

Historical-Photo-Visual Practice: A Stroll Through Guatemala's Sixth Avenue, Then and Now (Pictorial)

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The first author, Oscar Lemus, passed suddenly a few days before the acceptance notices were released. We have decided to go ahead with the publication and presentation of this pictorial, as we believe he would have wished.

This presentation is dedicated to Oscar and to all whose lives he touched and to all who love and admire him.

In Oscar's words:

We showcase the urban, social, and technological transformation of Sixth Avenue (La Sexta Avenida) in Guatemala City, by comparing two sets of past and present-day images of the same locations newly taken and from a local photographic archive respectively.

We demonstrate the value of historical-photo-visual practice by drawing meaning from visual and historical themes and reflective questions. We illustrate an alternative form of knowledge-making in design by developing sets of design principles informed by the meanings drawn.

Historical-photo-visual practice invites designers and researchers to see photographs as social documents and to consider what is revealed when the conventions and practices of past and present are [linked] in conversation

In this presentation, we privilege the narratives developed in the two historical and present photographic pairings. The text of the pictorial has additional analysis describing the takeaways for design knowledge production.

El Pasaje Rubio
The Rubio Passage

El Pasaje Rubio

The Rubio Passage

6th Avenue and 8th Street.

*Underlay: Circa 1930,
Photographer Unknown,
Archivo Foto Rex.*

Overlay: Sergio Cruz, 2020



Historical Context

The building pictured is connected to what was once known as the portal of commerce. The building here shares the same architectural history as the portal of commerce (Gongora, 2017).



Historical Context

According to Hemeroteca PL (2015), Paisaje Rubio is well known for one of the oldest bars in Guatemala, called El Portal.

This building is also notorious for being the location of the 1978 assassination of Oliverio Castaneda de Leon, secretary of the student movement (Hemeroteca PL, 2015).

According to Hemeroteca PL (2015), the building also housed famous artists and writers over the years.



Historical Context

The first floor was reserved for commerce, shops, and restaurants, its upper floor included the famous apartments.

The historical photograph is from the 1930's, perhaps when the building was being constructed. We do not know who the photographer is. The photograph appears to be a press photograph.





El Pasaje Rubio as photographed is in a process of construction or repair.



The architectural style represented is Art Deco. It is characterized clearly by the design of the white banisters on the second floor ...



