



AT DIFFERENT SCALES 在不同尺度下

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翻译：盛子洋

我开始在Guillermo Vázquez Consuegra工作室从事建筑师工作的时候，总是被不同规模项目的构思与生成方法所吸引。从城市尺度到技术细节，无论我们讨论的是一个迎接市民前来的巨大的城市门厅，还是一面墙上不同材料之间的衔接节点，我们都将为之付出相同的努力和热情。面对不同的功能空间也是如此。无论是重要的门厅还是停车场，所有项目都被诠释成了能够提供超出它本身功能预期的建筑空间。

其结果是一栋建筑作为一件经过时间精细打造的产品而完工。从最初的想法生成形态，到最终的建造，产生了大量的草图、图纸与模型。在这一过程中，双手作为创作工具扮演着重要的角色，计算机作为辅助工具。建筑的相关工作仍完整保留工作坊的手工艺特点。工作场让标准变得个性化，并让人们在建筑中的空间体验变成独一无二享受。

建筑项目的另一个使命是定义城市空间。除了从周围环境中划分出地块的边界，一个建筑也能消除界限，与公共融合，使建筑与城市间的连续性成为可能。■

From the time I began to work as an architect with Guillermo Vázquez Consuegra at his office, I have always been attracted to the way each project is conceived and developed in all its scales. From an urban scale to a technical detail, no matter if we are talking about a great hall that welcomes the approaching citizens or about a small encounter between diverse materials at a certain point of a wall, the effort and the passion dedicated to both parts of the project will be equal. The same happens with spaces of different uses. All of them, the great hall as much as a car park, are understood as architectural spaces that can always offer something more than what it is expected from their use...

The result is an architecture that matures as a meticulous work through time. From the very first moments in which the initial ideas start becoming forms, until their final construction, an endless amount of sketches, drawings and models are generated. In this development the important role played by the hands as creative tools is preserved and complemented by that of the computer. The architectural work still keeps as a whole the artisanal character of a workshop. A workshop that personalizes the standard and turns each spatial experience of the human being with the project into a unique moment.

Becoming an opportunity to define urban space is in addition a responsibility of the architectural project. Beyond the lines that separate the plot from its surroundings, the project erases limits, celebrating its encounter with the public and allowing for continuity between architecture and the city.



图4 塞维利亚Ramón y Cajal街的社会住宅街区项目 (摄影: Hisao Suzuki)



图5 位于罗塔的社会住宅街区项目 (摄影: Jesus Granada)

Cities are undoubtedly a collective construct. But no doubt, either, that certain agents in particular are able to make it follow one direction or another. Cities have a great cultural inertia, which in times of crisis usually tends to reproduce once and again models with no conflict, encysted in the tested fields of a misunderstood classicism or folklore. We could call it "thoughtless, reflex historicism". Seville (Spain) is one of those towns. Not many are able, then, to resist in positions of critical creativity. Those who stand up against conformism and defend roles of deep contemporary commitment are, by doing so, contributing decisively to the arousing of a new culture. Guillermo Vázquez Consuegra is one of those rare ones. His work was able to reflect on tradition from a contemporary point of view, but with a deep knowledge of both codes. He chose contemporaneity as a way of understanding his own cultural background. One of his earliest assignments was to edit the architecture guide of Seville. It was then when he soaked in the wisdom of tradition, when the essentially hybrid collective housing types of local patio blocks got deep in his way of looking at the world.

A three-meters-high narrow door leads us to the reception of his new headquarters, right opposite the "Atarazanas" (an indoor dockyard from the Middle Ages), one of the most impressive civil spaces in the South of Europe, whose rehabilitation Consuegra will soon be responsible of. The office itself is indeed built in an industrial ancient nave, attached to the port facilities. The refurbishment project was developed out of void. He actually designed the empty volumes, tempering and dragging Seville's blinding light right to the bottom of the space. As we go up the galvanized stairs, new unexpected perspectives keep popping up. The closer one looks, the more detailed the building becomes. As in most of Consuegra's works, the space is simultaneously built with the perfection of light and the controlled imperfection of matter. White beams, strangely converging with the shaped steel sheets of the composite slabs (a consequence of the inexact geometry of historic towns), create a non orthogonal system in which the lack of parallelism does not mean a lack of spatial order. Once in his personal office, surrounded by a big book shelf that embodies the windows, Consuegra would say: "for this project I was simultaneously the client and the architect, and maybe that was

the reason why I was not so insisting. I was very busy, so I just left many things flow during the construction period, without controlling them as I usually would have done. And it turned out good, I discovered interesting unforeseen results. Just like this lack of parallelism over there!"

