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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE MONASTERY OF THE COMMANDERS OF MADRID THROUGH THE TESTIMONY OF THE EMANUELA GAMBINI RESTAURATOR

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ABSTRACT

The testimony of Comendadoras Monastery of Madrid restorer, Emanuela Gambini, makes us reflect on the importance of the study and knowledge of the historical Memory that lies behind the heritage. His continuous search to understand the reasons that have conceived the historical heritage object of its restoration makes us witness the rich cultural background that the architect possesses, loving for his own saying of the old stones. In this article, we will understand how an architect who loves history uses it as an itinerary for the reconstruction of the renovated work in its strength and beauty, but that still keeps the spirit of the one who built it, restoring the heritage and its history.

INTRODUCTION

In this article, the architect Emanuela Gambini will guide us inside the Convent of the Comendadoras of Santiago el Mayor, which is one of the most representative examples of Madrid's baroque. Walking through the convent, currently under restoration, the architect will tell us the most curious anecdotes about the construction of this house signed by architects of recognized prestige of the Spanish scene such as the brothers del Olmo and Moradillo. It will be the same architect who will illustrate us about the ideas of projects of del Olmo brothers, who, unable to finish it, will be modified, later, by Moradillo. Unfortunately, although the building is the most intact part of the Monastery of the time, there are no publications on it. On a January afternoon, I present myself at the Emanuela Gambini Architect's Studio located on the seventh floor of a building near the Retiro Park in Madrid. After being received they tell me to wait in a very comfortable room where I will be received. After a brief wait, the architect enters the room, who very strongly begins to talk to me, explains her devotion to Leonardo Da Vinci indicating a series of studies she has conducted on Leonardo's works. Studies that have finished in the publication of books among which the transcription and translation of the Spanish edition of the unpublished codices of Leonado. In collaboration with Prof. Chueca, books on the Cathedral of Almudena or El Escorial, Prophetic Stone stand out. So after a brief period of sitting down to talk kindly, I ask

her the favor of showing me the Monastery since her profound knowledge of history had brought me into an unknown and intriguing world. In a couple of hours we start our tour in front of the side entrance of the Monastery entering the Anteaustria where the architect tells us about the wonders of this architectural complex.

Brief history about the beginning of the construction of the Monastery: The construction of the monastery of the Commander of Madrid begins by the Church. A Greece cross plan building from 1668, sited on a plot purchased on December 5, 1584 by the President of the Council of Military Orders, Mr. Iñigo Zapata de Cárdenas and his wife. The first works commissioned to architects Manuel and José del Olmo last until 1693 (the church is dated in 1697 according to wiki source). His Majesty, Felipe IV, declares himself responsible for the work for which he begins the rebuilding of the church, also building the sacristy and spending more than two million reals. In order to finance the construction, he ordered each Knight to wear the brotherhood habits of Santiago to pay thirty ducats. That amount in 1657 increased by 10 more ducats and 20 more in 1659 (document by F.Iñiguez not downloadable).

The program proposed to del Olmo Brothers was the exaltation of divine unity and trinity and equality among men: When the del Olmo brothers did this project, the only thing they try to pursue was the exaltation of divine unity and

trinity and equality among men, although there were different classes among gentlemen. We are talking about 1700, whereby equality between men was pure utopia.

