

Architectural Heritage – Learning from Abroad: the Spanish Experiment

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Abstract

The example of the Spanish has been a line of research as part of my Phd thesis. The reason behind this choice is that during the '80's they started from similar conditions as the ones existing in Romania post-1989, taking coordinated steps towards dealing with heritage. Therefore, valuable time can be saved on our part if we could manage to understand and learn from previous choices of others, both in terms of their success and sometimes failure. Starting with the '80s, the Spanish dealt with large urban fragments, city centres or other historical areas considered as a whole in a remarkably coherent endeavor. They were then going through a process that showed a delay compared to other western European countries, Italy mainly, that had begun work on historic centres starting with the '60s. The current presentation means to broaden the study of Spanish architecture in relation to historical artefacts. The period considered is 1980's - 2000, the beginning of The New Spanish Architecture as a school of thought and practice centered around Rafael Moneo. Other architects, of the same generation (Juan Navarro Baldeweg) or younger, whose careers were shaped by him (Lapeña & Torres, Miralles, Mansilla & Tuñón), carry on a consistent tradition of dealing with heritage. This bold, yet contextual architecture, its freedom in approaching historical sites, its way of turning constraints into qualities as well as a similarity between our cultures in terms of their spirituality, makes the Spanish a valuable study-case to understand and learn from.

Rezumat

Modelul spaniol a reprezentat o temă de cercetare în cadrul lucrării mele de doctorat. Motivul din spatele acestei alegeri a fost faptul că în anii '80, aceștia porneau de la condiții similare cu cele existente în România post-1989, reușind să aibă o abordare unitară în ceea ce privește relația cu patrimoniul construit. De aceea, un timp prețios ar putea fi salvat dacă am reuși să asimilăm parte din experiențele acestora, atât în ceea ce privește succesul cât și nereușitele. Începând cu anii '80, Spania a început revitalizarea unor fragmente urbane de mari dimensiuni, atât centre istorice cât și alte zone istorice primate ca ansamblu într-o abordare coerentă. Ei treceau atunci printr-un proces întârziat față de restul Europei occidentale, în special Italia, care începuse restaurarea urbană încă din anii '60. Prezentarea de față își propune să lărgască aria studiului asupra relației spaniolilor cu țesutul istoric. Perioada considerată este 1980 - 2000, începutul Noii Arhitecturi Spaniole ca școală teoretică și practică centrată în jurul personalității lui Rafael Moneo. Alți arhitecți ai aceleiași generații (Juan Navarro Baldeweg) sau mai tineri, ale căror cariere au fost modelate de el (Lapeña & Torres, Miralles, Mansilla & Tuñón), duc mai departe o tradiție în a aborda patrimoniul. Această arhitectură în același timp curajoasă și contextuală, liberă în relația cu

istoricul, capabilă de a transforma constrângerile în calități cât și unele similitudini culturale între România și Spania motivează exemplul spaniol ca un bun studiu de caz pentru a înțelege și învăța.

Keywords: Time, references, history, context, old city texture, contemporary, present, past

„Cities are like clouds: their precise form develops at any given moment from its previous form, and is destined to disappear in the immediate future. Temporality - the way time is present in architecture - is relevant to an efficient reflection on architectural form. An architect's work does not necessarily anticipate the future. It opens up and prepares the chessboard. Architecture is produced in the unfinished text of the city”. (Rafael Moneo, interviewed by A. Zaera, 1994)

1. Introduction

The initial interest in the Spanish architecture started with my PhD thesis (2012), that addressed the issue of coordinated interventions on large fragments of historical fabric. This meant both city centres and other areas belonging to the heritage family: industrial/ urban infrastructure areas, maritime/ river fronts, historic structures of large dimensions, public squares [1]. To begin with, the topic was not Spain-related. At a later time of the research it became clear to me that the period of the '80s, following the leftist Franco regime, was a very good example of a coherent process of urban rehabilitation performed on a massive scale. The reason for choosing this particular example is that the Spanish approach was delayed from that of other European countries, mainly Italy (that had started in the '60) and displayed some aspects that drew a parallel to the state of the heritage in Romania around the year 2000, thus making it relevant as a study-case. The first particular trait was that they had a 'hands-on', empirical approach regarding each urban context and this set them apart from the Italians and the French, who generally set the theoretical trend of the time and whose methodological apparatus was based on typology. The second differentiator was “a risky bet” [2] to rely on public space to activate heritage, rather than concentrating most of the efforts on housing, as the others usually did.

