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RESTORATION OF MONUMENTS IN SPAIN  
– THEORY AND PRACTICE

RESTAURACJA ZABYTKÓW W HISZPANII  
– TEORIA I PRAKTYKA

Abstract

The paper summarizes Restoration in Spain from 1840 approximately, describing the principle ideas and opinions but putting the focus on the difference between those who studies and those who works, who have the responsibility of the real solutions. “Restauro Stilistico” is practiced during a first period towards the change into “Restauro Moderno”. The relevance of using new materials and the importance given to the new technology in restoration are the main points, to finally look for methods as well as criteria.

*Keywords: Restoration, Spain, criteria, method*

Streszczenie

Artykuł przedstawia podsumowanie historii restauracji zabytków w Hiszpanii od około roku 1840, opisując zasadnicze idee i opinie na ten temat, a także skupiając się na różnicy między studiującymi a pracującymi (praktycznie), mając odpowiedzialność za prawdziwe rozwiązania. „Restauro Stilistico” było praktykowane w pierwszym okresie, zmierzającym ku zmianie w „Restauro Moderno”. Stosowność użycia nowych materiałów i ważność nowych technologii w restauracji są głównymi punktami odniesienia w poszukiwaniu finalnych metod i kryteriów.

*Słowa kluczowe: restauracja, Hiszpania, kryteria, metoda*

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## 1. Introduction

In a time when most of Europe is concerned with the defence and appreciation of Architectural Heritage, there exists, however, a great silence on the principles and objectives that should guide the action of guardianship. The debate, when it exists, focuses on the technical aspects, the problems of a practical nature, as Paolo Torsello states in *Che cosa é il restauro? (What is restoration?)* [1].

We concern ourselves about how to restore rather than the reason and purpose. And according to Torsello, this makes little sense any technical operation independent the purposes and the scientific, ethical and cultural objectives. He states that while in French, Spanish and Portuguese libraries is circulating the Restoration Theory of Cesare Brandi [2].

But what were the antecedents, the main criteria and theories that have served as background to the architectural restoration in Spain? And where do we stand?

## 2. Spain

The fire of the old Alcázar of Madrid in December 1734 highlights the lack of preparation of the assistants of the Italian architects who built the new palace. Perhaps this situation could have been the first impetus for the creation of the Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando in 1752.

It was during the reign of Carlos III when the discoveries of Pompeii and Herculaneum took place. Already during this time, the Academy began to be interested in the sense of antiquity, the ruins of the past, not only as an element of interest to the erudite collector or as a model for new architecture, but valuable in its existence as an architectural artefact of the past.

The Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando in 1756 stated its desire to “preserve and extend the memory of the ancient monuments of the Peninsula and especially those that were more exhibited that would disappear over time” [3]. By Royal Decree in 1777, the Academy of History was tasked with monitoring and conservation of the monuments of the past. They began to publish prints of our monuments, which as well as serving as documentation, also functioned as a means of promoting their value.

Throughout the eighteenth century, the controversy during the Medieval Age was in favour of Classical Antiquity, but it would only be after the Spanish War of Independence when the new aesthetic ideals would take root, recognizing the “je ne sais quoi” as an explanation of perceived beauty, however far from its classical precepts.

Ideas and concepts of interest began to emerge; Isidoro Bosarte worth mentioning amongst others, as it was he who separated the Idea from Execution. Also he believed that “outrageous ornaments, both good and bad belong to the history of art” [4] and therefore should be respected.

With Jovellanos, the individual vision of the work of art, unique, individual and innovative began to be appreciated. And interest grew in particular topics such as conservation techniques and building systems.

Romanticism and its change of subject made Spain a country of legend very apropos as a source of inspiration, and many travellers come to visit essentially the Arabic monuments.

Travel publications or books such as the works of Pérez Villamil, Square, Parcerisa, Carderera surfaced... however they showed images in which different constructions are overlapped, they give statements in defence of the unity of style. “Ancient works should logically be restored as necessary in the same way as they were originally constructed; this is the most evident principle whose truth is only now becoming generally recognized” [5].

