

ALEJANDRO SANCHEZ GARCIA | ARQUITECTO

CENTRO DE LAS ARTES SAN LUIS POTOSÍ

Mexico

ALEJANDRO SANCHEZ GARCIA

TEAM

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RESTORATION:

Francisco Ramos.

STRUCTURE:

EA Ingeniería y Obras Especializadas S.A. de C.V.
(Ing. Enrique Avalos Zavala)

INSTALLATIONS:

Taller 2M Arquitectura S.A. de C.V.
(Arq. Jose Madrid Quintero)

MODEL:

Armando Hernandez.

PHOTO:

Jaime Navarro.

MEMORY:

Alejandro Fernandez.

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At the end of 2004, INAH (National Institute of Anthropology and History) and CONACULTA (National Council for the Culture and the Arts) determined architect Alejandro Sánchez García as the winner of the nation-wide contest summoned by the Department of Culture of the state of San Luis Potosí for the intervention of the former state penitentiary and its transformation into a center for the arts.

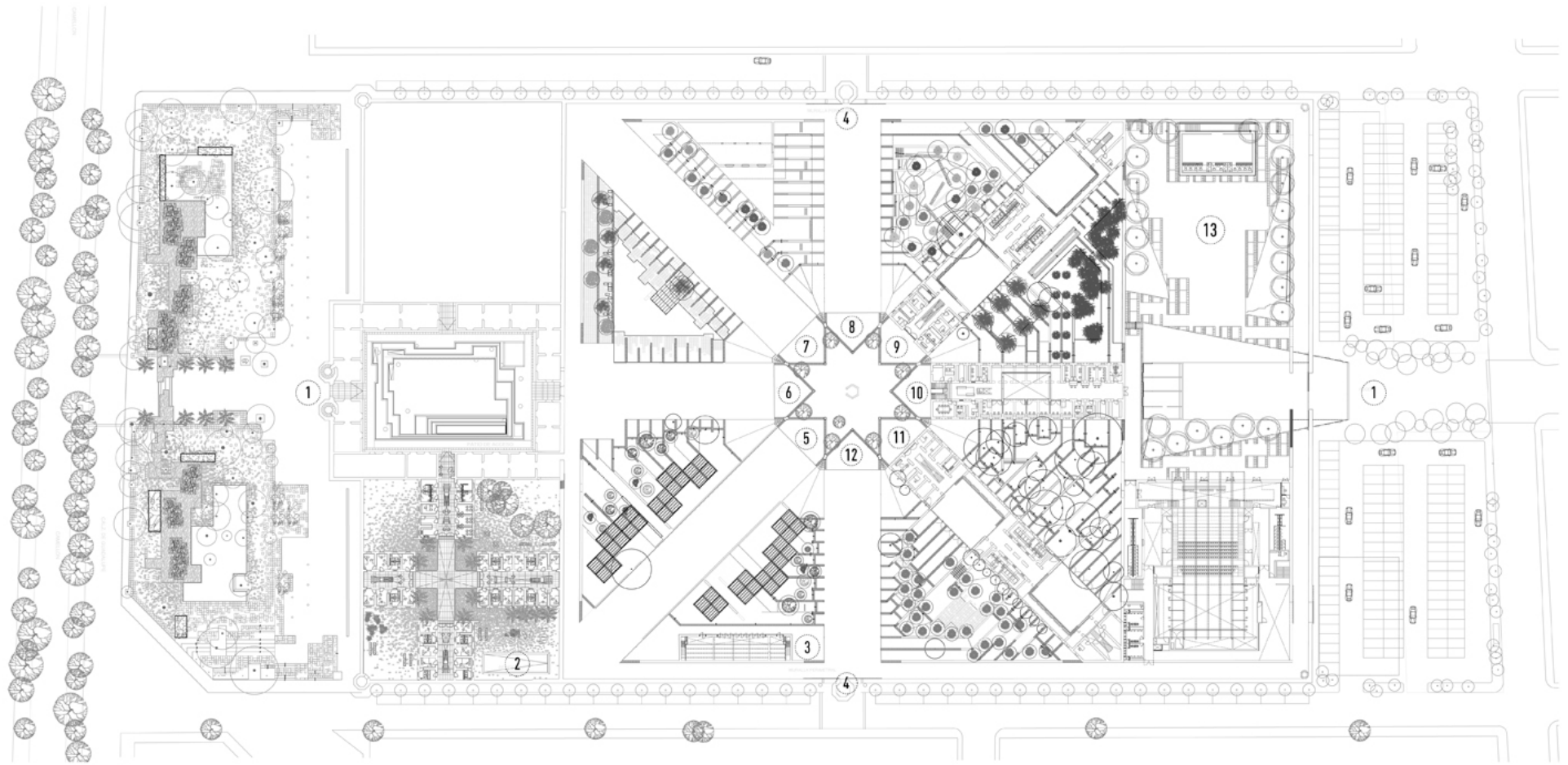
Converting a building originally conceived for depriving people from their liberty into a public space with an artistic and cultural affinity was not an easy task. The construction planned by architect Carlos Suárez Fiallo dates from the late 19th century and displays a panopticon scheme, with an observation and surveillance area on the center and eight concentric sections radially arranged around it, so the guards could have visual control of everything happening in the vicinity.

Even though the original project wasn't fully completed (only the ground floor of four of the eight sections was built, and not the two stories as originally intended), the prison worked for many years, and even held distinguished characters such as Francisco I. Madero who started writing the famous Plan de San Luis inside it.

