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Architecture is the least corruptible witness of history. A reflection on historic authenticity architectural matter[1]

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Abstract
As the concept of cultural heritage has broadened, we have understood that it consists of more than just matter. Its intangible values have been discovered, also and the concept of authenticity has been taken into consideration. Nowadays, it has been accepted that the Western restoration theory is not applicable in every case since it was created to be applied to long-lasting stone architecture. The history of Andalusi (Islam in Spain) architectural restoration allows us to verify correct decisions, mistakes a well as the difficulties of applying the restoration theory born for stone European architecture, when applied to another type of acrchitecture characterized by the use of decoration made of fragile materials, and linked to an artistic culture which is narrowly connected to the idea of replacement and preservation of traditional techniques. The restoration of Andalusi architecture implies specific problems related to its material features. This unique heritage has confronted Spanish restoration theory and methods with particular problems and reflections, and this in turn has made our understanding of cultural differences in the concept of authenticity easier.

Keywords: Restoration, authenticity, Islamic architecture, Andalusi architecture.

The old debate between "*authenticity*" and "*fabric*" in European restorative theory

"Architecture is the incorruptible witness of history, because you cannot talk about a great building without recognizing in it the witness of an era, its culture, its society, its intentions..." Octavio Paz described the character of architectural heritage, as a vehicle of values, ideas and symbols. However, we must bear in mind that this witness is incorruptible as long as we maintain its authenticity. The European restoration culture accepted that restoration is lawful, necessary and even mandatory, and this criterion has been extended to societies that are alien to the genesis of that concept. European experts of the 20th century systematically discussed and reflected on how to restore. One of the fundamental positions they maintained was centered on the recovery of what had disappeared, the incorporation of new fabric into the inherited architectural fabric, the search for unity and respect for the visual aspects and the form of architecture. The debate between form and history and between matter and image has marked the evolution of European restoration theory (García Cuetos, 2002).

But the truth is that, in Europe, despite defending the idea that the historical authenticity of fabric must prevail, the reconstructive practice continues to be justified for various reasons. In some cases, it is a result of traumatic losses of heritage due to disasters or wars. Faced with destruction, the collective need to maintain the emotional and memory value of certain assets is imposed. It seeks to recover the sense of normality broken by adversity, as it has happened in the case of the reconstruction of the Mostar Bridge in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Figure 1). This monument was destroyed during the Balkan War and was rebuilt following the principle of *com'era e dov'era* (as it was and where it was) for its fundamentally identity values and the cohesion of the communities in conflict (García Cuetos, 2009), since historically it had served as a link between the Muslim and Christian neighborhoods of the city. The importance of the recovery of that symbol is not only material. By remaking the bridge, they intended to lay the foundations for another, more complex reconstruction: that of the multicultural past and of coexistence lost and destroyed with the same architectural fabric (García Cuetos, 2004). The destroyed structure symbolized the tear of society and the temporary walkway (Figure 2), the attempt to recover communication links. UNESCO and those responsible for the renovation of the bridge pointed out that authenticity has been preserved because all the original materials that could be rescued had been recovered, and because traditional techniques had also been maintained. But, in my opinion, that authenticity lies in the fact that it is society itself who has admitted that repressed element and who has recognized in it the values of what was lost. The reconstructed monument is a symbol and a document; it expresses that the will to overcome drama has been imposed and memory has been recovered. But no one will forget that it was destroyed; a false history has not been created, because there is full awareness that destruction and reconstruction have occurred.
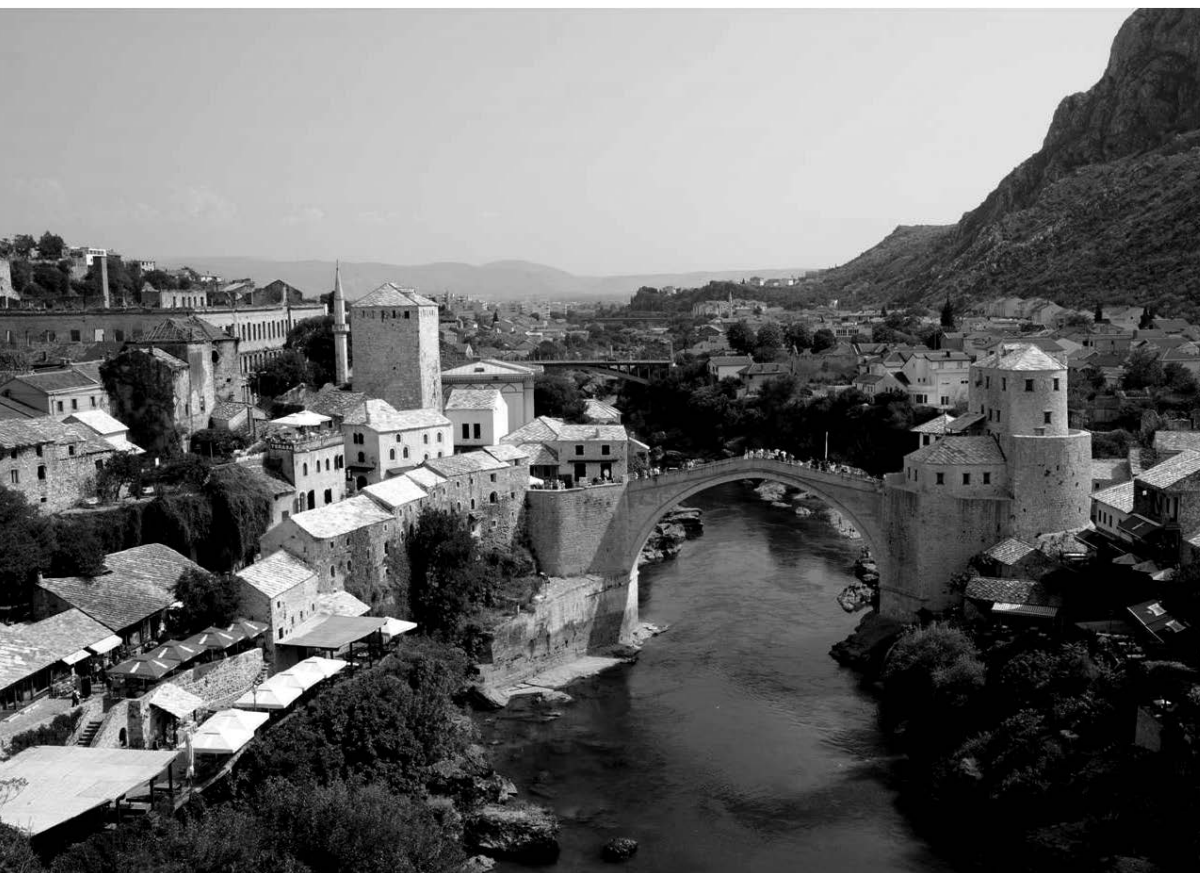

