ONE CENTURY OF PHOTOGRAPHY AND PRESERVATION IN CATALONIA: THE SERVICE FOR LOCAL ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE (SPAL)

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he Service for the Cataloguing and Preservation of Architectonic Monuments was created by the Provincial Government of Barcelona the same year as the constitution of the Regional Government of Catalonia called Mancomunitat (1914-1925). Both establishments, Diputació and Mancomunitat, were presided over by Enric Prat de la Riba, one of the most charismatic politicians of his time in Catalonia and in Spain. This Architectural Service was created just one hundred years ago, on 9th June 1914, and was a consequence of the “Report for the Preservation and Cataloguing of Monuments” produced by the Catalan Studies Institute, the academic entity responsible for all matters related to Catalan culture from its foundation in 1907.

The political and cultural situation in Spain at the beginning of the 20th Century was the decisive agent for the creation and definition of the Service. The union of the four Catalan provinces for the management of some services (called Mancomunitat), with the permission of the State Government of Madrid, was the tolerated political answer to the strong national movement in Catalonia at that time. This auspicious moment was used by Catalan authorities to initiate some key cultural projects that could fit into the concept of collectivity and deeply into the national psyche.

The Service was the first entity of any public Spanish administration dedicated to saving, preserving and restoring monumental heritage. Not only is it the oldest service with these characteristics in Spain, but it is also one of the oldest services of its kind in Europe, following the principles of the French Revolutionary Service for the Monuments of France, directed by Viollet le Duc. It was called “Service for the Cataloguing and Preservation of Monuments” and immediately began its work in January 1915. This name was changed in 1987 and it became the “Service for Architectonic Heritage”, but it changed again in 1993 and it became the “Service for Local Architectonic Heritage” (Cfr. Lacuesta, 2000).

From the very beginning, one of the goals of this Service was just the cataloguing of monuments in the province of Barcelona and the creation of photographic repertoires of these monuments. These major catalogues provided a wide knowledge about the historical buildings that were worth preserving for later studies and uses. It was then possible to analyze the possibilities of working on them and also the consequent dissemination of the results achieved. We must think that at this time, photography was behind the gradual growth in people’s sensibility towards architectural, natural and ethnological heritage and, as we will see later, it was one of the cornerstones of the Service’s activity. During its first hundred years of uninterrupted existence, the SPAL achieved important goals, such as its interventions in Roman and Romanic buildings and in some of the most important works by the architect Antoni Gaudí (1952-1926), as well as the creation of an important theoretical body of studies about restoration for their use. It included an extensive volume of books and an extensive archive, which had a great impact throughout Spain. In fact, nowadays the archive of original documents at the SPAL is made up of about 1,500
architectural projects, 206,000 photographs, 179,000 negatives, 88,000 slides, 8,000 plans and 10,000 books.

During the 20th Century, the Service was directed by only three architects. All of them have left an important record of their work. The first was Je- roni Martorell i Terrats (1915-1951); later, Antoni González Monereo-Navarro (1983-2008). In 2008 Joan Clo- sa Pujalet became the fourth architect director. Since 1989 the Service has been situated close to the Industrial Engineering School, in an old industrial building in the center of the Excample of Barcelona, the "Clock Building", erected in 1868 by the architect Rafael Guastavino as a weaving workshop.

After 1951, the Autonomous Government of Cat- alonia, recovering after the death of Franco, took control of the most significant cataloguing work for the whole region. As a consequence of the re- distribution of public competences in Spain, the SPAL was relieved of the responsibility of catalogu- ing the destruction of the huge efforts on their restoration. So, during González’s time, the SPAL took an indelible look into working meth- ods, defining some principles which were in line with those established by Martorell and which had spread throughout Europe and America.

The aim of this particular Method of Restoration, called SCCM, was for it to become well adapted to our time; its main principles were related to the need to analyze monuments and their circum- stances rigorously and pragmatically before the ar- chitectural project. This implied the consideration of a monument from three points of view: firstly, as a historical document (and, as a document, it must be treated with scientific rigor), secondly as a live architectonic object (which means, an object that is still useful for people, and must be useful in the future), and thirdly as a significant element that has established an emblematic and sentimen- tal relationship with the users.

