

# ENGLISH

English translation by Paula Olmos

## The best intentions: Refurbishment and paradigms

Miguel Ángel Baldellou

**H**ow much can we know about an author's deepest intentions?

This particular question has haunted my reflections each time I have undertaken the analysis of a work of architecture or have simply tried to put myself in the place of the author to be analyzed.

I am increasingly convinced of the fact that the documents of a project are just a stage in a process and, therefore, mere approximations in relation to the author's real intentions. Moreover, the official and conventional character of these documents makes them represent the most impersonal aspects of a project; the most concrete ones and, thus, the most alien to the possible intentions. Hence, these "scientific" and "objective" documents do not reveal the project's Idea, but just its "best intentions", in a most conveniently mollified way.

Whenever, in my documentary research, I have been forced to determine the author's deep intention in designing a particular project, I have had successive doubts, realizing how many definitive decisions are just circumstantial and cannot be considered the outcome of the project's own logic.

In the case of authors whom I personally could not know (Velázquez Bosco, Palacios, Mendelsohn), these doubts could not be, obviously, solved by themselves. But neither in those cases of well known colleagues as Bonet, Sert, Gutiérrez Soto, Alejandro de la Sota, Peña, García de Paredes or Gallego, have I been able to ascertain their most profound intentions. When we get close to them, these vanish. Their essence is probably their imprecise character, their rejection of concreteness.

The many possibilities of architectural analysis are even increased in the case of an "explanation" of the author's real intentions.

The complex relations established between an author and his work, which, in this case, is even a scheme that must be subsequently erected, become even more ambiguous when one tries to expose them to others.

The judgement of a work of art based on the author's intentions is, in any case, something that has been extensively criticized, among others by Hauser.

On the other hand, the "objective" analysis, that is, the analysis derived from the very object analyzed, is something rather inoperative if we take in account the isolated and self-centered existence of both the object and the observer. Not even the author himself, who conceives the object, and whose conception is born out of his own self-centered thought, can clarify this enigmatic process by which his thinking begets the

form. This incapacity to expose the basis of the process is probably the reason for the necessity to expose them.

The real intention, or the multiple and varied intentions of the author are not in the project's initial dossier nor, in the case of a complete work, in the definitive dossier, neither in the preliminary sketches nor in the "a posteriori" synthetic diagrams. In most cases, in fact, the acknowledged intentions are really posterior justifications displayed by the "authorized" interpretations.

Thus, not even in the best possible case, that in which an extremely lucid author, capable of controlling his own work achieves a result which can be considered rather approximate to the original idea born out of an intelligent mind, could we, nor the author, certify that the work "is" the exact replica of "the" project's "definitive" intention.

For, among other considerations, the designing process is something structured by the successive questioning and doubts in which the architect tries to solve "in the most convenient way" the inner contradictions of his own design as well as the many circumstantial variables.

The apparent resolution of many designers is, usually, concealing excessive deficiencies just obstructed by the guaranty of a superficial imitation.

I have mentioned all this things in order to criticize the common thesis which justifies the refurbishment operations (on the part of an architect or an archaeologist...) supposedly correcting the functional incompleteness or technical obsolescence of a certain work, as based on the "scientific" certainty about the author's "intentions". This certainty is apparently just supported, according to the most combative adherents to this opinion, by a supposedly complete (or at least sufficient) "documentation", which permits the reconstruction of the thought that gave birth to such ideas.

In this sense, the supposed "documentary guaranty" promoted by institutions like the DCOMOMO seems almost an invitation to "everyone" (taking in account the "unequivocal" character of the relation thought/product) to intervene in others' works of architecture, even in those considered masterworks and, therefore, difficult to "improve" and, in any case, the result of a delicate balance of advantageous and probably unrepeatable circumstances.

The special nature of masterworks makes of them something untouchable, even for their own authors. In the "inevitable" occasions in which some have even alluded to a "moral exigency" ("Gaudí's friends", for example) in order to justify the completion of the

uncompleted or the restoration of the author's real intention to the distorted, the results have made us, inevitably, regret the lost of the state previous to the "respectful" intervention.

If we now refer this issue of the "guaranteed" refurbishment to our deteriorated contemporary architectural heritage, which is now being so suddenly and suspiciously taken into account (a completely opposed attitude to that which permitted its decay), we must make some considerations on several imminent operations. After Alejandro de la Sota's decease, for example, some important projects have become real "orphans".

The new Museum at León and the enlargement projects for "Las Palmas Insular Council" and the Gymnasium at the "Maravillas School" in Madrid are three examples which make us wonder about how can we conclude the Master's uncompleted works, and, in that case, who should do it. The first one was, in fact, a radical intervention on the magnificent building by Miguel Martín (Vid. *Arquitectura* No. 300), only justified by the unquestionable quality of Sota's proposal (and obviously in the case of his direct participation in the works which is not possible anymore). The Museum at León was almost in a preliminary stage and would have required much work and reflection on the part of the author yet. But the imminent enlargement of the Maravillas Gymnasium is just based on the last drawings of a solution which just the author's unpredictable intuition could have transformed into a "guaranteed" result.

This last project would have been an extraordinarily interesting exercise of revision, on the part of an author, of his own work thirty years later. The Gymnasium was, for Sota, an inexhaustible source of reflection on the resources of his own intuition, on the processes which activate the most complex decisions in the course of a work of architecture. In spite of the many years passed since that old project was conceived and the many reconsiderations of its final form, there were yet some aspects left that were unintelligible even for its very author when trying to determine the intentions that gave birth to his Idea. If we had just had the famous "section" of this building it would have been very difficult to complete the project from it. The intentions of this drawing are not at all explicit. Its development required a great effort yet just possible on the part of the person knowing the "secret" contents of this document, that is, its author.

The present scheme which almost duplicates the building of the Gymnasium in relation to the axis of the School Church, is an alteration of the whole unit, of the facade and inner structure of the initial project which, regardless the quality of the adopted proposal, will be based on a scarce documentation. The referred documents, on their part, are extraordinarily important as they seem to be

Alejandro de la Sota's last drawings. Trying to trace in them his "intentions" is almost guessing. If we consider them analogous to the "section" of the old Gymnasium, whose complex development we know rather well, we must admit the evident difficulty of "disentangling" their intentions and consequences. Now, we should ask, who is going to "disentangle" them? We hope they will be respectful architects with the indispensable zeal to complete their work and the necessary talent to solve the many problems they will surely find. Their "courage" is evident if they are to take this challenge. Their prudence would have probably asked for more caution. In any case, we hope we will see the best possible results.

Going back now to our initial issue and assuming, in any case, the best intentions on the part of the designers, we are still undecided about the supposed guaranty of the operations based on documents that, as architects, we must acknowledge as intermediate and, therefore, subject to subsequent amendments. The problem is the interpretation and, therefore, the solution is a most skilled interpreter, which is the only one to guarantee the quality of the proposal. In this sense, the attitude of the very Sota when working on Miguel Martín's architecture is exemplary. His work was never based on the supposed intentions of the latter.

The "faithful" completions are as inadequate as the supposedly "radical" solutions completely disconnected from the problem's roots. Sota's scheme, thought affecting the building's skin and its most evident appearance, is not at all a superficial proposal. It is not easy to find the point in which structure and texture generate an epidermis. The way in which this equilibrium begets a form is something that cannot be contained in just some drawings, even less if these are considered the end of a process. And not the beginning.

I wonder about what would have happened if Mies would have completed the Sacred Family Shrine instead of the friends of the Master from Reus. This could have been possible if, in 1929, the one from Aagen would not have humbly rejected the proposal, according to an imaginary source of my good friend Alberto Campo.

Theodore's prescriptions do not guarantee the result. Respect is necessary, but not sufficient. I tend to be increasingly in favor of the transgression of those supposed intentions if this is supported by the moral authority of real values.

Why don't we always try to call the most accredited for such cases, even if it establishes a precedent? ■



## An architect for Conservation, an architect for Restoration

Alberto Humanes

### To Dionisio

In one of his last texts, "Storia, conservazione, restauro", Manfredo Tafuri, the Italian historian, makes an interesting contribution to the old debate on heritage conservation and restoration. He defines these concepts which are usually mistaken for equivalent and demonstrates how they imply operations which are not only different but even incompatible. He even goes as far as connecting the idea of conservation with the historian's labor while leaving restoration to architects.

He affirms that those architectural works which are acknowledged monuments cannot be the object of any transformation, refurbishment or renewal plan. If the monument has become a real memento in itself, no private nor public institution should promote its use in a different way than the traditional one. In this cases the only option is conservation. Conservation conceived as an operation whose only aim is exclusively prevent or, at least, decelerate the monument's decay by means of technical procedures. The Italian master thinks that, as we are talking about a systematic, scientific and technical operation... (unlike restoration which is an architectural transformation... which might well take in account historical values, but which cannot be otherwise but arbitrary), it must be entrusted to specialists. Tafuri's proposal defines an entirely new professional, different from the architect that could be called the conservator-architect who must have a deep knowledge on the history of the building techniques and who would just work with old buildings. He would never build anything. He would just be in charge of our heritage which so far "has been assigned to the most extravagant professionals and the most uninhibited political and administrative ambitions".

Professor Tafuri's considerations invite us to meditate upon these issues because, even if we agree, to a great extent, with his position and sharing most of his reasoning, I must say that, in his arguments, there are some arguable points which should be clarified.

First of all, we must remember that we can just conserve those things which exist. Unfortunately enough, there are, in fact, very few cases in which a mere conservation operation is possible nowadays. In most cases, the introduction of new pieces and additions is completely necessary. And this inevitably affects the monument's architectural elements and unavoidably demands an architect and a restoration project. A work of architecture will just be suitable for a conservation plan in two cases: either it is in a perfect state or it is a ruin. Between these two extremes, the many possible circumstances nearly always demand a restoration plan. On the other hand, it is essential to understand that pure conservation is something impossible, there are always some aspects of the building that must be transformed or eliminated. The very author is conscious about this particular point. He admits that pure "conservazione" implies some kind of transformation: "let us be sincere,

conservation does not leave the monument as it was".

Secondly, who is this new professional summoned up by Tafuri? I, personally, think, that there is nothing new in this conservator-architect. He already exists. A conservator-architect, a learned historian and expert in traditional building techniques, active curator of architectural monuments and widely trained by means of his daily practice, who is not currently designing anything, linked to the University departments of History, Architecture... this is something long ago common in Spain. Is he not a rather similar figure to our architectural inspectors of monuments, exclusively dedicated to their custody (their management, pathologic study, restoration, etc.), or our cathedral's "principal masters" or those self-nominated specialists working fundamentally in restoration commissions, all of them descendants of the antiquated regional architects?

Tafuri, in any case, separates his conservator-architect from any creative operation and any plan for a change of use in old containers which are works reserved for real architects. But he preserves for him the main role in the working groups gathered to take decisions in such operations. And this is precisely the realistic role of the architects employed by "Spanish Heritage", who are increasingly dedicated to such Committees.