This presentation is a broadening of that research and deals with the period 1980s - 2000. Setting a general guideline up to the generic 2000 is due to the fact that after it a process of massive international influences occurred, making it even harder than it was before to discern the common thread among so many variations.

The present research is not concerned with issues of scale of the projects, whether they are freestanding buildings in old city-context, extensions of historical artefacts or promenades along ancient walls. The aim is to get a step closer to the theoretical reasoning behind the general coherence in dealing with heritage throughout Spanish architecture at any scale. How did they do it and what can we learn from it? They are a particular brand and display features that present them as distinctive. What constitutes the distinction and what stands at its core? These were my initial questions.

My conclusion up to this point is that what sets the Spanish apart in dealing with heritage is, primarily, their perception of **Time**, and the way they relate to it through architecture, and I will come to elaborate further on.

Upon further studies, a second factor has arisen, one that my previous studies had overlooked: absorbing **References**. This includes both references induced by the context and the ones that stem from the personal realm of affinities of each architect: echoes of past architecture, whether

Modern, ancient or any other. Although this is a general truth regarding architecture anywhere in the world, the Spanish have had, in my opinion, a more self-assumed, deliberate way of absorbing traces of the past, due to the political and social context that resulted in a concentrated nature of the formative years of an entire generation of architects during that time.

2. Guidelines

First of all, some guidelines are due to set the frame. 1975 marked the end of the Franco regime and the beginning of monarchy, which came with a renewed will to impose change in all areas, including architecture. Spain needed to reaffirm itself as a consolidated force with new institutions. Hence, a lot of public funds, doubled by private investments, went to new architectural programmes. 1992 was a defining year for Spain as three major events coincided: The Expo of Seville, the Barcelona Olympics and Madrid acting as European Cultural Capital.

Under these circumstances, Spain went through a late acquisition of Modernism, at a time when the rest of Europe was beginning to live its Post-Modernism. Spanish architecture was by then mature enough to be able to critically assess and absorb a distilled form of Modernism, concerned with matters of place and identity. Shadows of past architecture are deeply felt and filtered in Spanish projects of the period, predominantly echoes of Le Corbusier, Mies and Louis Kahn, of books, articles and projects by Rossi and Venturi.

Before that, the period of Franco was dominated by something that went by the name of Modernism but was "*its perfect antithesis*" [3]. The *rational/ organic* architecture of José Maria Coderch, Alejandro de la Sota, Francisco Javier Sáenz de Oiza, came from a tradition that had Gaudí and Jujol at its core and all of these influences reverberated among Catalan architects emerging around the '70s and later on. The architectural environment was a confined one and no external exchange of information was taking place in the leftist time.

The 1980s were the shifting point, having Rafael Moneo at the core of The New Spanish Architecture as the first Spanish architect to be recognised internationally. He created an academic circle around him and mentored many other architects, including the ones mentioned in this study (Torres & Lapeña, Miralles, Mansilla & Tuñón). "*The words used by those of us who passed through the Barcelona school of Architecture in the 1960s and 1970s came from Rafael Moneo. He manufactured them; our ability to speak is thanks to him*" [4]. This centralised school of thought at a time following a seclusion and an information gap could be one of the defining aspects in the Spanish uniformity and coherence of design. This is the reason for which Rafael Moneo will be the reference point for this presentation. The other architects exemplified in this study do not, by any means, exhaust the topic. Other offices, as for instance Carlos Ferrater and Alberto Campo Baeza (and others) will be the topic of a further study.

3. Fragmentation, minimalism

The 1990s were torn between two main trends.