The SPAL’s activity during its first period between 1914 and 1951 was extremely profound and came under the direction of the architect Jeroni Mar- torell (1876-1951). Martorell was an important figure who laid down the main principles for the Restoration of Monuments in Spain, perfectly in tune with what was happening at the same time in Europe. In 1904, while he was still very young, he became the President of the Architectural Sec- tion of the Catalan Excursionist Center (1876), a society related to the natural environment and cultural heritage with a wide Catalanistic social base. From this architectural section Martorell promoted an ambitious research and cataloguing project of building heritage and in 1909 published an article claiming the creation of a graphic inven- tory of Catalan monuments, following the French collections produced through the Mission Histo- graphe (1851) promoted by Prosper Mérimée (who was general inspector of monuments in France between 1834 and 1860) and directed by Viollet le Duc: "...In France, promoted by the Ministry of Public Instruction and Fine Arts, there is a Commission for Historical Monuments that is concerned with compiling images of views which reproduce the country’s art..." (MARTORELL 1909). In this article Martorell talks about how this inventory should follow the modern trends of art and architectural studies, based on a good knowledge of the subject being researched in or- der to achieve a rational history—a working meth- od which was common in other European countries. When he became head of the Service, he was inspired by the German and Austrian mod- els and reproduced the same plan he had previous- ly designed at the Excursionist Center, but now within a Public Institution. The aim now was to create a scientific department specializing in the cataloguing and restoration of architecture which would be a pioneer throughout Spain. But the advent of this Service was not an isolat- ed case in Spain. The strong Spanish movement in all fields of culture (artistic, scientific, litera- rary, philosophical...) at the beginning of the 20th Century inspired another interesting project: the "Iconographic Repertoire of Spanish Art", whose goal was to have photographic information of monuments from all around Spain. (CARRASCÓ, LACUESTA 2010) This Repertoire was initiated in 1913, when industrialized Catalan society began to think about an Exhibition of Electric Industries that was to take place in 1917 in Barcelona. This exhibition, however, never came to light, although it was the source of the important International Exhibition of 1929 that took place in Barcelona. Following the trends of the time (Cfr. The Art Treasures Exhibition in Manchester, 1857) the Organizing Committee planned to have a paral- lel exhibition called “Art in Spain”, which was to show representative works of art from every peri- od from the whole country. The magnitude of the project made it necessary to gather exhaustive pho- tographic information, which gave rise to the idea of creating an “Iconographic Repertoire of Span- ish Art”, one of whose architects (the best archi- tects in Spain were involved) was Jeroni Martorell, who divided his work between the Service and the Iconographic Repertoire. The photographs taken for the Repertoire were the bases for the “Ancient Art Exhibition” at the International Exhibition of Barcelona (1929) and also for the construction of the Spanish Village on the mountain of Montjuïc. During the Second Spanish Republic (1931-1939), the service became part of the Catalanian General- ity and its work was extended to cover the whole region. In this period, between 1929 and 1936, Martorell was appointed architect of preservation for the so called Third Zone of Spain (the northeast area) and work in all this area. During the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), the main objective of the Service was to defend and protect monuments and archives against angry revolutionary masses and fasc- ists. But wars don’t have phases of a medieval time if possible. This was a general characteristic in this period in Catalonia and in all Spanish regions, and consisted in removing baroque additions and bodies and wall coverings. In Catalonia, the the- ory by some priests from the Catholic Church, especially Eduard Junyer (1901-1978), had a de- finitive influence on this model of Restoration which spread all over Spain during the Franco pe- riod. This attitude can be taken as an ideological attempt to increase the values of the past, whether it was appropriate or not in architectural terms, but useful to feed the national feelings related to the glorious medieval ages.