B: A building you never stopped learning from...

G: [Long silence]. Probably The Alhambra in Granada.

B: Three recent buildings that gained your interest.

G: [Silence again]. The Thérèse in Vals, by Peter Zumthor [1996]... Are they recent enough? Any of the latest buildings by Herzog and De Meuron, for instance, it could be the Schaulager Foundation in Basel. And, finally, any work by Alvaro Siza. I was impressed by Santa Maria de Cavañes Church [1996]. Or, of course, his building in Brazil [Iberê Camargo Foundation in Porto Alegre, 2008], which is wonderful, although that one I never visited in person.

B: To whom would you have commissioned the project of your own house, in case you had had no time to design it yourself?

G: To Alvaro Siza.

B: Parallelism or convergence?

G: It is definitely a tricky question... Convergence?

B: A book that changed your life?

G: [Long silence]. The Magic Mountain [Thomas Mann, 1924].

B: An artwork you would hang at home?

G: I am not fond of hanging art pieces at home. I actually have none at the moment, but I am about to hang a work by Luis Gordillo [well-known Sevillian painter www.luisgordillo.es].

B: Two reasons to study architecture?

G: One would be that architecture is the human need of bringing order to the world. Architecture is also a mean to get to know our physical environment, a way to explain the world we inhabit.

B: And two reasons for not studying it?

G: I don't really think there's any. Maybe the nowadays situation of economical crisis could be seen as discouraging, but I think that if someone has real passion and enthusiasm for architecture, there is no need for a change of mind.

B: Is "designing" painful?

G: Very. It actually takes a lot from me. I don't always share when some architects say that they have fun while designing. For me it is hard, although of course during the process there are moments of great joy.

B: Is architecture about discovering? or is it rather the art of renouance?

G: They are the same, aren't they? We find through renouance. Architecture is an exercise of synthesis, a process of accumulation, stratification and information computing, with many inputs and many agents. During the process, popping up windows would enable improvisation, mistakes, unforeseen events, etc. Initially, there is only need for renouance: whatever is clearly superfluous. In the design activity there is even room for antithetical interests, as there is for including personal experiences or traditions. In the beginning, it is a situation in which ideas flow in freedom, but then one concept usually turns into a catalyst and it is able to make all the others converge towards one solution. We begin to see the light at the end. That is probably "the discovery" you mentioned, but we had to dismiss many ideas in our way till then. Even beyond, once we achieve this main concept, we will have to renounce anything that is no longer coherent with the idea which is now ruling the project.

B: As one visits your buildings, it seems as if everything was carefully designed, preconceived, up to the smallest joint, without the slightest deviation from the model. But there must be a component of uncertainty you had to react to, during the construction stage, even though it did not make you lose a bit of the global coherence. That is inherent to architecture. To what extent there is room for improvisation in your projects?

G: If there is something I feel flattered by, it is whenever anyone says that my buildings look better when one visits them; in times in which architecture performs in terms of appearance, rather than being based in what really should be its deepest nature. Under these circumstances, the built fact becomes precious. Nowadays any building with a certain interest might have a dozen of splendid, spectacular pictures, but few of them would even pass the test of a simple visit to the place. Construction is a key point for me, and therefore I try to understand the projects from the constructive point of view. Architecture shouldn't be a parade of sparkling images. Architecture is something very serious. It builds the scenarios for our life, which eventually become part of the common perception of reality for our community. The quality of architecture should be measured by the density of its constructive approach. Construction is a mean to give an order to the ideas, turn them into a project and place them in the universe of the real, tangible things. Since, as we all know, architecture belongs to the world of physical, real things. A project is not architecture yet, just as a musical score needs to be built to achieve its materiality, its essence. I would like to think that my projects propose the right relationship between the project and the construction process: the correct materials selection (in fact a project-related decision: each project entails a particular materiality), appropriate construction techniques (trying always to personalize them to each project) or a fluent relation between the details and the whole. I undertake with the same enthusiasm the beginning of a conceptual design and the development of the construction details. There is a long reflection behind every detail and everything is set in order to serve the global coherence of the whole. Some designers let details become totally autonomous and that is something quite dangerous in my opinion, it could even go against the logic of the whole space, against the spatial structure. Details are a key question in the experience of architecture, since they give scale to the space and set the track for