FIGURE 1. MOSTAR BRIDGE, BOSNIA HERZEGOVINA, after its reconstruction.
Image: Pablo Herrero Lombardía.

FIGURE 2. PROVISIONAL BRIDGE, built on the ruins of the Mostar Bridge. *Image: Npatm.*

In other cases, the value of certain heritage elements as artistic and social references determines their recovery, even if they were conceived as ephemeral elements. These reasons justified the reconstruction of the German pavilion of the Barcelona International Exposition of 1929, the work of the architect Mies Van der Rohe (Bohigas, 1955). At the end of the exhibition, the pavilion was dismantled, but over time it became a key reference that defined the creative career of Van der Rohe. In 1980, half a century after its destruction, a letter sent to the press and signed by Emili Donato, Daniel Giralt-Miracle, Carles Martí Arís and Jaume Rosell promoted the reconstruction, with an argument that linked the recreation of the dismantled structure and the rebirth of the city: "The reconstruction of the Barcelona pavilion, beyond the exceptional nature of the work, has a high symbolic value: reconstructing it can and should be understood as a gesture of reparation to a city victim of destruction and degradation" (Donato, *et al.,*1979)[2]. Through the reconstruction of the pavilion, the image of a new Barcelona was cemented and united with the democratic regeneration, modernity and design that has cemented its current identity. The project was carried out by the architects Ignasi de Solà-Morales, Cristian Cirici and Fernando Ramos (1983) and the new pavilion, a replica of the original, was inaugurated in 1986 (Figure 3). In addition, it was provided with a basement, in view of its character as a motor for regeneration and social reactivation (Jaque, 2015). Both the Mostar Bridge and the pavilion of Barcelona are clear examples of architectural recreation that, a priori, violate the European restoration theory, which prohibits the reconstruction and remaking of architecture. They show that not even Europe univocally follows the criterion that authenticity lies in the same architectural fabric and that its preservation takes precedence in the way of a sacred relic.

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[2] [https://upcommons.upc.edu/bitstream/handle/2099/5283/Article10.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y] (accessed on 7 September 2018).

FIGURE 3. GERMAN PAVILION OF BARCELONA. Current state after its reconstruction.
Image: Ashley Pomeroy.

As the categories of cultural heritage have expanded, we have discovered that it is about more than fabric and it became necessary to reflect on the concept of authenticity. According to the European theory, every object is authentic from its creation and with all its history. Therefore, to preserve the authentic would be to safeguard the creative, the physical reality and the course of historical time. But in other cultural areas, the materiality of a large part of their architectural heritage, made of fragile materials and subjected to continuous repairs and replacements, is quite different from those of stone constructions. Graciano Gasparini affirmed that if the 20th century was that of the Charters, the 21st century should be that of Dialogue, and that we should review some principles that seemed immovable (Gasparini, 2002). For his part, Jean-Louis Luxen summarized that as a result of the growing diversity of heritage categories, of their materials and of construction or planning methods, we have had to define variable norms for authentic conservation and, as a result, different interpretations of the concept of authenticity must be considered according to different cultural traditions (Luxen, 2003). The acceptance of this diversity was the basis of the Nara Conference (Japan) (Rivera Blanco, 1999).

