

THE CONCEPT OF A CULTURAL RESTORATION PROJECT. THE FAÇADE OF SAN PABLO IN VALLADOLID (SPAIN)

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Abstract. This project, promoted by the Fundación Caja Madrid and the Regional Government of Castilla and León, emphasizes the need to disseminate and transmit the importance of guaranteeing the understanding, preservation and restoration of cultural heritage. In the present case this applies to this church façade, a 15th century masterpiece. To this end, while the restoration project is being carried out the public enjoys the unique opportunity of contemplating the beauty of this sculptured façade from a 30m-high lift platform. Visitors can thus follow and observe the real time restoration process, understand conservation problems, the techniques used, the time required for this kind of activity and the difficulties that are being encountered during the work that will permit the recovery and preservation of this masterpiece for future generations.

1. The Fundación Caja Madrid intervention method

In 1996 the Spanish Historical Heritage Conservation Program of the Fundación Caja Madrid, a non-profit organization created in 1991 by the Caja de Ahorros de Madrid, came into being on a national scale, focused on the execution of projects and works of comprehensive monument restoration. This Program is the largest contribution from the private sector toward heritage conservation in Spain. This contribution is both quantitative, with contributions from the Foundation itself plus solicited donations of over 193 million euro since then, and qualitative, thanks to the rigorously scientific nature of its interventions, its particular attention to investigation, theoretical debate and the dissemination and transmission of knowledge.

By means of the development of its own methodology, which is applied in the stages of project selection, coordination and restoration work, the Fundación Caja Madrid seeks to provide quality solutions that public administrations for very diverse reasons have difficulty providing when it

comes to investing in cultural heritage. In this way the Foundation forms multidisciplinary technical intervention teams with the professionals best suited for each type of task, also designing a specific methodology appropriate to the particular features of each case. In most cases, therefore, the Foundation takes responsibility for all of the preliminary investigative studies and the drafting of the restoration project, as well as everything related to disseminating knowledge of the project.

The project we are focusing on falls within the framework of this type of action: the restoration of the façade of the church of San Pablo in Valladolid, which is being carried out through an agreement signed in 2004 by the Regional Government of Castilla and León and the Fundación Caja Madrid.

2. The role of communication and dissemination in restoration projects

In 1999 ICOMOS approved the International Charter on Cultural Tourism in which the transmission of the importance of Cultural Heritage, as well as the need for its preservation, is defined as a fundamental objective both for the local community as well as for visitors. This Charter specifies, moreover, that physical, intellectual and emotional access to Cultural Heritage property is simultaneously both a right and a privilege¹.

Clearly, access to culture through architectural heirlooms is not achieved just by making physical access to the monument possible. It requires transmitting the knowledge, comprehension and interpretation of the principal content. Faced with this necessity, which is specifically pointed out by ICOMOS in the final draft of the Enane Charter of 2007² and is palpable in a great majority of monuments, we find that on the one hand the tourist industry is not able to assume this responsibility, and on the other that the cultural heritage restoration services of public administrations and the technicians charged with the elaboration and execution of monument restoration projects are driven by deadlines and, from a narrow, obsolete vision of their professional responsibilities, do not manage to deal with the question.

For all these reasons, in relation to the propositions of ICOMOS in the quoted documents, the Fundación Caja Madrid considers that communication and dissemination make up one more chapter in a restoration project in two senses: first, communication and dissemination of the monument's historical, architectural, symbolic values, etc., and also communication and dissemination of the processes followed for the conservation and restoration itself, trying in this way to meet society's right to information about events of public interest. In this way we also contribute

¹ International Charter on Cultural Tourism, adopted by ICOMOS at the 12th General Assembly in Mexico, October 1999.

² Final draft of the Enane Charter of April 2007, on the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites.

to the creation of a critical conscience and vision about architecture, cultural heritage and restoration, very much along the lines of Italy's "*aperto per restauro*".