Fragmentation, as a means to reflect a broken, divergent world in architecture, stemming from the Avant-gardes of the beginning of the 20th century (cubism, constructivism, dadaism) [5] was embraced by most of the Spanish architects around the '90s (the later works of Juan Navarro Baldeweg, Torres & Lapeña, Miralles, followed by Mansilla & Tuñón etc.). Moneo comments that 'fragmentation' could also be traced, not surprisingly, in Corbusier, Rietveld or even Mies, advancing the idea that modernism was rooted in a hidden or camouflaged fragmentation starting with the

'50s [5]. The term entered the academic discourse with Collage City of Colin Rowe. By the mid 1980s, it became a reaction against the rigidities of neo-rationalism, in search of a more dynamic idea of space [6]. In a simplified way, it meant taking in all the traits of the context at once, resulting into a fractured building similar to an on-going process. To **Baldeweg**, it reads as a *"palimpsest condensig features of the context (...), a device for responding to the complexity of topography, not just in response to changing paradigms in international architecture (the age of Gehry replacing the era of Rossi)"* [7]. **Torres & Lapeña** work in 'modes' and to them, the frgmented mode reconciles forces in the setting and complex topographical conditions [6], so theoretically, the same as Baldeweg. Still, the result is so much different. Curtis emphasizes a distinction between fragmentation and desintegration.

The other emerging trend was **minimalism**, a negation of form and the search for fluid space. The minimalists were influenced by the rational or manufactured buildings from the first decades of the century, giving way to *"an exacerbaded formalism, which originates in a disdain for form"* [3]. Minimalism was a manifest neo-rationalism born as a counter-reaction to the decorative excess of the post-modernists and the formalism of deconstruction [8]. Curiously, Montaner also places the seeds of minimalism at the beginning of the century, with the abstraction of the Avant-Gardes and the prominent Mies van der Rohe or Louis Kahn. Like any '-isms' and currents, influences overlap. He names Alejandro de la Sota as *"undoubtedly the maximum mentor of the minimalism renaissance in current Spanish architecture"* [8] and also places Coderch among them. But both de la Sota and Coderch are prominent influeces on all the architects named in this study and most of them are included among the 'fragmentation' architects. Moreso, Montaner names Mansilla & Tuñon minimalists, although when Cortés explains their methods it sounds a lot like fragmentation [9].

Two of the basic traits of minimalism are that it is purely rational and that it relinquishes history. Minimalism takes the non-form of purism or the topographical non-form, as in the case of Herzog & de Meuron. Still, Tadao Ando, a pure 'minimalist' has the traditional japanese space at the core of his abstractions, interpreted through strict modern architecture. Souto de Moura is also named among minimalists, but he is torn between the architectural tradition of Porto, with masters such as Fernando Tavora and Alvaro Siza, and his love for Mies.

Although the work of such complexity as the one of the architects mentioned is undefinable in categories of style, one thing cannot be said about Spanish architecture: that it works in the absence of history. Nor does it appeal to the rational. In spite of its rationality of form and structure, it is an architecture that appeals to the heart. The vocabulary may be minimal (although the play of Lapeña & Torres, for instance, can hardly be called that) but the extrovert joy of life is embedded in all Spanish architecture.

In the battle of these two trends, **Moneo** was not conforming. *"In the early 1980s, the period of post-modernism and revivalism, Moneo's architecture seemed too 'modern' to the more conservative critics. A decade later, in a period of vocal 'neo-avant gardism', it seemed too conservative to some. More recently Moneo has been at odds with deep-skin minimalism and with the fashion for the 'form-less' [10].* He went from fragmentation to **compactness**, closed forms that allowed for intricate interiors. *"Perhaps this search of mine also includes a degree of controversial interest in comparison to my colleagues, who are gratified by fragmentation"*, he said pondering... [11].

4. On Time

4.1. “architectural time”

I believe that understanding the way the Spanish architects integrate Time into their work is the key to understanding them. There is something very culturally-specific about the way history translates into architecture, a very definite type of contextuality. The exuberance of sometimes almost whimsical details in contrast with a strong sense of materiality of the architecture, an apparent contradiction between a transient/ fleeting impression in design and the permanence/ immortality of the generated space may be its appeal. Infinite *Play* might be a way to describe it.

The concept of Time could be regarded as having at least three aspects in architecture (leaving room for further development of this study).

4.1.1. *time of the building*

Firstly, the building has a time of its own, whether it strives for *permanence* or *ephemeral*.

While Zamora Museum of Mansilla & Tuñon is a permanent casket-box to contain the remnants of history it encloses, the Between Cathedrals project of Alberto Campo Baeza is a non-presence to non-fill a void, light and ephemeral.

4.1.2. *time of the site – history*

Secondly, there is the history of overlapping layers that defines a site. As Miralles said, “*there is never a clean slate*” [12]. This history imprints on the building the strata that have accumulated throughout time. It is a conscious choice for the architect to decide the just means in which these layers get to be expressed in the architecture itself. Utrecht Town Hall rehabilitation (Miralles) incorporated an old neo-classical building but the winning concept for the competition reproduced the scale and architectural atmosphere of the traditional Dutch houses that pre-existed on this site.