Materials and their incidence in restoration theory. The new conception of authenticity

As I have just said, the eagerness for the survival of the architectural material fits into a type of architecture, like the European one, or more specifically, like that of the European monuments that were the focus of the first restoration activities. One of the basic characteristics of the cathedrals, monasteries and palaces, all erected mainly out of stone, is its robustness. The permanence of the material, together with the cult of relics characteristic of the Christian culture's own past and antique collection. In the words of Javier Rivera, the idea of preserving the monument in its entirety is predominant and will lead to the "general acceptance of all those incidents that the mentioned work has known in its existential journey" (Rivera Blanco, 1999: 104).

At the same time, the evolution that the appreciation of heritage elements has undergone, orienting itself definitively to its valuation as cultural elements, has integrated a deep contradiction in a restoration theory, which continues to feed from the *Venice charter.* The values of identity or authenticity increasingly refer to the significance of architectural or urban works and to the transformations of the environment caused by human intervention. The same concept or the social representation of a cultural element is more important than the object itself; the intangible aspect prevails. Heritage materials and values are interdependent. This vision is indisputable in cultural areas in which much of the built heritage is characterized by the use of perishable materials that have to be systematically replaced. It is evident that, in its very conception, the authenticity of this architecture is based precisely on material replacement; efforts to make it durable would substantially alter its values. In those cases, to apply a restoration theory based on the introduction of techniques aimed at perpetuating the fabric would be to impose a Eurocentric vision that is in no way respectful of the very essence of the culture of those communities. Authenticity will be linked to constructive traditions, to the use of certain materials and to the transmission of that culture, respecting its harmonious integration with the natural and socioeconomic environment (García Cuetos, 2009).

The definitive change of perspective came with the *Nara document on authenticity* of 1994. This document takes as reference the *Convention on the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage* of UNESCO (1972) and the *Venice charter* (1964), but it defines cultural diversity as a value in itself, which should be promoted, especially in the context of homogenization and globalization as we are facing:

> *The diversity of cultures and heritage in our world is an irreplaceable source of spiritual and intellectual richness for all humankind. The protection and enhancement of cultural and heritage diversity in our world should be actively promoted as an essential aspect of human development* (Nara document, 1994: art. 5).

Since the various cultural values may be in conflict, it has been established that the cultural values of all are legitimate:

> *Cultural heritage diversity exists in time and space, and demands the respect for other cultures and all aspects of their belief systems. In cases where cultural values appear to be in conflict, respect for cultural diversity demands acknowledgment of the legitimacy of the cultural values of all parties. All cultures and societies are rooted in the particular forms and means of tangible and intangible expression which constitute their heritage, and these should be respected* (*Nara document,* 1994: art. 6 and 7).

Finally, it reaffirms the principle put forward by UNESCO in 1972, in the sense that the cultural heritage of a society is also the heritage of all humanity: "The cultural heritage of each one is the cultural heritage of all." The premises of the Nara document were subsequently endorsed by the *Universal declaration on cultural diversity (2001) of UNESCO,* in whose preamble we can read:

> *An instrument of such scope is a first for the international community. It raises cultural diversity to the level of "the common heritage of humanity," "as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature" and makes its defense an ethical imperative inseparable from respect for the dignity of the individual. The Declaration aims both to preserve cultural diversity as a living, and thus renewable treasure, that must not be perceived as being unchanging heritage but as a process guaranteeing the survival of humanity* (Matsuura, 2002: 3).

Once cultural diversity is understood and assumed, that acceptance must have its effect on the protection of cultural heritage. The *Nara document* establishes that conservation actions have their raison d'être by virtue of the values attributed to heritage elements. It also recognizes that this judgment on the values attributed to cultural heritage, as well as the credibility of the sources of information about these elements, can vary among different cultures and in the same culture over time, this implies that fixed criteria must not be established to assess value and authenticity. It is recognized that the assessment and treatment that societies grant to their heritage assets vary over time. The *Nara document* defines conservation as an interpretive as well as material operation: *"*Conservation: all efforts designed to understand cultural heritage, know its history and meaning, ensure its material safeguard and, as required, its presentation, restoration and enhancement*"* (*Nara document,* 1994) and points out the sources to determine the authenticity: "Information sources: all material, written, oral and figurative sources which make it possible to know the nature, specifications, meaning and history of the cultural heritage" (*Nara document,* 1994).

