



Mexicanness and the Rangelian style: impact on Graphic Arts and Furniture Design, 1960s and 1970s

Mexicanidad y estilo rangeliano: impacto en las artes gráficas y el mobiliario, 1960 y 1970

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Abstract

This study on the reinterpretation of mexicanness in the Rangelian style analyzes how Alejandro Rangel Hidalgo blended tradition with modernity in his graphic and furniture design works during the 1960s and 1970s. This phenomenon is framed in a Mexico passing through politic and financial transformations, where tensions between national identity and modernization permeated artistic expression. The research has an interdisciplinary focus, using a documental and critical analysis, along with the study of his works and his socio-cultural context.

Findings show that Rangel Hidalgo developed a style characterized by the use of geometry and symbolism, vibrant colors and complicated patterns that integrate both traditional and modern elements. The furniture design's field, it was noted by its use of local woods and artisanal techniques combined with modernist influences, creating functional and aesthetically unique pieces. His work at the Ex Hacienda de Noguerras is emblematic of his capacity to reconcile the Mexican cultural patrimony with the contemporary demands.

The legacy of Rangel Hidalgo's lies in his contribution to redefining mexicanness, establishing a dialogue between tradition and modernity, which continues inspiring designers and artists in the actual globalized context.

Keywords: rangelian style, Mexican graphic arts, furniture design, modernity and tradition, art and design in Mexico

Resumen

El estudio sobre la reinterpretación de la mexicanidad en el estilo rangeliano analiza cómo Alejandro Rangel Hidalgo fusionó tradición y modernidad en sus obras gráficas y diseño de mobiliario durante las décadas de 1960 y 1970. Este fenómeno se contextualiza en un México en transformación política y económica, donde las tensiones entre identidad nacional y modernización permeaban las expresiones artísticas. La investigación adopta un enfoque interdisciplinario, empleando análisis documental y crítico, así como el estudio de sus obras y su entorno sociocultural.

Los resultados muestran que Rangel Hidalgo desarrolló un estilo caracterizado por el uso de geometría y simbolismo, colores vibrantes y patrones intrincados que integran elementos tradicionales y modernos. En el ámbito del diseño de mobiliario, destacó por su uso de maderas locales y técnicas artesanales combinadas con influencias modernistas, logrando piezas funcionales y estéticamente únicas. Su trabajo en la ex Hacienda de Noguerras es emblemático de su capacidad para reconciliar el patrimonio cultural mexicano con las demandas contemporáneas.

El legado de Rangel Hidalgo reside en su contribución a la redefinición de la mexicanidad, estableciendo un diálogo entre tradición y modernidad, que continúa inspirando a diseñadores y artistas en el contexto globalizado actual.

Palabras clave: estilo rangeliano, artes gráficas mexicanas, diseño de mobiliario, modernidad y tradición, arte y diseño en México

◆ Introduction



he reinterpretation of mexicanness in the Rangelian style during the 1960s and 1970s is set within a complex historical and cultural context, widely explored in academic literature.

Alejandro Rangel Hidalgo's work belongs to a historical period strongly shaped by the various political, economic and social contexts in Mexico, which aim was to homogenize an ethnically, socially and culturally diverse society within an equally diverse territory into a singular Mexican cultural identity, through the dissemination, adoption and appropriation of identity symbols, through the popular and artistic expression. Although this search for Mexican cultural identity began in the years following the War of Independence in the XIX century, it was until the XX century that it was actively promoted by the dominant political classes under a socialist ideology and supposed revolutionary ideals, represented by the work of the three great Mexican muralists: Rivera, Siqueiros and Orozco, and disseminated through the Escuela Libre de Escultura y Talla Directa, better known as *La Esmeralda*.

However, during the 1940s, with the arrival of foreign artists and designers, new influences enabled the emergence of parallel artistic expressions that, while still aiming to convey a Mexican identity in the various artistic manifestations, allowed for more personal reinterpretations based on the artists' own realities and cultural contexts, moving away from the stereotypes promoted by government institutions.

Also, the aesthetic influence of the then already extinct, German school named *Bauhaus*, reached Mexico through figures such as Clara Porset and Michael VanBeuren, and was strengthened in the 1950s with the visit of its former directors, professors and students, such as Walter Gropius, Hannes Meyer, Mies van der Rohe, Josef Albers, who attended the Pan American Congress of Architects (Maseda Martín, 2022).