The third period began after the restoration of democracy in Spain in 1979. Antoni González became architect director of the Service from 1981 until 2008. In fact, he was the one responsible for the modern axioms of restoration fol- lowing the criteria or standards established by Martorell half a century earlier, and also following the modern trends throughout Europe at this time. These principles were outlined in the book The Objective Restoration (1999), where the SCCM Method is defined (GONZALEZ 1999). This book and this method should be indispens- able for any architect facing interventions in his- torical buildings or sites, but also to any pho- tographer involved in monumental architecture and especially for those working on registering the restoration process of these special build- ings. Since any intervention must consider the protection of different aspects: the documenta- ry, architectural and significant value, and the constructive and material authenticity. These guidelines are achieved by a multidisciplinary team involving architects, building engineers, draftsmen, art historians, archaeologists, docu- mentalists, as well as a well-supplied archive of documents, drawings and photographs, a consid- erable specialized library and, of course, a photographic service. (The SCCM Method can be seen at: http://www. diba.cat/web/the SPAL/descargues) During this third and decisive period, the activity of the SPAL has been really intense and important, not only with the restoration of hundreds of buildings, but also with the publishing and dis- semination of its work in books, leaflets, and an active presence in the most important world pres- ervation events. Due to its valuable and extensive contribution, the Service was honored with the National Award for Restoration and Preservation of Cultural Heritage by the Spanish government in 1998. But, what is the role of photography in this ex- traordinary process? Since its beginning the SPAL Photographic Service has been professionalized and it has been one of the most important bases of real action in preservation. Photography has also been included in the programs written by the ar- chitects who directed it and has been carried out profusely and continuously. So in 1914, together with the architect Martorell, another civil servant, Joan Carrera Duller, was named. He was re-
Photography has been a fundamental tool for preservation work at the Service because it has also been necessary to most stages of intervention in monuments. The conceptual axioms of this kind of photography are related to documents, so we can speak of it as scientific and technical, which is a characteristic of documentary photography. However, this is not so clear since according to Ackerman, the documentary nature of a photograph is not something inherent in it, but depends on the observer’s vision: “the documentary character is not intrinsic to the image. It is or is not in the eye of the beholder” (Ackerman 2003). It is true that at the beginning of this medium, all photographs were considered to be of a documentary nature, which was a consequence of the origins of its invention: a reproduction system born from the scientific field (where it was developed and found its first success). In the beginning, images were not questioned as either “mirrors of reality”, like a record or a document and there were no possibilities to investigate in another direction until many years later. This idea limited the uses of photography as an aid to other sciences or to other artistic practices. Only after many years of activity was it possible to discover and exploit different uses and to consolidate photography as a functional or referential virtue of photography. So, when in Catalonia (and in Europe) governments decided to act for preserving architectonic heritage, photography was considered an essential tool for an objective study of the monuments and their level of conservation. These photographs were very different from the first historical photographs: they were now no longer romantic, picturesque or evocative, because they aimed at obtaining taxonomies that could situate studies about monuments within the humanist sciences.

In more recent times, following the principles of the SCCM Method, within the SPAL there are multidisciplinary teams which are responsible for the historical and artistic studies, archeological analyses, study of monuments and structural tests, and graphic and photographic documentaries. Most of these studies are used to take place before the intervention in the monument, but photographs are taken just before the restoration works begin, just as it is performed and just when it has finished. Consequently, photography is just one of the most representative series of a crucial moment of a monument’s life must be seen as part of a chain formed by the original values of the monument and as a concrete record of these values. Photography becomes a memory, a certificate, a tool about the materiality and the meaning of the monument. But it is also a medium for the transmission of its knowledge, which is an artistic expression. Referentiality is not an objective question because the monument shows us some peculiarities that are rooted in cultural aspects, and these aspects are what give the monument its particular form rather than some other. The photographic project must consider these interior cultural characteristics of a monument.