There is a recognition that Western restoration theory is not applicable in all cases, because it is based on a concept of authenticity thought for stone architecture, therefore lasting or, at least, supposedly enduring. Previously, we seem to have forgotten that a decisive part of the built heritage, including part of the European architectural legacy, is made of wood, clay, and plaster, all replaceable materials that have been used as such by the cultures to which this heritage belongs. The idea that the conservation of the original fabric is the guarantee of the preservation of authenticity loses all its value in these contexts. Moreover, one of the first points made clear in the meeting is that in some of the world's languages there was no word to define the concept of authenticity. Consequently, it was considered necessary to develop dialogues in different regions of the world that, in reference to the diversity of cultural heritage, to perfect the concept and the application of authenticity in the heritage context. It was also accepted that this idea is rooted in different ways in specific cultural areas and should, therefore, be considered to be in accordance with them. The *Nara document* admits the change of paradigm that implied becoming aware of the value of the "humble" architecture, made with fragile materials (García Cuetos, 2009). Its preamble clarifies that it was possible to "challenge conventional thinking in the field of conservation, debate the ways and means of broadening our horizons to encourage greater respect for cultural and heritage diversity in the practice of conservation." All this, without abandoning the spirit of the 1964 Venice charter and starting from the principle that authenticity is the essential factor that allows clarifying the values attributed to cultural heritage.

After Nara, the reflection on the different concepts of authenticity remained open-ended and this was reflected in the *Regional document of the Southern Cone countries on authenticity,* whose conclusions are known as the *Charter of Brasilia.* It expresses a clear awareness of the differentiated regional identity of the signatory countries:

> *The countries of the Southern Cone feel the need to present the topic of authenticity from our specific regional reality, different from that of European and Eastern countries with long national traditions, given that our identity has undergone changes, impositions and transformations that generated two complementary approaches: the affirmation of a syncretic culture and a culture of resistance* (*Charter of Brasilia,* 1995).

As a consequence, the authors of the charter point out that each one of the inheritances, each one of their types of heritage, must be assessed according to these cultural premises. The meaning of authenticity is linked to the idea of truth; that which is considered to be true or that is true, that offers no doubts, is authentic. An authentic heritage element is one in which

there is correspondence between the material object and its significance. It is necessary to preserve its original message and the interaction between that element and its new cultural circumstances that were giving space to other different messages, assuming a dynamic and evolutionary process (García Cuetos, 2011).

When dealing with the relationship between authenticity and fabric, the *Charter of Brasilia* proposes a position directly related to the peculiarities of an architecture characterized by the ephemeral aspect of its materials. Its definition of based on the conservation of cultural uses over material:

> *An important portion of our heritage, especially in our traditional and vernacular architecture, is made of materials that are by nature ephemeral, such as earth, vegetable elements, wood, etc. In these cases, the renewal of evolving practices with cultural continuity, such as the substitution of some elements by using traditional techniques, constitutes an authentic response* (*Charter of Brasilia,* 1995).

This review of the concept of authenticity was reaffirmed shortly afterwards in the Inter-American symposium on authenticity in the conservation and management of cultural heritage. As a result of this meeting, the *San Antonio Declaration* of 1996 came into being. This document focuses on the close relationship between fabric, materials and authenticity:

> *Furthermore, there are important sectors of our patrimony that are built of perishable materials that require periodic replacement in accordance with traditional crafts to ensure their continued use. Similarly, there are heritage sites built of durable materials but that are subject to damage caused by periodic natural catastrophes, such as earthquakes, floods and hurricanes. In these cases, we also assert the validity of using traditional techniques for their repair, especially when those techniques are still in use in the region, or when more sophisticated approaches would be economically prohibitive* (*Declaration of San Antonio,* 1996).

The reflections contributed by the different national committees as a preliminary step in the preparation of the *Charter of Brasilia,* constitute a rich theoretical heritage that opened new paths to the debate on the authenticity and methodology of restoration (García Cuetos, 2011). They coincided that the concept of authenticity is not univocal and that, for example, the criterion for monumental heritage cannot be applied to the vernacular one. To this effect, the precision of ICOMOS Bolivia when specifically stating that "in the case of monuments made of durable materials such as stone, the concept of authenticity of material, design and construction techniques is of paramount importance and has priority over other notions" is particularly interesting (ICOMOS Bolivia, 1996). If the meaning of the word "authenticity" is thus linked to truth, we must understand that authentic will be what offers no doubts, but not doubts related to the single material aspect. In the words of the experts of the Southern Cone countries in the Charter of Brasilia: "The tangible support must not be the sole goal of conservation" (*Charter of Brasilia,* 1995).

The restoration of the plasterwork and tiling of the Alhambra in Granada. Fabric and authenticity in a particular European context

A large part of the treatments on the built heritage are carried out based on the principle of material replacement. When treating structures made with materials that in themselves are conceived as dispensable, the inherited fabric and the incorporated fabric are integrated into

a continuum, based on the survival of trades. In this context, creation and recreation are not understood as divergent and the architectural trades are alive. The architecture made with this type of materials does not only cover what is known as vernacular, ethnic or traditional, since it also includes monuments defined accordingly, such as some Hispanic Jesuit churches, Japanese temples, Moroccan kasbahs and Andalusi architecture (García Cuetos, 2011) .