4.1.3. *time of the promenade*

Thirdly, there is the time it takes the user to fully grasp the architecture of the building. Whether the building is a promenade in itself or sets a path for us to follow, it distills space into a personal experience, whether the promenade contained in Mérida or Miró Foundation by Moneo, or the Promenades Guadalquivir (Baldeweg) or Ronda (Torres & Lapeña). Spanish architecture excels in placing events alongside ancient walls, framing the texture of the old city. **Moneo** declares that he has learned from Corbusier how a building can generate a sequence of intensified views of the surroundings [13].

Time is an immaterial concept that makes architecture come into its being. Movement, whether just happening or arrested, is a way to take in the significance of the object. Movement embodies time. Different from the aesthetic perception of a painting, architecture is more akin to sculpture (the time it takes to sense its three dimensions). Architecture is like being inside a sculpture, the time dilates, unfolding into the multiple paths to explore.

All these times form an aspiration, a spirit of the architecture. Beyond aesthetic criteria, it makes us feel architecture in a profound way precisely because we feel the weight of time. There are buildings that incorporate movement (walking time) but choose to ignore historical references (Kunsthal, OMA). Others choose to ignore permanence, as in form, giving birth to chaotic shapeless structure on purpose, to deny their permanence (Gehry). The Spanish relationship with

time is a personal one. Unlike the Dutch time, that is more aseptic and perfect, or the Nordic time, that floats with the seasons, the Spanish time is a time of the context...of the sea, the clouds, the white Arab houses that got displaced, the perfect but most of all the imperfect, the surprise, the discovery.

4.2. “time of the architect”

Josep Quetglas, the interviewer of Moneo in “The Dance and the Procession” [14] believes that his architecture proposes a different temporality from that of many architects. I tend to agree. He sets him against Kahn and Rossi, exemplifying their opposing concepts. For **Rossi** time does not pass. It is composed of different separate entities: the Past and the Present. There is no transgression from one to the other and the Present always remains passive. This attitude “*disqualifies the present, (...), all ‘present’ gesture is either burdened with the model of the memory or is a spasm*” [14]. In **Kahn**, there are two times: a deep one, that presents a permanence that turns into form, and a superficial one, that moves linery, generating history and change. Kahn’s form is immutable, self-referential, belonging to the deep time and untouched by the superficial form of Time that is change or history. “*Kahn’s Form does not trans-form: Form ‘is’*” [14].

In **Moneo**, time is included into the project. Form is not influenced (cancelled or dismissed) by time, because Form contains Time. Josep Quetglas speaks of two basic modes to understand time, until the upsurge of modern society: lineary (history) or circular (perpetual change of seasons). He poetically says there is a third model, neither river nor wheel, where each instant contains the density of all instants produced, and this is the time of Moneo. In his own words, this is what Moneo believes: „*To be an architect merely means to be able to compress time into an instant, in a single place - to live the fiction that in your hands history, or rather the things that are to come, collapses*” [15]. Moneo agrees in his interview that the Zeitgeist is inevitable in some way [13].

His attitude towards the site is not a reading of the ‘genius loci’ since he does not believe in it. Still, there is „*the mormor of the site*”, the traces that it contains, that he tries to incorporate using „*associative abstraction*” [10]. Meaning the site inspires him to create associations that stem from different periods of time into a subjective melting-pot. The site does not generate form, but rather informs form.

A fundamentally different attitude we find in **Eric Miralles**. His flamboyant shapes stem from a need to condense time by overlapping traces, by his own account [12]. For him, as opposed to Frank Gehry, the unfinished work in perpetual movement is not an aesthetic choice [16]. It is simply the only possible way and this comes from a need to address time, since any building is by definition an „*ongoing transformation*” [12], an attempt to beat time, by being able to travel back and forth.

Juan Navarro Baldeweg is haunted, both in his architecture as in his sculptures, by the theme of frozen action, meaning implied movement which is arrested in space. Yet, his buildings are closer to Moneo’s than any other examples mentioned. They give off a feel of permanence, an exquisite balance.