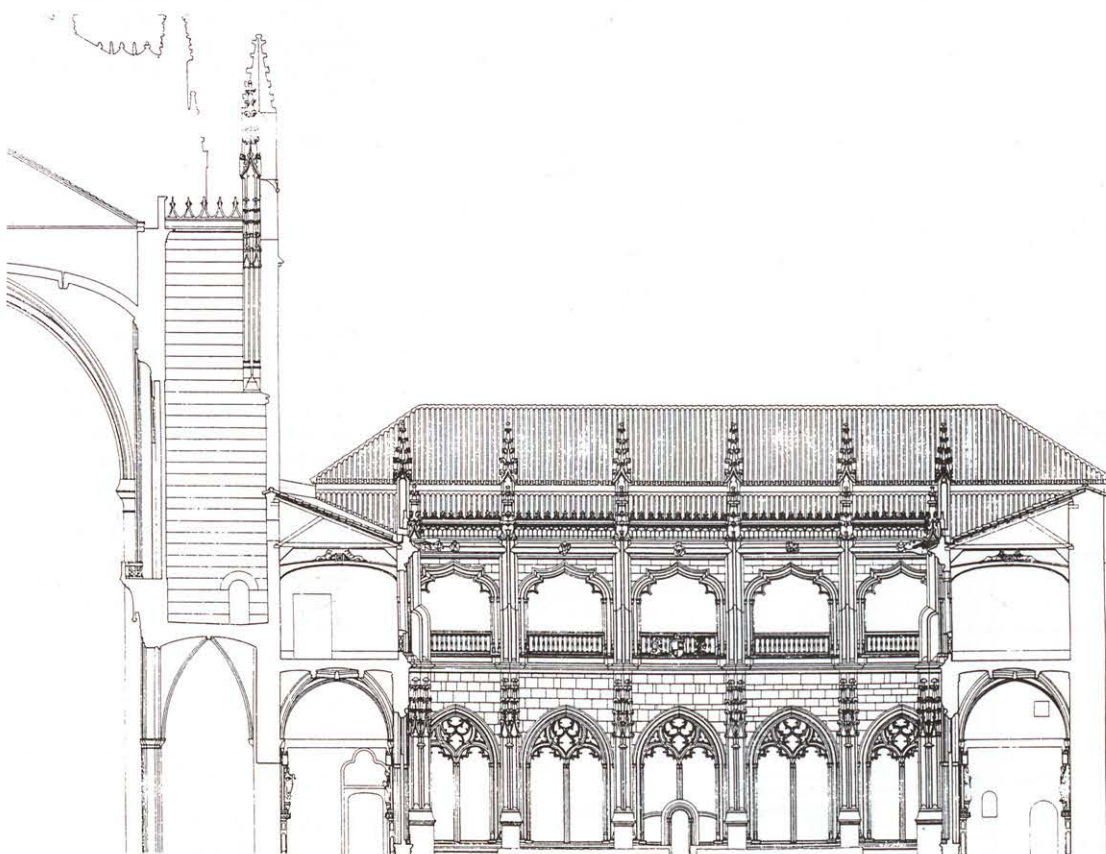
In third place, I think that the links established between conservation and history

and restoration and architecture imply a really restricted view of the matter which can just be applied to the University syllabus. Historical knowledge (styles, techniques, environment, facts, etc.) is an essential tool in any correct analysis of a monument and in any restoration process, even if we finally must admit an unavoidably subjective decision, specially if there are ruined parts which must be re-erected. Architects cannot be deprived of a profound study of history. Because, if restoration is an architectural operation, the architect involved in it must accumulate the indispensable knowledge to undertake a rigorous work. But he must also assume his responsibility as an architect and take in account that his work will inevitably leave a print on the monument which should belong to his own time. Conservation plans, according to Roberto Pane, should also include some critical attitudes before certain aesthetic and historical aspects of the old buildings. Therefore, I think the conservator-architect should know a lot about contemporary techniques and be conscious about the current values of contemporary architecture. Because in this kind of operation, even more in restorations, there should always be a certain degree of design and responsible decision.

I agree with Francesco Venezia when he says that the traditional separation between the conservation field and contemporary design has been pernicious for our architectural culture. In fact, the current practice in either the custody or restoration of historical monuments has suffered from this isolation indulging in technically poor and aesthetically impoverished operations (just during the eighties, when the public

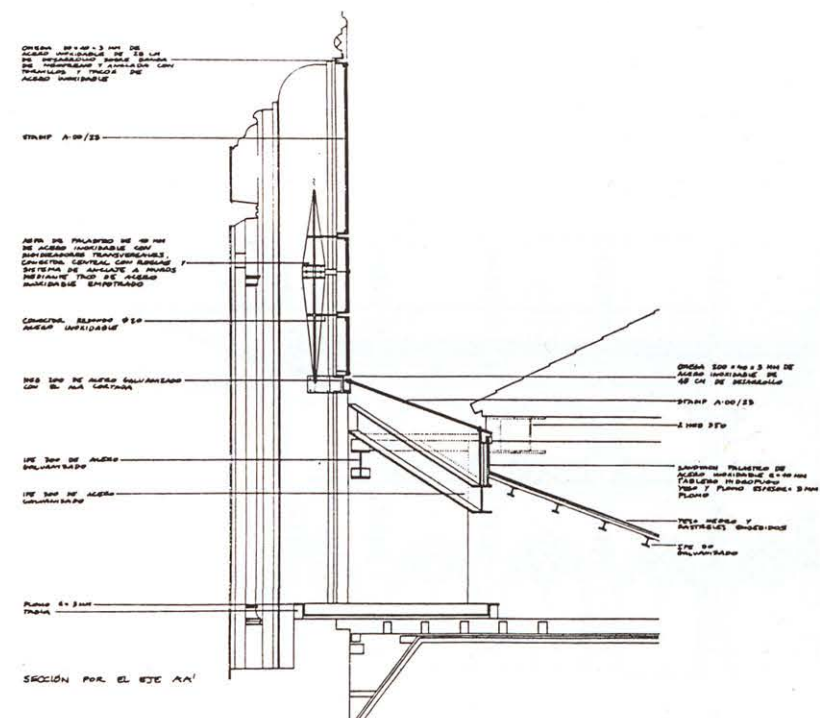
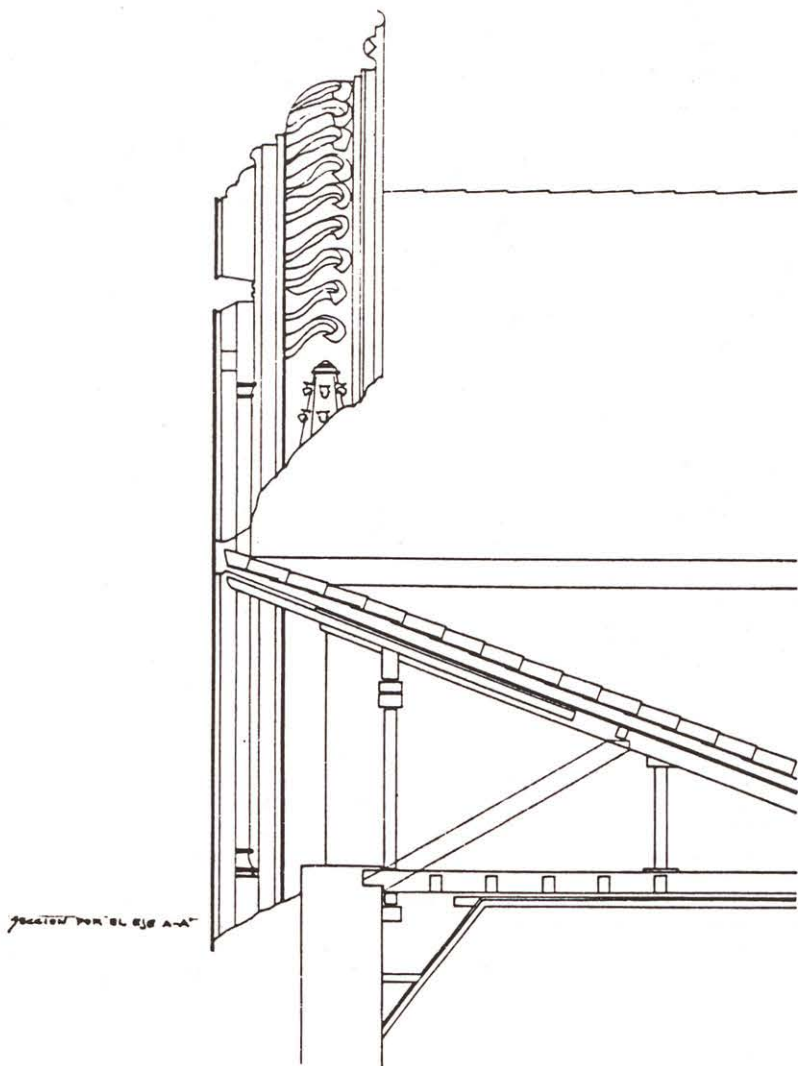
administration decided to work with independent professionals, this error was in some way corrected). The gulf between the architects, traditionally banned from working in old outstanding buildings and the conservators, segregated from the interests of cultural avant-garde, gave place to a certain degradation of the current practice. Tafuri shows himself conscious about this fact when, at the end of the interview, he declares that it is, in fact, very difficult to assume a historical vision of the old if one is not currently living the present and appreciating innovative operations.

On the other hand, I am convinced of the necessity to provide both restoration and conservation professional with an adequate technical (in historical and contemporary building techniques) and aesthetic (for both past and present architecture) training. We surely need a most complete education to train a unique type of professional, the architect, who will undertake either restoration or conservation projects depending on the demand and the particular conditions of the monument with which he may be involved. An education tending to a most complete both technical and cultural competence. We now understand Paolo Marconi's (the great architect and restorer) words in his book "Il Restauro e il architetto", when he defends Marco Dezzi's conception of the professional conservator against Tafuri's. The conscious warden and objective curator of our heritage, but also a real and personal interpreter belonging to his own time; mainly working on detailing, always conscious about the slight differences, paying enough attention to old voices but always trying to reinterpret them by means of his designing competence and will. ■



S. Juan de los Reyes (Toledo).





## History, conservation, restoration

Manfredo Tafuri

**Q.-** How would you explain the current relevance of the conservation issues and tendencies among the general public as well as in the specific world of architectural culture?

**MT.-** We must examine this particular phenomenon in relation to the continuous dismissal of values. As our present world cannot satisfy our needs and aspirations, we tend to look for our values in the past. This happens to the mass as well as to the individuals. Some years ago, in Rome, I was surprised by the tremendous queues of common people in front of the Quirinale Palace waiting to visit an exhibition of Riace's bronzes. A year later, in Reggio Calabria, nobody seemed interested in the bronzes anymore. The reason could be an unconscious collective faith: on one hand, the taboo of the Quirinale was broken, on the other, there was a kind of mystic expectation about this new "disclosure". Riace's bronzes were expected to "reveal" something new. People were anxious to perceive their "magic" sense (as in case of the fake Modigliani) acquired in the very process of their discovering and, no doubt, related to the lack of fantasy of today's world. It is not yet complete fetishism, just temporary and unexpected sparks consumed before some antique bronzes, before Van Gogh's paintings, before everything which is unattainable for our present civilization. Without this kind of reference, without this distant quality of the work of art, this phenomenon would probably disappear.

