever broken and twisted mouldings and the equally wild Baroque. The work was almost always executed by the Aztecs--the execution is crude but it is not lacking in charm and individuality.

But the attraction of the style is not in the detail. It is rather in the massing of the ornament, in its concentration and its contrast with the blank surfaces, and the general grouping of buildings with their many domes, towers and turrets and the rich use of colour. All these elements have been welded together to make the Exposition at San Diego.

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