A good example of this close relationship between the architectural project and the original space of the Güell Palace is the Güell Palace. This important building, really a prominent landmark in modern European architecture, is the property of the Provincial Government of Barcelona who bought it from the last Güell owner in 1945. It was included in the list of UNESCO World Heritage in 1984 and was the first modern building in the world to be included. The Güell Palace has recently been restored in its entire integrity (2004-2011) under the direction of the architect Gonzalez. The objective of the project was to recover the original appearance of the monument in Guàrdia’s time; this was possible because the building has not suffered important or irreversible damages or changes. The architectural project for the Güell Palace is the authentic space of a significant building, but it also gives the whole palace a purely architectural vision. So it was essential to restore the spatial, composite and ornamental aspects of Guàrdia’s project to their proper place. (Cfr. GONZALEZ, LACUESTA, BALDOMA, 2013)

However, the photographic record of the restored building has been the basis for some specific reflections about the relationship between photography and preservation. It was necessary to show the structural and formal solutions that Guàrdia had thought of for the needs of a large, wealthy family (the Güell family at this time was one of the wealthiest in Europe) that must be compatible with the needs of the busy offices that share the building and the social uses of it. The way of explaining the architectural order was one of the most significant features of the Palace and it was one of the goals of the restoration too. It was a priority and a real challenge to put this new vision of the Palace into images, unknown to the contemporary eye. So, the photographic project was defined by the same axioms of restoration (to return the building to its architectural value), and the images should be coherent with the principle of making Guàrdia’s work understandable. Pictures must show the logical system of construction; understand the relationship between the different spaces and outline the rationality of Guàrdia’s resources in the face of organic, functional and formal difficulties.

In this enforced context, to choose a significant stylistic approach would have been inappropriate for a correct interpretation of both the building and its restoration. Besides, it would have been a conceptually immoveable transgression for the information and knowledge that the pictures should transmit. This was the case of the all the documents of architectural documentation generated in this Rodchenko style, for example, it could have an appealing artistic experience, but not good enough for a reading of the building, because it would be far from the significance that Guàrdia had foreseen. In the SPAL practice, the relationship between photography and the restoration of monuments is more conceptual than formal or aesthetic, as respect for the Monument’s architectural identity is a priority. Another characteristic derived from the SCCM Method is the high importance of the archives, not only of the designs, but also of the photographs. In fact, the opposite is also true: the existence of a complete documentary series generated by the Service since 1915, safeguarded in the Archive and continually in use, was one reason for the continuous references in the SCCM Method to the importance of the archives. The SCCM Method came to explicitly express the responsibility of the Institution committed to the work of restoration in keeping (and displaying in an uninterrupted way) the materials generated from the Service. This affects every kind of material (photographic, videographic, phonographic, computerized, graphic, constructive, etc.) It also affects the scientific and technical works and studies, and the materials generated during the process. The previous step for the later dissem...
conclusive

In this paper, we have outlined how the development of photography throughout the 20th Century and its relationship to monuments and their preservation has gone through a profound change. At the beginning of the century, when it was necessary to catalogue buildings to be able to study and maintain them, pictures were needed as scientific documents; a register that must be as extensive as possible. This criteria came to be considered a basis for reconstruction during the revolution and the war in the middle of the century. Later, the immediate and urgent need to rebuild Spain after the disaster and destruction of the war led to the direct use of these records, and if possible, trying to copy the features that had disappeared due to the bombings. Some years later, when the tourists began to arrive in Spain, the monuments had to be "old" and "authentic" and their wide dissemination made it necessary to create photographs showing an attractive image of the artistic importance of Spain. Finally, when a new method of restoration was established, some new theories were introduced, and the major catalogues and repertoires were completed (Cfr. JAÉN 2000), photographs were included in a new vision of significant buildings: architecture was not only a subject of art and construction, but also a document, a social mark and a matter of sentiment. Monuments must be seen not only in close relationship with urban or rural space, but also in relation to the people that use and love them. (Cfr. GONZÁLEZ, JAÉN, ET AL. 1993)