In 1836 the transfer of properties of the regular clergy left many buildings unused, being impossible to inventory. It was believed that there was a need to create an institution to care for these impaired monuments. The Commission for Historical and Artistic Monuments was created by Royal Order on June 13, 1844, since the Royal Academy of History had neither the money nor the means. From 1845, many monuments started to claim funds, complaining of their poor condition. It was at this time when the School of Architecture was created in Madrid by Royal Decree of 1844.

In Spain, the Western neo-medievalist movement was complemented by a neo-orientalist style of architecture, with the Alhambra being its closest model. A look into the past will be made at first with eagerness for collecting, and secondly, as a search for inspiration; but when will the interest in the object itself appear?

“The notion of restoration as a search for a complete and initial state, that could not have existed, is legitimized by a cyclical conception of time (Platonic Aeon). But being aware of its destructive effect thereof, we recognize the progressive nature and the linear temporality, breaking the illusion of eternal return of things. Time begins to be recognized as a measure of authenticity without reversibility, as an arrow in one direction”.

A Royal Decree of June 13, 1854 granted attributions to the Central Commission for Monuments of the Academy of San Fernando such as: 6<sup>th</sup> “Avoid unsuitable and ill-advised restoration of the monumental workshops that may be in detriment of their preservation”, 7<sup>th</sup> „Report abuses regarding the enjoyment of these buildings granted with public uses” etc.

Soon the effects were felt, and reactions to the various interventions began to lead the first theoretical arguments. What is meant by “proper conservation”? And by „abuse regarding the enjoyment”? Here we will review the main theoretical arguments that began to be expressed in connection with the topic.

In the magazine *The Artist* (1835–1836), Count of Campo Alange thus expressed the opinion: “Whenever something entirely new is created, it should be copied with accuracy what existed before, and give to the latest work, if possible, an air of antiquity, which would make more complete the illusion and more fruitful the study”.

While J. Giménez Serrano in the *Manual of the Artist and Traveller in Granada* (1846), referred to the Alhambra in Granada, saying that: “Always preferable are prosaic ruins and wild restorations: ones arouse poetic feelings, while disdain the others” [6].

But one thing is the theory, as the previous two confronted examples, whilst another is the reality. Matías Laviña, an Architect of roman background, where he arrived in 1917, was responsible for the restoration of the Cathedral of León, after it was declared as Monument in 1844. For him, the illusion of reality and not this, was the desired effect. It was very possibly influenced by the so-called *Manifiesto del Restauero Stilistico*, which was issued by Leo XII in Rome on September 18, 1825, in connection with the project for San Paolo fuori le mura, after the fire. The document states that “no innovation must be introduced in the forms and architectural proportions, or in the ornamentation of the building, if not to exclude anything introduced in later times after its original foundations, at the whim of the following age” [7]. That is to say, the focus was on figuring out to rebuild, but only its aesthetics

and not its building systems. But Matías Laviña also proposed a cable-stayed solution or “boosted” temple, to avoid having to perform a major demolition, although this solution was not supported by the Academy of San Fernando.

### **The shade of Viollet**

An exceptional case within the extended “restauro stilístico” can be seen in the work of Juan de Madrazo. He took charge of the Cathedral of León in appalling condition, where he would attest to its constructive knowledge, and would seek consistency between the forms and construction systems. Close to Viollet, he related forms to the purposes, place and circumstances in which they are applied.

### **The swing of the pendulum**

However, it would be in relation to the restoration of San Vicente of Ávila, and the proposal of Vicente Miranda to eliminate south portico, when a debate about the definition of artistic merit and historical value would arise, led by Marín Baldo and Juan Bautista Lázaro. While Marín Baldo was in favour of the unity of style, Juan Bautista Lázaro declared that “the judgment of every restaurateur should be set at the specific point regarding what deserves to be respected, and that everything, absolutely everything is monumental, be it in good or bad taste, provided it is linked with the history and vicissitudes of the building to which it belongs” [8]. That is to say, respect of the concept of documentary value had already begun to take shape.

