

THE IOC AT THE EXPO



The pavilion was designed by Pedro Ramirez Vazquez, IOC member in Mexico, who also created the Mexican pavilion.

By Andy Robinson

Spain will have had more than its share of momentous celebrations in 1992. Before the Games in Barcelona, Seville is hosting the World Fair, officially opened by King Juan Carlos. The IOC was keen to have the Olympic Movement represented at this exceptional event, the gateway to the future. The Olympic Pavilion is officially inaugurated by the Executive Board during its meeting in Seville from 7th to 9th May. Andy Robinson takes us on a tour of the pavilion after a stroll through the shady streets of the Expo.

The island of la Cartuja (Charterhouse), once a parched wasteland embraced by a meander in the river Guadalquivir, whose dust was turned to mud by occasional floods and put to use in a solitary ceramic factory, will house the 1992 Universal Exposition. From April 20th until October, 18 million visitors are expected to allow their curiosity to get the better of them and try to define for themselves what Expo commercial director Samuel Ortega calls "something between a trade fair, a circus and a city of the future".

That Seville's urbanists are as ambitious as Barcelona's will strike foreign visitors before even reaching the city. Those who come via Madrid will likely take the high speed train which has taken three hours off the journey from the capital to an extraordinary temporary terminus on the Expo site which the uninitiated might take for a circus marquee. Others will disembark at Rafael Moneo's 21st century neo Gothic airport and - if they have already visited 1992's other mega event - compare it with Ricardo Bofill's 21st century neoclassical airport terminal in Barcelona.

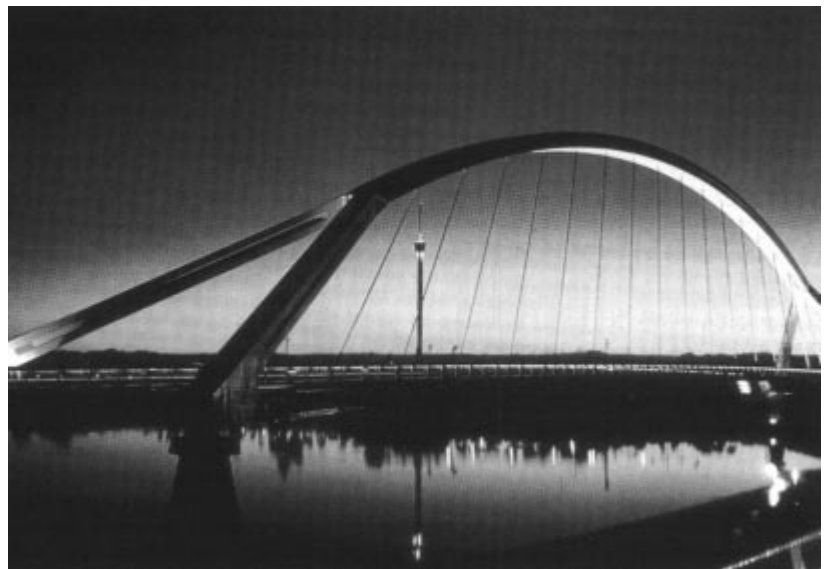
WORK FOR A GREAT DREAM, AS IN BARCELONA

The similarity between the two city's infrastructural projects does not end in their airports. As in Barcelona, 1992 will take Seville's urban fabric from the post-war to the next century. Whereas the leitmotif for Barcelona's Olympic regeneration was 'cara al mar' ('turn to face the sea'), Sevillians have borne the apparently interminable screeches of pneumatic drills and excavators by closing their eyes and dreaming of a city with its 'cara al río' (face to the river). Seven bridges across the Guadalquivir have been built for the Expo and the flood wall - made obsolete by the canalization of the stretch of river most susceptible to flooding - demolished. As in Barcelona, railways that tore the city apart have been rerouted to an impressive new station designed by Antonio Ortiz. Barcelona mayor Pasqual Maragall's prayer to the Magi in January 1988 that the ring road around the city be completed by 1992 has been repeated in Seville whose narrow streets had choked

with through-traffic from Cádiz to Huelva. The kings and the Spanish ministry for public works seem set to perform the miracle.

ARCHITECTURE AND VEGETATION

At the Expo itself pavilions representing the international community and Spanish regional governments as well as outstanding commercial interests will provide a theme tour of the discoveries of humankind, symbolized by Columbus's unexpected discovery of the New World, on its 500th anniversary. An advanced network of fibre optic telecommunications now spreads out beneath the four and a half million square metre island where a carpet



The Universal Expo in Seville, a bridge to the future.

of lush vegetation has been laid thanks to hydraulic and solar technology.

The pavilion architecture is eclectic to say the least. Sevillian architect, Antonio Vázquez Consuegra's, Navigation Pavilion supports a curved wooden roof which Consuegra suggests maintains a harmonious balance between the river and other



Expo buildings. Most visitors, says the site guide, liken it to a ship's hull, a comparison welcomed but not foreseen by the architect. Oriol Bohigas, mastermind of Barcelona's Olympic project has designed the Pavilion of the Future. The British pavilion, Nicholas Grimshaw's glass cube with internal waterfalls, was one of the first to be completed. The Japanese pavilion is a traditional log cabin whose front door gives alarmingly onto a curved steel helter skelter. Of the hundred or so pavilions about twenty will be honoured with a permanent place on the island.

THE OLYMPIC PAVILION

One of the permanent pavilions is that of the International Olympic Committee. Mexican architect and member of the IOC, Pedro Ramirez Vázquez has found the inspiration for his design in the classical origins of the Olympics, albeit with a post-modern twist. The IOC pavilion resembles a small Parthenon yet its columns are made of glass not marble and its interior is solid. Rafael de la Hoz, Ramirez's assistant architect, calls it "the negative of a Greek temple". The pavilion is seven metres high and encloses around 1000 square metres of floor space. Its interior is divided into two areas, one devoted to an exhibition of the history of the Games and the other to displays provided by future Olympic hosts. Coca-Cola, the Olympics' indefatigable sponsor, has generously contributed the construction.

The simplicity of the pavilion interior has helped Pedro Ramirez avoid the problems that have beset other Expo architects who have been forced to invent functions for their pavilions which have subsequently been changed by interior designers and theme museographers. What Rafael de la Hoz describes as "having to design the suit before the body", led to the resignation of Julio Cano Lasso, architect of the Spanish pavilion. Ramirez's long experience of architecture for major international events - he designed the Aztec stadium for the 1968 Mexican Olympics - has made him flexible enough to adapt to the imperatives of the Expo, says de la Hoz. Ramirez has also designed the Mexican pavilion for the Expo.

Like Josep María Abad, chief executive officer of the Barcelona Olympic Committee, who has assured thousands of journalists that the 1992 Olympics will be self-financing, Samuel Ortega maintains calmly that the income from sponsors, on-site sales and entrance fees "is assured" and will cover the Expo's 180,000 million pesetas (1,800 million US dollars) costs. Ortega dismisses any suggestion that staging two self-financing events of such dimensions in the same year has stretched the business

community's financial resources to the limit: "There are few common elements between the two events", he says. "The Olympics relies on the sales of TV rights for most of its revenue whereas, since the Expo lasts for six months, visitors' actual consumption provides a large part of its income". Enrique Moreno de la Cova, deputy commissioner to the IOC at the Expo agrees with Ortega: "The two events are different enough to be complementary", he says.

A.R.

(Previous page) Glass replaces marble in the columns of this modern temple.

Seville's Universal Expo receives its first guests.