The Andalusi art corresponds, as defined by Gonzalo Borrás (2014: 11), with the artistic manifestations created in the territories of the Iberian Peninsula (today divided between Spain and Portugal) under the political dominance of Islam. This rich architectural legacy is one of the unique ensembles of our cultural heritage. As I have previously analyzed (García Cuetos, 2016), this heritage is defined by its fragile beauty and for that reason, has posed specific conservation difficulties that, in many cases, have put the ideas and restoration methods of the European culture to the test. It has confronted us in a very special way with the concepts of authenticity and the debate on the use of traditional techniques and the introduction of contemporary materials. All these challenges have made us realize the need to interpret heritage values beyond pure fabric. This architecture brings us closer to the considerations and concepts more typical of a non-Eurocentric field and has been a determining factor in the evolution of the theory and methodology of restoration in Spain.

The history of the restoration of Andalusi architecture reveals the difficulties involved in applying the restoration theory born in the Europe of stone architecture, to another characterized by using a decoration based on fragile materials linked to an artistic culture closely related to the idea of the replacement and preservation of traditional techniques. For example, throughout the history of the restoration treatments on the Alhambra, the problem of the fragility of its decoration, which consists of plaster, tiles and wood, has required a systematic approach. To solve it, different solutions were applied, derived from each historical period and from the distinct sensitivity of the professionals responsible for those works. That same delicacy and vulnerability of the Nasrid architecture makes it susceptible to restoration excesses, since its continuous deterioration encourages the replacement and imitation of that decoration that materializes its fundamental values.

The tiling[3] and plasterwork of the Alhambra is currently conceived as an element loaded with historicity and it generally understood that the conservation of its authenticity is closely related to the preservation of its materiality. But this criterion clashes with the difficulty of facing a fragile material that was not designed for permanence, as in the cases of the gypsum or tiles. These decorations were systematically repaired using traditional techniques. While the Moorish craftsmen, trained in the traditions and crafts of Andalusi art, remained active, this maintenance was possible. But when they were expelled, this tradition, this cultural heritage, was lost with them. Today we apply a restoration concept born in Europe and conceived fundamentally for structures made of stone (García Cuetos, 2009). It is easily forgotten that authenticity is not respected only by clearly differentiating restoration treatments and the use of different materials and that the disappearance of material culture also means the loss of an irreplaceable cultural heritage. We must be aware of the limits of our methodology, because it can cause the disappearance of basic values such as the brightness and color that formally, visually and culturally define that decoration that is fundamental in Andalusian architecture. The complications lie in the fact that the simplistic alternative, replacement using traditional techniques without differentiating the original from the restored one, also involves the authenticity of the monument from the point of view of our European criteria. This dilemma is what has made and continues to make the restoration of Nasrid architecture so complex and imposes the urgent need for its meticulous conservation, as a better alternative to restoration.

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[3] The *alicatado* or tiling is a decorative coating elaborated through the use of tiles; when it is applied to the lower part of the walls it is called *arrimadero*.

Throughout the history of the Alhambra restorations, various solutions were applied to address the decay of the decorative elements. A very interesting case is that of the tiled base of the Hall of the Kings at the Palace of the Lions of the Alhambra. When Rafael Contreras began its restoration at the end of the 19th century, the skirting board presented numerous lacunae and deteriorations (Figure 4), but materials similar to the original ones could not be obtained (Orihuela, 2008). In the absence of tiles identical to the historic ones, and due to the high cost of reproducing or importing them, Contreras decided to replace the lacunae of the tile skirting board with stucco. This method is, a priori, more consistent with the theory that was imposed in Europe throughout the 20th century, because it maintains the difference between the original and the restored areas. Curiously, Rafael Contreras is considered to have been, and indeed was, a restorer who was more concerned with ornamental elements than architectural ones. I think that is precisely why he reflected more deeply on a fundamental issue in the restoration of the Alhambra: the relationship between decoration and the reintegration of the image and the formal values of the monument (García Cuetos, 2009).
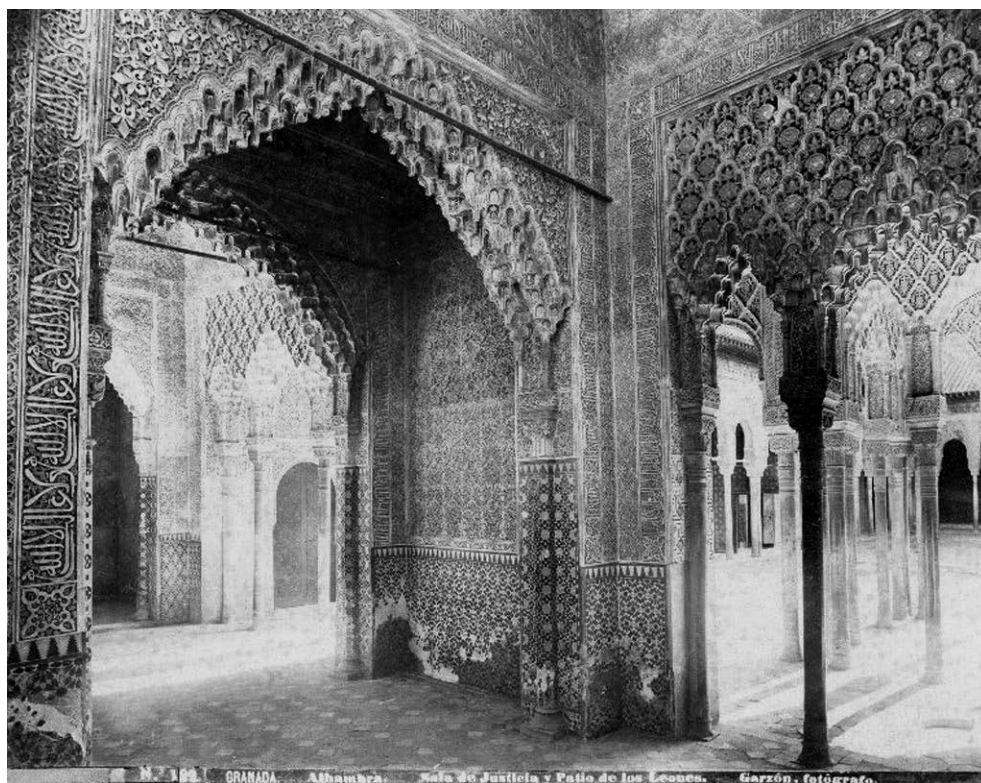