### **Favourite styles**

The Cathedral of León embodies the changes that took place in the theoretical arguments on architectural restoration during the nineteenth century. When Demetrio de los Ríos took charge of it from 1880, after the death of Madrazo, he confronted the problem of the western gable end. He proposed two solutions, one of them was to tear down the existing building and construct another unit in the style of the architecture of the 13th century. The other solution, supporting the “status quo”, was to respect the facade, suggested taking it apart and replacing it whilst correcting construction problems such as its verticality. When they appeared to have overcome the excesses of the disciples of Viollet le Duc, it is not so in this case. The proposal of Demetrio of the Ríos does not correspond to a change in attitude, but instead a change of taste. In the Memoir of the Restoration Project, the architect says that it is proposed since it is a work of Renaissance Juan de Badajoz, author of the Seville Council who was connected for reasons of affection.

### **Things begin to change**

Regarding Santa María of Lebeña, in Santander, José Urioste drafted a restoration project in 1895 proposing to eliminate the tower built about 50 years ago, for being above the crossing and causing damage to it, but thought about constructing the tower elsewhere in a similar style and form. Simeón Ávalos, reporting on the project as Secretary of the Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando, proposed that in the tower would be modified “the very characteristic Byzantine Latin forms of the tower, so that the work will be encased in modern character”. It seems, therefore, that the criteria of Camillo Boito and Modern Restoration were already known, and the Academy began to implement them.

However, the theme of the third subject of the *Sixth International Congress of Architecture*, in April 1904, which deals with *Conservation and restoration of monuments of architecture*,

differentiates between dead and living monuments, and the commentator Cabello Lapidra notes that living monuments should be restored and “in the primitive style of the monument”. And so the theories continue, with some exceptions, such as the ideas of Manuel Vega and March.

Vicente Lampérez and Romea had addressed the issue of the restoration of monuments since 1899, but it is in 1913 at the conference delivered in the Spanish Association for the Advancement of the Arts, when the problem became systemised, up to the point that a series of rules of practice were established, searching a middle ground; generally siding with the unity of style, although after the appropriate investigation [9]. In this line we must also cite Sanz Barrera and his project for the Cathedral of the Seo of Urgel.

### **The Tourist Board and the Alhambra of Granada**

The Alhambra in Granada had been object of restoration from the first third of the nineteenth century. These were mainly focused on ornamentation, due to the ornaments were of paramount importance for conservation because of being a monument with poor construction systems. The Contreras family and especially Rafael Contreras would become very important for the monument, nevertheless with excessive works like those partaken on the Bathhouse.

Modesto Cendoya continued in the same line in terms of decorations, but would start other interventions, such as searching for plumbing pipes etc. in the forest of the Alhambra.

The attacks in relation to exaggerated restorations by Cendoya Modesto, brought to the Alhambra a new entity, the Board of Friends of the Alhambra, created by Royal Decree of March 14, 1913, with advisory functions but little activity, save for the initiatives of the Marquis of Vega-Inclán.

After visiting the monument, he issued a harsh report of May 2, 1913, then published in the *Royal Tourism Police in the Alhambra in Granada*. In the report he explains their theories, that “the architect should be limited to consolidate, without disturbing, or replacing, or adding foreign elements to those that are still preserved...”.

Marquis de Vega-Inclán tried to implement his theories, as outlined in the Royal Police, and chose the Patio del Yeso in the Alcázar of Seville. With this intervention he brought about a new era for our monuments. By order of the King, and together with the architect José Gómez Millán, he carried out the works named as “exploration and consolidation”. This consisted mainly of creating elements that supported the existing remnants, so that each architectural element was preserved as it was, whether they be arches, columns, ornamentation... Vicente Lampérez would qualify this statement as “constructive orthopaedics without aesthetic garb”. But these criteria were usually associated with the works of Camillo Boito.