**Q.-** In your opinion, what has been the basis for the current consideration of architecture as a great cultural value that should be preserved? What has been the role of history in the process?

**MT.-** We must distinguish the attitudes of historians from that of other kind of scientists. It is, in fact, an error to mistake mass culture for homogeneity as it creates a series of rather isolated circles. One of the first reasons for the change of attitude about the urban structures in the second post-war period was, probably, a combination of the general appraisal due to old sites and some economic considerations. That is how (in Italy, during the fifties), the singular value of historic centers was revealed. The battle was first championed by Umberto Zanotti Bianco and then by the "Italia Nostra" organization which denounced the constant assaults to historical centers specially the proposals for Rome's "aperture" (Sventramento). All this produced a tremendous reflection on old districts. Developers understood how this old areas, precisely because of their singularity, could be promoted as economic "out of market" goods. That is how this perverse relation was established. Economic revaluation was the only result of the fights of those interested in the preservation of old districts who did not have the necessary understanding of the situation to confront the effects of their cultural operations. All those societies involved in the restoration of old Rome have been gradually and obscurely immersed in a radical transformation of their

object: social replacement and privatization of space. Nowadays, there are several contradictory processes going on. In the first seventies the revaluation was tremendous, but later on, developers began to perceive the possibilities of integral operations in historic buildings. In spite of the good intentions, the necessity to offer a certain image has provoked unfortunate operations. For example, the Grassi Palace restoration in Venice, sponsored by the FIAT, was much criticized and it became an illustration of what shouldn't be done in Italian monuments. The FIAT company tried to demonstrate how it was possible to restore in very little time. But is this so important when the results are such as we can see in the case of the Great Channel? Besides, in most cases, the artistic quality of the object was not taken into account, the only consideration was the age. In fact, the Grassi Palace is not a really significant work from the 17th century, even less in Venice. I think that the vision of a historian is rather different to that of the mass. Giorgio Massari, the author of the building was not a really relevant figure. In this sense, we should be grateful to the FIAT as it has dismantled an worthless palace.

**Q.-** The interest in the historic value both of architectural works and urban units, gives way to extensive discussions in relation to the appropriate way to manage our architectural heritage and the competence of those in charge of the operation.

**MT.-** I think we should be clear about this particular point, because some issues which seem rather obvious are not so simple: for example the idea that conservation always implies restoration, which is something rather questionable. It is essential to define, from the very beginning, the object, limits and extension of the conservation plan as the operation, just in the hands of a group of experts, will affect the whole community.

Preservation is considered mandatory in the case of acknowledged singular monuments. In these cases, the buildings or districts are considered so significant for contemporary history that no change in them can be acceptable: these are those historic works which remain as collective heritage and which deserve so special attention that there is no point in reusing and refurbishing them. If a monument has become a real memento, any kind of new function applied to it would be a distortion. Le Corbusier's words on this particular issue, probably a bit old fashioned and ingenuous, are becoming rather exact. Le Corbusier maintained that historic sites are a threat for contemporary life. I can also demonstrate how the reutilization of Venetian Palaces as university colleges is a threat for our community. Why don't we consider the possibility of just showing the whole interior of a palace as its unique function? Let us imagine the Farnese Palace, the seat of the French Embassy nowadays, as simple exhibit of the Renaissance life, as an empty museum just showing itself. Contemporary men entering a great, chilled hall, would perceive in a more precise way the 16th century civilization. Up in the garret, they would learn about the life of the servants in spaces just 1,2



meters high. We tend to idealize old life in these palaces: this is a question that has much to do with the criticism of present times born out of the progression of Modernity. This reduction of the object to a simple museum of itself, is naturally impossible to extend to the whole city (it is just applicable to some deserted places that would become archaeological parks). The main problem is, precisely, the identification of the monument, which is not at all an easy task as the concept of monument tends to change. Our culture "invents" monuments, creating confusing "traditions" which we must take into account: in fact, even the fake can be a monument and not only a document. In any case, when conservation is the goal, the architect is not the appropriate technician, as he does not have the appropriate education or practice for this particular purpose. Conservation means preparation and continuous maintenance. The work should be done by experts in old stone and brick that should also be specialists in historic techniques and tools and their evolution.

**Q.-** So, you think that a new kind of professional should be created for the specific field of conservation.

**MT.-** It is becoming rather necessary to find professionals different from architects to manage this issue, because architects do not have the appropriate mentality. Architects think, reasonably enough, that wherever they work there must be something left that they would consider theirs. Conservators, instead, are precisely worried about their work not being perceptible. There is also another problem: architects do not have the appropriate training as they don't have the necessary disciplines in their University syllabus. That is, they lack the necessary tools which should be subsequently acquired either in post-graduate programmes or in every day practice. Conservators just work with old monuments in which they simply realize minimum transformations, as mere cleaning (which is also a transformation: let us be sincere, conservation does not leave the monument as it was). Conservators work with scalpels as really qualified surgeons. Nowadays, in Italy, there are, in fact, very few specialists or institutions capable of providing adequate and qualified advice.

**Q.-** What could be the role of the current University reform in this particular field?

**MT.-** I hope that the new educational plan in the faculty of architecture would create post-graduate courses in "History and Conservation". That is not "History and Restoration". Restoration is an architectural discipline, it is a transformation that takes account of historical values but which is not mere conservation. The latter requires the profound study of the technical and qualitative differences between, for example, a Byzantine wall structure, and others from the 7th or 12th centuries. Because, sometimes, it is just by having a profound knowledge about the wall's technical constitution that is possible to date it and take decisions about the appropriate treatment. We are talking about, for example, the chemical analysis of the building materials, which is something completely essential and which implies not only technical

but also a deep historical knowledge. Those interested in research and pure conservation must take courses on history of architecture, history of ancient architecture, of byzantine architecture, medieval architecture, modern architecture, islamic architecture... Then, they must learn about old techniques and their analysis. These kind of people will not build anything at all but will take care of our heritage which is now assigned to the most extravagant professionals and the most uninhibited political and administrative ambitions.

**Q.-** What is then, history for an architect?

**MT.-** I think architects consider history in a rather biased way. Nowadays, in the architectural faculties, there are Ph. degrees in history. But I think this must change. Our proposal for an educational reform, with an specific post-graduate programme, is based on the assumption that a student of architecture is trained in everything but history. Historical studies, besides, imply many additional and contiguous fields and, nowadays, we must face the fact that many people enter the University without knowing the difference between Charlemagne and Charles the Fifth. The current system tends to transform students in precocious monomaniacs: any issue just half envisioned through a monographic course becomes for them their own unique and absolute universe and, in this way, they come through a whole process of misconceived and blind specialization. This situation is also reinforced by the particular psychology of the current young generations who, living in a troubled world, tend to cling to just a few things, the most certain and profitable. This is a real handicap as architectural students are exposed to the most lamentable historical inventions of the teachers of Composition who do not bound themselves to contemporary architecture.

**Q.-** Don't you think that this complete segregation between the historical education of the conservators and the historical information given to the architects might result in serious problems? Don't you see the risk of depriving conservators of a necessary competence in design and technique while just introducing designers to the world of history?

**MT.-** In our proposal for doctorate courses we also included architectural design and urban planning courses for our historian-conservators.

**Q.-** We just have talked about conservation and specialized education for conservators, but what about refurbishment and restoration applied to historical buildings?

**MT.-** I don't think a restoration process should be entrusted to just one person. Restoration is like surgery (on a sick body), as disturbing for a monument, a painting or a sculpture as it is for a human being. Like in any operation, the different elements of an architectural body must be analyzed by the different specialists; but, why are monuments so sick? In most cases because there has been

no preventive conservation. I might seem a bit pessimist, but I think that, today, there is a common interest in leaving things decay until intervention is made mandatory. This is profitable for architects as well as private developers. For, why don't private developers, in the present cultural situation, ever get involved in conservation operations? Because these do not provide a powerful image. Private developers need transformation, voluntary change; precisely those things that architects like, who feel so proud of their designed chairs being placed inside Juvara's or Palladio's palaces. In a moment in which architectural language as a concept seem to be criticized, it is easy to find some kind of justification in the manipulation of historical objects. The question is how to avoid traumatic operations. When restoration is inevitable, I think the appropriate method is consent. We need a group of people with completely different interests in relation to the monument all commanded by an individual who, in my opinion, should be a public employee. The administration would be the real center of decision once the debate would be held. With historians, researchers, technicians (the chemist, expert in restoration issues, the technician specialized in singular foundations, the structural engineer, the architect...) sat around the table, the public administration would be responsible of the new function of the building and not the architect himself. Our technician specialized in singular foundations would, for example, decide whether the old building's foundations should be reinforced in order to keep it in use. The historian could, in such case, disapprove, adducing the importance of these foundations as an example of, say, Leon Battista Alberti's descriptions in "De re aedificatoria". Because, for a historian, such foundations might also be a monument, even more important than the building itself and he might think they must be respected. Nobody is right: the final decision should come out of the debate.

Let us think about the case of the Imperial Fori so much discussed about in Rome some time ago. Archaeologists thought that it was their concern (that is, because they belonged to either the early or late ancient imperial age) and that they should excavate the whole fori. They excavated and uncovered the foundations of the 17th century church of Sancti Luca e Martina by Pietro di Cortona which consisted of a curious solution of poles. The archaeologists who found them told the newspapers how this "was good news, because thus, historians specialized in the 17th century art, so much concerned about formalistic issues, would pay attention to a material element so important as the foundations of a church". The answer is not capricious. But it seems not to take into account the evidently greater importance of the remains of the hellenistic and imperial ages. The discourse of the archaeologists should not be that of the winner or the looser. It should just be compared with the opinion of the rest in a profound debate in which public opinion must also take its part. This discussion around a table should not disregard the weight of the feelings of the community about certain urban images which have come to be considered a common heritage, in spite of their unreliable origin, by means of a "fake tradition". We could recall the case of Matteo Nuti, the pride of the city of Fano, considered the architect of the 15th

century Malatesta Library. There is a recently published monographic paper on Matteo Nuti which includes an interesting document. Matteo Nuti, according to this document, was not an architect, but a mason. And the question is not who was Matteo Nuti, but how could the city of Fano invent its Matteo Nuti. There is a similar problem in Ferrara with Biagio Rossetti and his supposed role in the enlargement of the city promoted by the Duke Ercole I in the 15th century. In the latter case Bruno Zevi has created a myth which is considered something untouchable by the people of Ferrara. I will mention other examples of assumed traditions closely related to restoration issues. Bare brickwork, for example, was some time ago, considered "historically" correct. Thanks to the work of Paolo Marconi and Paolo Forcellino of the "Istituto Centrale del Restauro", the extensive use of stucco in the 16th century palaces has been revealed. Great architects used a refined stucco made of lime and volcanic rock mixed with marble powder. They used different stuccos in order to represent stone work or marble. The shaft, capital, base and entablature were treated as a whole. Sometimes the background was painted as white marble and the pilaster as limestone with a softer white (the base, the capital, the architrave, the cornice and the entablature should be plastered in the same way). In these buildings, capitals and bases were frequently made out of "peperino" (a volcanic rock, similar to granite), cheaper than limestone and good for chiseling. First of all, restorers thought that old architects just tried to color their facades and, in the restoration works, capitals and bases were not plastered. But they soon realized they were wrong. In any case, there are many erroneously restored buildings which can confuse common people. In fact, the public has come to like them in this way and paradoxically enough their love for the authentic results in the appreciation of the fake.