FIGURE 4. ROOM OF THE KINGS IN THE PALACE OF THE LIONS IN THE ALHAMBRA OF GRANADA. Condition before the restoration treatment by Rafael Contreras, with the lacunae and decay of the tile skirting board. *Image: Postcard. Authors' collection.*

In Islamic art, the intimate union between architecture and decoration, geometry, color or light, are essential aspects. If that decoration is lost, fundamental values of that heritage equally disappear and I believe, as already said above, that the strict and univocal application of the restoration theory as we have come to understand it, often violates those values and therefore alters its authenticity, curiously while pretending to preserve it. Contreras was very aware of that reality and we could ask ourselves if his decisions were governed by a deeper reflection than what is usually accepted. The words of Contreras himself reveal his starting point:

It is becoming necessary to test next year the creation of new tiles or tile mosaics, because if we ceased the study and understand of this kind of Arab ornamentation, we would be reduced to never being able to fully complete the restoration of any of the Palace's departments (Contreras, 2008: 129).

In 1858, Rafael Contreras again manifested his understanding of the need to recover the effect of tiling in order to reintegrate the beauty and values of the Hall of the Kings:

At the same time we have begun to make the imitations of the mosaic columns that have been destroyed in the aforementioned room, having agreed on the need to re-establish in their primitive form the precious stacks of glazed colors that are still fragmented and without which the foundation of this entire section of the Alcázar would be without effect or beauty (Contreras, 2008: 132).

The problems to restore the tiles led Contreras to opt for what he defined as an *interim solution* (Contreras, 2008: 132): to redo them in stucco, as long as the tiles that would allow their reintegration were not obtained. But the fact is that this solution, born as a provisional one, has become permanent and continues to pose one of the main problems of conservation of the Nasrid palaces of the Alhambra. The stucco has deteriorated, but it has finally been restored and preserved, as one more stratum of the monument:

The final result of this treatment is the product of a great effort contributed by the activity of an interdisciplinary team fully involved in the study and treatment of the whole of the base of the wall. On the other hand, the conservation of the reproductions made by Rafael Contreras has been of great interest, since they are part of the history of these rooms, which over time has also developed its own paths and criteria, but which, in this treatment, remains as a witness of the past of these actions.[4]

Already in the 20th century, Leopoldo Torres Balbás, an architect restorer who had participated in the elaboration of the Athens Charter of 1931, and who defended the application of the principles of scientific restoration, had to face the fragility of the Alhambra, of which he was fully aware: "It is a miracle that the Royal House of the Alhambra has reached our days in the condition in which we admire it today, because of its very fragile structure and poor construction" (Torres Balbás, 1929). Despite this, Torres Balbás renounced to redo and recreate the decoration and opted for solutions that still surprise us today for their sensitivity and modernity. Inside the Palace of the Lions is the Courtyard of the Harem. That small and beautiful space was in a dilapidated state at the beginning of the 20th century (Figure 5). Towers Balbás proposed its restoration from 1923. Regarding the decoration, he conserved the original remains, but did not complete the lacunae (Figure 6), being coherent with his conservative and anti-recreation ideas, since he understood that in some cases it was necessary to resort to repair, but not to completion; he explained it in the following way:

There are times when an old building in poor condition can be consolidated, purely and simply. But suppose, for example, that a part of it, long since disappeared, has been replaced by another one poorly made, without any character or interest, that disfigures it, leaving no doubt of the primitive disposition: then, if it is restored in its general lines, in what we could call its envelope, without trying to copy the detail and in such a way that this added part of the old part is radically differentiated, then a repair has been made (Torres Balbás, 1933: 270).

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[4] [http://www.alhambra-patronato.es/index.php/Estucos/1322/0/] (consulted on 5 May 2018).