the eyes in their sight around. In some of my buildings, sometimes one might think that some details in particular are playful and carefree (it could be the case for some of the railing systems in the Rehabilitation of San Telmo Palace, for instance) but they are so just apparently, since behind all of them there are many trials, one to one tests directly on site, again and again, till we reached the final solution. So coming back to your question, I like solving joints and details during the construction process. And we have a trick. I usually draw very complex, expensive details in the layouts, which are not necessarily fitting the final reality, but they will give me the tolerance (in terms of difficulty or budget) to eventually implement whatever we finally need. It is getting more and more difficult to have the chance of transforming the project as it is actually being built. But the real-time poetical reaction of the architect to the process of physical development of the ideas is still something deeply significant to architecture. Architecture is a connection between ideas and constructive knowledge. That is the reason why it is so disappointing whenever we develop an executive project and it is not built: after the effort of so many people, architecture does not take place. Thinking and doing, designing and building are absolutely indivisible binomials. I see myself as a builder architect.

B: Carme Pigem said, in one of the interviews of this series, that one of the greatest problems of nowadays architecture could be that the first prototype is actually the final product. However, in order to achieve the final solution, you usually use one to one tests with the real material, developed on site, and then you apply the conclusions in different areas of the building, both to the same, repeated element or even to others. You are, thus, developing a prototype, which, after a trial and error design adjustment, eventually "contaminates" the rest of the project. Isn't it, somehow, an industrial product design development, close to manufacturing methods, embodied within the "traditional" construction process?

G: That is the way I want it to be. I could even say that not only the details' solutions, as I already said, but also the initially selected materials are listed in the layouts and document without a great conviction. It will be only on site, during construction, when they will be finally affirmed. Yes, the solution achieved for a detail in particular might contaminate other details in another point of the same project. Sometimes, construction details may be a consequence of a technical issue, but they might also emerge from the proximity of two different materials. Some materials cannot simply get in contact and it is an issue we will, for sure, get confronted with on site. How to solve the transition from one to the other? How to make this contact take place, in order to enhance the expressivity of both elements when taken separately? I think it is fascinating how one material is able to increase other material's capacity for expression. For instance, in Seville Congress Center (FIBES), the aluminum sheets, with their shine and reflections, enrich the stony perception of concrete surfaces. But construction sites keep becoming more and more complex, with an increasing number of intermediaries. The room for the on-site variations is getting narrower, since any modification has budget or schedule-related implications. It is the architects' task to find a compensation somewhere else in the project. And not every designer is willing to do this extra, tiring work of convincing every party, modifying the project in order to include the new solution or rebalancing the budget. I do.

B: Let's talk about matter. You mentioned metal, a recurrent resource in your work, its capacity for adopting multiple shapes or textures, its malleability, the way it reflects or blurs light and colors... and the multiple

combination possibilities with other components. In general, you usually work with raw materials, presented in their natural state or directly coming from manufacturing production, with no extra manipulation. Is this a way of self contrition? Or is it rather a deliberate form of elemental poetics?

G: I usually use materials in their natural appearance. For instance, I am not fond of stainless steel looking like brass, or brass looking like copper, or tiles looking like wood... I prefer to emphasize natural features. I tend to work with few materials. With one single material in different textures, let's say: stone, which we can use pumiced, sandblasted, flamed, split-faced, etc. in big or small pieces, in multiple shapes... we can reach completely various effects. Few and good quality materials, that could be the key point. Nothing more superfluous than a building turned into a catalogue of construction samples and materials; or materials pretending to be more than they really are: another superfluous act. I like architecture when it is able to produce a shocking emotion: that deep personal experience that comes out of visiting a good building. This feeling might be produced by the spatial perception: light, proportions, scale (architecture fundamentals), but also it might be entailed by the materials and textures. Matter is also able to carve some of those permanent memories in us.

B: You are suggesting an empathic relation between the user and the materiality!

G: Yes. In the main auditorium at Seville Congress Center, for instance, the interior is completely coated in aluminum sheets. What could be seen as an expressive restriction is, indeed, a way of spatial enhancement. The impression it causes in the visitor is clearly stronger than it would have been with a combination of many materials. Sometimes we need to be daring enough to reduce our palette to the essentials, if we want to achieve the effects the essentials produce.

B: You manage scale in a very rich manner. To some extent your buildings are scale-less. They work as beautiful objects when you build them as small models, in the same way they function as buildings in the city. On the other hand you transposition elements between scales: a domestic porch is turned into an urban-scaled canopy, window-scaled slats are transformed into big louvered, abstract surfaces, etc. This creates an inner interference in the observer's perception. Besides, you work with the same care in a small railing system, as in the whole building's concept. Sometimes there seems to be a bigger design effort in a complex handle than the one we could find, for instance, in some of your simple abstract facades. Nevertheless, we could state that inter-scale coherence is one of the key features of your work.