By Royal Decree of January 16, 1914 the Board of the Alhambra was created, which would replace the Board of Friends, with the mission to “preserve, strengthen and respect the Alhambra”. Count Santibáñez del Río was also a strong advocate of conservation.

### **Torres Balbás. The exception that proves the rule**

Also an advocate of conservation, he had been developing his theories, especially in the *Seventh National Congress of Architects*, held in Zaragoza in 1919. Arriving at the Alhambra he explained his approach as “strict conservation and respect for the ancient work, but without dogmatism and attempts to apply theories a priori”. A defender of new materials in restoration, such as reinforced concrete... but also of the smaller architectures and the use of monuments.

Amós Salvador, however, would defend the reconstruction as restoration criteria. Whilst documents, images, project exist, you can duplicate it, he says, because for him it is not the direct implementation that is important in the case of architecture.

But this would be the exception, so conservative theories would become more widespread. And so Anasagasti, Puig and Cadafalch, Jerónimo Martorell, among others, would be the first architect of the Heritage Service of the Provincial Council of Barcelona.

### **Restoration as a technical problem**

Modesto López Otero, director of the School of Architecture of Madrid, refers to it saying that the problem before so learned, so theoretical, it became technical [10]. He has already assumed that the restorative theories had become widespread. Soon the 1933 Act emerges, and “areas” are created.

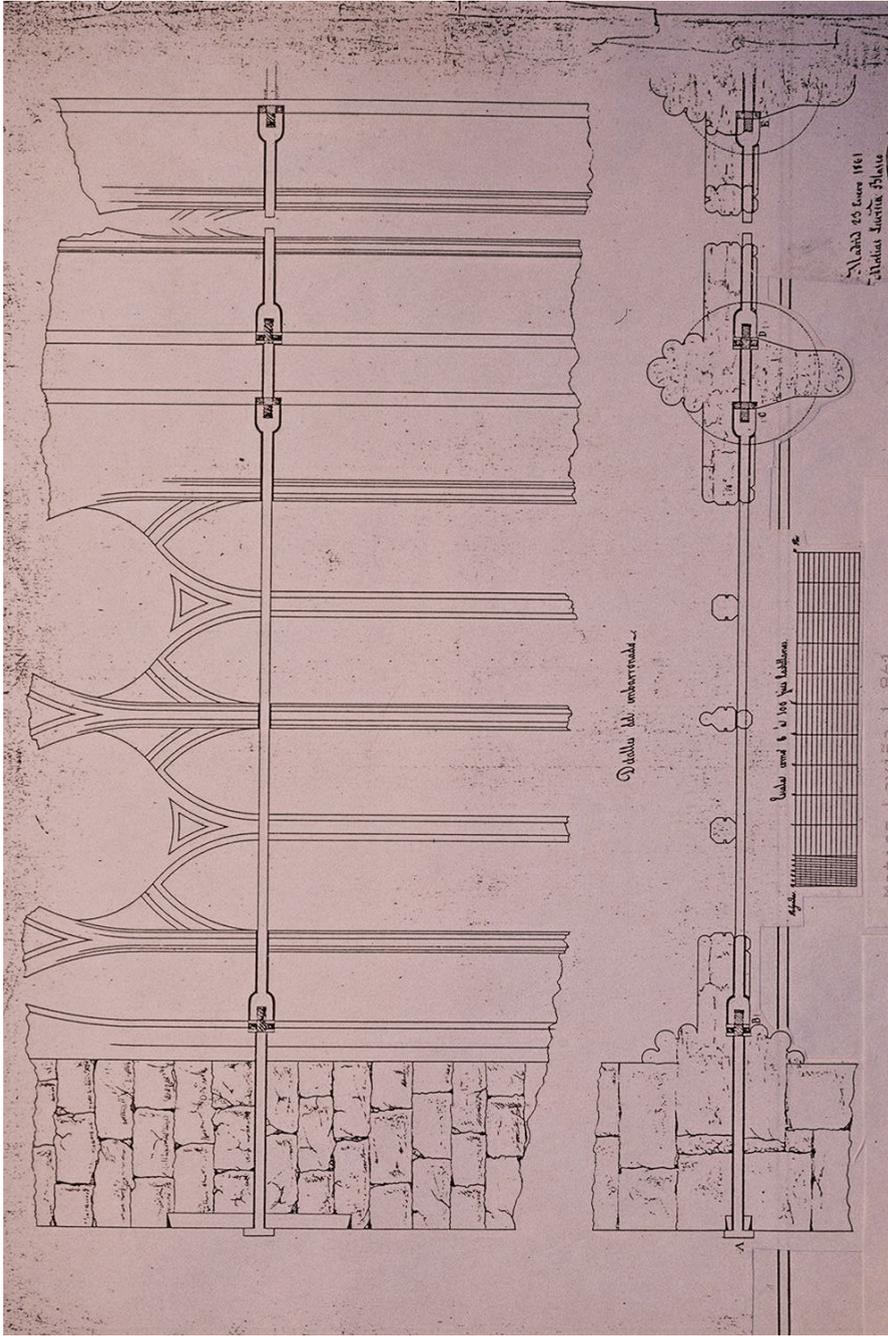
And in this line, we must remember the role of some of our architects, as pioneers in the use of modern techniques. Enrique Repullés y Vargas, author of the first armed injections to consolidate pillars of San Vicente of Ávila in 1886, and Joaquín Fernández at the Cathedral of Seville. Or the fascinating Polonceau roof trusses, by Matías Goizueta at the Monastery of Irache, around 1990.

