One Century of Photography and Preservation in Catalonia: the Service for Local Architectural Heritage (SPAL)

Gaspar Jaén i Urban
Montserrat Baldomà Soto
Maria Antònia Carrasco Martí

Departamento de
Expresión Gráfica y Cartografía
Expresión Gráfica Arquitectónica
Universidad de Alicante (España)

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One Century of Photography and Preservation in Catalonia: the Service for Local Architectural Heritage (SPAL)

The 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 Jeroni Martorell i Terrats (1915-1951); later, Camil Pallàs i Arisa (1954-1978); then, Antoni González Moreno-Navarro (1981-2008). In 2008 Joan Closa Pujabet 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 Eixample of Barcelona, the "Clock Building", erected in 1868 by the architect Rafael Guastavino as a weaving workshop.

After 1981, the Autonomous Government of Catalonia, recovering after the death of Franco, took control of the most significant cataloguing work for the whole region. As a consequence of the redistribution of public competences in Spain, the SPAL was relieved of the responsibility of cataloguing monuments and concentrated its efforts on their restoration. So, during González's time, the SPAL took an in-depth look into working methods, 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 circumstances rigorously and pragmatically before the architectural 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 sentimental relationship with the users.

The SPAL's activity during its first period between 1914 and 1951 was extremely profuse and came under the direction of the architect Jeroni Martorell (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 Section of the Catalonian 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 inventory of Catalan monuments, following the French collections produced through the Mission Héliographique (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 order to achieve a rational history –a working method which was already common in other scientific disciplines. When he became head of the Service, he was inspired by the German and Austrian models and reproduced the same plan he had previously 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 isolated case in Spain. The strong Spanish movement in all fields of culture (artistic, scientific, literary, philosophical...) at the beginning of the 20th Century inspired another interesting project: the "Iconographic Repertoire of Spanish Art" , whose goal was to have photographs and studies of monuments from all around Spain. (Carrasco, 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 parallel 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 photographic information, which gave rise to the idea of creating an "Iconographic Repertoire of Spanish Art", one of whose architects (the best architects 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 Catalonian Generalitat 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 north-east 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 fascist bombing over Barcelona and Catalonia. After the war, the Service adopted some of the principles of Franquism concerning monuments, especially looking back into ancient Spanish history and monuments. (Cfr. Lacuesta 2000)

The second period of the Service was between 1954 and 1978 under the direction of Camil Pallàs, in the middle of the Franco period. In open contrast with Martorell before him, and González after him, Pallàs has left us very few theoretical written documents. Consequently, his philosophy must be found in his restoration works, especially churches, which were very numerous in this period. Pallàs used to change the most modern parts of the buildings looking for their "authenticity" and looking back at the image 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 theory by some priests from the Catholic Church, especially Eduard Junyent (1901-1978), had a definitive influence on this model of Restoration which spread all over Spain during the Franco period. 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 following 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 (González 1999). This book and this method should be indispensable for any architect facing interventions in historical buildings or sites, but also to any photographer involved in monumental architecture and especially for those working on registering the restoration process of these special buildings. Since any intervention must consider the protection of different aspects: the documentary, 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, documentalists, as well as a well-supplied archive of documents, drawings and photographs, a considerable specialized library and, of course, a photographic service.

(The SCCM Method can be seen at: http://www.diba.cat/web/the SPAL/descarregues).

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 dissemination of its work in books, leaflets, and an active presence in the most important world preservation 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 extraordinary process? Since its beginning the SPAL Photographic Service has been professionalized and has been one of the most important bases of real action in preservation. Photography has also been included in the programs written by the architects who directed it and has been carried out profusely and continuously. So in 1914, together with the architect Martorell, another civil servant, Joan Carrera Dellunder, was named. He was re-

quired to be skillful as a designer and as a photographer because one of the objectives of the Service, as we have seen before, was to make a graphic inventory of the most significant buildings in Catalonia. In this way, from the beginning many photographs of Catalan monuments were taken and they were vital to the reconstruction of buildings after the huge destruction from the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939).