FIGURE 5. COURTYARD OF THE HAREM. Palace of the Lions of the Alhambra in Granada before its restoration. *Image: Archive of the Board of the Alhambra and Generalife.*

FIGURE 6. COURTYARD OF THE HAREM. Palace of the Lions of the Alhambra in Granada. Current status after the restoration by Leopoldo Torres Balbás. *Image: Pablo Herrero Lombardía.*

The same methodology was applied in the most notable of the intervention treatments by Leopoldo Torres Balbás in the Alhambra: the *Palacio del Partal. T*he front of the palace was completely altered and the arcades integrated into the bulk of a new façade (Figure 7). Operating as he had done in the Courtyard of the Harem, Torres Balbás liberated and restored the arcades. When the portico was liberated, the old problem of the restorers of the Alhambra was again present because the decoration was missing. In order to restore the image and the visual values typical of Andalusi architecture, it was necessary to restore the lace plasterwork that decorated the arches. This situation had also arisen in the Gypsum Courtyard of the Royal Alcázars of Seville, in whose arcades an important number of ornamentation fragments had disappeared, generating lacunae. Between 1918 and 1920, the Marqués de la Vega Inclán had proposed a restoration in which, pretending to respect the history of the monument, its formal and visual values were altered, by replacing the lacunae with brick clumps. The effect was truly devastating (Figure 8) and it contrasted sharply with the solution charged with delicacy, creativity and knowledge of the values of the Nazari architecture of Leopoldo Torres Balbás, who replaced the lost plaster using pieces of the same material. In this manner, the restoration could be identified, but the formal effects, its reflection in the water of the pool, the light and the spatiality of the room, were recreated with masterful results (Figure 9). Torres Balbás himself exposed the limits of this intervention:

> *We tried to do so with the utmost respect for the Arabian work, without adding anything that could one day give rise to doubts or confusions. The arches that had disappeared in the façade we made again in such a way that, giving the illusion of the disposition that they one day had, but perceiving well that they are modern work. Where ornamentation was lacking, the wall was covered with a smooth coating dyed with color that harmonized with the rest. The pavement of the porch itself had to be made new, placing old white marble slabs, as it undoubtedly had, replacing the decomposed mud tiles with which it arrived to our days* (Torres Balbás, 1924: 16).

FIGURE 7. PARTAL PALACE. Before the restoration by Leopoldo Torres Balbás.
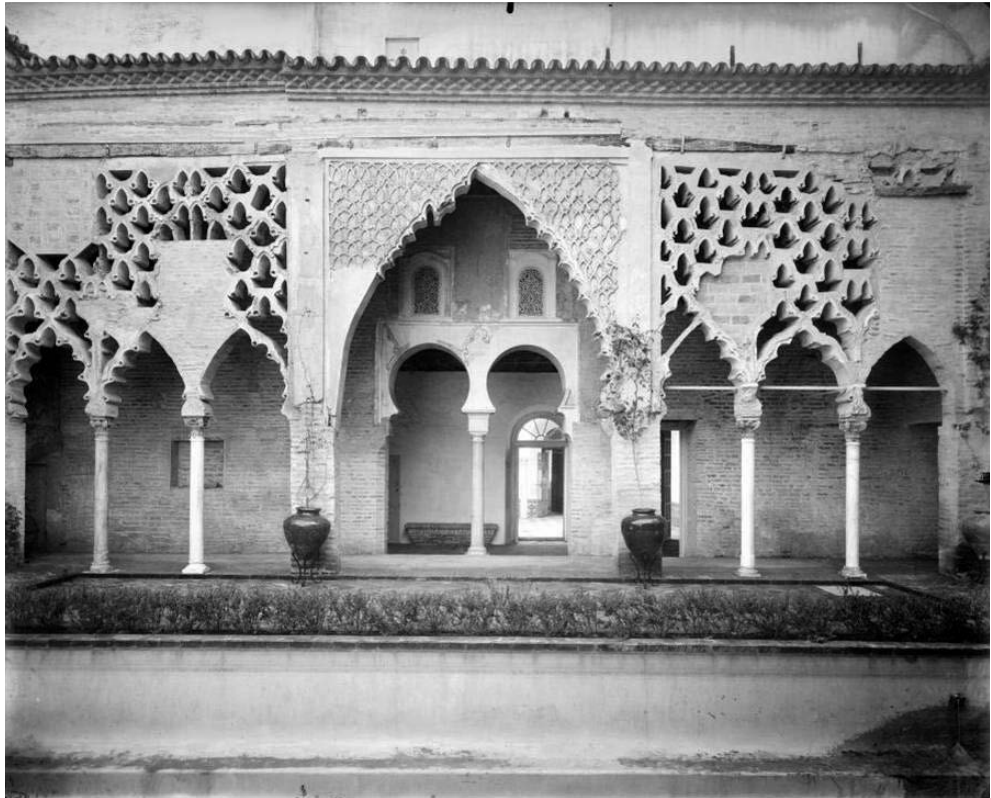*Image: Archive of the Board of the Alhambra and Generalife.*

FIGURE 8. COURTYARD OF THE GYPSUM OF THE ROYAL ALCAZARS OF SEVILLE. After the restoration by the Marqués de la Vega Inclán and José Gómez Millán.
Image: Photo library of the Institute of Cultural Heritage of Spain (IPCE).