### **The method and the Service**

One of the few institutions with continuity since its inception in 1914 until today, has been the Patrimonial Architectural Service of Barcelona Provincial Council.

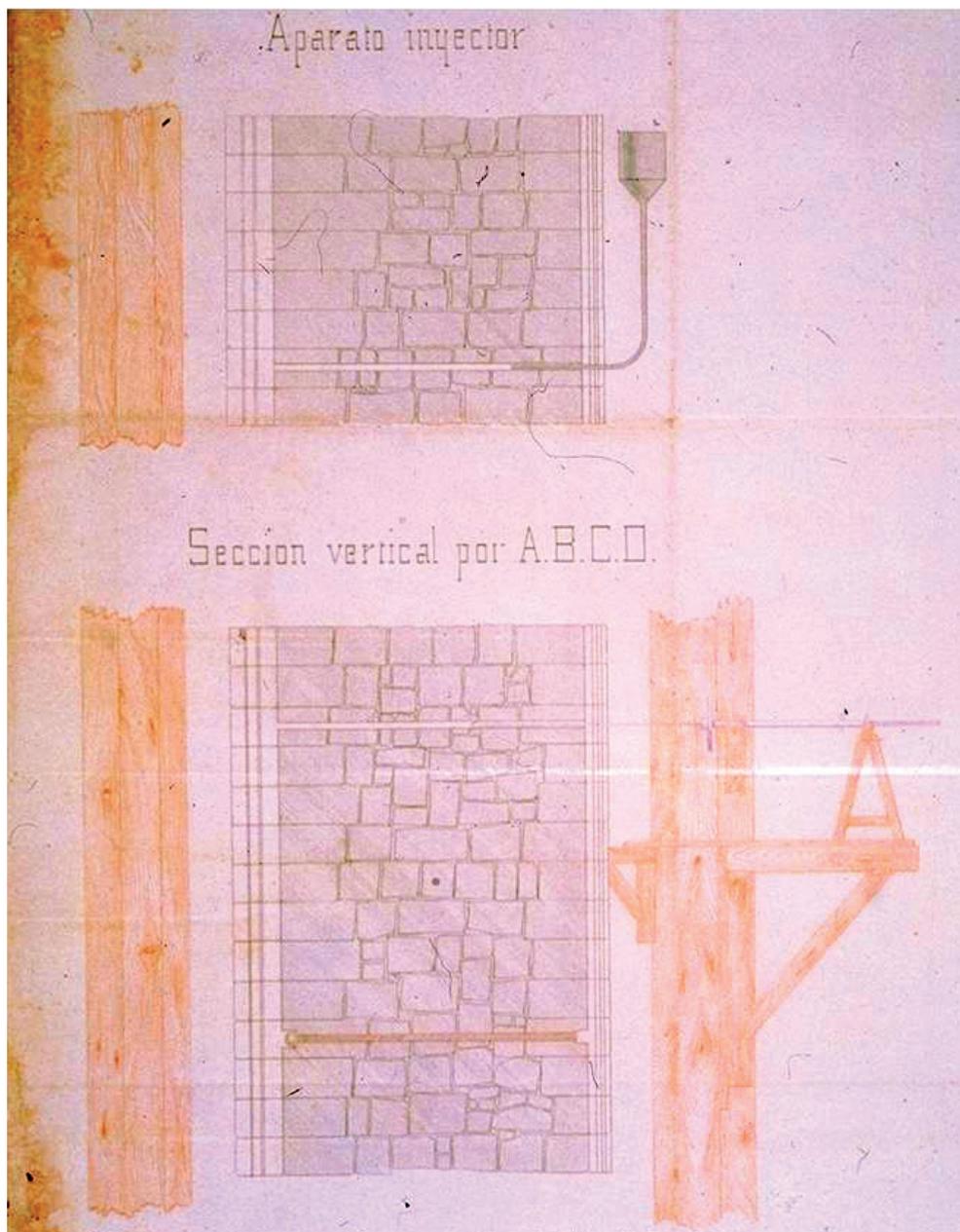
Since 1981, the head of the Service has been Antoni González Moreno-Navarro, who has created an interdisciplinary team and a working method towards an Objective Restoration that has been essential in the restoration of the Spanish Architectural Heritage. An important figure alongside Salvador Pérez Arroyo, with criteria from education and from professional practice, to return Spain to once again become a pioneering country in architectural restoration.