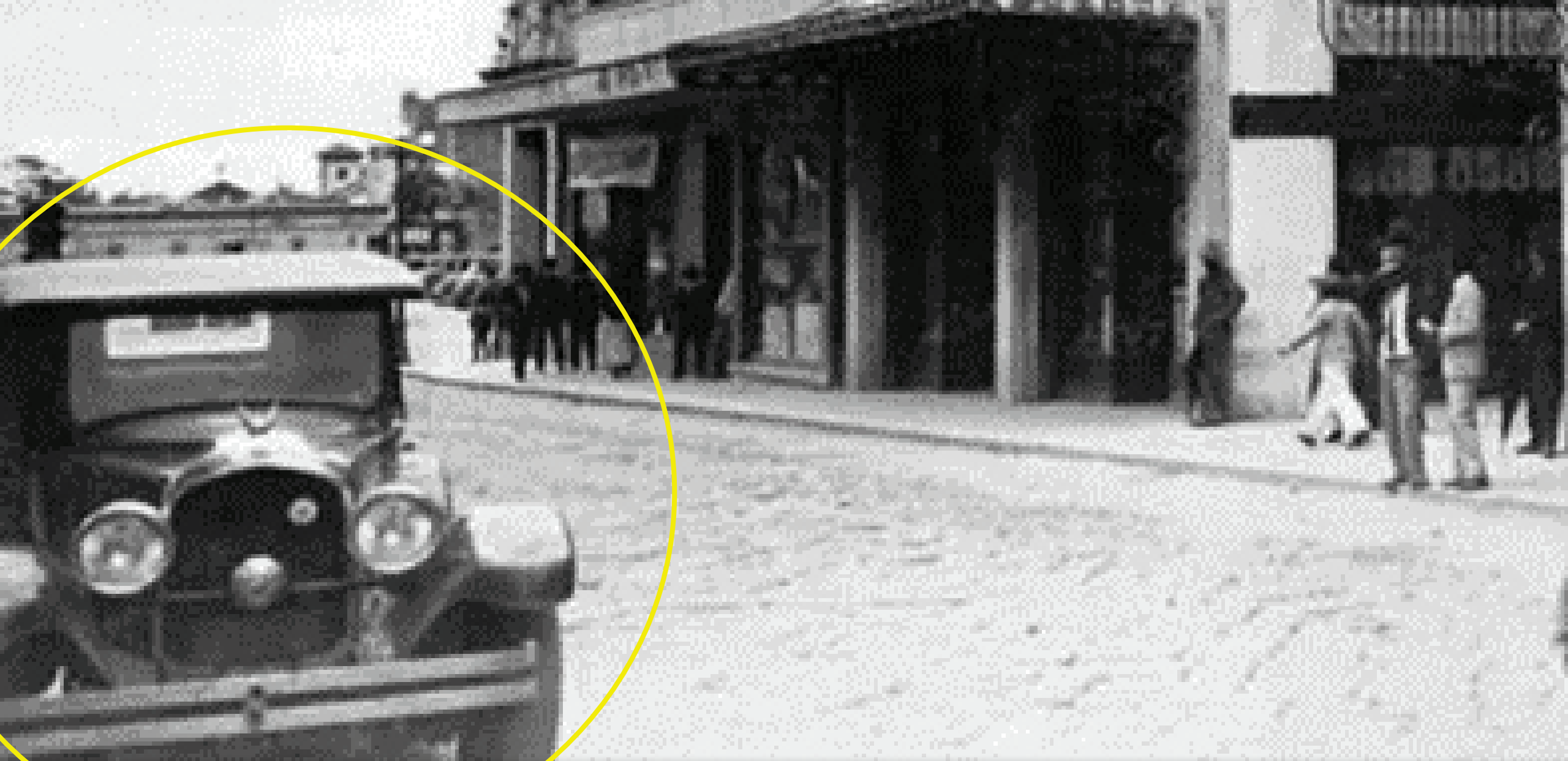
... and iron awnings on the first floor.



It is unclear if the second and third floor of this building is an extension of a smaller looking building on the middle left side of the photograph.



The pavement is rocky.



The car across the street seems to be from the 1930's.



Below the iron awnings there is a store display.



The whole building seems to include a total of four store displays each with an iron rod sunroof. The first display seems to be a clothing store. There is a white dress on the storefront display.



To the right of the display there is a group of four men dressed in suits engaged in what appears to be a conversation.



Some of the people in the photograph are in motion, perhaps walking to a destination.



To the left of the display there is a large opening. It is the entrance to Pasaje Rubio. It also includes a large decorated wrought iron gate, perhaps intentionally used for fashion and/or security.



The right side of the photograph includes a person sitting down who appears to be resting. We infer this based on the outfit and the sand behind. Possibly, this is a construction worker.



An individual with a black dress walks by in front. She has a face covering and is holding onto a smaller looking clothing item, maybe a sweater or jacket. The construction worker is directing his gaze towards her.



Behind the woman is another individual holding the hand of a younger child who is wearing white. We may guess that both are following the woman—perhaps they are family members or one a non-remunerated individual, and the other a family child.



El Pasaje Rubio in 1930



El Pasaje Rubio today



El Pasaje Rubio is now painted in a yellow hue. The sidewalk along the building is adorned with trees covering the architectural design of the building, part of a beautification started in the mid 2010s.



The wrought iron gate is still present. Near the entrance there is an individual wearing a red hat carrying what appears to be a trolley. Many stores hire people to do the job of transporting items from one location to another. Next to the person carrying the trolley is a man in motion carrying a cellphone in his left hand—his gaze directed towards the phone or possibly the sidewalk.