It was then when the idea of founding the Mexican *Bauhaus* re-emerged, that is to say, an educational institution that would integrate knowledge and skills from different trades to propose an authentically Mexican aesthetic.

It is within this political and cultural context that Alejandro Rangel Hidalgo emerged from the west of the country, educated under the ideals of the Secretariat of Public Education of José Vasconcelos; however, distancing himself from the nationalist percepts, he managed to consolidate his own style in graphics, combining tradition and modernity, and bestowing a unique Mexican cultural identity, not only to his native Colima but to the entire country.

There have been few publications of the work of Alejandro Rangel Hidalgo. One of the most comprehensive is his most complete biography, written by Guillermo García Oropeza (*Alejandro Rangel Hidalgo. Artist and storyteller*, 2003) based on their conversations and his work, which seems more like an anecdotal compilation of the intimate conversations they had during their friendship. This volume is essential for understanding the creative mind of Rangel Hidalgo and much of his work.

On the other hand, the book entitled *Alejandro Rangel Hidalgo: artista universal* (Chávez González, 2001) gathers a series of writings written by different individuals and family members who knew him. It was coordinated by Martha Elena Chávez González and published by the University of Colima as a posthumous tribute to his legacy. Some articles that were published in international magazines were also taken into account, such as the one of the journalist Anita Welch, in Phoenix Magazine, published in 1973, which talked about the furniture of Los Pinos, as well as writings in other local magazines, such as *Decisión de Empresario*, published in 2014 by Oscar A. Suárez, on the Cooperativa Pueblo Blanco, which includes interviews with the artisans who started their training under the mentorship of Alejandro, legitimate heirs of their works and that as of today, lead the Escuela de Artesanos de Pueblo Blanco de Comala, which is still in operation.

Additionally, his graphic work, preserved at the University Museum Alejandro Rangel Hidalgo, form part of the Centro Cultural Nogueras of the University of Colima, where some of his most emblematic furniture and decorative arts pieces, as well as some private collections are also preserved.

The legacy of Alejandro Rangel lies in his graphic works, now considered as part of the contemporary iconography of Colima; as well as his contribution to the productive vocation of the town of Comala, through the training of over 300 artisans at the Escuela de Artesanos de Pueblo Blanco, today known as the Cooperativa de Artesanos de Pueblo Blanco, which allowed solving a social and economic need in Colima, placing it on the map, not only in Mexico, but all around the world, by transcending with his works, to other continents.

◆ Theoretical foundation

The reinterpretation of Mexicanness in the Rangelian style, especially during the 1960s and the 1970s, represents an artistic and cultural dialogue between tradition and modernity. This phenomenon is contextualized within a Mexico undergoing political, economic and social transformations, which deeply influenced artistic expressions, especially in graphic arts and furniture design.

Secco (*Neo-Mexicanism and nafta: Exhibiting National Identity*, 2010) highlights the role of the *Neo-Mexicanism* as a key artistic movement in the making of the post-revolutionary national identity by combining traditional elements with contemporary influences. This approach allowed artists like Alejandro Rangel Hidalgo to develop a unique style that integrates symbolism, geometry, and functionality. Moreover, Rangel's work became a symbol of a renewed Mexicanness that responded both to the pressures of modernity and the need to preserve cultural roots.

In his article "La represión de lo imaginario en el campo literario mexicano del siglo xx", Vélez García (2010) addresses the tensions between nationalist expectations and individual artistic expressions, a phenomenon that was also reflected in the development of the Rangelian style, since the exclusion of narratives not aligned with the predominant nationalism in literature extended to visual disciplines, where cultural authenticity often clashed with hegemonic demands.

Rendón's research (*Mexican Art Exhibitions in New York as Cultural Diplomacy, 1928-1932*, 2016) on cultural diplomacy through the exhibitions of Mexican art, highlights how these initiatives promoted a reinterpretation of Mexicanness at an international level. This context allowed the fusion of local traditions with global aesthetics, a central characteristic of the Rangelian style.