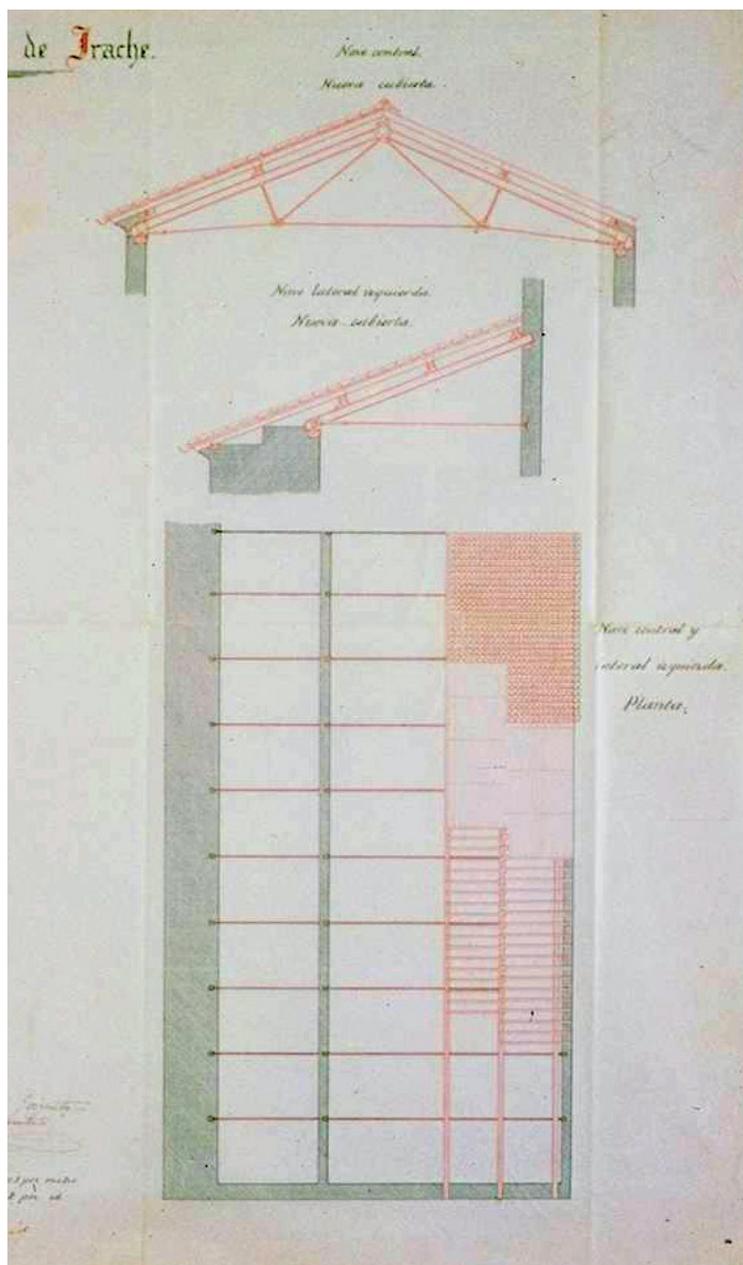
III. 1. Boosting Project for the Cathedral in León. Matías Laviña. La Casona, Cathedral of León, 1859

