THE FRAMING OF PATRONAGE IN MEXICO CITY'S HISTORIC CENTER:
Project for the **Centro Historico** Foundation in the Ex-Royal Convent of Jesus Maria

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree
Master of Science in Historic Preservation

Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and preservation
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May 2008
a. Statement of purpose:

The current regeneration of the Historic Center of Mexico City has brought new light into the relation between public space and private patronage. Since 1980, several projects have tried to rescue the Historic Center from the disrepair it had fallen into. The dramatic progress sparked in 2001 by the financial and logistic support of the companies and foundations related to Carlos Slim, has alarmed many of the preeminence of private patronage in such a significant public space. However, this situation is reflective of a strong tradition of architectural and urbanistic sponsorship during the Vice-Regal period.

My thesis unites a study of two historic cases: the distinctive corner niches of the Historic Center and the case of the Ex-Royal Convent of Jesus Maria (built in 1580 and consistently worked upon ever since). Reinterpreting the history of the ex-convent and the architectural representation of patronage in the niches can guide a design to reinforce the private sector's commitment to the Center. The Centro Historico Foundation will thus adaptively use the ex-Royal Convent for its headquarters, using contemporary architecture to represent the two sides of patronage, munificence and interest, reflected in principles derived from the study of corner niches and the complex history of the building. The displayed and concealed sides of the project will suggest a new way to look at corner niches, to read beyond their ornamental function and discover the subtlety of their most "guarded" meaning, helping inspire new projects in the center that deal with niches and promoting their restoration and presentation.

b. Thesis question:

Can contemporary architecture enter into a relationship of resonance with the culture of patronage that has shaped the Historic Center of Mexico City?

Test:

Measure up to the principles derived from the examples of the past.