Finally, López Casas ("La evolución del arte fantástico en México: Daniel Lezama", 2016) and Oesterreich (2018) emphasize the impact of cultural appropriation and the tensions between the collective and individual identities in the formation of new aesthetics. Rangel Hidalgo's work, like that of the other exponents of his time, reflects the constant search for balance between authenticity and modernity, becoming a reference for Mexican design and a means to reflect on national identity in a period of increasing globalization.

Through these contributions, it is possible to observe how the reinterpretation of Mexicanness in the Rangelian style was influenced by a network of historical, political and cultural factors that shaped both graphic arts and furniture design in Mexico during the 1960s and 1970s.

◆ Methodological design

The analysis was based on an exhaustive documentary review, including academic texts, historical studies, and works related to Alejandro

Rangel Hidalgo. Primary and secondary sources were consulted, such as specialized articles, exhibition catalogs, interviews and archival documents, in order to obtain a comprehensive view of his career and context.

An interdisciplinary approach combining art history, design, sociology, and cultural studies was employed to identify the sociocultural and artistic influences that shaped his work. In addition, visual and comparative analysis methods were applied to examine the stylistic and thematic evolution in his works.

The research also included the detailed study of graphic works, furniture, and architectural and interior design projects. Formal and stylistic analyses were conducted to understand the relationship between his aesthetics and the international design trends of his time.

Finally, the study was complemented with a critical analysis of the political and economic factors of the period, allowing for contextualization of his production within social and cultural changes of the 1960s and 1970s.

Discussion *Alejandro Rangel Hidalgo*

To fully understand and appreciate the work of Alejandro Rangel Hidalgo, it is essential to consider the political, cultural, social, and family contexts that influenced his artistic development. Rangel Hidalgo, born in 1923 in Colima, received an exceptional training from an early age. Guided by his mother, who fostered the abilities of her three sons, Juan, Javier and Alejandro, who excelled in different disciplines: Juan in carpentry, Javier in blacksmithing and Alejandro in drawing (García Oropeza, 2003).

Alejandro attended elementary school in Colima within the educational program promoted by the Ministry of Public Education in Mexico under the leadership of José Vasconcelos, which emphasized the dissemination of national identity symbols, especially through the Mexican muralist movement. During the 1930s, Rangel Hidalgo moved to Guadalajara, where he continued middle school and high school at the Jesuit Preparatory School. Even though he initially considered studying Law, his passion for art prevailed, influenced by figures such as Julio de la Peña, with whom he worked as a draftsman, and from whom he learned the architectural trade and was introduced to the modern rationalist design of the time (García Oropeza, 2003). He also met architect Ignacio Díaz Morales, from whom he learned about art history, literature and philosophy (García Oropeza, 2003). By that time, Díaz Morales was part of the *integration of plastics art*, which allowed Alejandro to connect with figures such as Luis Barragán and Jesús Reyes Ferreira (García Oropeza, 2003), who were already living in Mexico City. Moreover, Alejandro

constantly traveled to the capital for professional reasons, allowing him to interact with various important figures from the cultural, artistic and political spheres.

At this time, so-called regionalist architecture, led by Barragán, Castellanos and others, had already consolidated a style that sought the essence of Mexican architecture. This type of architecture was characterized by volumetric facades and rustic textures, using materials such as wood, tiles and mosaics, along with an earthy color palette (Olate Venegas, Díaz García and Fernandez Martín, 1990). Beyond architecture, interiors were complemented by furniture and accessories designed by the architects themselves, inspired by the artisanal tradition of the country estates and villas of Jalisco, a style that resonated with Rangel's own roots in Colima.

The collaboration with these architects not only inspired Rangel in the furniture design, but also reinforced his commitment to preserving regional authenticity. Each piece, crafted with local woods and traditional techniques, combined functionality and aesthetic, reflecting the richness of the local craftsmanship.

Between the 1930s and 1950s, while the rationalist principles in design and architecture were spreading from Mexico City, a series of actions promoted by some architects and designers with a strong ideological conviction also took place. Through their works, they encouraged the professionalization of traditional crafts, convinced that design was a means to improve the material living conditions of the people, as well as a form of symbolic expression to define and consolidate national identity. They did so by reinterpreting a wide variety of objects considered folk art and/or craft, giving them a new modern meaning for an emerging urban context.