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Gathering information at the Monastery of Sant Salvador in Breda (Barcelona). The second in line starting from the left is the architect Jeroni Martorell. Photo: Emili Llatas, 1907. Gelatin developing-out paper, 13x17 cm. SPAL Archives.
The Greek ruins of Emporion, property of the Diputació of Barcelona in the early years. The site was finally transferred to the autonomous government of Catalonia in 1993. Photo: Josep Esquirol, 1909. Gelatin developing-out paper, 13x18 cm. SPAL Archives.
The architect Antoni Gaudi and Catholic Church representatives visit the construction works of the Güell’s colony Church in Santa Coloma de Cervelló, Barcelona. This is a rare photograph of a courtesy visit kept in SPAL photographic archives. The intervention in this building in 2002, under the direction of the architect González, was one of the most important restoration works carried out by the SPAL. The church was declared UNESCO World Heritage in 2005. Photo: Antoni Gallardo i Garriga, ca. 1910. Stereoscopic gelatin silver plate, 6x13 cm. SPAL Archives.
Reconstruction works at Sant Martí Sarroca Castle, a gothic building restored under the direction of the architect Camil Pallàs. Photo: Joan Francès Estorch, 1969. Gelatin developing-out paper, 18x24 cm. SPAL Archives.

Celebration events after the restoration of the Romanic church of Sant Jaume Sesoliveres (Igualada, Barcelona). The community is always highly involved in restoration projects, as one of the main subjects to be served. The emotional link between monument and neighborhood is essential and strategically central when planning an intervention. Photo: ©Montserrat Baldomà, April 1995. 35 mm Ektachrome slide. SPAL Archives.
Sant Vicenç de Malla, a Romanic church restored under the direction of the architect Antoni González in 1985. It is one of the most celebrated achievements of the SPAL. After the archaeological studies, some missing parts were rebuilt with new and different materials and the original shape was restored. Photo: ©Montserrat Baldomà, February 1998. 35mm Ektachrome slide. SPAL Archives.
Interior view of the pre-Romanic church of Sant Quirze de Pedret (Cerda, Barcelona), restored by the SPAL between 1989 and 1995. Photo: ©Montserrat Baldomà, 1996. 120 mm Ektachrome slide. SPAL Archives.

Monastery church of Sant Llorenç prop Bagà (Guardiola, Barcelona). The restoration finished in 2008 after several years of studies including archaeological and documentary research, geological prospecting and structural surveys, all of them supported by extensive photographic reports. Photo: ©Montserrat Baldomà, January 2008. Tiff digital file. SPAL Archives.
Book cover of *The Güell Palace* (2013), one of the most in-depth studies made by the SPAL. This amazing building by Gaudí (one of the finest art-nouveau buildings in Barcelona) has been inscribed in the list of UNESCO World Heritage. In this book, the historical and physical description of the building (and how it was restored) is both, literary and photographic; so photography becomes fundamental to the understanding of architecture.

Palau Güell, in Barcelona. Main Façade. This color photograph is the same as the cover of the book *The Güell Palace* (2013). This sophisticated picture, which is from such a frontal perspective, is a good example of the uses of new technologies in architectural photography. (Photo: ©Montserrat Baldomà, April 2012. Tiff digital file. SPAL Archives.)
Interior space of the Güell Palace. In this image, the goal has been to highlight the subtle connection between the different rooms and circuits of the main floor. Photo: ©Montserrat Baldomà, April 2012. Tiff digital file. SPAL Archives.

The magnificent central room at the Güell Palace. In this picture, the complex relationship between the different levels of the building can be seen. Photo: ©Montserrat Baldomà, April 2012. Tiff digital file. SPAL Archives.
COLOPHON

The interior pages of this booklet were printed on white 200 gr/m² Magno satin paper; the covers on white 300 gr/m² Magno satin paper and the external covers on white 220 gr/m² Laid paper. The booklet was produced using Adobe InDesign CC, on Apple Computer MacPro 5,1 W3690 and all body copy and captions were set on Goudy Old Style type. Stamping was done at Pascual Segarra Printers, in the city of Elche (Spain), and finished on the 16th of November, the day of Saint Gertrud of Helfta, known as The Great.

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Deo Gratias

Nota Bene: In 1915, Frederic W. Goudy designed Goudy Old Style, his twenty-fifth typeface, and his first for American Type Founders. Flexible enough for both text and display, it is one of the popular typefaces ever produced. Its recognizable features include the diamond-shaped dots on i, j, and on punctuation marks; the upturned ear of the g; and the base of E and L.