In **Ellias Torres & Martinez Lapeña**, new additions are melted into historical architecture, like small dents. They adhere to it, with a „soft touch” that enhances the past, making it part of the present. By their transformation, the past is made to reappear new in a surprising way. All the layers are present all the time.

5. On References

Many of the projects I have encountered have echoes of previous buildings, not in terms of form but in terms of spacial schemes or attitudes. Recurrant Modern models are constanly at the back of the architects' minds, after all, we are dealing with a late-aquired, critically enthusiastic end-of-the-century modernism.

Apart from that, William Curtis comments that „*when one takes an overview of recent Spanish architecture, it is striking how much of the best work is concerned with matters of place and identity*” [6]. Common references that do not refer to architecture have a crucial importance in the specificity. Some stem from the context: 'invariants' in Spanish architecture, even running back to Arab or Roman periods (memories of Roman theatres, aqueducts) and the vernacular of the Mediterranean. Others take natural forms (plants, animals, artificial landscapes), haunted by memories of Gaudi, embedded in the Spanish cultural life-style by the sea. All these form up a culture that is easily recognizable.

References could be divided into two categories: those induced by *the site* (historical context, extending to traditions of the area: the vernacular; associations to the natural landscape) and born from the personal memory or the professional archive of the architect, references of *past architecture* (of any time and place).

5.1. of the site

5.1.1. historical: Spanish 'invariants', the vernacular

Moneo tends to see the act of building as restitching damaged fragments of the historic city. Reading the dense palimpsest of provincial Spanish cities is definitely his greatest strength. Yet one never gets the impression of collage, but maybe of a „*difficult unity*” derived from an „*associative abstraction*” [17]. Curtis even comments that Moneo „*does not know how to forget*”, talking about the risk of an architecture to become almost too knowledgeable, overburdened by reference.

Miralles describes his work as resulting from multiple variations: „*[our projects] seek out and accept the existing constraints, but not one or two- hundreds-, all of them I would say. Architectural tradition is one of them. Working within limitations or working while being aware of a certain architectural tradition. We would like to present our work within the context of this aspect: variations*” [12]. One of the categories of projects of their office includes works that put a different spin on historical contexts, „*projects in which the historic environment makes architecture take on an unexpected character (...) reminding us all the past and the present moments in order to reach something else, perhaps a future*” [18]. Such is the case of Santa Caterina Market, the Utrecht Town hall or even their own studio.

Lapeña & Torres rely upon a set of mixed cross-references that are sometimes hard to pin-point. Multiple layers and meanings overlap into a reading of the place like through a fractured mirror. That explains, maybe, the raptured planes that intersect to form elements at different scales, sometimes walls, sometimes a pavement in a piazza, sometimes a stairway leading to a palace. Curtis classifies the firm as „*belonging to a niche of its own*” in the recent Spanish productions [6]. The vernacular is always a point of reference. Ellias Torres wrote a small book about the peasant architecture of his native Ibiza.

Baldeweg embeds his work into the landscape, reframing the existing setting. To him, architecture is a long promenade to emphasize the historical city, so reciprocal relationships between new and old are created. Still, his references come more from nature than from historical context and he refrains from any direct association.

5.1.2. *natural: forms in nature (artificial landscapes, plants, animals), life by the sea*

Curtis calls **Lapeña & Torres**'s architecture as „*a way of framing and intensifying sensual experience*”, also speaking of „*an underlying hedonism for light, water, greenery, sky and the desity of shadows, (...) hand in hand with a feeling for the tangible, and intangible, residues which contribute to the spirit of place*” [6].

Juan Navarro Baldeweg's work is a constant creation of artificial landscapes. For him, a horizontal hovering line against the horizon is a leit-motive. Shadows generated by the interplay of light and dark, transparencies and vegetal metaphors, haults on the way that resemble clearings in the woods enable parallels between The Guadalquivir project in Cordoba and Ronda Promenade of Lapeña & Torres in Palma de Mallorca. Baldeweg's intervention is quiet yet distinct and sets a background for the historical town and the Mezquita, more along the lines of ‚frames’. The second project, just as distinct, relies more on play and punctual incision, emphasizing the historic by means of unexpected turns and associations. While the former is more ‚permanent’, the latter is more ‚ephemeral’.