G: Scale has nothing to do with size. That is probably why a project can respond as an object and as building. One of the main aims of my work is to build a place: the place the building creates. And a place has a lot to do with its own scale. With the historic city as the basic background for any contemporary intervention, I always tried to drag urban values into the building. That means basically a change of scale: streets turned into walkways, squares becoming patios... playing with these relations and the sensations they cause is fascinating. This is somehow bringing back our vernacular architecture. Right after my graduation, fortunately or unfortunately, I had not many assignments and I devoted myself to the study of the city. I had the chance of analyzing the local architecture and all the conclusions I reached crystallized later in a couple of books I wrote: "An Architecture Guide of Seville" and "Seville. 100 Buildings". I realized later

to what extent my work was influenced by what I learnt from our tradition. Patio houses, traditional collective housing, bullfight rings or haciendas in the olive trees plantations... they were all organized around a void. They were built surrounding an empty space. And I could now say that "void" is the real generator of most of my buildings. In certain occasions it was evident, just like in the National Museum of Underwater Archeology in Cartagena (2008), where the empty space between the two pieces becomes the germinal ideal of the project. Or in Seville Congress Hall project, where the whole building is organized around two great voids: the void of the road (with the bridge-building above) and the void of the great urban vestibule with the ramp. These voids become an intermediation space of connection between the city and the building. They are somehow building a complex urban threshold. Again a scale-related issue, since these spaces belong simultaneously to the city and to the building. They are public spaces but private at the same time; collective and intimate, exterior and interior. This is how I begin most of my projects: first trying to create a Place and then including these voids, which far from being subsidiary areas, become the ruling spaces of the building. **B:** It is as if your architecture was ruled by a reversed law of universal gravitation, by which the empty, mass-less spaces would produce the strongest attraction. Do you carve void spaces out of the mass or do you shape emptiness and then add the volumes? What comes first, convexity or concavity?

G: In some cases, at the beginning there is the volume, which we begin to perforate. And then, in a particular moment, void takes the lead and becomes the main character. Sometimes we begin with empty spaces, just like in Cartagena. But it is all about the place. I don't believe in architectures considered as objects. Buildings must root in the place. Spectacular architecture, that one featured by its own images, do not... For the Museum in Cartagena the void was the germinal concept for the project. The new sea front enabled a public walk along the shore and the building should not become an obstacle. The boundaries blurred and the building, split in two, let the city pass through. Ambiguous, limit-less spaces fascinate me: pergolas, canopies... This is where spatial quality of architecture lies. It is not something new, the limit line of the house was always something very significant for Mediterranean people. For instance, traditionally, flamenco artists took his portraits posing at their homes' thresholds. That was the most important point of the house for them, neither outside, nor inside. This brings us again to the concept of soft boundaries, the idea of a manipulated limit or threshold, so recurrent in my work. It reminds me of the films by Sam Peckinpah [1925-1984]. He always put his characters in the limit: the border between two countries, the end of old times, the edge of youth...

B: The National Museum of Underwater Archeology in Cartagena is one of the flagship projects of the office. As you said, you let room for the public space to pass through, but basically the building is developed underground, linking with the idea of archeology, with the poetry of penetrating the historical substratum. The building then spreads up to create a window to the sea, as we can clearly see in section. This conceptual underground void, as it emerges, needs to be shaped, otherwise it would vanish into the celestial sphere. Therefore, what emerges is actually nothing more than a shaped emptiness to produce the entrance and to let the light in, almost like an urban-scaled skylight.

G: Exactly. We are playing with scales again. In the process of development of a project, many interest come together. Some inputs emerge

from the program, other from the analysis of the site. But we should never forget that this apprehension of the place is always subjective, partial and even confusing, since it is influenced by one's personal experiences. Although the place is there, it means something for me and something else for you. In this location, I wanted the building not to consume public space. So what appears above the ground belongs concurrently to the public realm and the museum. And splitting the building in two happened to be one of those discoveries we mentioned before, since it also worked for the program organization. A national museum tends to be separated in two parts: the exhibition area and the research center. Therefore, we set two pieces: one facing the city and the historic wall, rectangular and with a strict geometry, and the other looking at the sea, adopting a more organic shape. The building was, so, trying to contribute to the museum's contents. The visitors enter the museum descending and this experience prepares them to what they are about to see. It puts them in a particular situation to empathize with the contents. Narrow ramps lead them down and, then, they suddenly find themselves under the skylight, in a very impressive, unexpected high space.