**Q.-** What would be the role left to the architect in this working group?

**MT.-** What we know nowadays as restoration which is commissioned to a supposed expert in transformations is something absurd: it is based in examples which are not anymore culturally correct. I am talking about, for example, Carlo Scarpa's work in the Castelvecchio museum. I think Scarpa's project is a high quality work (we should not forget he worked in collaboration with a first quality expert as Licio Magagnoli, the museum's director) and belongs to the cultural current of his time. Carlo Scarpa was, in fact, allowed to realize many things impossible for his imitators or any other normal professional in those years. We are talking about quality issues: Scarpa, even destroying a monument, was capable of realizing a highly valuable work. This just happened by the Grace of God which is not very common. We must make a common rule by ignoring these exceptions. I disagree with the Italian University tendency to educate "geniuses": this is precisely one of the reasons for the cultural dispersion of our architects in the latter decades. Italian faculties have many graduates and we should make "good artisans", socially useful, out of them. It is a problem of education. Many of us, teachers of architecture, are conscious



about the frustrating times we are now living in and about the impossibility of teaching a discipline which does not exist by itself. In a mass university, architecture must become a discipline, something which is not at all. In many cases what we do is graduate poets. But, the solution to the problems of restoration is much in the line of creating rules. The experience at Bologna or the more recent one of Benevolo, Cervallati and Insolera in Palermo's historical center have given place to polemics about the criteria used in the projects. I can understand these criticisms, but I think that some of their assumed rules are valid. I think they have worked hard in trying to create rules which would make possible to discriminate wrong decisions, what works and what does not work. This is also true about contemporary architecture. We live in a plural world in which there are not rules, in the words of Bernardo Sacchi, there is no concrete decision about our common interests.

**Q.-** Don't you think the institution of these rules in the realm of historic restoration could hinder architectural expression and thus avoid the marks of our own time?

**MT.-** I think the problem with historical sites as been posed precisely by the instability of our architectural culture in relation to its own basis. When this insecurity, that is, this concern about its own means of expression, is maximum, the necessity of a link with the past is revealed. I think that it is very difficult to assume the value of history if we don't learn to live in the present and appreciate interesting modern operations. Modern architecture must be admired, not just by the architects, but by everybody. It is difficult to estimate the old if our cities are not modern. We are just being fetishists or praising a local atmosphere or regretting old good times. There is also a problem of patronage: architects are aggressive, as they are frustrated, and public employees show themselves timid, coward in front of the public opinion. They should ask for something modern wherever it is needed and possible: that is why operations using an old monument arise that "libido operandi". We think Venice should not continue being an infect pond: in such a Venice, the construction of a skyscraper in the Piazza de San Marco, could be easily assumed as necessary. We must build a new Venice working in the limits, the conflictive derelict boundaries, where we would not affect the city's image. New things have no clear roots and that is why they are not appreciated, but they must be conscious about and accept this lack of appreciation. When links are cut, the dialogue with the context becomes subtle and complex, there is no point in simply using the same plaster or old composition. What should be the age of Venetian buildings? Venice's "genius loci" is represented by the meeting, the dialogue of different elements from different ages. But this process has been interrupted, and really not just in the Pool. We must talk about this interruption, if we ignore it we will just be involved in an architecture which is "dramatically comic". If we do not experience modernity, history becomes an homogeneous unit or just a personal eccentricity. ■

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## Arquitectural preconseration heritage and anticipation

Pablo Campos-Calvo Sotelo

The architectural conservation issue should make us think in terms of anticipation. The achievement of a continuous presence of the object's, the architectural work's, values can be considered as one of the main ideas and conceived aims of the initial design.

We will, therefore, concentrate on this intentional quality of the work's meaning and character (born out of its very project) whose maintenance must be a requisite.

We suggest the term "preconseration" as implying a new attitude completely different from that of the traditional ideas of heritage preservation and revitalizing.

### ARCHITECTURE, HERITAGE AND CONSERVATION: ON THE HERITAGE CONCEPT.

We must begin by establishing a series of basic notions.

What should be conserved?

Which are the appropriate criteria to evaluate and select the works to be preserved?

Let us recall Marina Waisman's definition of heritage as "every environmental element which can help an inhabitant to integrate within his own community in the double and profound sense of participating in both the continuity and the construction of a common culture".

Heritage is not just a value received from the past, because we keep building the future.

We will try to establish a taxonomy of the main attributes of our heritage which deserve our attention, using a theatrical metaphor as a guide:

- as a fragment of History, involving cultural information. Something as a literary piece, a text in which to read History.
- as an architectural or urban element whose main feature is its own physical reality, its formal quality. We could call it a scenography.
- as a symbolic element whose meaning is connected with ideology. This is the dramatic aspect of heritage. Although architecture's main aim is not at all that of transmitting a message (it is providing adequate and functional space), this particular attribute of heritage becomes fundamental in any reflection upon its origin and maintenance.
- as a temporal link which integrates both citizens and their environment. Heritage acts as a temporal reference for both the unattainable experience of the past and the eternal reliance on a future Utopia. It helps us in our continuous analysis of our own environment in terms of the "coincidence of the spirit of the time and the spirit of the place" (Enrique Browne).

Any work of Architecture will just be an empty shell if it is not related to the human beings who use it. That is the consequence of its being the only genuinely public art. As works of art (taking in account their own genesis) we can wonder about their links with the urban structures in which they are placed. Aldo Rossi makes clear that: "All the important demonstrations of social life and the works of art have in common their origin in unconscious experience; collective in the first

case and individual in the second".

So we have defined our evaluation criteria for cultural heritage and the conditions architectural works must observe to be incorporated within this concept.

We must make clear how, in this first approach, the basic constituent of an architectural work which deserves preservation and public interest is precisely its own identity and cultural significance along the years which have made possible the conservation of its character along History.

### THE STRUCTURE OF TIME: HERITAGE AS A SHOW

Time is a structural factor which affects both Architecture and Heritage.

It acts in diverse categories.

On one hand, we have its linear dimension (short, middle, long-term), which classifies heritage in terms of endurance.

On the other, its vital character which is the subjective "chronometer" of experience and which is opposed to physical or "watch" time.

We can also mention a recently established category: we talk about the "false" immediacy of supposedly present images through modern media.

After our characterization of the four aspects of the heritage value (historical fragment, physical reality, symbolic element and temporal link), we go back again to our theatrical metaphor in order to understand the role of time in the analysis of our legacy: heritage as a show.

Kowzan defines this latter concept (show): "Art whose product is transmitted by means of space and time, that is, which inescapably requires space and time".

In such an interpretation, Heritage communicates its own meaning through its physical (Space) presence which determines its relation with the cultural context of each epoch. We are talking about something different from just spatial (visual) or temporal (musical) arts which just require one of them (space or time) to be present in a human context.

### PERSPECTIVES ON HERITAGE

Before starting with the debate on conservation we must delimit our field. We, consequently, suggest, as working hypothesis, various basic perspectives on heritage which could be, for example, definition, creation, evaluation and conservation.

We must take in account how our essay postulates that definition and evaluation should (even must) be one act with the project (creation) in order to obtain the ideal characteristics for future and efficient conservation.

### CONSERVATION

Once the basic keys of heritage evaluation reviewed, we can analyze our phenomenon

from a point of view either previous or posterior to its materialization. We will now concentrate on the second possibility. But first, we will try to establish a concrete definition of the conservation and preconseration terms. These apply to essential aspects of Architecture and are not purely material concepts. Their material denotation, in fact, will not be considered in the present essay.

The endurance of a certain building's significance is something closely related to its utility, because Architecture's function is to create useful spaces and it is from this point of view that we must evaluate it.

Voillet-le-Duc said that the best way to preserve a building is to find an adequate use for it. So we have the first rule of endurance, the operative state.

Conservation, in this sense, would be the attempt to make use of any Architecture from any time, just trying not to sacrifice the whole of it. In this way, the dialectic relation between History and Project would appear as the appropriate reference for any policy concerning heritage.

It seems as though, in our search for an adequate attitude before conservation, we should, in any case, avoid the theories of integral restoration (promoted by the lovers of the past which imply the chronological death of the monument) and also the radical perspective of a critical restoration, in most cases too conscious about the present, disregarding and extorting the monument. Thus, we suggest the assumption, on the part of the restoration project, of the mentioned values of historical heritage (historic document, physical reality, symbolic element and temporal link). This strategy would also imply a careful study of the object's physical and cultural environment in an attempt to establish a correct relationship between the good to be preserved and its surrounding structures and architectural types.

Julio Cano Lasso adds: "This considerations will make us rediscover architectural tradition and undertake a more serious analysis of the relations with the climate and the landscape, the many forms, building details and types present in our vernacular and regional architectures; Juan de Mañara recommended a careful study of the traditional idioms before trying to introduce supposedly better ones..."

The significance of a future projection of the work make us incorporate the term "permanency" within our essay as a peculiar characteristic of heritage which should be taken into account by both the conservationist and mimetic standpoints. "Permanency", as a past which is still experienced, can be either pernicious for the very endurance of the object's values (pathologic permanency) or beneficial for this same purpose (progressive permanency).

Thus, we will subsequently develop the basic hypothesis of our proposal: the definition and observation of the progressively permanent values of the architectural object (from the very conception of the project) as the best means to achieve its preservation.

### PRECONSERVATION: THE PROJECT AS A STARTING POINT

We have already mentioned that, in our opinion, the most important aim of the conservation project is the preservation of the



architectural object's or the urban structure's identity and character.

The necessity of a Project is something sufficiently demonstrated and acknowledged. It is the adequate means for contemporary creativity to operate on heritage and a tool which permits us to advance future results. The project's precognition makes possible the appreciation of those characteristics of the object that must be preserved as intrinsic values.

There should be an interesting relationship established between the initial project and the conservation one. Both should be, in some way or another, complementary along with the chronological sequence which brings them to life in such a way as to build a fruitful dialogue between the "new" and the "old", Actuality and History.

The original design can and must provide the object's valuable and desirably permanent structure. Along the years, this function will probably have to be complemented by means of a refurbishment operation which would assume the original conception and just adapt it to the new demands. A closer proximity between Memory and Modernity would probably improve this process.

The apparition of the term "process" will introduce us in the following reflection.