FIGURE 9. PARTAL PALACE. Current condition. *Image: Pablo Herrero Lombardía.*

Here we encounter an alternative to the recreation of the decoration, but one which allows the reintegration of the visual unity of the monument. In addition, this solution brings architectural restoration closer to that of painting. This treatment of the lacunae using a different material, which allows recovering the potential unity of the work seen from a distance, reminds us of the theories applied later by Cesare Brandi and the *Istituto Centrale per il Restauro*. Torres Balbás used some innovative resources that make him a pioneer of a new vision of restoration.

In short, the history of the restorations of the Alhambra has been confronted with the problem posed by the fragility of its materials and its decoration. Over time, solutions have been sought to replace the disappearance of trades and techniques that allowed the maintenance of its unique materiality and also to apply European theory in an architectural context ill-suited for it. That history is facing the process that, to this day, has survived in Morocco, where the techniques of plasterwork and tiling hve been kept alive and where the cultural concept of authenticity is different and is not related so much to fabric as it is to intangible values. It respects and assumes the termination of fragile materials and the consequent need to replace them, as an inseparable element of the monument and its life. One example is the different aspect of the minaret of the Koutoubia mosque in Marrakech before and after the restoration of the tiles that decorated its upper area (Figure 10). In this type of intervention treatments, the preservation of traditional procedures is indispensable and forms the true cornerstone of authenticity. When referring to the restorations that took place in the medina of Marrakech, Faissal Cherradi explains that alternate procedure and its close link with the restoration methodology:

> [...] I wonder if really in countries like ours, where the material used in construction is extremely fragile: raw earth, gypsum, lime, etc., as an example, we should not really consider safeguarding the knowledge of these master craftsmen and enable it to be transmitted to other younger people, before it is lost in our "restoration" projects; to avoid suffering what is now happening in the West, where traditional know-how has ceased to exist and now they attempt to recover it and they only talk about recovery (Cherradi, 2004: 296).

This same dilemma can be seen in the earthen architectures of the Atlas or the wooden one of Ottoman Istanbul (García Cuetos, 2007; 2009). These are architectural cultures and cultural heritage that is inseparable from the idea of the replacement of the material and in which the foundation of safeguarding it is precisely in the maintenance of these constructive traditions. Losing them, therefore, means seeing the very reason of that heritage disappear. This is why Faissal Cherradi has resorted to the replacement of tiling following the traditional techniques still alive and that should continue to be transmitted and applied:

> We are doing it this way and we know that 20 years from now we will have to do it again, but I say and I ask myself: if for four and a half centuries it has always been like this, why now come with another kind of philosophy? I do not know why. I think these monuments have to continue living. They have been maintained and there have been master craftsmen who, when a plasterboard has fallen or cracked, have repaired the fissure. And why not continue? (Cherradi, 2004: 223).

As we see, when dealing with similar buildings and in two neighboring countries, very different procedures are applied, linked to two very different conceptions of authenticity.

In the Alhambra, the search for alternatives to recover the decoration that is fundamental for the conservation of the values of this architecture while maintaining respect for the European concept of authenticity, has led restorers to make a recent discovery that opens a new way of working. It is a mortar that slightly modifies the structure of the traditional one,

FIGURE 10. MINARET OF THE ALMOHAD MOSQUE OF THE KOUTOUBIA OF MARRAKECH. Condition after the restoration of the tile in its upper area using traditional techniques. *Image: Pablo Herrero Lombardía.*

by adding a resin with a copolymer with fluorescent properties visible only under ultraviolet light; a property which, unlike phosphorescence, lasts forever. It can be used in all types of volumetric reconstructions and as a base of chromatic integrations, varnishes, protective and colored resins. In this way, the restored elements will go unnoticed to the naked eye and will maintain the visual unity of the plasterwork decoration, but when they are illuminated with an ultraviolet light, they will show a fluorescence that will allow identifying the added fabric in the restoration process, even under the patina added over time.[5]

Conclusions

The restoration of Andalusi architecture is inseparable from the history of Spanish monumental restoration, and it presents specific problems linked with its assessment, reception and material characteristics. The values of these monuments have, at this moment in the history of Humanity, a particularly relevant meaning, since they constitute a heritage born of a unique cultural synthesis. This unique creation has confronted the theory and methodology of Spanish restoration to particular problems and reflections and it facilitates the understanding of the cultural differences in the concept of authenticity. In the Alhambra, innovative and complex technical solutions are applied to solve a problem that, a few kilometers away, is tackled by keeping alive the cultural heritage of traditions and trades. These are two different views of authenticity that apply to a similar architecture born of the same culture and that face the same conservation problems. A complex reality that demonstrates our contradictions and raises questions for some of our certainties.

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[5] Mortero Alhambra [http://www.alhambra-patronato.es/blog/index.php/mortero-alhambra-el-color-de-las-restauraciones-del-siglo-xxi/] (accessed on 2 September 2016).

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