To the left of the individual with the trolley is a store that functions as a cellphone and general store. The walls of the store are plastered with small and medium sized advertisements, Claro for example.



Across from the cellphone/general store is a wrought iron sculpture on top of a stone piece. It is titled "Loco y Arbusto Canonero" by Pepo Toledo. The original piece was made with aluminum. It was destroyed during a protest by street vendors in 2016. It is possible that it is now designed with metal rather than aluminum to deter its destruction.



To the right side of the main gate the storefront now houses the American chain Dunkin Donuts. The windows all include advertisements in Spanish. One advertisement promotes "Free Donut Fridays." Another advertisement promotes latte and cappuccino deals and displays the price of an ice cream cone in Quetzales, the national currency.



The window is utilized for to go orders. Individuals and families usually stop by to order an ice cream cone, coffee, donuts—or all three. Above there are steel doors serving neither ice cream nor donuts, but rather as precaution and security during non-shopping hours.

Edificio La Perla
La Perla Building

Edificio La Perla

La Perla Building

6th Avenue and 9th Street.

Underlay: Circa 1930,

Photographer Unknown,

Archivo Foto Rex.

Overlay: Sergio Cruz, 2020



Historical Context

According to Wendy (2017), the building in this photograph, La Perla, functioned during much of its life as a shopping location for the citizens of Guatemala; part of the first floor included the high-end jewelry shop “La Perla.”



Historical Context

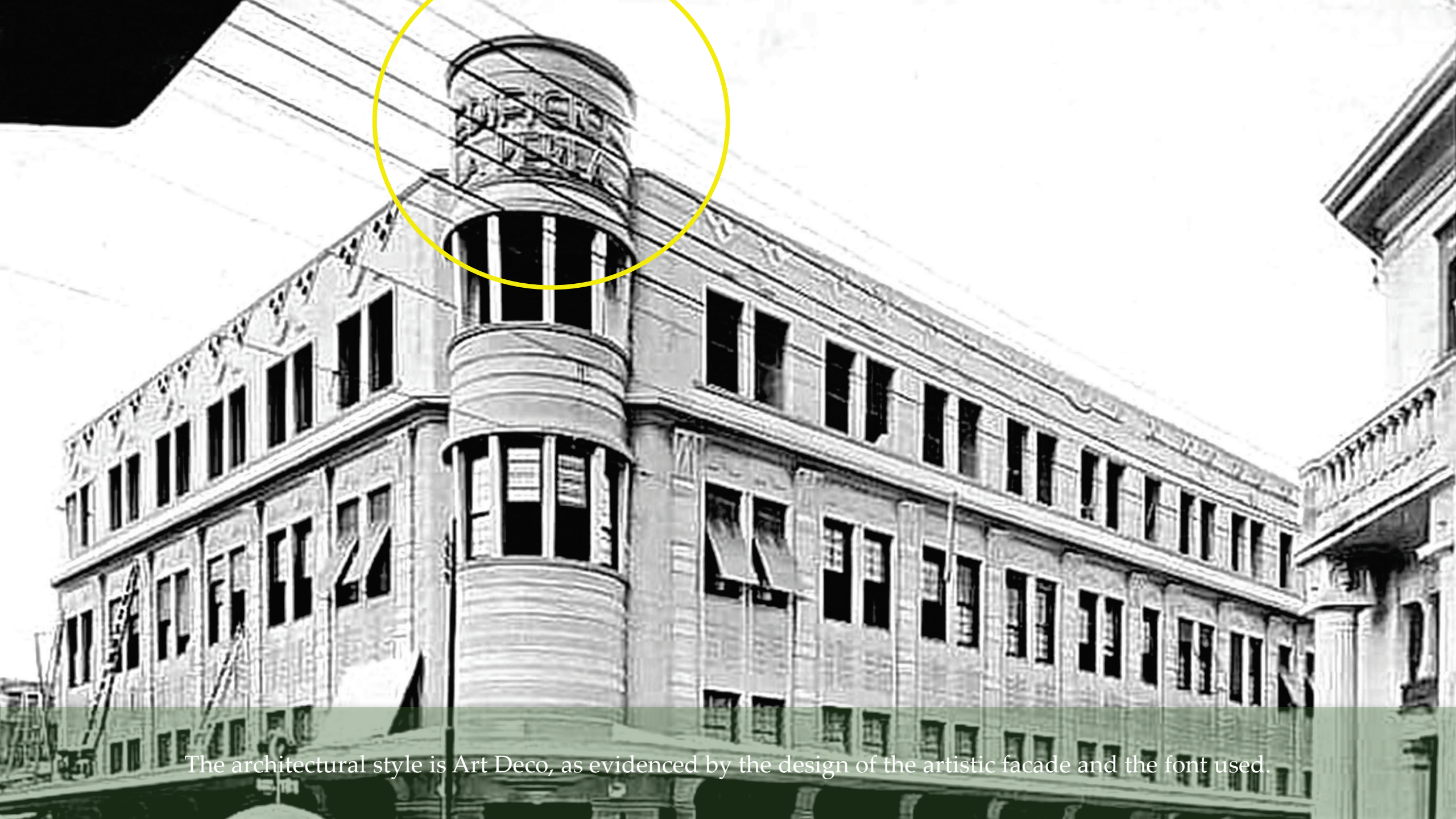
The rest of the storefront space housed shops with an assorted inventory of imported goods, such as technological products, cameras, and appliances.