We must, first of all, confirm the importance of the time factor in the evolution of heritage. The adaptability and endurance of its most significant qualities (historical document, physical reality and symbolic element) are the basis of its singularity and importance.

That is why any designer who is consciously trying to create this permanency must think about his project more in terms of a chronological process than in terms of a finished object.

Therefore any photographic instant in the development could be described by Wölfflin's formula: "conceive the being (Dasein) as becoming (Gewordenes)".

This process must have continuity, suppleness and flexibility. The last one is essential for our present purpose. Flexibility of composition is the most efficient guaranty of an adequate succession for cultural heritage. But we must never mistake a most desirable openness and versatility for apparent vagueness.

## INTENTIONS FROM DESIGN

When we talk about design, we refer to a creative, artistic activity in search of permanency. In Gaston Bachelard's words: "Simplicity brings oblivion and we suddenly feel gratitude for the poet who is talented enough to find the unique touch to summon it"

In this sense, the architect's aims and intentions in his creation of a project make of him a conscious subject participating in what Riegl called "Kunstwollen", "art's will".

The following quotation insists on this particular issue:

"How is it so that any talented student in a drawing class might well excel Masaccio or Pollaiuolo in representing anatomy and, nevertheless, his production is, in most cases, worthless? The most approximate answer is that, nowadays, such a capacity might or might not generate a fruitful creative disposition. More precisely, we can say that: when art's will

permits it, capacity becomes art".

So, as we have defined the artistic intention as the basic feature of any creative act, we can now enumerate the adequate objectives in the definition of our heritage values for their efficient preservation. That is, the common denominator of such objectives (which we will subsequently list) should attain the endurance of the project's essential soul in order to make of it an observable cultural element for present and future human beings.

## CHARACTER (EXPERIENCE AND UNITY)

"As the acts of seeing and thinking are inseparable, we must admit that any description includes an interpretation and, consequently, we cannot conceive a meaningless description referring to a particular fact".

We will make use of this text by Otto Pacht to make clear, from the very beginning, how we cannot separate the concept of the character of a work of art from its assumption and analysis by a human being. The former is senseless without the latter.

The experience of an architectural work cannot be replaced (this would imply the elimination of matter) by audiovisual images which suspend the space/time relation. Let us define our term.

The "character" of a project is its strength and originality differentiating it from more conventional or prosaic works. If we think of a series of formal answers to a same programme, their particular character would be the criterion to differentiate them. If they bear such "character", they will all be significant works of architecture, with a particular identity, representing each one of them an individual version born out of the designer's mind. If they do not have it, they will just be visual transcriptions of the programme.

Therefore, we affirm there should be a kind of allegoric sense in creativity in order to produce a mark in the user, an "engraving" (the greek sense of the word character) of its contents which should remain in him. Better still: the soul of the project must be engraved in the citizen's soul.

Consciously conceived architecture is capable of transmitting subliminal messages, of providing a meaning while keeping its functional capacity for conforming useful spaces. According to Gombrich, we can consider the works of art as "the apparel of verbal manifestations".

J. Burckhardt, in the same line, adds: "If we could express (...) the idea of a work of art in words, art would be dispensable and the particular work should never have been erected". We must permit architecture to become an autonomous sphere of expression.

If we try to conceive in a concrete way the physical implications of these notions, we could say that architectural character can be seen either in the building's significance, in its particularly imposing global form or in the plastic sense of a visible allegory.

The reference to the formal impact as a possible objective make us think about the idea of unity as the building's global consistency. In this sense, we can mention the relation with the landscape, the language, scale or the adoption of a certain type with a cohesive inner structure as means to achieve this unity. These factors would eliminate

disaggregation and make possible the composition's unity and integrity.

## RELATION (ENVIRONMENT AND EMERGENCE)

In order to understand the particular role of relation in the definition of heritage, we will transcribe Marina Waisman's opinion: "The particular characteristic of heritage is precisely the relationship between the historical object and its environment (...), this unit presents new meanings which cannot be provided by one of the elements alone".

There are different possible relational categories. Some invite us to foster the relationship of the work with its physical and human environment in order to preserve its own values. The coherent intertwining of the contexts must give place to a more solid identity and clarity for interpretation: both indispensable prerequisites of our proposed goal.

Now, we should also take in account the principle of emergence, according to which this connection between the architectural object and its cultural environment gives place to certain properties which are not present in the isolated elements.

Architecture, being a link between Nature and men, and bearing a symbolic system of social connotations should also encompass functional, constructive and aesthetic factors. We can conceive it as a whole integrated by interconnected parts and then observe, uncover and explain their diverse relations and connections.

A building, an organism with its own logic, belongs to a certain structural grid which links it with a greater unit of which it becomes a mere fragment. These structures belong to three types: spatial, related to society; technologic, capable of materializing a certain form; and figurative, representative.

The correct combination of them all should give place to an architectural proposal which would be adequately integrated within its physical and human environment and which would make possible the efficient endurance of the work's values.

## FLEXIBILITY

Let us examine this third goal which should be a clearly visible attribute of any architectural project. We can conceive it as the specific capacity of space to change its dimensions. It, consistently, includes the void space as an active phenomenon which becomes a real tool for composition.

Architecture must bear the character of an open work in order to avoid the rupture in its necessarily changing cycles of occupation. Flexibility and continuity are closely related and they need each other in order to be effective, to be substantial.

Frank Lloyd Wright defended continuity against the "closed container". The polemic between the "finite" and "non finite" object is something visible in the old medieval or baroque cities. There is no single isolated or complete building in these. The creation of a context demands the interconnection of several units.

Let us go back to the idea of continuity as something desirable in an architectural work. It might have a double sense: we can be talking

about just one building and apply it to its capacity for historical endurance (by means of its power to change its dimensions or flexibility); but we can also conceive the project as an intermediate stage in the sequence between its predecessors and descendants which would imply a genetic series in which every element would tend to a certain goal transcending itself.

In this way, we would have the so called continuity and development tendency in which every stage would just be conceived as a temporary solution tending to an also changing ideal.

To sum up, the static image of the isolated project becomes dynamic.

## TIME AS A CONDITION OF THE PROJECT: (CONTEMPORARITY AND PROSPECTIVENESS)

This is probably one of the most abstract factors of the preconception concept developed in our essay.

From the moment of the initial design, and in order to obtain the already mentioned values, we must take in account the temporal process started by the materialization of the project. This must be conceived in such a way as to maintain its fundamental virtues (those which will make of it a suitable heritage and demand preservation) in any stage of its future evolution. In this sense, we must try to imagine and envision the work's variability (flexibility of continuity) without renouncing to any of its essential values.

If we consider, for example, a rather large project, we must, from the very beginning of the plan (contemporarity), anticipate its future in order to guaranty its merits (prospectiveness).

The character of the work must be preserved along History because it is the means for its interpretation.

If we go back again to our concept of the project as a living organism, we can easily define its birth, growth and decay. Our design should encompass every stage in order to avoid neglect. Paradoxically enough, when we imagine the work's "tomorrow", we might be designing its own decay, but it should be just its physical and not its emblematic decay. If the process would affect the work's integrity it would reveal a negligent approach to the basic aspects of the project (either technologic or aesthetic).

We maintain that, in these processes, ideology becomes a basic factor as the double goal is to preserve our Heritage and establish adequate relations in our human environment (a key factor for our heritage's proper use and care). Finally, we will have to admit the difficulty of achieving the goals mentioned in this essay. The many interferences affecting the process of designing Architecture make almost impossible an adequate management and planning. In any case the conservation issue should be considered from the point of view of anticipation.

If Utopia is the inversion of the establishment, Preconservation would be a somewhat ideal operation in the positive sense of a hopeful dream.

Thus, our concept would help us to create better places for the human beings' future habitat and, therefore, would not imply Utopia's negative sense of the unattainable. ■







He never imagines his walls as pure forms. He creates real, concrete walls in a kind of poetic realism. Fake architecture from a rigorous and strict architect. Frigerio's designs are concrete poetic evocations or, better still, lyric architectural innovations".

Richard Peduzzi's stage designs are for the critic Georges Banu utopian architecture. He has worked with the director Patrice Chéreau in Italian style theatres as well as in multiple use spaces as in Nanterre and in the Bayreuth Festival House, with his famous designs for Wagner's Tetralogy which were so much loathed by orthodox Wagner followers. Peduzzi, an architect by his studies, is the master of the vertical. A lover of Palladio's work, his trademark are his tall columns and walls which make the actors shrink. Both director and set designer concluded that Nature laws are the same as architecture's, so a mountain could adopt an architectural form. Peduzzi thinks he is more fortunate that the 17th century utopian architects as he can see his works realized on the stage. His sets, veiled, mollified or exposed by Chéreau's illumination, are somewhat disturbing because of their familiar and, at the same time, bizarre appearance. Banu says: "Peduzzi materializes his stock of architectural images on the stage which appears as a real place surrounded by a void. His extreme capacity for poetic intensity has been visible in marvelous and impressive sets which remain in our memory".

It is rather evident that we cannot recall every interesting designer in the world of theatrical architecture which has been so much prolific in this final period of the current century. But we must mention at least Robert Wilson, a complete theatrical man in the Renaissance sense (painter, set designer, director, author) and a man of his own time, or perhaps of the year 2001.

He has worked with musicians as Philip Glass, Cage and David Byrne, and authors as Heiner Müller. His minimalist productions combine opera, concert, dance and theatre and he has been able to fascinate and hypnotize the public sensibility for several years now by means of a mathematical structural precision born out of his careful story-boards. His super-project "Civil Wars", "Einstein on the beach", "Hamletmachine" or "Death and resurrection in Detroit" are just some of his most famous productions. Nowadays, Wilson is facing Hamlet alone on the stage and in a most succinct way. He is in love with the Bauhaus and says that he was, from the beginning, interested in dance and architecture: "what I disliked about theatre was that it seemed an art of sets. But working in a theatrical space implies shaping it in an architectural way. I was interested in formalism, in the means to organize a space, the relation between time, space and structure; if there should be an objective inscribed in the space, it would be like an sculpture... I always work with drawings. My drawings are not intended to reproduce the space: they reveal the structure of this space and the texture of the paper".

When Wilson arrived in the theatrical world, he brought with him that new equation of time, actors, place, matter, movement. He has probably realized Brecht's dream: freedom of form and heterogeneity, and the combination of genres, and the use of other artistic disciplines which are, we may say, the symbol of our age.■

## 'Main Street'

The study and analysis of Madrid's "Main Street" implies the understanding of one of the primary elements of our urban configuration. For Urban history (as something different from what is usually called "History of the city") we generally understand the analysis of the development, transformation and manipulation of historical urban elements. Unlike other issues as the housing policies, the differences between Suburban and Enlargement operations, the definition of improvement and embellishment plans... the street, as one of the main constituents of the urban fabric, has not received adequate attention on the part of the historians. In this sense, Bonet Correa pointed out the unusual character of the essays on particular streets, as units capable of conforming the urban fabric whose layout can be considered "the formal expression of the city's primal order".