Mansilla & Tuñon take a more abstract approach in terms of relating to the *context*. They affirm that the '90s were divided between two paths, a more contextual one, more neutral in order not to damage it, and a more open one they define by the term ‚*parasitic*’, in the sense Derrida gives the concept. This means feeding an item into the context to generate a new set of relationships. „*Perhaps due to our education, we always end up stitching things together, restituting certain connections*” [19]. And this is where we see that by education, they must have meant also the education under Moneo and his school of thought.

Life by the sea translates into a multitude of nautical references, such as awning-sails of medieval ships, wires twisted tied into nautical knots, shackles, wood structures resembling those of boats. This interest for the Mediterranean roots goes further back to Coderh, Sert and Siza and also has its echoes in earlier Modern movement, especially Le Corbusier and his fascination with the vernacular and the Mediterranean. And, in turn, it ping-pongs back to the haunting image of Le Corbusier in Spanish works, especially in Moneo. So the circle of references closes in a perpetual loop...

5.2. *of past architecture*

There are recurrents themes and models that haunt the personal memories of any architect. Whether they come from ancient architecture (Mérida museum), or are filtered references of Modern projects (spatial schemes of Mies, Kahn or Aalto), or memories of other cultures (top-lit halls or the orthodox churches' dome), they form up a vocabulary of references that is inevitably present in any architect's work. Still, the references in Spanish architects, especially in Moneo, are deeply assumed and transferred into a more direct way, without being literal. Other prior architects, as Coderch and de la Sota form up a „*national lineage*” combined with a „*local pedigree*”. Gaudi is a permanent undercurrent.

Curtis sees traces of the Danish Arne Jacobsen, Alvaro Siza and beyond him, Alvar Aalto, in the work of **Lapeña & Torres** [6]. Moneo describes their work as „*set in the past, enabling us to make it become the present. Everything is present. Architecture should never be the past*” [20].

Moneo's references are the hardest to discuss, since they come from a broad knowledge of past architecture that are blended into a melting pot to generate projects that at first sight strike as un-resembling one to the other. It is a work rooted in modernist ideas that are critically absorbed but

gained from a more open mindedness for precedent that had emerged from the following two decades after the demise of Franco. Being the first Spanish architect to gain an international acclaim, his work stands between the cultural roots and the international discourse. His academic inclination makes him question the basis of architectural language and the underlying concept of design, constantly bringing him towards the theoretical justification of his peers, Corbusier, Khan, Mies. Thus, his work is constantly cross-referenced. La Tourette and Ronchamp are perpetual love-affairs. He is as much an inheritor of Oiza and De La Sota, as he is influenced by Scandinavian Asplund and Utzon and tributary to the works of Rossi and Venturi.

Baldeweg seeks references in Alvar Aalto's Essen Opera for his competition proposal for Canal Theatre. He shares with Moneo the obsession of the 'top-lit space'. He also shares affinities with Alvaro Siza (and his buildings as abstractions of landscapes), Soane, Asplund and Kahn. Fernando Espuelas remarks that „*he travels the diachronic freeways that cross time, through the „eternal present” revealed to us by Giedion* [21]. To his interviewer's remark that his work is filled with the history of architecture, Baldeweg's answer is „*yes, but I hesitate to say I am primarily concerned with making historical references. I am not interested in imposing a private narrative as happened with post-modernism*” [22].

Mansilla & Tuñón draw references and turn them into abstract geometries to serve different purposes. Sometimes they change scale, sometimes uses: roofs become walls and vice-versa. While one project is a 'technological castro' inspired by the nearby Celt-Iberian fortifications (Lalin Town Hall), another uses the reference of the Roman circus or the medieval Spanish fortification (Automobile Museum). The MUSAC in Leon draws its geometry from the tessellated Roman pavements and the stained glass windows of the cathedrals [9]. Still, the result resembles neither, since they take a pattern, break it down to morcels (pixels) and then replicate them in a repetitive geometry, 'families' of shapes that change scales all the time to become buildings, façades, pavements.

All of the above-mentioned architects have had a huge impact on each other. Not only they were all formed under the guidance of Moneo, but they all follow and critique each other's work. Proof of this is the way they interview each other for 'El Croquis'. On the other hand, a comparison with the School of Porto would be an interesting topic for a further presentation, since the two have a lot of common traits and give off a similar feel. It is not a coincidence that Moneo and Siza have constantly been following each other's work. So do the other Spanish, and with other Portuguese architects as well, such as Souto de Moura. It is because all of them are under the Mediterranean cultural umbrella, and much of these similarities are felt throughout the common feel of their work.

