

A Criticism by its Author of the Route of Friendship Project

The importance of the Route of Friendship lies in the fact that it poses a question to which a satisfactory answer has never been given. The original project, which was to place monumental sculptures along the motorway, could not be carried out for various reasons. If it had been possible to include these works within the town itself, the sculptors would have been confronted with the major, but interesting task, of how to set their works within the existing buildings; how to embellish the town. No doubt this would have been ten times more costly. The commissioned artists would have had to travel to Mexico several times to form their own teams of Mexican artists and architects. The monuments would have been much more imposing. There would have been permit difficulties and the problem of finding artists who would have willingly accepted an atmosphere created by factories, supermarkets, skyscrapers, individual houses, etc. and who, at the same time, would have been capable of creating a harmonious character for the road. This idea, representing friendship between nations and continents, was not possible.

The project was reduced to a more or less successful decoration of an almost empty section of the 'Periphery Ring.' Some of the sculptures were created without thought being given to the play of light and shade or to their appearance from a car passing at top speed. These works would have been better in a public park. However, from the outset I had opposed the traditional idea of a park.

The road offers many favourable aesthetic elements, sudden curves, rises and descents, exits and entrances, although it was constructed by civil engineers and not artists. Sculptures placed on the verges follow one upon the other like an exhibition. They need no urban background. They could have been enhanced if the artists had collaborated with the civil engineers from the beginning.

By using a uniform colour one could have gained much. In painting a whole quarter of a town, or at least the buildings along an arterial road in one colour one eliminates many ugly and muddled forms. The colour creates a group (that can be alternated with green zones or some other element of contrast).

On the 'Route of Friendship' it was necessary to make diversity a virtue. The sculp-

tures were painted in different vivid colours and a harmonious succession was sought. Perhaps a uniformity of colour would have been better. They had to be painted because the grey cement is depressing and uninteresting and does not give the best visual effect in the opaque atmosphere of this region.

In spite of everything, I think this was a worthwhile experience. It drew artists from the sterile isolation of commercial galleries and underlined an urgent urban need: the aesthetic improvement of avenues and roads.

During the inaugural session of the International Reunion of Sculptors (17th June 1968) I spoke of a dream that I have had for almost 10 years: replan the whole country on the basis of 'stations,' huge vertical towers, 150 to 200 metres high, approximately 150 kilometres apart, built along the roads from the northern frontier (USA) to Guatemala from the Atlantic (Veracruz) to the Pacific (Acapulco) passing mountains, deserts, jungles and cities (bypassing the latter). New towns would be born in the areas architectonically empty, towns begun by a large artistic ensemble. The enormous funds necessary to carry out such a scheme would draw vast sums of private capital. In the huge under-developed areas new towns would arise (first hotels, motels, service stations, markets, schools) round the artistic monuments. Tourism could thus be extended throughout the country. Mexico would become the country with the 20th-century Renaissance of the Arts, like Italy in former times, and would attract tourists from all over the world. The 'artistic planning' in each 'station' would be controlled by a team (numerous but carefully chosen) of architects, artists, engineers, sociologists, economists, etc. who would not only take charge of the main monument but also of the homogeneous evolution of the growing towns and roads linking the stations.

The fact that I know that I can still keep this dream fills me with hope that the world is nearer to a joint solution of its problems and to a homogeneous future in spite of the wave of pessimism that floods over me every morning on reading my paper.

Mathias Goeritz



Photo Garay

'The Great Bear', sculpture by Mathias Goeritz. A group of 7 columns, 15 metres high, in painted concrete erected at the entrance to the 'Palais des Sports' (Félix Candela, Antonio Peyri and Enrique Castañeda Tamborrel, architects).

«La Grande Ourse», sculpture de Mathias Goeritz. Ensemble de sept colonnes de 15 mètres de haut en béton peint élevé à l'entrée du Palais des sports.

«Der grosse Bär», Skulptur von Mathias Goeritz. Eine Gruppe mit sieben 15 m hohen, gestrichenen Betonsäulen am Eingang des Sportpalastes.