In the projects undertaken by the Fundación Caja Madrid, which serve the goal of disseminating and transmitting the value and importance of both the monument itself and the need for its preservation and restoration, we can enumerate eight actions that are generally applied, following a basic structure. Their application both during the restoration work and after it has been completed is preceded by analyses of these actions' relative costs and benefits in the context of the particular reality, circumstances and characteristics of each project and monument. Schematically, these eight actions are as follows:

1. On-site communication activities
2. Organizing and conducting information sessions and/or educational workshops
3. Attracting the media
4. Communication over the Internet (www.fundacioncajamadrid.es)
5. Video monitoring and information on the projects and construction work
6. Publication in the collection "Restored Monuments"
7. Creation of masonry museums
8. Organizing and conducting annual concerts at the restored monument with scores and music relating to it.

Thus, communication and dissemination is an aspect that the Fundación Caja Madrid considers fundamental in order to safeguard our historical heritage. For this reason, and taking into consideration that the cost-benefit ratio of a Communication and Dissemination Plan has to be positive, since 2003 the Fundación Caja Madrid has conceived and promoted projects in which the special features and circumstances of determined monuments permit an increase in the scale and budget of communication and dissemination, optimising the resources and efforts used. This is how a "restoration project", understood as a mere material intervention and adaptation of the monument, becomes a "cultural restoration project" whose importance goes beyond the monument itself thanks to its features and those that the intervention project is able to contribute.

In this sense, the project of the Program for the Conservation of Spanish Historical Heritage of the Fundación Caja Madrid that best reflects the efforts made in communication and dissemination to society of the values of the monument and of the restoration processes, and which clearly stands out because of its innovative character in the field of dissemination of historical heritage is the Cultural Restoration Project of the Facade of San Pablo in Valladolid.

3. The cultural project of San Pablo: transmitting the value of cultural heritage

3.1. THE ROLE OF SAN PABLO IN THE HISTORY OF VALLADOLID

Since its foundation in the 13th century and up to the present, the Dominican convent of San Pablo has given martyrs and missionaries to America and the Far East and played a decisive role in the Court, Chancellery, Inquisition and University. It increased local culture several times over with great orators and scholars and contributed with its brotherhoods to the splendour of Holy Week. It has been the centre of important civic events, being the site of the baptism of kings such as Philip II and Philip IV and the pantheon of kings, princes and nobles such as the Dukes of Lerma, its great patrons.

The convent was founded in 1276 at the express desire of Queen María de Molina and Fray Juan de Torquemada. It would be Fray Alonso

of Burgos, chaplain and confessor of Isabel I, the Catholic Queen, who reconstructed the convent and the lower half of the main façade in the Hispano-Flemish gothic style at the end of the 15th century with designs by the architect Simon of Cologne. The Duke of Lerma and the preachers completed the present façade and church (Fig. 1) in the first two decades of the 17th century. During the War of Independence (1808-1814) the Napoleonic troops seriously damaged the complex, just as the Disentailment of 1835 later brought about the toppling of the already battered convent premises. In the 20th century the church suffered a fire and several restorations. (Fig. 2)



Fig. 1. Detail of the San Pablo church façade

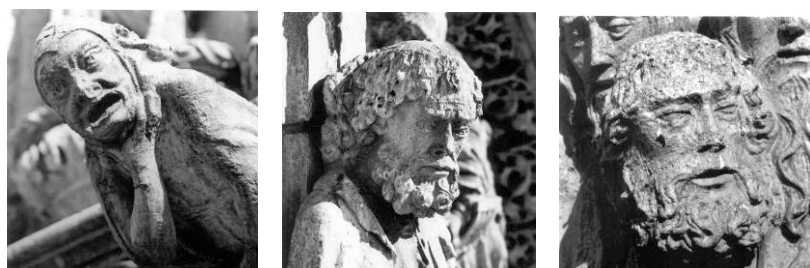


Fig. 2. Detail of the sculpted decoration of the facade of the Church of San Pablo