B: The idea of counterposed geometries is quite recurrent in your work: Cartagena Museum, Enlightenment Museum in Valencia, some of your Social Housing Proposals. There is an undeniable expressive capacity coming out of it, an emerging inner tension that makes the observer react. But it is when this concept is confronted to the program that it achieves its greatest interest. In the Social Housing Block in Rota (Cádiz, 2004), a very rigid, quadrangular outline shapes an area, which then you carved by a freely-drawn, zigzagging line defining the common courtyard. But it is definitely as the double geometry meets the housing type, enabling the room size variations and the heterogeneity in the apartments, when the gesture achieves its real architectural dimension. In floor plan, the building is, so, defined by three clear stripes: a quite rigid one for intimate areas with the bedrooms, an equipped band with the WCs and staircases and a more public one, facing the courtyard and including the public areas (living rooms and kitchens). This final stripe is the one that gets interfered by the zigzagging outline and released from the rigidity of types.

G: Otherwise it would have just been a gesture of frivolity. Architecture has to solve the function, but it must also go one step forward in order to provide freedom. Architecture needs to overcome this first limitation of functionality. But at the same time architectural form has to be coherent with the programmatic layout. In Rota, the regulations obliged to a close block layout. The changing interior facade enabled a suggesting, attractive solution for the building under these particular regulations. It also made possible a more complex relationship with nature, as it gave room for the trees to grow in a more free, organic way inside the courtyard. But all this would have been meaningless, if it had not been a way of architectural manipulation of the housing program and typologies. The inner coherence between program, structure and shape is basic for architecture. We could also include natural light to the list, if you let me. Whenever there is a successful coexistence of these factors, architecture achieves its summit. It was always like that. In Pantheon, in Rome, light, form and structure come together in a single, impressive solution. In that sense, Roman Pantheon was an inspiration for some of our projects, like our competition for Medina. I would like to think that, with that proposal, we were achieving a bit of this convergence of light, architectural shape and structure.

B: You always seem to find a gap for freedom. It is probably easier when talking about small facilities or even in big ones (although they might have very complex programs). But it is certainly impressive that you manage to include some space for innovation even in social housing projects, under hyper restricting regulations. Even then, there is always a component of surprise in your works. In order to achieve it, you tend to foliate the layouts, creating a series of program stripes that you later manipulate. As you explained, in Rota the zigzagging facade introduced heterogeneity, a changing band which is able to "jump" over the regulations. Also in one of your early flagship projects: the social housing block in Ramón y Cajal Street in Seville, back in 1987, you used the architectural surprise. An unexpected wider corridor in the last floor enables a sort of semi-public, semi-open street to provide access to the apartments from a suddenly social space. You even located some benches in it. This transforms the building completely, "contaminating" the typology, as it creates, at the same time, the cantilevered cornice that characterizes the whole project. Also in one of your latest buildings, the social dwellings in Vallecas (Madrid, 2012) a surreal skin of metal reflections envelopes a very precisely designed housing block (in terms of program, typologies and surface control), changing completely the experience of living in it and distorting the interior rigidity of the typologies.

G: I love designing social dwellings. Ramón y Cajal Street's housing building was, indeed, the first important project of this office. It is actually very difficult to make "Architecture" with a social housing program, especially in Spain and even more in Andalusia, where the controlled costs per square meter are a half or even a third of the European standards. There are little chances for inoculating those spaces of freedom that let us introduce quality in architecture. Instead of limiting ourselves just to give an acceptable solution for the exact program required. I always try to find the way to flip upside-down the project and somehow I manage to let the building fly freely, once we have responded to the clients' requirements and the program needs. The official program for the living interior spaces is quite reduced in social housing regulations in Spain, so the gap for freedom lies usually in the exterior areas (collective or private) or the circulation spaces. Ramón y Cajal's Building is a good example of the thorough design effort this requires: apart from the widened public corridor, every ground floor apartment is equipped with a private patio and every top floor enjoys a personal terrace on the roof. In times in which the spotlight is focused on the singular buildings, and their wonderful and fantastic images of spectacle, it seems that the spaces for living (the ultimate aim for architecture) became a minor topic for architects. The main object for architecture is the city and the housing buildings are those that actually build the city. How to contribute to a better urban environment and to better everyday domestic living areas? In fact, I never had the chance of developing private dwellings, all my residential projects were social housing programs. What I keep trying to do is solving the domestic areas in the most flexible, versatile way, we could say in the most isotropic manner. Even following the hyper strict regulations, we aim for designing free spaces the users are able to transform, to expand or to adapt to their necessities. Beyond the increasingly fashionable trend of artefacts equipped with foldable tables and furniture, sliding walls, etc... we propose simple ideas. For instance: a clear position for the wet rooms enables a great transformation by simply demolishing a wall, which is a quite natural action (and this entails some other design decisions: continuous flooring surfaces, partition system independent from the facades,