II. 1. Projekt wzmocnienia Katedry w León. Matías Laviña. La Casona, Katedra w León, 1859



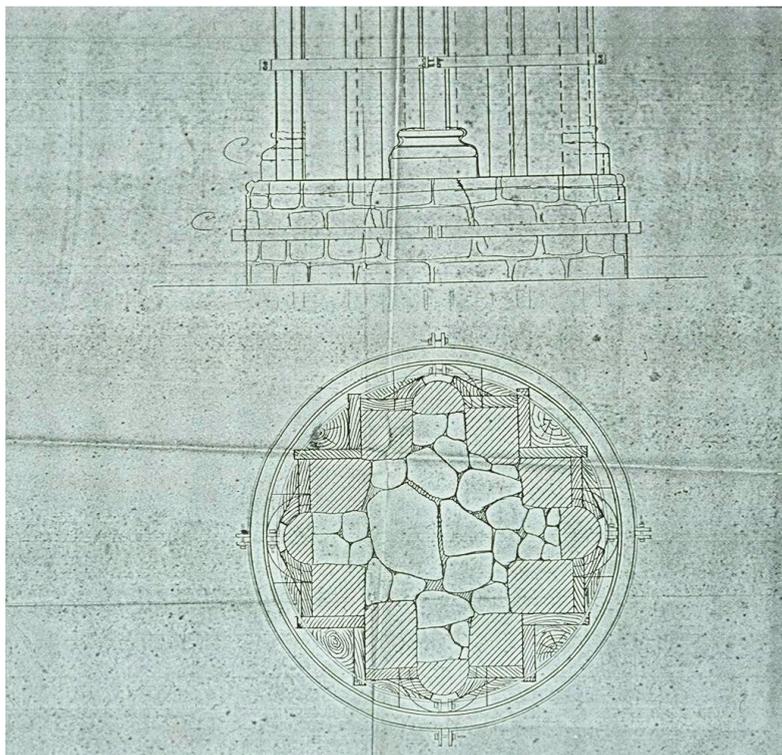
III. 2. Injector system. Restoration Project. Cathedral in Seville. Joaquín Fernández, 1890

II. 2. System iniekcji. Projekt restauracji. Katedra w Sewilli. Joaquín Fernández, 1890



III. 3. Polonceau trusses and supports on groundings. Irache Monastery. Matias Goizueta, 1990

II. 3. Kratownice Polonceau i podparcia na gruncie. Klasztor w Irache. Matias Goizueta, 1990



III. 4. Sketch for “stitching”. San Vicente in Ávila. Enrique Repullés y Vargas, 1886

II. 4. Szkic „obejmy”. San Vicente w Ávila. Enrique Repullés y Vargas, 1886

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