

CASE STUDY

Universidad Central de Venezuela, Caracas, Venezuela: a Modernist campus (1944–77 and continuing)

In October 1943, General Isaías Medina Angarita, the democratically elected President of Venezuela, under pressure from the then rector of the Central University of Venezuela, Dr Antonio José Castillo, announced the decision to build the university anew. It would be a University City on a new site on the old Ibarra Estate located at the edge of central Caracas. The Ministry of Public Works made the choice under pressure from Dr Armando Vegas who recognized the potential of a central site with good foundation conditions as better than the others available at that time. Carlos Raúl Villanueva (see Figure 7.26), Paris educated and Venezuela's leading Modernist architect,

was brought on board the planning team almost immediately. The development and implementation of the master plan was almost entirely in his hands, but marked by rivalries amongst politicians, university officials and designers. One of the problems was that although the project was initiated under Medina Angarita, its development took place under the dictatorship of General Marcos Pérez Jiménez and many people involved in the university did not want to be seen to be associated with his regime.

Villanueva's first scheme for the university (1944) was a symmetrical, axial Baroque one based on the classical discipline of his education in Paris (see Figure 7.27a). At the



Source: Leal (1991); courtesy of the Archivo Fundación Villanueva

Figure 7.26 Carlos Raúl Villanueva.