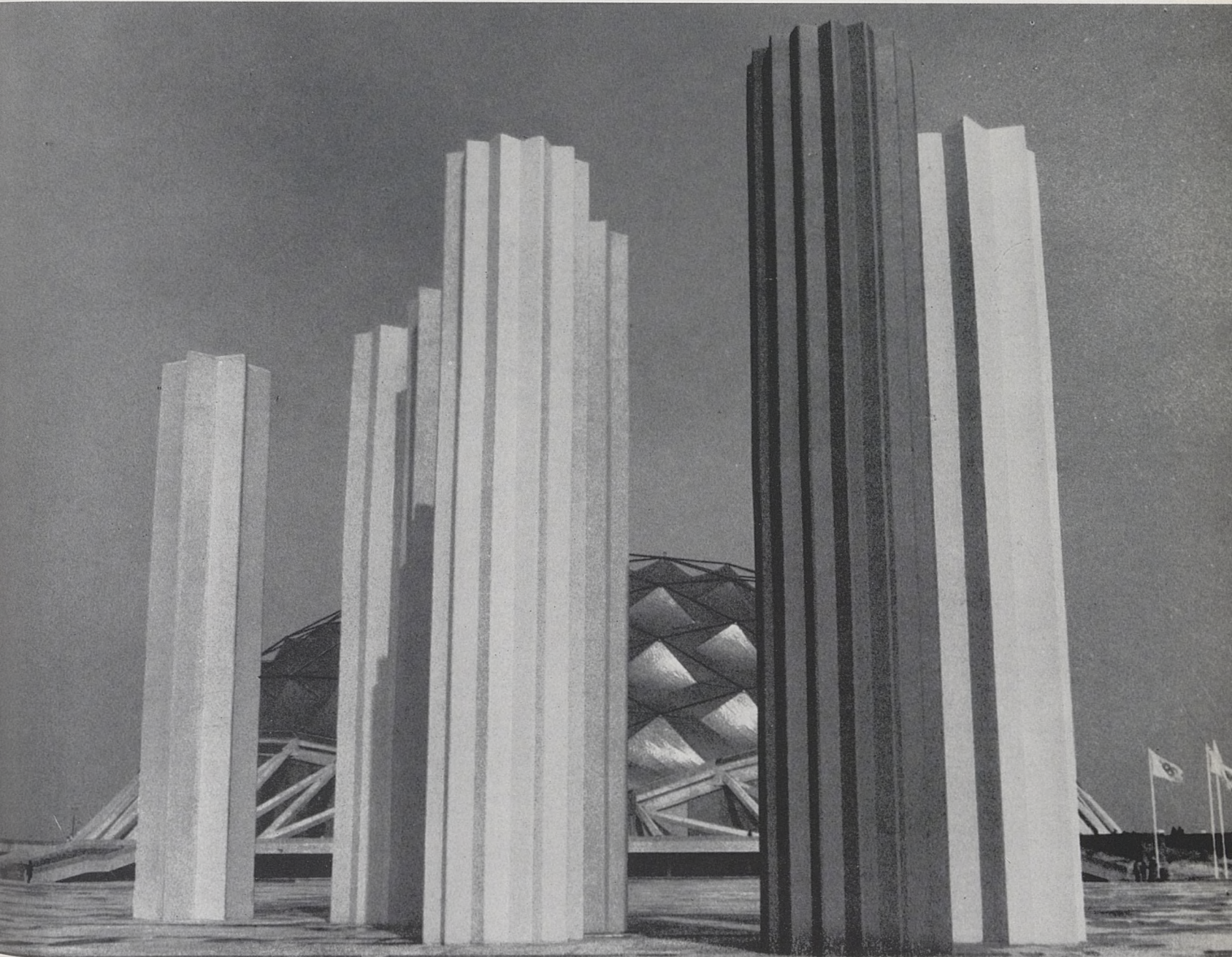


Photo Christian Soucayet