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 documental 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 2001) 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 field with its own intrinsical status. This new possibility generated a dual concept of the idea of the photographic image, with fundamental debates throughout the 20th Century. One example was the discussion by Moholy-Nagy about production and reproduction in the photographic medium (Moholy Nagy 1922); another was the bipolar idea stated by Christopher Phillips, considering photography as a functional or referential media in contrast to its capacity as a generator of new expressive potentialities. (Hamburg, Phillips 1989)

But in Martorell's time, all fields of European scientific practice considered the documentary character of photography as valid and unquestionable; partly because it was a legacy from 19th Century positivism. Besides, the appearance of instantaneous images, the gelatin bromide dry plate and the improvement of photographic equipment and procedures promoted the incorporation of photographic technology as evidential reasoning. The relevance of this premise is that any activity with scientific aspirations was well protected by the referential virtues 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 and anthropological research, constructive 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 field of study in the SCCM Method. This photographic 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 ideas and feelings related to that building. Photographs explaining a restored building should not only engage with the original value of the building, but also with the principles that have led to the intervention.

The new conceptual proposals of the SCCM Method about the essence of monument and how to restore it has meant the revision of the way photography captures it. The triadic essence of monument (as a document, as architecture and as a significant element) demands a photographic approach which has a deeper impact than the mere register of some specific shapes or some particu-

lar spaces. Traditional documentary status is surpassed by the need to value the complex concept of the monument. It is here photography of building heritage takes on a new dimension related to interpretation and grasping not only the physical but also the cultural elements, as something emanating from the materiality of the monument. It is a part of its referential capacity, but it must also be the consequence of a previous process of knowledge, reflection and comprehension of the deeper virtues of the monument, which are not always the most evident. The conclusion is that documentary activity about monuments may be as intellectually complex as any kind of photography, for example as an artistic expression. Referenciality 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 Monument and its image is the case of 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 Gaudí's time; this was possible because the building has not suffered important or irreversible damages or changes. The architectural project aimed to rebuild the original spaces and give the whole palace a purely architectural vision. So it was essential to restore the spatial, composite and ornamental aspects of Gaudí's project to their proper place. (Cfr. González, Lacuesta, Baldomà, 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 Gaudí 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 Gaudí's work understandable. Pictures must show the logical system of construction; understand the relationship between the different spaces and outline the rationality of Gaudí'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 inadmissible transgression for the information and knowledge that the pictures should transmit in this case. If the Palace had been photographed in a 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 Gaudí 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 documental 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 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, just when they are needed) all the documents 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-

ination of these documents is keeping them all in an Archive. It must be considered that everything (a letter, a file, a law, an invoice, a bill, a project, a design, a photograph) is a part of the Monument and must be preserved indefinitely and must be easily accessible.

So the Archive has become as important as administrative, technical or scientific documents; and every Monument must be the point of reference for the arrangement of different materials. All kinds of documents are registered and archived the same day they reach the Service and all documentary files are immediately available to anyone who may have anything to do with that Monument. In general terms, ten years after the end of restoration work, documents can be freely consulted by the general public. They must never be destroyed because they are considered as a part of the life of the Monument. Since 1914 the photographic archive has grown in an uninterrupted way and keeps a highly important testimony of the architectural history of Catalonia and Spain. It is an indispensable resource for the preservation and restoration of the rich heritage registered there. You can find more than 200.000 photographic registers in very different formats there: albumen papers, gelatin-bromide copies, pigmentary procedures (cyanotypes, carbon prints, bromoil prints) photomechanical procedures, glass negatives (some of them stereoscopicals), nitrates, acetates and polyesters. You can also find works by the most well-known Catalan photographers of every period, and all together, it forms an iconographic repertoire highly specialized with a superb cultural and social value.