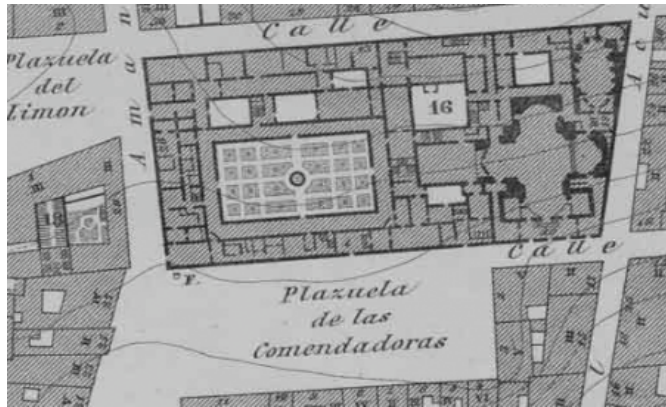


Figure 1. Plan of the monastery

To fulfill the objective of exalting the unity and divine trinity, they perform the triad composed of the circle that is obtained from the projection of the lantern, which comes from the drum and another circle that hypothetically embraces the four arms of the Greek cross (Figure 1). The group represents the Christian church spread throughout the world, there is also a Golden ratio and everything is a multiple of three. The sectional elevation of the interior of the church was very complicated, because the low reliefs of one place had nothing to do with the low reliefs of the other part and since everything is curved it is not worth the cut and paste, you must project it one by one.

Q: This was built by the same architect or were three different architects?

A: The same architect, del Olmo brothers also worked on the work. They sought to emphasize the achievement of exaltation through the Golden ratio where everything is a multiple of three, but they were no successes at all.

Q: Where do they fail? They fail to try to represent equality between men. They can't do it and you know why?

A: Because they projected a central temple, like San Pedro de Roma. They started preparing a kind of foundation but when one of del Olmo brothers died (José del Olmo) Manuel is forced to abandon the idea. Manuel del Olmo asked Luca Giordano to paint a picture for this house (the restorer Emanuela Gambini emphasizes the value of the architectural complex as a house) and he painted the largest painting he had painted in his life, with such brutal dimensions that it is not understood where it should be located. There are not many places in this convent where you can stand it. So it will be placed in one of the arms, the one that was free, since one was arranged on the axis of the choir while on this part they had put materials in the time of Philip IV. In the end, they close this space and place Luca Giordano's painting at this point creating the main altar in front of the choir. This provision generates two anomalies: the first, when entering through the narthex until you pass the toral arch you do not see the main altar and the second that being a Christian church is not properly exposed.

Q: Curious, does this facade look directly at Jerusalem?

A: No, I would have to aim at Jerusalem.

Q: But shouldn't the churches point to Jerusalem?

A: Yes they should but there are exceptions like the Almodena Cathedral, because it is the church of the Royal Palace, which is aligned with the Royal Palace.

Q: A church that has a very good relationship with Jerusalem?

A: Saint Francis the Great.

Q: And in Naples too?

A: San Francisco di Paola. Well, finally, del Olmo brothers together with the prior decide to sacrifice this arm and place it on the altar as an altarpiece

Luca Giordano's painting: We will see the painting and then the Chapter room. Now we are in the choir and before we have the painting by Luca Giordano. Look, here's his signature (Figure 2) and the year 1695. Look at the blue Uclés castle, this is the best and largest painting that Luca Giordano painted.



Figure 2. signature of Luca Giordano

Q: What are the meanings in this table?

A: The Theme is dedicated to Santiago in the Battle of Clavijo (Figure 3, indicating the spectacular nature of the painting), this also has the allegory of the three. Three soldiers, three horses, three angels, everything is always a multiple of three and Luca Giordano, when he does, thinks exactly about this and is gorgeous. Santiago never killed Moors, but tradition says Matamoros and there you have it.

Q: Luca Giordano, took part of the Order of Santiago?

A: No. But this painting was commissioned by Manuel del Olmo and a military officer of the Santiago order, who, knowing Luca Giordano, asked him to paint a painting for this house. Luca Giordano studies the house and decided to paint this picture. The King sent lapis lazuli powder and that's why you can admire these blues. Look here there are more angels, there are three with wings and you should not confuse them with others that are not, they are muses while here are three knights and three Moors.

Q: And why this castle?

A: Because it is the Uclés castle, which is where the order of Santiago is enclosed and where the order of Santiago is founded and here in this box you have three horses, look at the back of this horse that is a wonder and you should also consider the breaks in the picture between

heaven and earth. In this other area is the battle between Moors and Christians, while here, the Apostle James has wielding his sword to kill the Moors and liberate the Christian church. Well, this painting that has a dimension of 5.88 by 3.72 meters and you cannot stand anything but the main altar.