The upper floor is said to have included a hotel (Wendy, 2017).

This underlay photograph approximately dates to the early 1920s or 1930s.

The photographer is unknown; we do not have access to the physical photograph to inspect for markings or notes. We suspect this to be a press-photograph due to the photographic style.





The architectural style is Art Deco, as evidenced by the design of the artistic facade and the font used.



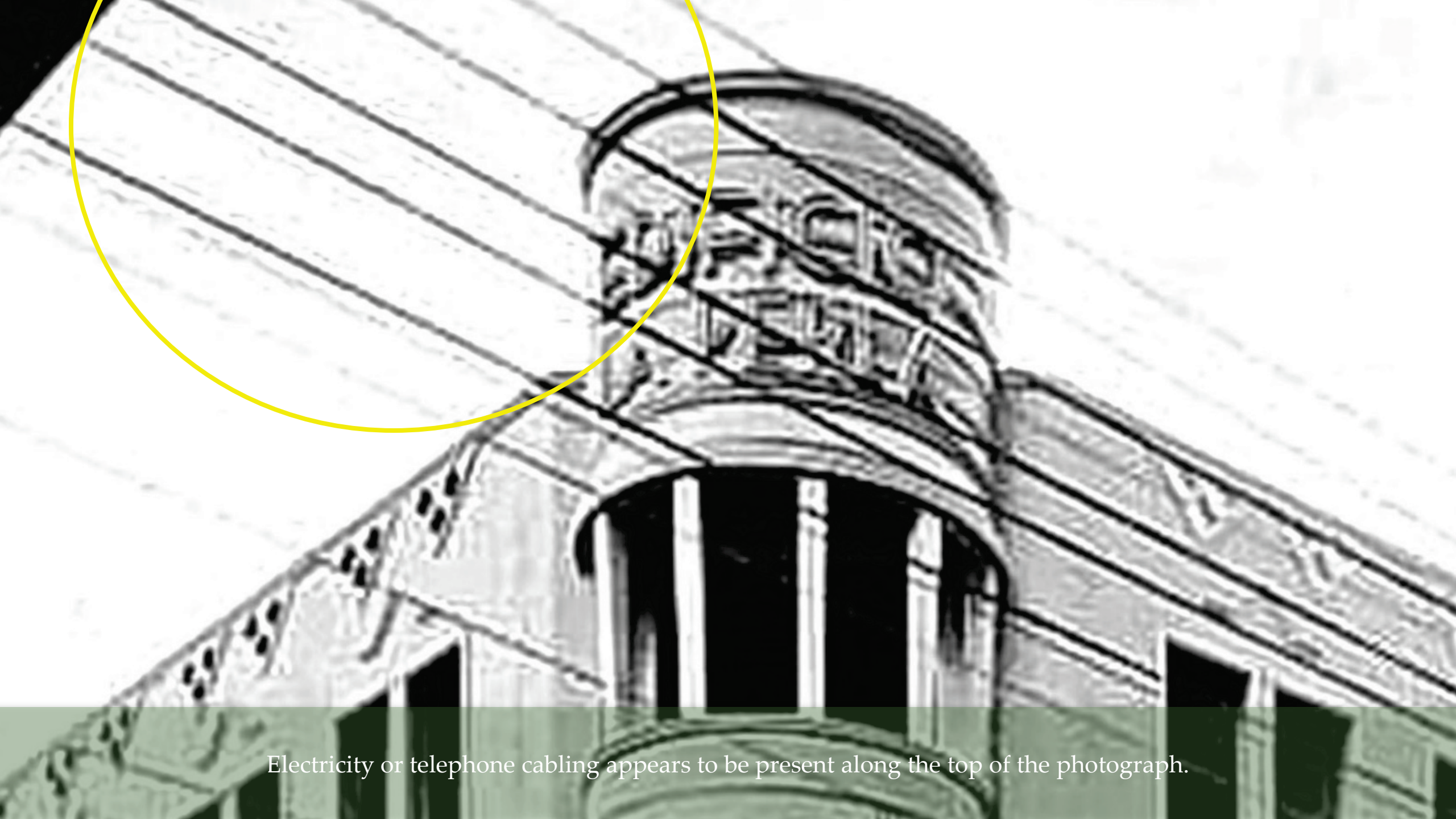
There is a traffic agent in the middle of the empty street, dressed in what appears to be a uniform which includes a hat. The agent is holding an umbrella, perhaps to take cover from the sun.



