

## Popayán, Colombia

Organization of American States and Museum of Modern Art of Latin America  
Text and photographs by Carlos Delgado

The city of Popayán was founded in 1537 in the former site of two small Indian towns. Like all the Spanish cities of the time, it is based on an octagonal plan that starts in the main square. In this square, the main temple and municipal council can be found.

The houses are aligned following a common wall that is prolonged by an eave which offers the pedestrians protection from the sun and rain. Inside the rooms are arranged around a central patio flanked by arcades or corridors.

In 1736 the city was destroyed by an earthquake and its inhabitants constructed it again over the ruins of the old city. Unfortunately the tragedy was repeated in 1983 and the greater part of what had been the historical colonial center was destroyed. A restoration program has been started; however, most of the major buildings suffered irreparable damage.

The following photographs document what was once one of the most beautiful cities of the colonial Spanish period.

### Images

Former cloister of the convent of Santo Domingo, now converted to the headquarters of the University of Cauca.

Church of the Compañía of St. Joseph. The façade of baroque design was constructed by the Order of the Jesuits in 1736, after the earthquake that destroyed the old chapel.

Chapel of Belén. Detail of the façade.

Chapel of Belén. This chapel was constructed in 1681 by the rich, generous artisan, Juan Antonio de Velasco.

The balcony of the house of President Tomás Cipriane de Mosquera.

The doorknocker of the house of the modernist poet, Guillermo Valencia.

The church of Santo Domingo. The façade shows a strong Baroque influence. It was constructed by Gregorio Causi from Santa Fe in 1736.

Partial view of the city from the Chapel of Belén.

Cathedral of Popayán. The cathedral was totally destroyed in the earthquake of 1983.