Terán analyzed the "Atocha" and "Toledo" streets; Elías Tormo, the "Fuencarral" street and Tafuri, the structure and particularities of the Roman "Via Giulia". There are also some essays on the so called "stradas nuovas"; but we have almost nothing about the history and origin of Madrid's "Main Street".

Almost nothing about its medieval layout or its appearance in the 16th or 17th centuries. And this lack of previous studies has restricted our sources to the information about the particular buildings kept in the Municipal Secretariat Archive and Madrid's historical cartography. In any case, the study of Madrid's "Main Street" helps us to understand the changes suffered by the city: because (leaving aside the slight changes in its outline) it remained the same street through the transformations occurred in its outer appearance as the division of blocks and lots, the area's morphology, the type of housing or the concepts of ornament and embellishment.... a consequence of the changes about heights introduced in the municipal building codes. The social structure of the street, the state property and the relations between the public and private spaces as well as the existing monuments and institutional buildings also changed. The study of the city's most representative street help us to understand the importance of such abstract rules as those defining the permitted height of the civil buildings in terms of the hygienic necessities of the convents (... it would not be proper of a principal street to have some houses exceeding the others in height in a most imperfect way, and others so short as to contradict the ordered splendor and good grace of the public space). In the same way, the study of the particular buildings of this street has revealed us the situation of the 17th century "Casas a la Malicia" and the data about exactions and taxes included in the 1750 "Planimetría" proclaim the primitive importance and singularity of this lane as contrasted with other important avenues of the city.

### THE IMAGE OF THE STREET

Madrid's "Main Street" was outlined in

Carlos Sambricio

medieval age, when the principal lanes in the city connected the Citadel with the Wall's gates. It runs between two depressions (the present "Arenal" and "Segovia" streets), over the crest of the hill connecting the Citadel with the Guadalupe Gate. The commercial area (Plaza Mayor) was located in its prolongation, so it run between two clearly differentiated spaces, the area surrounding the Citadel and that around the "Plaza Mayor". The main function of this street was not only that of connecting the Citadel with the Guadalupe Gate but, as the unevenness between the fortress and the river forced the city to grow towards the East, it became the axis for this growth. In the 17th century, the line connecting the Citadel and the "Sol" Square, received three names for its three parts: from "Sol" to the old Guadalupe Gate (more or less on the present San Miguel Square), Mayor (Main); then, unto the "Plaza de la Villa", Platería; and the rest Alameda.

Other lanes, on the left and the right, connect our street with the nearby convents and churches ("Descalzas Reales", "San Ginés", "San Nicolás"... ) which were segregated from other buildings and conceived as real urban landmarks (according to Iñiguez's study of the 1561 Building Code). The oldest documents, as Anton van der Vyngaerde's view of the city and Teixeira's map give us very little information. In the former, we just can see Madrid's "profile", the silhouette of its churches and convents, while the bird's eye view is missing. In the latter, due to the type of perspective selected, the elevation of the "Plaza Mayor" conceals its back side and, thus, the rear street, our "Main Street". In order to learn something about the street during the 17th century, we must make use of the travellers' books and guides, the plans and maps, engravings and drawings from that time revealing something of the street's structure. But, unfortunately enough, most of these, as conceived for travellers and interested people, mainly reflect the area's convents and monasteries. Neither does our "Golden Century" literature reveal many details about our street. The main reference is that of the city's "Mentidero" (the steps of San Felipe) - even Marañón talks about this particular public space in his Don Juan - . Lope de Vega's comedies and Calderón's mystery plays and so many others, supposedly located in Madrid, just mention the importance of the street, its particular atmosphere and commercial character.

If we consider the sense and function of the street in each historical period, we will have to answer five fundamental questions: how was the division in blocks performed; how were then these blocks divided into lots; what type of housing was built there; what was the appearance of the street's facades and, finally, were really the municipal building codes so significant in the street's configuration.

### DIVISION INTO BLOCKS

It is easy to distinguish the blocks located in the Platería section, from those in Alameda or Mayor. We just have to observe Espinosa

de los Monteros' plan or read the descriptions contained in the "Planimetría General de Madrid".

In 1746, Ensenada ordered a detailed record of the situation of the housing built in the city and an inventory of the settlement tax due by every one of them, including the relation of those that were free of any charge and those that had any debt with the public finance. The "Planimetría" includes 557 block plans and 7800 descriptions which have been fundamental in our study of the "Main Street". The section of the street called "Mayor" is composed by blocks number 386, 387 and 388, then number 389 in the corner between "Bordadores" street and the "Plaza e Herradores", and numbers 412 and 415, on the side which is nowadays that of the even numbers. On the other side, we have the "Casa de Correos" occupying blocks number 205 and 206; the "Casa del Cordero" in block number 203, then blocks number 202, 195, 194 and, finally, block number 193 by the arc of the Guadalupe Gate.

In the lower section of the street, we have many religious buildings (the convent of San Felipe el real, San Miguel parish church, convent of the Sacrament, convent of San Felipe Neri, Salvador parish church, convent of Constantinople, and Santa María parish church), and a great number of distinguished houses and palaces, some of them now lost: in the "Plaza de la Villa, the Lujanes House, the dependencies of the Cisneros House and the Town Hall. Then, immediately afterwards, the Palace of the Marquis of Cañete, then the Camarasa Palace (the "Civil Government", nowadays) and those of Uceda and the Councils Palace, then, in the lower section, in the old lost Malpica street, the house of the Marquis of Malpica and that of the Duke of Osuna and Benavente. On the right side, at the beginning, the Ufate Palace; then, on the corner with the Luzón street, the house belonging to the Acuña family (and later to the Duke of Alburquerque); then, the house of the Cuevas y Pacheco family and that of the Duke of Abrantes (the Italian Institute nowadays). On the contrary, the section called Mayor presents mainly common and narrow housing (some of them three storey), with constricted doorways or, better, profound caverns and alleys... almost vertical and completely obscure staircases... diminutive and poorly devised dwellings, according to Mesonero Romanos' "Antiguo Madrid". This clear difference induces us to study, in first place, the form of the blocks and proceed with the division into plots.

While the Platería and Alameda sections present mainly institutional buildings and the houses of the most powerful (probably because of the proximity to the Citadel), the blocks of the Mayor section are the center of the city's commercial activity. In this sense, the latter requires not only a different type of portioning but also a greater width than the Platería and Alameda sections, with commercial porticoes on both sides from the San Miguel parish church to the end of what the "Planimetría General de Madrid" (1749) calls block number 202.

These porticoes of the Mayor section are a fundamental element in the urban appearance of the street, as they come to transform the old character of the Platería and Alameda sections: the Mayor section was not anymore the "Street of the Gentlemen" but a commercial axis, and that was the idea of



the economic designers of the time when they conceived the porticoes. The street became then, the functional prolongation of the Plaza Mayor and, from that moment (until approximately 1840), all the projects submitted to the Town Hall regarding it and complying with the regulations, presented porticoed ground floors under differently devised facades. The porticoes, then, appeared, not only in the "Main Street", but also in the lanes connecting it with the "Plaza Mayor", thus, marking the mentioned character of commercial prolongation. From the Zaragoza Arc, the Plaza presents another extension area, towards Atocha; by the so called "New Street" (Ciudad Rodrigo street after the 1790 fire), towards the San Miguel Church; and through Guadalajara Gate, by our "Main Street", towards the Sol Square.

The image of a porticoed "Main Street" has not been sufficiently studied, although there are some references. Javier Ribera, in his essay on "Juan Bautista de Toledo and Felipe II" mentioned the layout of this Royal Street as well as the Guadalajara Bridge with the proposal to tear down some blocks which obstructed the vision and easy access towards Sol. The 1591 Building Regulations, required the substitution of the wooden posts with stone pillars in the Plaza Mayor, Mayor, Toledo and Atocha streets. Francisco de Mora expressed the same opinion in 1608 when he suggested the homogenization of the area. The necessity to align and straighten the street is something visible in Gómez de Mora's plans and Veronique Gerard mentions this circumstance in her work on Madrid's Citadel. Bonet Correa, on his part, mentions the regulations dictated in 1573 by Felipe II prescribing the main functions of the Plazas Mayores in the American colonies: "...every square around them and the four streets coming out of it must have porticoes, because these are very serviceable for the traders who usually establish there. The fact that most of the streets coming out of Madrid's Plaza Mayor are porticoed, reveals the influence of the American reality in Spain. But, in our case, the mentioned "four streets" are, in fact, a single "Main street" which is conceived as a prolongation of the space of the Plaza Mayor. This issue has not been yet sufficiently studied.

When did these porticoes in the "Main Streets" began to be built and who was the author of the proposal? Which was their origin and their reference? We know their existence from the second third of the 16th century but we do not have images of the mentioned pillars or the urban general appearance of the street. I have mentioned the 1591 regulations which prescribed the substitution of the wooden posts with stone ones with stone bases and capitals. Bonet, in his essay, points out how the Castilian porches are based on the idea of the Greek and Roman porticoes: "their structure is very simple and functional: a series of wooden posts bearing horizontal beams and, above them, the housing facades. An schematic version of the classical post and beam structure which is, in fact, a solution, to bear the medieval cantilevered upper floors".

Later in history, with the triumph of classicism, the stone porticoes with pillars or pilasters made out of multiple columns, and arcs over springer and entablature were incorporated.

The 18th century cartography assumes the commercial character of the "Main Street".

Around 1750, the Mayor section of the street was not only wider than those of Platería and Almudena, it even exceeded those of the San Bernardo, Hortaleza and Fuencarral streets. The porticoes even advanced beyond the street's official alignment and, therefore, when, near the Sol square, these disappeared, the street became even wider. As our lane is a relic from the medieval age, one of its main problems was, precisely, alignment. A problem whose solution was undertaken at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries. The Municipal Archive documents reveal us the corrections and amendments made by the Municipal architects to the projects submitted. They dictated retreats and changes in the facades always in order to obtain straight lines.

The pilasters of the "Main Street" are not visible in Teixeira's plan, but they appear in the 1750 "Planimetría" and, therefore in the 1761 Chalmandrier's plan and that by Espinosa de los Monteros from 1766. But curiously enough, Ponz does not mention them in his "Travel", when he does, in fact, talk about the atmosphere of the "Plaza Mayor" and about other porticoed streets as those of Palencia. The portico was the most singular element of the "Main Street" and the 18th century cartography also reveals its urban function in connection with the "Plaza Mayor".

In Francisco de Mora's proposal of 1597 on the area of the Guadalajara Gate, we can easily perceive the intention of creating a porticoed street connecting our "Main Street" with the Plaza de Herradores that would solve the discontinuity of the Guadalajara Gate. Years later, Gómez de Mora, who designed the Plaza mayor and the "Nueva" street, continued with this project. In the middle years of the 18th century, this clear will to embellish and unify the street's design (with specific "ornament" regulations) made Ventura Rodríguez, not just as Municipal Architect, but also as private professional, develop two specially relevant projects: the Casa de Correos in the Puerta del Sol square (outside our "Main Street" but really close to it and affecting, in fact, blocks number 205 and 206) and the "Proposed design for the correction of the unevenness between the Guadalajara Gate and Platerías, block number 451, plots number 4, 5, 6 and 7, according to my report of august 1768". From the Zaragoza Arc, the Plaza Mayor was extended towards the Atocha street and, after Ventura Rodríguez's project, the so called "Calle Nueva" (Ciudad Rodrigo Street after the 1790 fire) prolonged the order of pilasters towards the San Miguel church and the Guadalajara Gate (keeping the same design in the granite square based pilasters and fixing a definite rhythm to be followed by the upper fenestration). The pilasters even turned around the corner at "Main Street" and went up to the Sol square.