The building appears to be in the process of construction or repair, perhaps due to the earthquakes in 1917-1918 (Guatemala del Ayer, 2012).



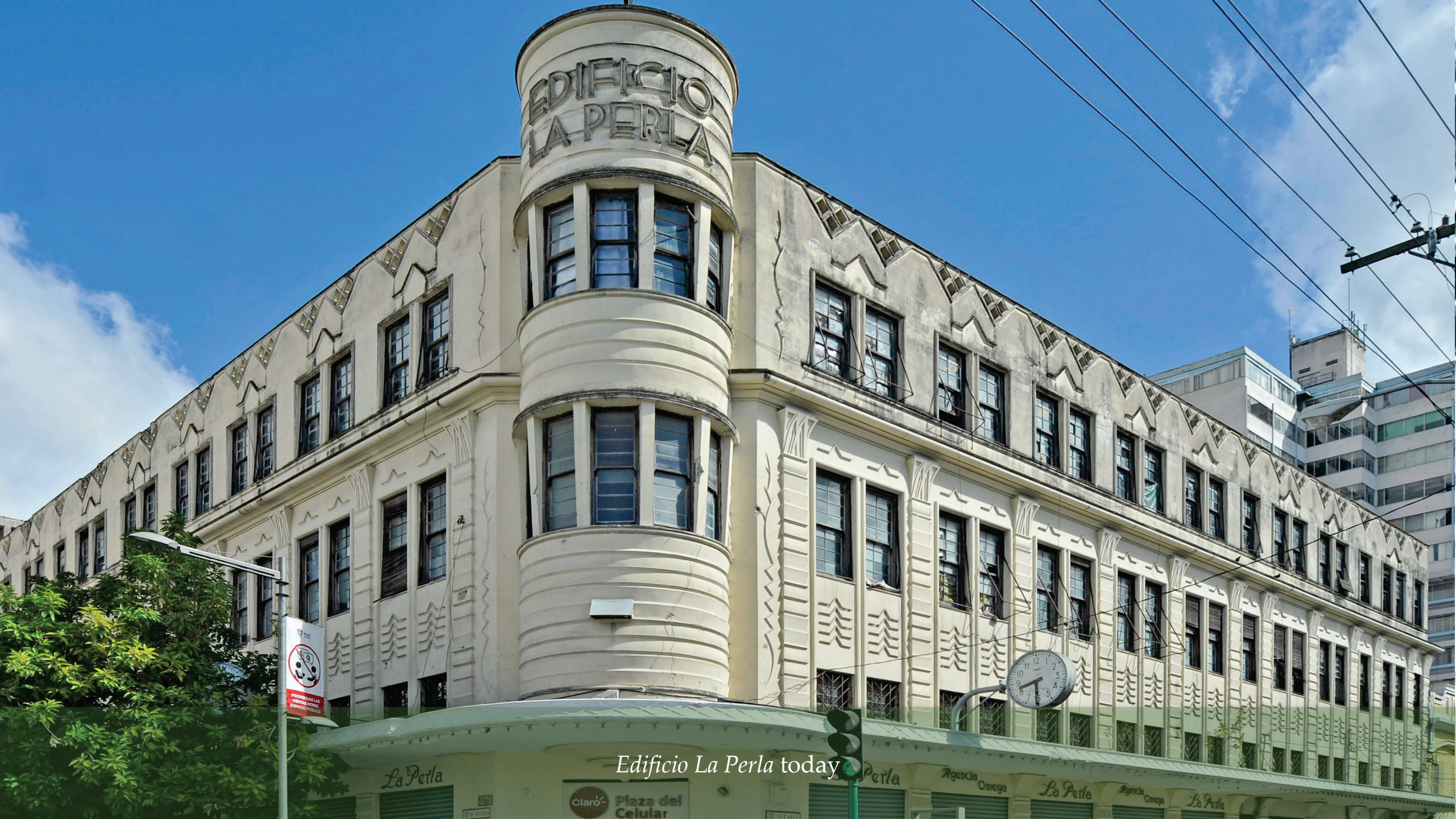
The window displays on the first floor include spectators and/or possible customers.