In 1947, at the age of 24, Alejandro received a scholarship to travel to Spain and France; during those two years, in addition to designing scenery for *ballets* and operas, he visited museums and art centers. Flemish painting left such an impression on him that his work was influenced by the perfection of the detail, perceptible only with the aid of a magnifying glass. Upon his return, he continued his work as a poster illustrator for the government of Jalisco, designing the poster for the 1st Gran Feria of Jalisco in 1953, commissioned by the then governor Jesús González Gallo. He was also the creative mind behind the new logo for Guadalajara, a stylized profile of the cathedral consisting of two triangles separated by a semicircle, which has been used ever since as a symbol of the city.

In 1955, he decided to return to the Ex Hacienda de Nogueras, near the town of Comala, where he set up two rooms in the large house as his personal studio. From Nogueras, he continued working as a designer and illustrator, collaborating on covers and vignettes for books by

prominent Mexican and foreign writers, such as *Pedro Páramo* (1955), by Juan Rulfo; *Carta a un zapatero que compuso mal unos zapatos*, by Juan José Arreola; *El alcalde de Lagos y otras consejas* (1957), by Alfonso de Alba Martín; *Flor de juegos antiguos* (1958), by Agustín Yáñez; *Un milagro para México* (1964), by Josefina Niggli, and *La sombra niña* (1965), by Griselda Álvarez.

As a painter and illustrator, he developed a very particular style for which he became internationally renowned, thanks to his series on Mexican themes and traditions, as well as his *Pre-hispanic Angels, Angels of this World and Christmas collections*: 200 different cards published as Christmas cards by the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) and the New York Graphic Society, which were awarded in 1963 and of which more than eight million were sold (Rangel Hidalgo, 2021).

In these series, he illustrated boys and girls dressed in elaborate traditional costumes from each culture, Mexican ethnic group, and country. Each card included objects and accessories representing their traditions during a universal occasion like Christmas; these details, along with the clothing, expressed the cultural identity of each social group, region, or country. The resulting work was the product of a process of analysis, synthesis, and abstraction of cultural symbolic values, while maintaining his own distinctive style reflected in each of her works. His pictorial work is recognized for the children with doll faces, illustrating a fantasy world that earned him the nickname: "Painter of innocence."

In the series *Pre-Hispanic Angels*, the figures are depicted wearing embroidered garments, ear ornaments, necklaces, and bracelets, as well as the distinctive headdresses characteristic of each culture. They are accompanied by a clay urn decorated with the same tradition's pastillage, sgraffito, and colors (see Figure 1). For example, the *Angel of Colima* is shown with a red clay urn shaped like a *tlalchichi* dog, identical to the thousands found in the Nogueras area, which are characteristic of western cultures. The *Angel of Teotihuacan* carries a polychrome tripod urn with a lid; the *Zapotec Angel* wears a large headdress of decorated thread and a filigree gold pectoral, while the *Totonac Angel*, dressed in garments adorned with golden beads, is depicted smiling openly, just as it appeared in the archaeological remains of the Veracruz region.



Figure 1. *Postcards of the collection Pre-Hispanic Angels: Angel of Colima, Angel of Teotihuacán; Zapotec Angel and Totonaca Angel.*
 Source: *Compiled by authors, private collection*

In the collection *Angels of this World* (see Figure 2), the costume, hairstyle and traditional accessories of each country are accompanied by a flower and a bird, also indigenous, that represent them. Thus, while the *Mexican Angel* is represented as an indigenous child wearing an embroidered cotton shirt and pants, with a wool sarape, straw hat, and huarache sandals, accompanied by a red macaw and an urn with the poinsettia flower, the *Angel of Spain* is represented by a maja with her shawl and linen skirt, complemented by a *peineta*, hairnet, and fan, accompanied by partridges and a vase with red carnations, complemented with comb, net and fan, accompanied by partridges and a vase with red carnations, and the *Angel of Japan* wears the traditional silk kimono, the obi with delicate prints, *zori* sandals, and *tori* socks, with an elaborate hairstyle and hairpins adorned with silk beads and tassels; accompanied by an onagadori rooster and a bouquet of lotus flowers.