图6 马德里Vallecas社会住宅项目 (摄影: Duccio Malagamba)

drywall construction techniques...); cross ventilation types (always!); natural ventilation and light in every space, including kitchens and WCs, etc. Paradoxically, to reach freedom, we need to propose mathematically designed domestic layouts, since these strategies are only possible by implementing a great precision in the design process and surfaces computation. I can say that, for instance, in Vallecá's dwellings there is no single extra square centimeter, everything is accurately measured.

We are designing spaces for the everyday: the scenarios where our lives take place. Architects have to position men in the center of the architectural debate. Any other approach makes architecture unnecessary.

B: Sequences have a great importance in your work: the way linked areas relate to one another. In these series of spaces one might go from the interior to the exterior, from intimate to public zones. In our personal experience of entering the Congress Center in Seville, even though the entrance is highlighted by the great urban canopy, the boundary between interior and exterior is not so clear. A blurred line somewhere sets the limit and, in fact, it is not easy to tell whether one is inside yet or not. The building assumes this condition and the great hall resembles a public square, borrowing strategies from urban design. Even the scale is closer to an urban area than to an interior space.

G: It is a social platform! The great hall is a meeting point. The congress center works as an extension of an existing building (a great fair and exhibition center, which needed to be equipped with new auditoriums). We had simultaneously to react to the preexistences and to the city. The great ramp is a space of transition, a manner of foaming the gradient between the city and the building. A thick wall to one of its sides, necessary, due to structural reasons, to support the great cantilevered roof above, embodies a series of rooms along the ramp. We wanted to add some functions to the circulation space. These terraces were supposed to be small exhibition areas, although, unfortunately, I think they never actually used them. Let me show you something...

[In this moment, Guillermo stands up and looks for a book in his library: a new monograph on the building published by La Fábrica. For several minutes he explains the building in detail. Here we note down some disconnected paragraphs, flashing highlights of a long conversation.]

...I am fond of undetermined spaces and I like buildings able to transcend their own initial function. The great public buildings that history preserved were those able to host various programs, those opened to different interpretations. They were proposing prototypical sequences of corridors and rooms, wide enough to host multiple potential programs. That spatial openness was the key for them to survive through time. This is what I like the most about Seville's Congress Center project: in the great spaces anything could take place, things we cannot actually preconceive...

...How does the body move inside the building? The body considered with all its senses: smell, vision, touch... its rhythm as it moves defines the space it is moving in. I think this is something important to understand the distribution areas in the Congress Center... no form of architectural representation is able to substitute the physical experience of the body moving through the space.

B: If there is something criticizable in this building is the powerful suburban component of the project: so many delicate spatial strategies to be applied in a certainly dysfunctional periphery. Wouldn't they work better in a more coherent urban space?

G: Somewhere else, the project would have been a different one. As I said, the design had to give response to the city and to the existing building [a quite eclectic project that reacted to the surroundings by trying to become a landmark]. In this case, we found a peripheral environment and that is precisely the reason why we needed the big ramp. It responds to the suburban condition of the area. It is an action-reaction effect. One cannot step off the bus and open a door to enter a public building. Not in that place. That would be shocking. We needed a transition space to detoxify. But indeed, in-between intermediate spaces belong to our tradition: the hallways¹ in patio houses, or access enclosures in convents or churches², or horse-dismounting areas in palaces³. They are all part of our architectural heir. We have wonderful examples. It comes to my mind the great indeterminacy of the first courtyard in Casa de Pilatos (Seville, 15th - 16th Century), still sharing some of its walls with the street, and the way it articulates the entrance to the sequence of patios. Peter Smithson was also fascinated by this building, especially by some completely undetermined spaces like the terrace facing the square. He was deeply



图7 San Telmo宫殿修复项目 (摄影: Duccio Malagamba)

impressed by an area with no great significance in the domestic program, but hiding a great potentiality. Spaces without a clear function, which initially could be seen as wasted areas, were those that gained his attention. I always try to research on the possibilities of this kind of undefined spaces nobody asked the architects for.