3.2. STATE OF CONSERVATION OF THE FAÇADE

In the middle of the 20th century the façade was in a deplorable state of conservation. During the 60s and 80s interventions were effected on it, but time has served up a devastating verdict on them, since those actions caused new damage that hadn't existed up until they were performed, much of it caused by overconfidence in the chemical products popular at the time. To this must be added a whole series of easily identifiable historical problems, such as the erosion of mortar, deformations, appearance of fissures, breakages, construction pathology, the presence of damp, notable volumetric losses and loss of sculpted material, successive sandblasting and collapse, condition of patinas, exposure of surface salts, pathologies of a vegetal or animal origin, algae, fungus and lichens, microbiological agents, alterations to the original material, protections and dressings, products producing alterations, the presence of cement mortars, wedges of different materials, staples, rusts, stitches, reconstructions, etc. (Fig. 3). All these factors that have affected the building over a prolonged period of time have given rise to the deplorable state that the façade was in when the cultural restoration project began.



Fig. 3. Detail of pathologies of the façade: accumulation of pigeon guano, presence of salts due to spreading damp patches, loss of sculpted material

3.3. THE CULTURAL RESTORATION PROJECT

The restoration of the façade of the church of San Pablo, initiated in 2004, was the first project chosen by the Fundación Caja Madrid for development of a cultural restoration project to its full magnitude and importance. The factors that converged at this monument and project that gave it its extraordinary character from the point of view of communication and dissemination are many. Briefly, they could be listed as follows:

- The tremendous relevance of the San Pablo façade, a stone altarpiece that represents one of the most notable episodes in the history of Spanish art
- Its deplorable state of conservation and the difficulties the owners and public administration faced in undertaking a complete restoration

- The location of the monument in a city like Valladolid, one of the urban centres in Spain that has most suffered from the out-of-control development of recent decades. This circumstance, the responsibility for which rests on the whole of Valladolid's society, contributed in large measure to the intention of doing something special with the communication and dissemination of the project
- The firm intention of the Regional Government of Castilla and León to collaborate in the project from the beginning
- Thanks to the support of the Regional Government and the contribution of the Fundación Caja Madrid itself, financially there existed the possibility of carrying out a project of investigation and scientific restoration whose goal is to be a model for this kind of project.

For all these reasons, the strategy of the cultural restoration project consisted in organizing and executing the project in three stages from 2005 to the end of 2009. The complete restoration of the main façade of San Pablo and the dissemination of information about it are included within the stages.

3.3.1. *Stage I. Treatment of damp patches*

The treatment of damp patches in the foundation is being effected by the construction of a gallery of natural underground ventilation that extends toward the interior and is accessible for inspection, as well as doing on-site pre-studies on the façade with photogrammetric survey. With the participation of specialized laboratories, these studies made it possible to carry out an exhaustive ocular inspection, a taking of samples and the performance of cleaning tests with the object of establishing a unified intervention methodology. These physiochemical studies were completed and compared to other investigations commissioned by the same type of historical, documental, archaeological, iconographic and architectural project.

3.3.2. *Stage II. Façade conservation treatments*

The second stage consists of the carrying out of the restoration of the façade, which in general terms implies:

- Cleaning and consolidation operations, respecting patinas and utilizing the most appropriate techniques as determined by previous tests
- Treatment and elimination of salts
- Protection of horizontal surfaces – saddleback copings, crowning elements and upper part of cornices – by means of lead lining
- Repositioning of pieces that had disappeared from crests and mouldings
- Restoration of the belfries
- Application of general patina by areas, analogous with original

- Anti-pigeon protection system
- Continuous conservation and maintenance plan with installation of a monitoring and control system