Figure 2. *Postcards of the collection Angels of this World; Angels of Spain, Angel of Japan, Angel Mexico and Angel of Alaska.*
 Source: *Compiled by authors, private collection.*

In both collections, although they are simple, synthesized shapes, the details in the textures, brightness, colors, and shades of each garment

stand out. Whether it is simple embroidered cotton, intricate lace, or soft silk, it manages to connect the senses of sight and touch, and through the flowers and the birds, also evoke the senses of smell and hearing.

The illustrations of the *Christmas* collection, which portrays the different ways of celebrating this date in different countries and historical periods, depict a couple dressed in their traditional attire, accompanied by furniture and objects from each period and/or region; In the *Byzantine Christmas, 5th century*, the figures wear heavy velvety clothes with gold brocade details, dressed with headdresses and jewelry typical of that era. At the center is a piece of furniture with carved arabesques beneath a mosaic of golden tesserae, representing the Baby Jesus seated on a throne with precious stones embedded in a pantocrator pose, the whole set as if it were the emperors Justinian and Theodora as children.

The same level of detail appears in the cards corresponding to the *Italian Renaissance, Spanish Baroque, American Federal, 18th Century or Russian, 19th Century*, in which the attire and accessories as well as the attitudes of the people, furniture, and religious objects correspond to the historical period and the culture or country in question. The detailing of textiles, jewelry, and furniture connect the senses and that is achieved with Rangel's deep knowledge of history, art, cultures, and their identities, as well as his ability to capture the essence of celebrations and traditions with stylistic and emotional precision.

Although it was his cards that went around the world, bringing him international fame, his work as an illustrator is far more extensive, covering diverse formats and themes. For example, in addition to Christmas, he presents Mary in her different invocations: *del Carmen, de Dolores or Dolorosa, de Guadalupe, de los Mares*, and even the Mexican Baroque of Tonantzintla, in which he illustrates in his singular style, the altarpiece and the exuberant decoration of the interior of the church of Santa María Tonantzintla, in Puebla; thus reflecting his interest in religious iconography and his ability to reinterpret these themes with a personal and contemporary vision.

The graphic synthesis of an artistic work by Alejandro Rangel Hidalgo, specifically of his *Pastores de México* collection, is expressed through the simplification of forms, the use of clean lines, and the reduction of elements to their fundamental essence. These pieces are characterized by an economy of detail and a relentless pursuit of visual purity.

This artistic approach not only highlights the intrinsic beauty of each element but also reveals the depth of the cultural message they carry. Rangel Hidalgo manages to convey the essence of Mexico's rich cultural tradition through the subtlety and clarity of his minimalist style, representing symbolic elements in a simple, yet powerful, and evocative way. This refined, intentional aesthetic allows the audience to focus completely on the essence of the work itself, emphasizing the beauty and meaning

of each cultural element present in his creations, thus transforming the way the audience engages with the artwork and the tradition it represents. It can be defined as a stylized and minimalist representation that emphasizes visual economy through precise lines and simplified geometric forms.

In this work (see Figure 3), the formal simplicity of the compositional elements is manifested in:

- 1. Use of basic shapes:** Characters and elements are reduced to essential geometric shapes, eliminating unnecessary details.
- 2. Controlled chromatic palette:** The use of earthy and warm colors predominates, in harmony with Mexican cultural traditions; they contrast with vibrant colors in elements that emphasize the theme, adding a skill of his pictorial technique with nuances that give a subtle movement and volume.
- 3. Compositional balance:** Each figure and object is carefully arranged to convey harmony and visual balance.
- 4. Reference to tradition:** The elements that accompany the character reflect the essence of Mexican traditions, capturing its identity through a modern graphic style.



Figure 3. Pastores Collection. Acrylic technique on mahogany plywood. 1976.
Source: Compiled by authors, private collection.

Alejandro Rangel Hidalgo employs geometric elements in an ingenious and creative way to represent and celebrate the richness of Mexican

cultural tradition. Through shapes, such as circles, triangles and rectangles, he manages to create visual and artistic compositions that evoke the impressive stylistic heritage of Mexican culture across time. These geometric forms not only add modernity and freshness to the works but also serve as a solid reminder of the deep cultural roots that inspire the collection as a whole.