To further demonstrate how the references are embedded into the projects, I have selected three study-cases that do not carry the same amplitude, since they display totally different programs. Still, they demonstrate all the types of references that have been discussed to this point.

6. Studycases

6.1. National Museum of Roman Art – Mérida, 1986 (Rafael Moneo)

The Mérida project is a seminal building of its time because “*it showd how it might be possible to combine some of the agendas of the time – classicism, context, typology, ornament, legibility- in a convincing work that vibrated between abstract and representational, ancient and modern*” [17]. It is a display of Moneo's *compactness*, in the sense that it is a finite volume, an envelope closed from the city, a recluse universe that leads its life in the inner space.



Figure 1. National Museum of Roman Art – Mérida. (T. Huxham, flickr, 2013); "Ancient Ruins Used as Public Baths" by Hubert Robert, 1798 (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_bathing); Córdoba Mezquita (<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki>)

This project is haunted by Roman memories, both as references to aqueducts and bridges and a more abstract, generic syntax of Roman construction. This translates into the use of the arches, which are clad in Roman brickwork, aspect that has been much debated as „untrue”, because of its concrete armature and the attached ‚veneer’ of brick.

Moneo also remained fascinated by The Mezquita (Cordoba Mosque), whose restoration he had worked on. Always, at the back of his mind runs the image of the top lit hypostyle hall of the baroque and byzantine religious buildings. This also associates with the invariant substructures of Spanish tradition: the civic assembly and the procession. Another constant reflection is of the skylights over the lower volumes of Le Corbusier in La Tourette.

Mérida is all of these together and none of the above.

6.2. Ronda Promenade - Palma de Mallorca, 1991 (Elias Torres & Martinez Lapeña)

The architects work on different ‚modes’ that bring together in a unitary version all the constraints of the setting. Insertions, extensions and remodellings form associations between the old and the contemporary that cast a new light on both. One of their projects was the restoration of La Guell park and this definitely influenced them on their level of detailing.

In a site filled with historical constraints (two bastions, the castle of Bellver, the cathedral and the texture of the old city), the entire strip of walls needed to be remodelled into a series of public amenities. The link between the lower level of the walls and the old city could now be reestablished by means of an old tunnel.

References of past architecture are to be found both in the Modern period and in the history of the site. Speaking of the theatre zone, Curtis [6] draws a parallel between the Ronchamp oblique spatial relation between spectator and event and the other kind of ‚tent’, of concrete, hovering above the seating. Still, at a closer look, an unexpected resemblance appears to me between the vertical shaft of light in the connecting tunnel and the lateral lanterns in La Tourette.

Jujol and Gaudi had made interventions in the Cathedral a century prior. These works, especially Gaudi’s baldacchino hovering above the main altar, inform the new project, especially given the architects’ experience with Gaudi’s work. Another source of architectural reference would be the Palma palaces, with the Ionic arches and columns in the new pedestrian tunnel.

Natural references are self evident in the complexity of vegetal details and the subtext of palm leaves and foliage in the baldacchino. *Nautical forms* shape the tent hovering over the theatre, resembling a sail stretched by wires and metal connectors from the world of sailing.

6.3. Ciudad de León Auditorium – León, 2001 (Mansilla+Tuñón)

The Leon Auditorium project has been chosen for its approach, a screen towards the historical context. Other projects, such as the Zamora museum, choose a different path to set a dialogue with the historic artefact, as a „casket that contains its jewels” [9].

The León façade is a double-screen of exaggerated depth that turns a wall into space. From the outside, it stands as a cluster of frames, ‚a family of windows’, as from the inside, an irregular array of windows of many sizes, perceived as a flat plane, show various images of the convent standing opposite to it (now turned into a hotel). The screen sets a dialogue between the inside and the outside, in the architects’ statement an intended homage to Ortega y Gasset’s concept of ‘seeing and being seen’ [19]. The outer side of the screen displays its depth, like reacting to the context that presses onto it, „a family photo” or „a cubist face with a thousand eyes” [23]. Or, a surrealist one...like Dali’s haunting Dream Sequence from 1945 in the Alfred Hitchcock’s film Spellbound.