Discarding the stigma surrounding the penitentiary system of a country plagued with social conflicts required not only an intervention at aesthetic and functional levels, but also an entire evolution from within, that could physically and metaphorically confer a new meaning to it. So the intervention began over its essence, the basic elements which confer it its prison character: the cells. The limestone blocks that formed them were removed piece by piece and taken to the exterior. Each of the eight triangle-shaped patios conformed between the concentric sections were taken over by elements which used to be walls and floors, which were not thrown away but recovered individually, and puzzle-like reassembled to build new elements. Jardinières, walk paths, water bodies and new recreational and landscape components were brought to life by the same building blocks which used to deprive it.

The reuse of sillarejo limestone blocks became the leitmotif which unifies the whole project. The proposal also envisioned the conclusion of the original plan, completing the second level of the one-story structures with the contemporary use of exposed concrete, respecting the original intended shape of the volumes but clearly differencing the ancient from the modern.

The original brick tunnel vaults were also reproduced on concrete in the interior of these new additions, incorporating them into the aesthetic language of the proposal even in forged elements under the metallic walk paths. When needed, the 45 feet vaults disregard structural support for the development of activities that demand so.



1 ACCESS / ESPLANADE / SHOP

2 RESIDENCY

3 FINE ARTS

4 PERIMETER WALL

5 VISUAL ARTS

6 ADMINISTRATION OFFICES / MUSEUM

7 MUSIC

8 LIBRARY

9 DANCE

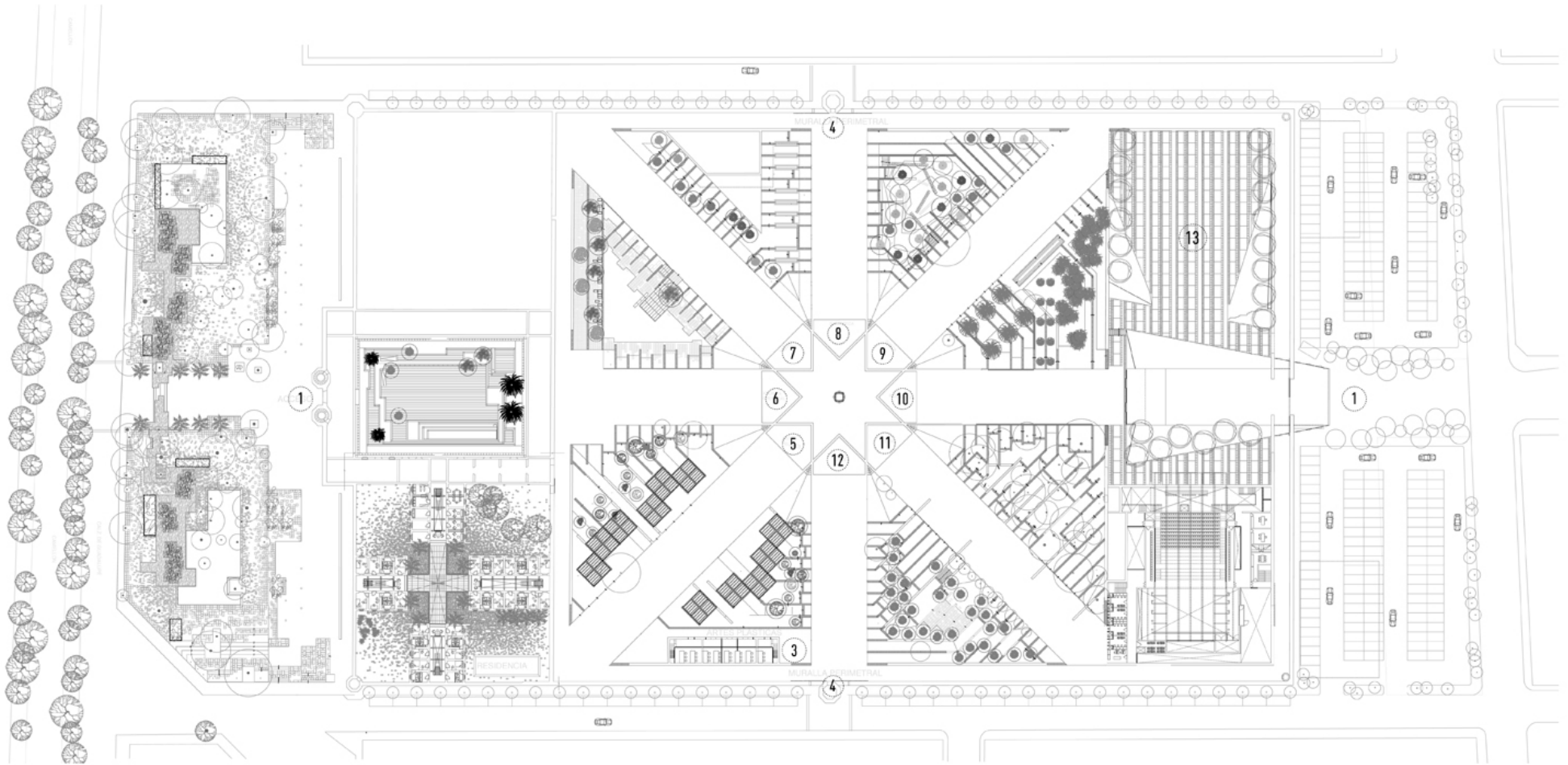
10 LIBRARY

11 THEATRE

12 CLASSROOMS/ LIBRARY

13 OUTDOOR THEATRE

LEVEL 0



- 1 ACCESS / ESPLANADE / SHOP
- 2 RESIDENCY
- 3 FINE ARTS
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- 5 VISUAL ARTS
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- 9 DANCE
- 10 LIBRARY
- 11 THEATRE
- 12 CLASSROOMS/ LIBRARY
- 13 POLYVALENT THEATRE

LEVEL 1