The heritage of the Olmo brothers and the rebuilding of the Moradillo: When this architect, Moradillo (1753) realizes the error of the del Olmo brothers, he leaves only the choir with the church and begins to build the sacristy of the knights (between 1746 and 1753 source (<https://artedemadrid.wordpress.com/2010/11/18/la-sacristia-de-los-caballeros-revisited>) during the reign of Fernadno VI, an unexpected and hidden jewel for not having a facade, he builds it orthogonally to open courtyards so that in this house there were 5 courtyards. Moradillo was a very peculiar man, he was the son of a bourgeois who had married a woman named María Castilla with whom he had three sons, who were all architects, but of the three only one stands out, Francisco who is the second of the three children. It turns out that Francisco marries an Italian woman and with her, he travels a lot to Italy and falls in love with the baroque architecture of Borromini and curvilinear architecture. The knight's sacristy itself is a work enhanced in Baroque style.



Figure 3. Picture by Luca Giordano

Influences of Italian architecture on the Mordillo and the Monastery: When King Ferdinand VI at the death of the Del Olmo brothers entrusts the work to Moradillo, he has the possibility of experiencing its architecture. To the court of Carlos III comes an Italian architect Francisco Sabatini (Palermo 1721-Madrid 1797), between the two an interesting professional exchange is established. The two attracted and looking at the architects of the opposite countries. In this exchange there are two important things, the first one is reflected in the chapter room and a room that served to receive visits because the nuns were three quarters of nobility and needed a room to receive visits and more specifically a room where to attend the visits of the aristocracy, this will be the last room we will visit today. In this last room there is a peculiarity that could be summed up in a definition: the room of the forbidden since in this room there is hand-painted wallpaper. We have had to bring this paper from Japan because it is a paper made with hemp sheets, (the manufacture of this type of paper in Spain posed legal problems and that is why we had to

import it from Japan), painted on the wall there are also some leaves in which nickel particles shine which is a poisonous material. The roof paper in turn is made with cobalt blue which is also poisonous. Well, these materials were banned in 1780 (probably because of the declaration of war between Spain and the United Kingdom) Now we will explain why the three base colors present in the sacristy of the knights are repeated throughout the convent. Well of the three base colors, bluish green correspond to the bay leaves, the yellow siena to the conquered lands and the red to the blood of the martyrs. This is the reason for the three colors at the base of the Monastery of the Commander of Santiago. Something personal: 5 months ago I was in wheelchairs, I will explain it to you. I put my foot on a wet sheet, slipped and broke my femur and I had to go through a procedure. When I was doing the Almudena Cathedral, I laughed a lot with Fernando because he said: we are old but not so much, well anyway in February I turned 82 years old.

Brief clarifications on the work of the Escorial: On this facade I will explain what I was saying about El Escorial. Do you see this fake run? The windows above support this impost and the one below supports below. This was the escorialense way that Sabatini had copied when he made this facade, now it is not appreciated because it is not restored but this sign is repeated on all four facades (Figure 4).



Figure 4. comparison between the facade of the Escorial and the monastery

Q: Why did you mark with this sign? He liked it. But do they have any messages?

A: Let's see, the entire escorial is a message, this was like the temple of Solomon, the main facade of El Escorial is not seen because like the Arabs, Felipe II, the main facade that is the Temple of Solomon is inside the courtyard of honor because the main crunch was put there by the great library where science and wisdom for Felipe II was important, then he had put the school and then put the host of the old friars, then following the main axis through the courtyard where he You see the shelves on the facade of Solomon, then you enter the church and on the main axis of it there is the famous Cristo di Benvenuto Cellini, an ivory Christ that is gorgeous and following this axis there are on the right and left both courtyards. In the background is the courtyard of the queen and that of Felipe II when they say he was a very honest man, very reserved and I laugh a lot because you know where the cenotaph of Felipe II

is? In the High Altar!! Christ, he and his father on the other side.