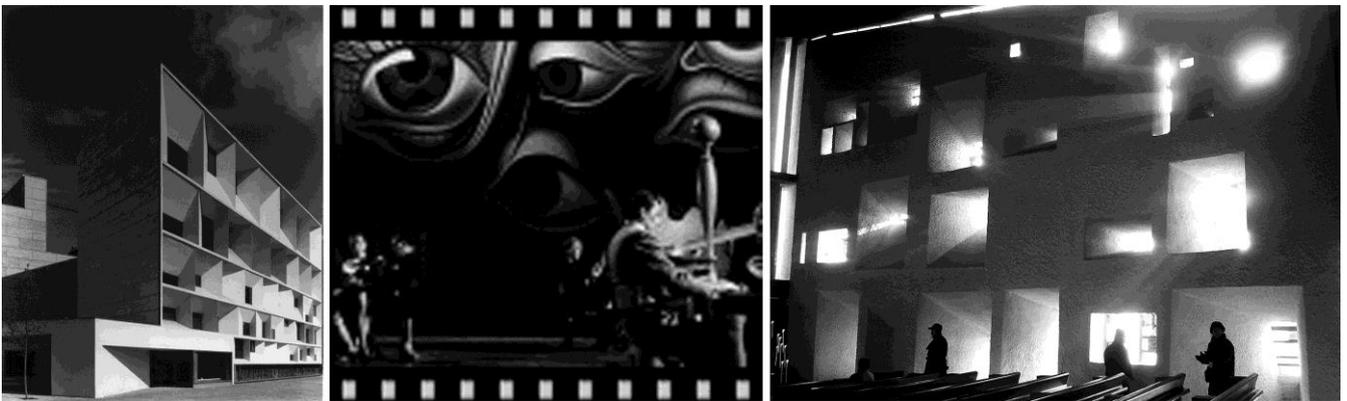


Figure 2. Ciudad de León Auditorium. (<https://commons.wikimedia.org>; Spellbound Scene (D. Pattern, flickr, 2007); Le Corbuser- Notre Dame du Haut, Ronchamp, 1954 (R. Hyde, flickr, 2003)

It even recalls a reverted façade of Ronchamp, although I have come across no affirmation of this intent.

This screen-like device is similar to Moneo’s choice for the Murcia Town Hall, where a different kind of screen overlooks the historical texture of the square and the Cathedral. This idea of a ‚retable’ entity that is able to reconcile different historical periods, is traced back by Moneo [13] to broken-down Roma theatres, or, in early Modernism, to Terragni’s Casa del Fascio, 1933 [13].

7. Conclusions

What we can divine from the period under question is that the architects were crossing a threshold, in between inherited traditions and a growing internationalisation of practices. Under these circumstances, around the year 2000 they were struggling to attain an individuality, in a new Spain that had opened its gates towards mercantilism. A conflict emerged there, between the strong disciplinary education of the New Spanish Architecture of the ’80s and the ever increasing demands of the market. The Spanish responded with design, and more design, to the point where it had

become a trade-mark, making critics affirm that exported architecture should deal less with the individuality and more with the solid, grounded principles they had been formed under.

The political and social context of the '80s presented, in the end, a great advantage on the international stage. The advantage was that of a unitary, cohesive formative years, that made an entire generation of architects respond to more or less the same values. And these values were strongly affirmed and felt in the Barcelona School of Architecture of Moneo. So this so-called conflict between tradition, contextuality (in spite of the distorted nature the term has now acquired with over-usage) and the more relaxed and abstract way of dealing with building in general and heritage in particular of the newer generations will, in time, probably prove to be their greatest strength.

Now returning to what the lesson of the Spanish could be, it is true that the '80s were very much a consequence of historical chance. This context is now difficult to replicate. Still, around the year 2000, after surpassing the insecurities of the '90s (regarding heritage), we were at the point of their time of the '80s, when the ground rules for intervention had been laid and urban rehabilitation began. Although a difficult period historically, for architecture, and mostly for the part that it dealt with heritage, it proved to be a blessing in disguise. The aftermath of this is, maybe, that a more centralised approach is more probable to generate a coherent effect. All the steps were well guided, logical and had a strong basis. In my opinion, this was the time when Spanish architecture was the most 'individual'. Before it became a brand, and when it was more connected to its roots. Still, it still retains now that quality and coherence, which has been deeply embedded at its core, probably because the fundamentals have been well taught....

8. References

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