Thus, the geometric elements are not only aesthetically appealing, captivating the viewer's gaze, but also carry with them a deep symbolic meaning that fuses graphic modernity with cultural tradition in a way that is unique and truly distinctive in Rangel Hidalgo's work. This singular fusion of styles allows his works to serve as a bridge between past and present, generating an artistic dialogue that invites reflection on cultural identity in the contemporary context. This graphic synthesis succeeds in conveying a deep connection to Mexican cultural roots while highlighting the artist's ability to synthesize visual richness into an accessible and contemporary artistic language.

It is about idealized childhood, in diverse attitudes and contexts of *costumbrista* character; children who appear perfect, who move away from ordinary childhood to become archetypes. With a subtle, sinister quality, they are children who do not muss their hair, who do not sweat, who do not play, and certainly never shout, immersed in an orderly and silent universe.

On the other hand, the flora and fauna of his beloved Ex Hacienda de Nogueras were also a reference for his work: orange trees with orange blossoms, pomegranates, strawberries, tuberose, bluebells, doves, cardinals, quails, swallows, owls, and other species that inhabited the gardens. His botanical knowledge is represented in his illustrations of fruits, large towers made of tropical fruits that serve as decoration and sometimes as a background to welcome visitors, with the legend "Esta es tu casa".

Crotons, those plants with large variegated leaves in different shades of green, yellow or red, also became worthy subjects in a collection in his highly characteristic style: a blend between the abstraction and synthesis of modernism with the meticulous detail of the Flemish Renaissance, without leaving aside, at times, the experimentation with Expressionism.

The techniques used were basically *gouache*, acrylic and oil paints for his easel works, on *Fabriano*, masonite or wood panels, as well as mixed techniques with markers and India ink, as in his *caravels*.

Through his works, Alejandro Rangel Hidalgo celebrated his ideal, fantastic world that expresses peace and harmony in the faces of his characters with the composition, and colors he used, far from the revolutionary ideals of the three great Mexican muralists and the dramatic

Expressionism of his contemporaries. As well as Rufino Tamayo, Alejandro chose his own interpretation of Mexicanness and, rather than with European artistic trends, he was inspired by 14th century Flemish painting and pays attention to detail.

This Rangelian Mexicanness can also be seen in his furniture design, where the artist takes as direct reference the Novo-Hispanic period and some details of the Renaissance. Alejandro Rangel reinterpreted the forms and adapted the furniture, both in size and function, to the needs of 1970s society, taking care of quality and details to the maximum. Thus, he designed dining room sets, living rooms, bedrooms, and complementary pieces such as credenzas, chests, cupboards, desks, bookcases, reception tables, coffee tables, and side tables, as well as a wide variety of decorative items, giving each piece its own identity through painted decoration on drawer fronts, door panels, and the top backs of chairs and armchairs.

Although the application of paint on wooden furniture is not new, having been done since the lacquered furniture of the 17th and 18th centuries, to those known as *apple and pear* furniture of the 19th century, this technique was used to decorate the pieces, the novelty lies in the expressive repertoire of these paintings that belong to the same style of easel paintings, lithographs and illustrations of the world of Alejandro Rangel Hidalgo and in the application of the *gouache* technique, combining the use of stencils, hand painting for details and application of transparent varnish of thicker consistency to achieve a three-dimensional effect in some pictorial elements.

In the various pieces of furniture, rectilinear volumes predominate, with the exception of the butaque. Turned details are frequently used, especially in the upper finials of chests of drawers, buffets, and seats, which may take the form of a drop, a pineapple, a single or double sphere, among others. Molded panels are also a defining feature, appearing on the fronts of dressers, chests of drawers, buffets, credenzas, bureaus, and even on the skirts of seats and headboards. The simplest versions are covered with a light coat of paint, sometimes directly on the wood, sometimes over gold leaf, with hand-painted decorations applied on top according to the chosen theme, which makes each piece of furniture set unique. Fewer in number are the pieces that combine wood with wrought iron techniques, in which curvilinear forms inspired by vegetation prevail, ending in flowers or leaves, particularly in headboards and table bases of all kinds (see Figure 4).