As we have mentioned the medieval layout of the street was progressively altered and straightened. In the same way the subsequent division of the blocks into plots, as exposed by the 1750 "Planimetría", reveals significant changes in the division criteria. We can even learn the names and privileges of those who lived in the street. But, if we really want to know something about the street's character, we must make use of the travellers' descriptions or the economic commentaries (Larruga, for example, enumerates the

position and activities of the guild associations and the factories). They provide us with an expressive vision of street's everyday life. The manuscript called "Noticia Topográfica correspondiente a los años 1625 y siguientes", discovered by Molina Campuzano, tells us about the existence of nearby guild headquarters as the "Portales de Joyeros" (Jewelers), the "Portal de la Ropería de nuevo" (Tailors), in block number 194; the "Portal de los Manguiteros" (notaries), block number 388, the "Portales de las telas de seda" (silk traders), blocks number 415, 413, 412 and 193. Mesonero adds some information about the ground floors of such houses: "although they were rather meager, they presented commercial porticoes, partially specialized as their names reveal: "Roperos" or "Pretineros" (tailors) on the left side, "Manguiteros" (notaries) on the right, then "Telas de Seda" (silk traders) and the prolongation called "Platerías" (silver trade)".

We must know the particular activity of each block to understand the space left in it for each plot. We must assume that the really valuable and decisive facade was the, the narrowest one, while the plot's depth, is usually parallel to secondary lanes. Thus the division of certain blocks, as number 195, is first of all dictated by the facade over "Main Street", while the rest attends to the lateral routes towards the Plaza Mayor. In block number 194, for example, the alley has no significance, probably because of its lack of commercial activity.

There are some contradictions though to this general statement. For example, in block number 193 the plots face in a similar way the "Amargura", "Nueva" and "Mayor" streets). In block number 202 the "Postas" and "Mayor" streets are equivalent, presenting really deep plots which probably were accessible from both routes. In the blocks divided by a middle axis, it seems as though the intention is to create a unitary area. Thus, the porticoes of the Plaza Mayor continue by the Calle Nueva and up "Main street", establishing (as can be seen in Ventura Rodríguez's drawings) a fixed rhythm for the fenestration and the pilasters up to block number 194.

## "MAIN STREET" HOUSING TYPES

When Carlos III arrived in Madrid in 1760, the city became an active building site and was soon thoroughly transformed. I have already mentioned in other works how his kingdom gave place to a double phenomenon: on one hand, the area comprised by the streets Hortaleza, Fuencarral, Montera, Toledo and Prados was occupied by means of new constructions which developed the current ideas on housing design. It was in this area that the aristocracy and emerging bourgeoisie decided to settle and so, it became a courtier district in the second half of the 18th century. But in the core of the city, in our "Main Street" the situation was completely different. The projects submitted to the Town Hall during the second half of the 18th and first half of the 19th centuries are just facade refurbishment plans: as the municipal regulations just dictated the necessary "ornament" (regulations on "air", "water" and "fire" would be subsequently added) the interior problems of the dwellings, the arrangement of the living space, were not at all posed. So, if we now can talk about this

inner arrangement of the housing in the area, it is because we have made use of two references. The first one is the analysis found in the treatises of architecture and architectural education developed by the Architectural Section of the San Fernando Academy (where we can find Ventura Rodríguez, Juan de Villanueva, Silvestre Pérez, Pedro Arnal, Antonio López Aguado... as Architectural Directors and Lieutenant Directors, all of them, at the same time, Municipal Principal or Assistant Architects). The second is the comparison between the 1750 "Planimetría" and the recently elaborated maps for Madrid's 1995 General Development Plan, in search of the coincident lots, interior courts or staircases which might reveal the survival of the 18th and 19th century types. The housing projects designed for the "Main Street" lots were limited by several restrictions: first of all, most of the plots were already determined and it was rather difficult to obtain the reunification of some of them in one; the height was also dictated by the regulations; the composition of the facades had to follow the rhythm of the pilasters and the fenestration of the adjacent houses. As in the 17th century Gómez de Mora's designs, the facades presented (as Plò and then Bails pointed out) symmetric balconies along a most simple plane. Analyzing the plans of the dwellings, we quote "...we must say that the arrangement tends to be rather regular. The rooms are nearly always rectangular, even in the most difficult cases, as in José Hermosilla's project for the Torrija street. In most occasions, the spaces are organized around a central court, with an staircase placed on the axis. In other parts of the city, as in "Tres Cruces" there were orchards and single family housing".

Most of the housing blocks of the time were three storey. The different floors were divided in the facade by horizontal and rather expressive moldings. In most of them there were garrets. The windows and doors tended to be rather irregular and disproportionate. At the end of the century, we find, in most projects, a white vertical line dividing the windows and less balconies. The building's front door was hardly ever in the center of the facade. The ground floors (occupied in other areas by the coach house and the stable), were here commercial establishments. These were rather important in a century in which the number of small traders grew with the emigration from the country villages. Not all of them would prosper. After the front door, there was a deep hallway. The bedrooms and living rooms were located on the main floor (also on the upper floors in the case of collective dwellings). At the end of the century, with the supervision of the Academy, housing became a rather important issue and a new rational language began to be used instead of the colorful baroque. The brickwork flat arcs were eliminated and, after the 1790 fire which destroyed the Plaza Mayor, the issue of the building materials began to be widely discussed.

## JUAN DE VILLANUEVA'S REFURBISHMENT PLANS, THE INDEPENDENCE WAR AND SILVESTRE PEREZ'S PROJECTS

The fire destroying the Plaza Mayor in 1790 was the beginning of the transformation of



our Main Street's urban structure by means of Juan de Villanueva's new regulations. These have a significant consequence: our "Main Street" had been conceived as the prolongation of the Plaza Mayor but, after the fire, the streets of "Toledo", "Cava de San Miguel", "Nueva", "Cuchilleros", "Boteros", "Botoneras", "Vela", "Vidrieras" (today's "Gerona"), "Imperial", "Latoneros", "Postas", "Vicario Viejo" (today's "Pontejos"), "Sal", "Amarguras" (today's "Siete de Julio"), "San Cristóbal", "Plaza de Santa Cruz" and "San Jacinto" (today's "Zaragoza") were unified in a single project and assumed the same pilasters of our "Main Street". The homogeneity of the whole area demanded the same regulation of the height and the mandatory use of the pilasters. It is the same idea as that posteriorly developed by Percier and Fontaine, the Paris Rue de Rivoli and the Karlsruhe. Villanueva's project tries, in 1790, to define a unitary city. The spirit of his proposal is rather different from that of his intervention in the Town Hall, when he placed the belvedere over the Almudena section of the street, conscious about the urban significance of the lower section of the street.

At the same time and due to the derelict state of the housing located in block number 172 (comprised between the Mayor, Chamberga and San Miguel streets and the Plaza), these were demolished and the site prepared for the new construction. But, when the works were beginning, the Council decided "to create a single street, instead of the preceding two, which should go to the right by the "Espejo" lane". Villanueva, on his part, and in 1804, proposed the complete elimination of the whole block adducing that "this new space will provide amplexity and serviceability to the nearby Plaza Mayor, even more if, in due time, we undertake the connection with the lot occupied by San Miguel Parish Church which is a really poor building that should be demolished as had been already agreed".

With the same spirit as Ugartemendía, many years later, when he dictated the strict regulations for the reconstruction of Old San Sebastián, Villanueva faces the Academy, once his project rejected affirming "...A city must be built in one go and to endure thousands of years. The fire became for him a good pretext for the renovation of the old center, as the 1666 London fire had been for Wren's refurbishment. Our "Main street" became integrated within a superior order and an strange contradiction began to emerge. Now, the street was the outer limit of a unit and, in this sense, the blocks number 202, 195, 194, 194, 171, 172 and 173 (now odd numbers) began to be considered as completely different from those on the other side (now even numbers).

The War (or better, the activity of José Bonaparte's kingdom), affected our street in a significant way. We know that Juan de Villanueva began a new process of demolition in the Almudena section, with the intention to facilitate the access towards the Plaza de la Armería from the axis of the "Main street". This project developed a previous idea of Silvestre Pérez who wanted to connect the Royal Palace with San Francisco el Grande. We also know that, accordingly to the Empire's market policy, during the Bonaparte kingdom, the Town Hall demolished the block number 172 and erected the San Miguel Marketplace on the site. Both operations had a

significant repercussion in the area's layout and the city changed in a rather substantial way, although it was only some years later that it became evident. The National Heritage policy undertaken by the French king and the successive expropriations of religious estates had as a consequence not just the evident change in the property but the possibility of a new demolition policy that would tear down palaces and religious buildings. In this sense, there were even some that, confronting Fernández de los Ríos and all those in favor or the Extension project, championed the development of the historical center by means of the occupation of the lots abandoned after the expropriation. Ruiz Palomeque published a record of the demolished convents. Among other proposals, some suggested the creation of a new street that would connect the Almudena section with the San Nicolás church, that was never established. A new project that did affect the Mayor section was agreed by the Town Hall Council in september 1839. The adjacent streets to the old convent of San Felipe (block number 103) would be newly arranged and the houses expropriated in order to widen the street by forty feet.

From that moment, the operations undertook in our street were basically the unification of plots into new properties with, in some cases, innovative proposals for the new buildings morphology. Along the 19th century (beginning with the expropriations policy) the commercial image of the street will be transformed, the porticoes will be occupied with new stores that will conceive them as showcases. But the main change will be the clear differentiation between the even and odd sides. On the even side, most of the stores would be new and the renovation would be radical. On the contrary, the odd side would keep its 17th and 18th century shops that would just be slightly and progressively refurbished. ■

## A Never ending story through adversity

Maira Herrero

What is the matter with Madrid's Teatro Real?

How many millions have already been spent in the works?

How many millions will be spent yet?

How many millions would have been necessary to build a new theatre?

When will the works be finished?

These are not recent Parliamentary Questions. They were submitted in 1935 by the G.A.T.E.P.A.C. to the Minister of Public Instruction and Fine Arts. Since 1817, when the Royal Architect, Isidro González Velázquez, was commissioned by Fernando VII to design and build the Plaza de Oriente with the Teatro Real in the central axis of its perimeter, this magnificent spot has been repeatedly transformed and refurbished in the middle of endless polemics.