B: Although in Seville Congress Center you worked with preexistences, they had no special historical value. However, in many of your projects you were commissioned to develop proposals for heritage sites or buildings. In those cases, you reinterpreted vernacular types and spatial sequences that belong to the tradition, tested innovative combinations of local materials or construction techniques, used traditional sustainable approaches, etc, but always from contemporariness. Your code of intervention seems very clear: studying the existing, researching on the object itself and other references, removing distorting interferences and reinterpreting from a contemporary point of view. I am referring to a line of projects that goes from Cartuja Heritage Institute (Seville 1987-1995, developed in ancient naves attached to a monastery and related to a ceramic factory), to Tomares Council House in Seville (2004), San Telmo Palace Rehabilitation (2009) or the (still unbuilt) Atarazanas Rehabilitation.

G: Any intervention on a heritage site is a question of interpretation of the existing building or area. Interpretation must precede action. So it is very important to design a clear strategy. I think contemporary interventions should achieve a peaceful coexistence with the existing. My position would be as far from a mimetic historicism (usually coming from the orthodox approaches of academicism), as it is from the idea of proposing a great contrast between old and new, praised by some sections of modernity. I like to wander an intermediate area, what I call the "third approach". This "third approach", probably the most complicated one, proposes a process of analogy of the existing building. It is a way of avoiding simultaneously positions of historicist camouflage and ideas supported by the exaltation of "difference". I defend that the innovative language of modernity and those languages consolidated by history doesn't have to be necessarily antithetical, but they may interact with each other, reach a state of common resonance and eventually become complementary. It is probably in the Rehabilitation of San Telmo Palace,

where this approach of ours reaches its peak of intensity. In this project there is actually a great continuity between old and new⁴.

B: That is indeed how architecture usually happened. We tend to talk about the "existing building" or "the preexistences", seeing it as a perfectly coherent whole, while probably what we usually find is a reality in continuous transformation for years or centuries, before we arrived...

G: Always remaining far from fake historical mimetism, analogy enables a physical and historical continuousness with the existing reality. Nevertheless, each building requires a specific strategy of intervention. This frame approach, rational and intuitive at once, leads the whole project. But it is important to solve also every little situation in particular. And here it comes the most surprising idea: sometimes it is needed to follow a different tactic in order to preserve the contemporary coherence of the whole. General and particular strategies could even become contradictory. Heritage interventions are complex and very subjective. I think it is important to produce contemporary architecture in a manner that it establishes a fluid continuity with the historic city, and not only when talking about interventions on heritage items, but also regarding new pieces of architecture. We always try to preserve the urban features, the scent of the city, the idea of the city as an area of integration of many different times.

In Tomares Council House, the historical building could be apprehended as a sequence of courtyards, so what we did was adding some new courtyards to the existing series. We used a contemporary architectural language, but establishing analogies with the historical one. Thus, we proposed an architecture defined by walls, walls with small windows, resembling the traditional architecture of Andalusian Haciendas and preserving the idea of concatenated open spaces, recovering some timber-made structures and making them more abstract...

B: Contemporariness would be then possible with no rupture...

G: Absolutely! This is related to certain specific sections of modernity that never aim for a rupture.

B: Analogy brings us into interesting areas of ambiguity between old and new, without betraying contemporariness. You do not seem to be afraid of this kind of uncertainty. In Tomares Council House, the new interven-

tions, including new naves, are built in perfect continuity with the ancient ones. The concept of sequence links all together in a contemporary analysis of the hacienda layout and, within this frame, you work freely both with traditional renewed techniques and with some completely contemporary interventions. You are, by doing so, seeking achievements of the historical architecture in order to highlight them and reinterpret them in the new additions. In the same line of thoughts, in San Telmo Palace Rehabilitation, you developed a great research on the building to identify some lost characteristics of the palace. After filtering a number of distorting recent interventions, you recovered a series of patios. However, when it gets to the little details, the excessive baroque ornamentation of the existing building seems to contaminate some of your solutions, which are not as essential as they usually are in your designs.