CONCLUSION

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. 1983)

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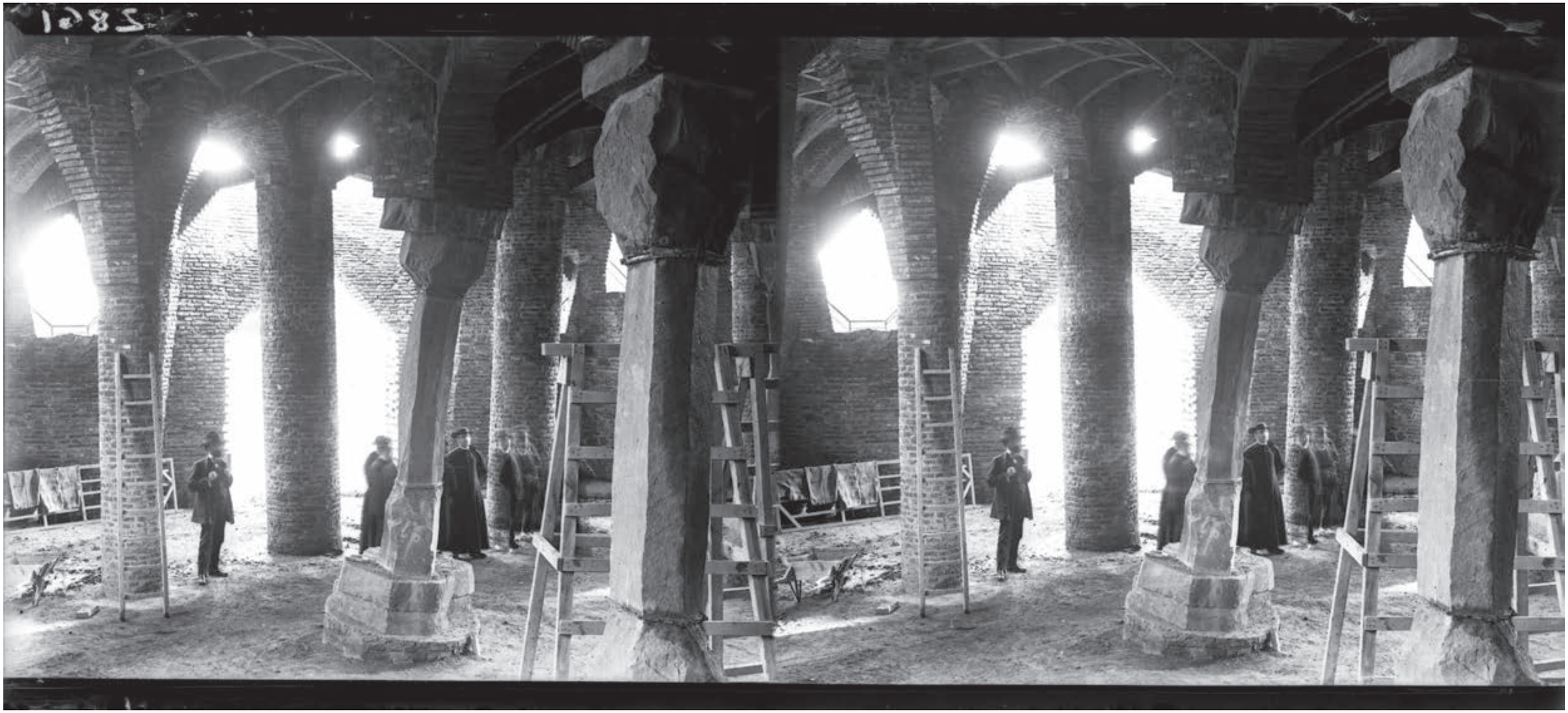
Gathering information at the Monastery of Sant Salvador in Breda (Barcelona). The second in line starting from the left is the architect Jeroni Martorell. Photo: Emili Llatas, 1907. Gelatin developing-out paper, 13x17 cm. SPAL Archives.

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 Gaudí 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.

Book cover of *La restauració ara i aquí* (*Memòria 1981-1982*), 1983, the first of a long list of titles about the theory and practice of preservation produced by the SPAL after franquism in Spain.

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 (Cercs, 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/m^2 Magno satin paper; the covers on white 300 gr/m^2 Magno satin paper and the external covers on white 220 gr/m^2 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.

MMXIII

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 puntuation marks; the upturned ear of the g; and the base of E and L.