The place currently occupied by the building has been a theatre for more than 200 years now. Our story begins in 1704 when an Italian Theatrical Company decided to settle in a place called the "Caños del Peral" Wash House. Four years later, in 1708, Francisco Bartolomé, the Company's director, decided to erect, in the same lot, a modest structure to house their plays. Most of the theatres were, then, built and funded by the theatrical companies themselves. In 1737, the famous "Caños del Peral" Coliseum, of which we keep yet enough documentation, was finished at last and there remained until its collapse in 1817.

Isidro González Velázquez wanted to build a monumental piazza before the Palace of Oriente, taking advantage of the refurbishment works undertaken in the area after José Bonaparte's demolitions in 1810. Velázquez's project devised a circular space, rather opposed to the traditional squares, opened towards the Palace and formed by buildings with a porticoed ground floor, mezzanine and piano nobile. The project also included the facade for the new theatre, with an also porticoed ground floor to match with the adjacent housing buildings and placed in front of the Palace, creating an axis, as in Sachetti's designs.

But the lack of funds and incompetent management of the public finances frustrated the works which were interrupted once and again and were never finished according to Velázquez's plans, although the South portico was almost completed. The project for the piazza as we know it nowadays belongs to Narciso Pascual y Colomer.

Antonio López Aguado, Madrid's Official Architect, was then commissioned to design the definitive project for the new theatre. Aguado recovered some of Velázquez's ideas and designed the rear facade over the "Plaza de Isabel II" and the building's interior. The plan, rather constricted by the awkward lot in which the building is placed, is an irregular hexagon. The theatre hall and stage had then to fit in this container leaving around them a variety of useless spaces difficult to reach. We must take in account that the entrance from the Plaza de Oriente was just intended for the monarch and the court while everybody else had to use the Isabel II entrance and go along endless corridors and staircases. In spite of the site's oddities, the

building was still a typical theatre much in the style born out of the debates of the French and the Italian on the ideal form of these new public establishments and developed throughout Europe during the 18th and 19th centuries. The building picked up some ideas from Blondel's "Cours d'Architecture", published in 1771, in which the author suggested the convenience of segregating theatrical establishments from adjacent buildings in order to facilitate the access of carriages and the construction of open air porticoes for the public refreshment.

As Aguado remarked in the project's dossier, the new Coliseum was intended to become one Europe's greatest Opera Houses: "...once concluded, it will be larger and more beautiful than any other and in no case inferior in musical quality..."

After López Aguado's decease in 1831 the project was subsequently transformed. Custodio Teodoro Moreno was then commissioned to direct the works and was responsible for the final form of the building. He was the author of the fantastic scale model exhibited in Madrid's Municipal Museum in which we can contemplate the aspect of the many times altered original project by López Aguado. Only a few months before the conclusion of the works, Moreno resigned adducing health problems and was replaced by Francisco Cabezuolo, who had already been appointed architect by the King and quantity surveyor at the Theatre's works for several years. He designed the old wooden roof structure. Once the works finished, Cabezuolo remained as the building's curator until 1926, when the theatre was closed.

After many interruptions (in most cases due to lack of funds), the new Coliseum was officially finished on the 31st of October 1850. Four architects, several projects, thirty two years and forty two million "reales de vellón", were employed in the erection of an Opera House intended to rival Europe's most eminent establishments.

In spite of the widespread appraisal of the architectural critics and the public of the time and the significant importance of the building for Madrid's musical life at that moment, the "Teatro Real" had many functional flaws and lacked adequate facilities. The main problem was the already mentioned awkward form of the site and the lack of continuous funding.

In other great European cities, these theatrical establishments are profusely decorated and embellished in such a way that the pompous ornament becomes part of the performances' social rite. The best example is of course Garnier's Opera House in Paris in which the auditorium seems to be just an appendage to the monumental staircase and not the other way around. In our Teatro Real, instead, the auditorium and the stage are the design's central features, and the visual and acoustic issues are efficiently solved. Other public additional spaces are just left around the hall as secondary matters. When, a year after the theatre's official opening, the Royal Music and Drama Conservatoire was located in our building's dependencies, the functional problems became even more serious as the circulation scheme was altered and the establishment's lack of store room was



revealed. This real "invasion" of the building by activities strange to its main purpose was something rather repeated along its whole life and the main origin of its many alterations and renovations.

In 1878, the theatre's deficiencies became evident and the auditorium was remodeled. The great chandelier suspended over the hall's central point was eliminated as it restricted the view from the "gods", the foyer and the access to some dependencies were improved and the roofing and the facade repaired.

Two years later, the architect Joaquín de la Concha, as theatre's curator and the French engineer Juan Baylac, who had worked in the project for Paris Opera House, submitted a renovation project which included a new stage and metallic curtain that was never realized.

In 1884, de la Concha designed a new facade over the "Plaza de Oriente" in a French like style that was rather fashionable in that time. He made the two upper receded floors advance over the ground floor carriage portico and thus obtained additional space to room the royal dependencies. The facade over the "Plaza de Isabel II" was also altered.

The first signs of modernization came in 1888 with the electrical lighting fittings installed in the whole building and the submission of several projects for the stage's remodelling that were never realized. The most significant among them was that signed by the architect Alvaro Rosell which included a modern mobile stage made out of several platforms which were propelled by means of an ingenious device.

Even before the end of the century, with Enrique Repullés as the theatre's curator, the auditorium was transformed. The Neo-Gothic ornament on the gallery parapet was replaced with fashionable motifs and the old fresco paintings on the ceiling by Eugenio Lucas were covered by a more dramatic display.

The improvement and renovation works continued during the first years of the 20th century. The Royal box was enlarged and the foyer and corridors decoration renovated, the old stalls were replaced by more comfortable ones with folding seats and the heating and ventilation systems were modernized; but the so much needed great structural renewal never came.

When, in 1915, Antonio Flórez was appointed new curator, he denounced the former theatre authorities by revealing the risk of collapse of some neglected dependencies and the derelict state of the whole building. Nobody took the matter seriously until a fire in the royal box occurred in 1916 revealed the awful conditions of the building's fittings and the necessity of a metallic curtain to isolate the stage from the hall. In spite of all this trouble, the only operation was an increase in the firemen nearest squad and the strict fixing of the electrical fittings.

Flórez was finally able to elaborate a renovation project which was never undertaken but which was rather useful as it exposed the building's main flaws.

The theatre was still currently used until October 1925 when, with the Opera's Season already announced, the imminent risk of collapse was made public. The interior of the building had suffered significant movements along the facades over Vergara Street and the Plaza de Isabel II; there were cracks on the bearing walls which had to be shored up.

According to the experts, the reasons for these movements were an underground stream which flowed under the building's site, the works for the new metro station at Príncipe Pio and the bad state of the building's dependencies. The authorities decided to close the theatre for good.

Once the theatre closed and the Music and Drama Conservatoire cleared out, there were many reports, certificates, papers and projects intended for the building's definitive refurbishment. The old idea of tearing it down was again cherished by many. The bad construction, the derelict state of the building after years of neglect and the lack of modern facilities were some of the arguments of those in favour of demolition.

But the King though it was a foolish idea and Antonio Flórez, as the building's curator, had to elaborate a project for the theatre's consolidation and reform. The project was exhibited in the galleries of the Palace of Libraries and Museums. It included eighty two water color drawings displaying the intended improvements.

The works activated by Flórez, with whom Pedro Muguruza began to collaborate in 1928, seemed to be endless. Once the consolidation works finished, the interior was to be renewed in order to complete a modern Opera House. But the Civil War interrupted the works and provoked new damages in the interior as it was used as powder magazine.

After Antonio Flórez's death, Muguruza, appointed Architecture's General Director then, a post depending on the Ministry for Public Order, activated the works in 1940. He commissioned then his former collaborators Diego Méndez and Luis Moya to continue with the project. They were in charge of the building's works until 1961, when they submitted their last project.

Since the beginning of the refurbishment operations in 1926, with the reinforcement of the whole building, the appearance of the theatre had been gradually transformed. It was rather larger now, with a new stage and gridiron and a third gallery floor added to the auditorium's perimeter.

Now and then it seemed that the new theatre was already finished and it became almost a symbol of frustration.

The old idea of deserting the building was considered again and the Juan March Foundation organized an international contest to design a new Opera House to be built in the new "Azca" commercial area. The architect Fernando Moreno Barberá and his Austrian colleague Holmeister were the authors of a project that was never realized. In 1965, the Ministry of Education and Science, considering the state of the Teatro Real, commissioned the architect José Manuel González-Valcárcel to elaborate a dossier about the building's possibilities and an estimation of the cost of the necessary works. He concluded that it was impossible to build a proper Opera House in that restricted space.

They decided then to rethink it as simple concert hall and thus it was inaugurated in October 1966, after a careful restoration. For twenty years, our Teatro Real has been a magnificent concert hall and the seat of the Royal Superior Conservatoire of Music and School of Drama. But Madrid was in need of an Opera House comparable to the most significant around the world and the authorities decided again to recover the Teatro Real for its original purpose.

In 1969, a report was written which dictated the necessity to build a new auditorium. This new concert hall, designed by the architect José García de Paredes, was finally inaugurated in 1983.

In 1986, the Ministry of Culture decided to renovate and enlarge the Teatro Real and make of it the country's most significant and modern Opera House and appointed José Manuel González-Valcárcel who knew the building by heart to elaborate a first project. He worked on it together with his son Jaime González-Valcárcel and, afterwards, with the architect Miguel Verdú.

His first approach was based on the optimistic idea that the building could be renewed with a rather lower budget than that employed in similar operations in other theatres around Europe and that the works would be finished in 1992.

These began in January 1991. But the operation was too complex and the works were delayed again and again without a visible end. The architect's decease during a visit through the works accompanied by the media people was a new complication. Valcárcel had so far realized a first project and overseen a complex period of selected demolition works (in order to liberate the building from the many constructions which had crammed its dependencies) and another difficult period of consolidation works.

In 1992, the Ministry of Culture finally decided to appoint the architect Francisco Rodríguez Partearroyo to elaborate a dossier on the functional and formalistic possibilities of the building taking in account the current project. Three months later, Partearroyo submitted his proposals in which he centered on the rationalization of the vertical shafts, the location of the complex air conditioning and ventilation system and a functional overall structure clearly and coherently expressed in the exterior forms.

It is from then on that Partearroyo is appointed director of the works and, after many proposals, is able to complete fundamental changes in the building's inner structure and exterior appearance. The vertical and horizontal circulations have been considerably improved and new spaces for internal as well as public use have been devised. The most visible change is probably the new unitary roof (for which the two last turrets of Flórez's 1929 project have been demolished) and the erection of the oval barrel vault which houses the air conditioning plant and lift's machinery. The enlargement of the Plaza de Isabel II portico towards the sides, as in the project by Flórez, is another significant feature. Partearroyo has been able to obtain a coherent unitary sense of the whole building in which the new architecture fits harmoniously enough with the old one.

One hundred and fifty years of adversity had frustrated the opening of Madrid's Great Opera House. But now we can count on one of the better equipped buildings for such purpose. We just have to wait a really little time and we will all be able to enjoy it. ■