Electricity or telephone cabling appears to be present along the top of the photograph.



Edificio La Perla in 1930



EDIFICIO
LA PERLA

Edificio La Perla today

PROHIBIDA LA
FUMIGACIÓN EN
ESTABLECIMIENTOS
PÚBLICOS

La Perla

Claro Plaza del Celular

Perla

Agencia Omega

La Perla

Agencia Omega

La Perla



EDIFICIO
LA PERLA



This photograph taken at the beginning of 2020 shows how the architectural style of the building has persisted for almost 100 years. The windows, building color, and its function still remain the same — a location for shopping and either living or perhaps office space.



Today, the first floor is no longer a jewelry store but now houses various businesses, such as the cellphone conglomerate Claro. The first-floor storefront displays are now reinforced by steel gates. This is part of general security measures for businesses across the country during their non-operational hours.



A large clock is also now present.



Instead of a traffic agent, a traffic light is clearly visible.



The avenue (La Sexta) is blocked for automobiles, but not for citizens, while 8th street is for the automobile traffic and foot traffic.



The lamp post includes a vinyl sign. It reads “the sale of goods is prohibited in public space.” The drawing informs citizens about the prohibition of money and good(s) exchange in public space.





Next to them is a musical group playing marimba, bystanders tend to crowd around the group and tip them for their musical skill.



In front of the tree there is an older person walking by. Next to this person is another person standing in place and holding a bicycle wearing a helmet



Cabling is also present. It now traverses buildings. It is messy and unorganized.



Towards the middle right of the photograph, we see a man and what could be his family member, a younger person, waiting for the light to change.



The bottom lower right side of the photograph shows a metal poster display. It announces the dates for the historical centre festival.



The lower right zone of the photograph shows two parked motorcycles.



There is a white car in motion on the road. The windows are tinted. A husky breed dog appears to be people watching.

We hope you have enjoyed this tour of moments in and
across time at Guatemala's Sixth Avenue.

Kindly see the text of the pictorial for additional commentary on how this pictorial fits in the context of pictorials and aligns with several themes of the conference.

Thank you! 谢谢!