3.3.3. Stage III. Communication and Dissemination Plan

The ambitious Communication and Dissemination Plan, started as a third stage of the project, brings together the ensemble of restoration interventions of the two previous stages. It coincides mainly with the execution of the second stage and permits, along with it, a better understanding and social valuation of the monument and of the problems that affect its façade. To this is added the unique opportunity for the public to experience and observe both the sculpted stone façade and the work of the restorers in real time and from a privileged perspective. To carry out this program the Plan is being developed through the following actions:

- Creation of an informative enclosure around the worksite, by means of the installation of an enclosure around the work area with a description of the cultural restoration project: studies performed, restoration work in progress and activities undertaken during the Communication and Dissemination Plan. (Fig. 4)



Figs. 4 and 5. Informative work area enclosure and the Interpretation Centre

- Interpretation Centre. Coinciding with the inception of Stage II in the restoration work, the façade Interpretation Centre was inaugurated in May, 2007. This is a temporary exhibition space structured as two ramps and a lift platform that travels vertically along the façade. The Interpretation Centre serves as a welcome space for visitors at the same time as it introduces the history of the building through a graphic museum program that consists of a series of explanatory panels. The contents are structured in five major thematic blocks: the history of the convent and the Dominican church, the urban space and its historic and modern value, the monument as a cultural property of society, the description of the restoration in progress and a historical summary. The highly informative exhibit is based on the panels, photographs, drawings

and engravings as well as an audiovisual projection. (Fig. 5)

- Lift platform. Without a doubt this is the most impressive part of the visit. Access is through the Interpretation Centre. Going up on the platform allows visitors to contemplate the different levels of the sculptured program of the façade-altarpiece of the San Pablo church close up, and at the same time they can follow the restoration work being done live. All of this is accompanied by the pertinent explanations of a guide from the Centre. (Fig. 6)
- Video monitoring project. Since the inception of the restoration work in 2005 the Fundación Caja Madrid has run a project to document the investigative and restoration work videographically. The videos are recorded monthly, last 5 minutes and consist of an educational narrative on the construction characteristics of the façade, the origin of the damages it has suffered, the intervention criteria followed, the restoration techniques employed, etc. The videos are broadcast on the worksite on a monitor installed on the informative enclosure and on the Foundation's web page (www.fundacioncajamadrid.es). This way the evolution of the work can be followed from month to month.
- Dissemination over the Internet. Aside from the videos mentioned above, a complete synthesis of the two studies performed and of the projects planned out are also available on the Fundación Caja Madrid website. Through historical photographs, diagnostic reports and project plans the members of the public who take an interest can go more deeply into the different aspects of the project.
- "Music and Heritage" series. Collaboration with the Music and Heritage Program of the Fundación Caja Madrid permits development of a concert program whose goal is to contribute to making the spaces restored by the Foundation more dynamic and recovering their musical heritage.
- "Restored Monuments" series. When the project ends a critical revision of what is known up until now about San Pablo will be collected in a book, which will also document the whole restoration process carried out, integrating aspects such as the communication

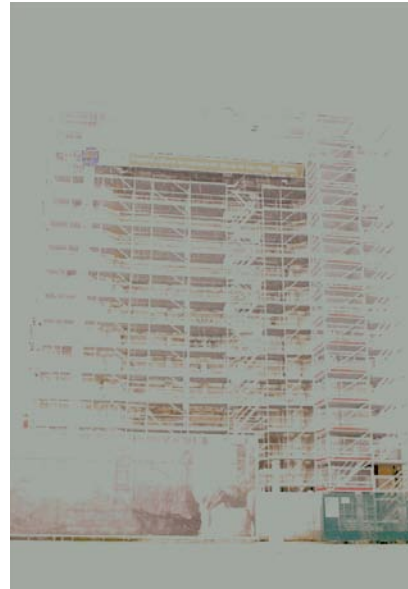


Fig. 6. Lift platform

and the coordination performed.

This Communication and Dissemination Plan was designed by the Fundación Caja Madrid with the intention of sharing information about the values and significance of the monument, as well as promoting awareness of the process of its deterioration and restoration. All of this is done based on the conviction that the greatest insurance for the conservation of these monuments comes from knowledge and the affection that society itself feels for them.