Figure 4. Chest of drawers and armchair model *Granadas*. Molded and painted mahogany wood. Gouache technique.

Source: Collection of Alejandro Rangel Hidalgo, courtesy of the University Museum Rangel Hidalgo.

The same representations are repeated in the products made in wrought iron, such as chandeliers, lamps, flying buttresses, flower pots and other decorative objects that are also currently made by the artisans of Comala, trained in the School of Crafts of Comala, for which Alejandro himself rescued and reinterpreted -in his very particular vision- the old system of workshop-school, master-apprentice, to ensure that all students understood the particularities of the Rangelian style and could reproduce it in all the pieces.

Little by little they were positioning themselves in the regional urban market, since in addition to making furniture pieces for restaurants and hotels in the states of Colima, Michoacán and Jalisco, they also received orders from prominent figures in Mexico's political and social scene, such as Luis Echeverría Álvarez, who, when he visited the workshop, personally ordered some pieces of furniture for his private residence, and later requested the furnishing of a room in the presidential residence of Los Pinos, which was named *Sala Comala* (Welch, 1973) (see Figure 5).



Figure 5. Sala Comala. *Los Pinos* official residence. Mexico City.
 Source: Alejandro Rangel Hidalgo Collection, courtesy of the Museo Universitario.
 Alejandro Rangel Hidalgo.

During this same period, the School received orders to furnish and decorate Mexican embassies around the world and, consequently, large orders came in for hotels and the Rosita restaurants in the cities of Osaka and Kyoto, in Japan (*El Comala de Hoy*, 2018); for the restaurants Los Chiles and Las Fuentes, in the city of San Francisco, California, in the neighboring country of the United States of America, and later for countries on the European continent, such as Germany, Italy, France, Spain and England (Suárez, 2014), which put them on the world stage, for the design and quality of their products, as well as for representing the tradition and modernity of the third quarter of the twentieth century of Mexican design.

We can reiterate, then, that the Rangelian style is known for its structured creative freedom, combining elements of realism and abstraction. This approach transforms the organic world into geometric representations, endowed with a particular character that revitalizes the creations. Some key aspects of Rangel Hidalgo's style are the following:

1. Geometry and symbolism: He uses geometric shapes to represent organic elements, reflecting the ability of Mexican culture to fuse the modern with the traditional.
2. Cultural themes: His works include geometric figures, angels, vegetation and traditional clothing, celebrating Mexican cultural diversity.
3. Colors and patterns: He employs vibrant colors and intricate patterns that add dynamism and cultural significance to his creations.

Cultural context: Her art is a statement of cultural identity, preserving and promoting Mexicanness in contemporary art.

In terms of the impact on graphic arts and furniture design during the 1960s and 1970s, the analysis suggests that the revalorization of the indigenous laid the groundwork for a broader reinterpretation of Mexicanness in design. The influence of modernist aesthetics, combined with the recuperation of indigenous cultural elements, resulted in a unique style that sought to celebrate national identity, though often at the expense of authentic representation of indigenous communities.

Furniture

In addition to his contributions to Mexican graphics, Rangel Hidalgo is especially known for his design of wooden furniture, in which he combines artisanal techniques with a modernist approach. Some of his main contributions in this field include:

- ◆ **Polychrome wood furniture:** Rangel used local woods, such as cedar and parota, to create furniture that reflected the cultural richness of Mexico. His pieces stand out for their hand-carved details, inspired by pre-Hispanic motifs, Mexican flora and fauna, as well as geometric figures.
- ◆ **Functionality and aesthetics:** Unlike much furniture of the time, his designs prioritized both functionality and aesthetics. His creations, although richly ornamented, were practical pieces for everyday use, which made them attractive to both the local and international markets.
- ◆ **Serial furniture projects:** Rangel also ventured into mass production, while maintaining the handcrafted spirit. Collaborated with local workshops to create furniture for hotels and residences, which helped revitalize Mexican craftsmanship and generate employment in the region.