The first Comendadora of Santiago: We are entering Moradillo's work. We are not going to entertain ourselves about the iconography because only this would take a lot of time, anyway, we are going to make a small paragraph on this painting that is by Doña Sancha and Doña Sancha had to be the Queen but in 1100 they did not allow it so Queen was only 40 days later to abdicate in favor of his brother Fernando III the saint and for these reasons in the picture is on the ground scepter and crown. Her sister and her mother joined the Cistercian order while she however did not like the Cistercian and then one night that it rained a lot falls fainted in front of a church of Palencia (Palencia) where they pick it up and put it inside to cure it and after recovering realizes that they had dressed her like that, I live black, white cloak with the cross of Santiago and then she said: this is where I am going to get in and she was not the first commander of Santiago because they already existed, but she has died in smell of holiness because from this church of the palentino then they took her to Uclés later to Santa Fe de Toledo.



Figure 5. Picture of Doña Sancha, the first Comendadora of Santiago

The architect and I walking through the Monastery stop in front of a photo of the attic in restoration explaining some things about the restoration work: In the course of my work on site I am moving aside and recovering material that I imagine can be useful for the restoration of other works. In the attempt to restore the wooden works I use the previously recovered material to insert it into the old work (and it shows me a prosthesis with the graft of the recovered material in the old one) where I cannot use this system I use laminated wood since it is not attacked by xylophages and does not deform. For example, in other previous interventions new parts had been introduced while I in each section that I restore repeated and

put the material recovered from the previous actions. Continuing on our tour, he explains to me that where the wall has no continuity because it is not locked, in order to improve and ensure stability, it inserts a "candula" that crosses the walls to join simulating a seam. To ensure the union does not use resin because it is cold factory and the use of the resin does not ensure penetration until the end of the material, in addition that the temperature contrast creates a thermal shock that is not good at all. With a brief subsection, he explains to me that nowadays chains are not used for the restoration of monuments, but carbon fiber, building a ring around the monastery and preventing the displacement of the walls. To finish with the recovery of the wood attacked by termites, when the thickness of it exceeds 5 cm, we put the spigots of no return. In the course of my work on site I am moving aside and recovering material that I imagine can be useful for the restoration of other works.



Figure 6. wood restoration works

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The miraculous story of the recovery of the painting by Doña Mariana Vélez Ladrón de Guevara, founder of the Monastery: The lady in this portrait is the founding mother of this monastery and her remains rest in Valladolid. This lady's name was Doña Mariana Vélez Ladrón de Guevara, daughter of Don Iñigo Vélez Ladrón de Guevara, Spanish ambassador

from Germany married to a Sister. The story behind the recovery of this portrait is unique. When she becomes a closing nun, she is made this portrait and one day the secretary of the Royal Council of Military Orders calls from Germany to her brother who was here and tells him that she has seen a painting that is there that nobody wants it because it is a nun with the cross of Santiago and then the other says buy it and buy it for € 300 including the frame. When he saw it, the mother superior wanted to buy it but they did not sell it to her even though it is in storage in the monastery.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The investigation was developed through the testimony of the restorative Emanuela Gambini and her incessant love for research and ancient work. Through the personal interview with the restaurateur we have been able to know the great work of del Olmo brothers, where literature and research is extremely scarce.

Conclusion

Surely the restored architecture needs to be useful to restore and express not only the architectural work itself, but the meaning in which it was conceived and transformed over the centuries as well. This article aims to make us understand that the knowledge of the small details has helped eliminate everything that is unnecessary to enhance the need that is to return the work conceived in its entirety over the four centuries. The reinterpretation of the solution of the main altar is singular, which, due to the death of one of the del Olmo brothers, becomes a sculpture to a pictorial image, that if overflowing with meanings hidden at first but under the study of the work they are revealed to the visitor.

That architecture, the restored one, must satisfy the cultural and social need of man as he passes through the temples and that is why he transforms and evolves without losing the testimony of the time he was. The beauty of this art is the persistent need of the artisan where the replica is due and authorized although the artisan is interpreter and owner of the design and its realization under the historical memory of time and place; an art that is capable of being conservative but that is in step with the times.

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