Also, this Communication and Dissemination Plan was designed because it was recognized that in Spain the efforts made in this area are minimal. Although the opportunity of observing how restorers and other professionals work on a monument throughout a restoration is not a new idea³, it is true that this is the first time that this has been done in Spain.

3.4. THE COORDINATION OF THE SAN PABLO CULTURAL PROJECT

Following the line of action of the last few years of the Heritage Conservation Program of the Fundación Caja Madrid, the general coordination of this project has been supervised and carried out by the Foundation itself.

The framework of the collaboration Agreement with the Regional Government of Castilla and León and the Fundación Caja Madrid establishes the existence and training of a Commission for Monitoring and Control of Works, made up of members of both entities and by some of the technical personnel involved in the project. This Commission meets regularly to perform detailed tracking of the main lines of the project relating to intervention criteria, decision-making, subjects relating to the coordination of the communication and dissemination project, with information about the initiative and all those matters that they consider necessary for the smooth functioning of a project of this nature.

As refers to the management of the Communication and Dissemination Plan, the importance and the logistical, financial and technical effort needed to have a restoration of these dimensions open and accessible to the public should be highlighted. As has already been mentioned, to make the concept of "*aperto per restauro*" in San Pablo a reality they created an Interpretation Centre whose content and explanations by the personnel who coordinate it

³ The few times that this has been done in other countries, it has been on monuments and projects for exceptional works: specifically, in the restoration projects of the façades of three of the principal French cathedrals and, by projects more similar in design to that of the Fundación Caja Madrid, which has been able to learn from all of them. They include the Roman Theatre of Aosta, the so-called Progetto Moses in San Pietro in Vincoli in Rome, and, also by Michelangelo, the David statue in the Accademia of Florence. The San Pablo cultural restoration project was also enriched by the brilliant experience of the "open for construction" project of the Fundación Santa María de Vitoria (Spain) which, although different in its activities, shares goals and philosophy with Valladolid.

are evolving alongside the restoration work. This is especially true when taking the lift platform tour and seeing the façade and its restoration live. The visit ends with the showing of an audiovisual that gives a global vision and synthesis of the total content of the visit, which is novel and interesting to say the least and seeks to make the public aware of the value and necessity of preserving heritage monuments.

The Foundation also coordinates the videographic project documenting the restoration which is available on the internet. It updates and includes new episodes of the work periodically which as a whole give a global vision of the scope of the intervention.

The Fundación Caja Madrid has also been making a significant effort to make the project known on two different fronts which has meant that up until now close to 40,000 people have seen and visited the façade. All of this has been achieved by means of an effort that is especially focused on:

- The media: press, radio and television
- In professional and academic spheres, visits by prestigious experts have been promoted, organizing on-site visits of postgraduate, masters and specialist courses and offering the San Pablo tour to schools and educational centres
- Presentation of the project in forums for debate and technical meetings and conferences.

4. Conclusions

One year has gone by since the launch of this project, and it is possible to list a series of qualitative and quantitative conclusions that will help us further develop the model of project coordination for projects of this magnitude and also monitor the interest and the repercussions that an initiative of this kind has on society, as well as evaluating social habits as respects the cultural offering available.

We can affirm that in the area of monument heritage, it is not so much the case that a cultural tourism demand exists, but rather that it is generated through high-quality cultural possibilities. This project is one example of this, a pioneer of its kind within the existing national offerings in Spain.

In short, the San Pablo Cultural Project is proving itself to be a completely profitable undertaking from a social and cultural point of view. Its ultimate goal is that which is set forth in the 1985 Law on Spanish Historical Heritage: that the measures of protection and promotion which are carried out relative to Heritage lead to an ever-increasing contemplation, understanding and enjoyment by the people of those works that are the heritage of the collective abilities of a people.