Contributions to interior design

Alejandro Rangel Hidalgo also had a significant impact on interior design. His contributions can be seen in several projects, both public and private:

- ◆ **Hotel and residential projects:** During the 1960s and 1970s, Rangel worked on the interior design of numerous hotels in Mexico, with a focus on tourist destinations such as Manzanillo, Colima, his home state. His designs incorporate regional elements to create a welcoming and authentic ambiance, integrating his unique furnishings with local architectural elements.
- ◆ **Integration of art and design:** Rangel had a holistic approach to interior design, in which he fused his knowledge of graphic arts with the creation of unique spaces. He decorated interiors with murals, paintings and furniture designed by himself, generating a cohesive style that reflected the essence of Mexicanness.
- ◆ **Use of local materials:** His ability to work with local materials, such as wood, wrought iron and clay, allowed him to design interiors that were an extension of their natural surroundings while maintaining cultural authenticity.

Architectural contributions

Although not an architect by training, Rangel Hidalgo collaborated on several architectural projects, especially in Colima:

- ◆ **Houses and public spaces:** Rangel designed and decorated several private homes, in addition to collaborating in the planning and decoration of public spaces. He is recognized for his ability to integrate architectural design with the natural and cultural environment, creating spaces that reflected a harmony between the modern and the traditional.
- ◆ **The Alejandro Rangel Hidalgo University Museum:** A significant example of his architectural legacy is the Alejandro Rangel Hidalgo University Museum, located in the former Hacienda de Nogueras, Comala, Colima. Rangel contributed to the restoration of this colonial hacienda, transforming it into a space that combines art, culture and design. Not only his paintings and furniture are exhibited here, but also his collection of pre-Columbian art.

Graphic work

In the field of graphic work, Rangel is widely recognized for his series of Christmas cards for Unicef during the 1960s and 1970s, which were an

international success. His illustrations combined Mexican folkloric motifs with a modernist style that appealed both in Mexico and abroad.

- ◆ **Illustrations for books and publications:** In addition to his work for Unicef, Rangel illustrated several books and magazines, bringing a unique visual style that stood out for its clean lines, vibrant colors and stylized figures.
- ◆ **Mexican themes:** His graphic work is not only recognized for its distinctive style, but also for its subject matter, which always sought to celebrate Mexican culture through idealized depictions of rural life, festivities and indigenous traditions.
- ◆ His work is considered part of the contemporary iconography representative of the state of Colima (Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes/Secretaría de Cultura del Estado de Colima, 2012).

Legacy and recognition

Alejandro Rangel Hidalgo's legacy lives on through his influence on contemporary Mexican design. His ability to fuse tradition and modernity has inspired generations of designers and artists.

- ◆ **Cultural promotion:** Throughout his life, Rangel was a tireless promoter of Mexican culture and the arts. He organized handicraft workshops in Colima, fostering the development of artisanal skills in local communities.
- ◆ **Museum and foundation:** His legacy is preserved in the University Museum that bears his name, as well as in the Rangel Hidalgo Foundation, which continues to promote art education and design in Mexico.

◆ **Conclusions** Alejandro Rangel Hidalgo was a visionary who transcended the boundaries between art, furniture design, interior design, and architecture. His work stands as a testament to the ability of Mexican artists to innovate and preserve their cultural heritage, creating a style that is both deeply Mexican and universal.

Regarding the reinterpretation of Mexican identity in the Rangelian style, it is a multifaceted process, reflecting tensions between tradition and modernity, individuality and collectivity, as well as authenticity and commercialization, in a context of political and economic transformation, which becomes an artistic trend that seeks to reconcile modernity with the rich Mexican cultural tradition. This artistic phenomenon not only reflects a renewed search for national identity but is also deeply

rooted in a historical context that has shaped the graphic arts and furniture design in Mexico.

Alejandro Rangel Hidalgo operated in a context of duality: while seeking to affirm a national identity, he faced the pressures of a globalized market. His work at the Ex Hacienda de Nogueras is an emblematic example of his ability to integrate historical and contemporary elements, becoming a benchmark in Mexican design.

The reinterpretation of Mexican identity in the Rangel style represents a synthesis between tradition and modernity, individuality and collectivity. Alejandro Rangel Hidalgo not only contributed to the development of graphic arts and furniture design in Mexico but also created a dialogue between cultural heritage and contemporary demands. This legacy, deeply rooted in Mexican culture, continues to inspire new generations of artists and designers. ●

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