G: I like listening to the building. The rumor of the building will give us the hints for the rehabilitation proposal. The experience of the already existing becomes the platform for the new architecture. On a general basis, I would never support the mimetic reproduction of the historical styles or the exact reconstruction, although the "third approach" I explained is exceptionally compatible with some contradictory approaches, especially when we focus on little questions. For instance, in Tomares Council House, we opened a couple of new balconies in an already existing patio with another two balconies. The new ones reproduced the old ones, since the space was so small that a completely contemporary element would have distorted completely the perception of the space. When we are rehabilitating a certain specific atmosphere, in which some elements in particular disappeared, it is probably more consequent to reproduce them in the way they were, in order not to produce a shocking reaction. In some other occasions, we realize the project might demand a more contrasted intervention, a clear difference between old and new. I am not against it, although usually it is neither my way of proceeding. As I said, in general I aim for the idea of analogy, using the existing building as a platform for a contemporary intervention in which we reinterpret what we found, seeing it from our present time... although, unfortunately there is no master recipe.

In San Telmo Palace Rehabilitation we aimed for some poetical situations... [He brings a recent monograph by William Curtis on the building and he goes through some images: some wonderful marble-made flat railing systems, completely contemporary and some abstract skylights of faceted geometries, able to split and bring the light, he explains, to several separated spaces] We solved each space in a different way, but at the same time keeping the coherence with the adjacent spaces. When he visited it, Alvaro Siza [the Pritzker-awarded Portuguese Architect, who has a close friendship with Guillermo Vázquez Consuegra] said that this was the most interesting thing about the building. In the architectural promenade through the renewed palace, the transitions of spaces take place in a very fluid, soft manner. To the point that, maybe, someone not especially concerned about architecture might take some old parts for new or viceversa. What happened in San Telmo is that the contemporary language became a little more exaggerated, in order to fit the exuberant baroque style. Otherwise, the excessive contrast would have emerged and that is what I was trying to avoid.

As William Curtis suggested, it was about the poetics of the place. The personal experience of wandering through the building is something crucial for the coherence of the different languages to be fully apprehended. So we reacted to the existing atmosphere, working with light and mat-

ter. I love manipulating light, playing with it, taking it from above, channeling it, bringing it to the ground floors, passing it from one hand to the other... light is the main material for architecture.

B: The whole process of the project took almost twenty years. Working in such a scale for a historical building rehabilitation (21720 m²) and such a long period of time, you went for sure through many vicissitudes. Please, tell us something about those years.

G: This long-term design process gave me the chance of reflecting and thinking deeply about all the interventions we did. In fact, most of the project was designed on site, during the construction process. I even changed my mind about several things. For instance, some of the elements, initially proposed in a colder, constrained contemporary style, turned into something more overemphasized, as a reaction to the consolidated language of history. But above all, it was a personal transit of discovering and learning. First I had to unveil the building as the object of a permanent metamorphosis. In fact, behind a true baroque façade, and with the exception of the main courtyard and the chapel, the building was hiding a completely distorted space [he shows to us some of the pictures of the original situation, looking like low-cost social housing in a very bad condition. "That is what we found!"]. The interior of the palace had lost its heritage value and this gave the architect, finally fearless, the power of proposing a new architecture. It was very difficult to accomplish, but we finally managed to demolish everything that had no historical, architectural or constructive value. I was falsely accused of having destroyed the baroque grid of the palace. But the building had gone through three clear stages: initial (as it was built), transformation (when the dukes of Montpensier occupied it) and finally a great decay (as it was transformed into the Seminary). When it got to our hands, the original layout was already completely altered and the new speculative additions were not dialoguing with the main historical remains. It was a great effort and I had to go through a terrible time of injuries and insults from many conservative institutions. But I always thought it was something very important to achieve a good project. The whole thing demanded a very clear idea and a great perseverance to actually make it happen. Resistance and risk are some of the most valuable virtues for an architect.

B: You stated once that "good architecture does not usually come out of consensus"...

G: There is always someone against. In fact I was sued and it was reported to the Royal Beaux Arts Academy of San Fernando in Madrid (which actually had no agency in the project), but the committee they sent informed positively, saying that it was a very respectful project with the baroque building. For many months the project was at stake, but we resisted.

Whenever we face a project involving a heritage building, it is important to let history talk. But is nonetheless crucial as well, to decide when, where and how we are able to let our own contemporary culture lay on the building. We have to connect present and past to get into the future. I could never support that kind of dogmatic conservatism that tries to fossilize history, preventing heritage buildings from acquiring new architectural, contemporary values. We have to let our historical buildings evolve, grow with times. Often, pretended innovation steps on already explored fields, while the seed for contemporariness might lie in the tradition. In that sense, there would be nothing more contemporary than the past and nothing more preterit than the present.