

# The first quarter of the century from eclecticism to rationalism

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Between 1900 and around 1925, Spanish architecture trod a complex path. During this period, the conventional division of centuries was not adhered to, and 19th-century eclecticism lingered on through its architectural disciples, who steered it into a dead-end as they overlapped chronologically with the beginnings of 20th-century architecture. This new architecture was heir to the confusion and hesitation that permeated the latter decades of the previous century. At the same time, however, it was touched by the innovative currents rippling through culture and was spurred on by the appearance of new construction techniques and materials to display its desire and enthusiasm for change. This was the fertile ground from which architecture was to sprout forth in renewed form.

Indeed, a new atmosphere slowly began to set in around 1925, closing the door on the 19th century and its legacy. However, no distinction was made between the sterile prolongations of eclecticism and the lines that were consolidating the beginnings of a renewal. In short, this turning of the page on the 19th century was to affect the architects of both pastiches and revivals and those who had sincerely signposted the way to the future. Anasagasti, Palacios, Flórez Urdapilleta and López Otero, now known to be of capital importance in Spanish 20th-century architecture, were, at best, relegated to a back seat in historiographical terms and, at worst, unfairly consigned to oblivion.

The complexity of this whole period slotted quite naturally and coherently into the general cultural panorama of Europe at the time. In the case of Spain, however, certain specific features of the landscape combined to form a rather more individual personality. Historically, the period coincided with the reign of Alfonso XIII, which lasted from the year his mother, Queen María Cristina of Habsburg, ended her regency in 1902 right up to the collapse of the monarchy and the advent of the Second Republic in 1931.

The 20th century began in Spain amid the consternation caused by the loss in 1898 of the last vestiges of the country's once great overseas empire. Much has been said and written about the repercussions of the

“Disaster of ‘98” on Spanish culture at the beginning of the century. Naturally, a sensitive field like architecture could not remain unaffected by such a momentous event. The descriptions many architects of the time wrote of their own projects reveal an explicit intention to include references to the architecture of the glorious times of the lost empire. This desire was reflected by the neo-plateresque revival and the great importance which was attached to the architectural styles which were characteristic of the Spanish renaissance. The paradigmatic example of these architectures was the plateresque tower of the Monterrey Palace in Salamanca, which the great Spanish author and philosopher, Unamuno, praised as the eternal symbol of everything quintessentially Spanish. This same architecture was to trigger a whole series of explicit revivals – in the so-called Monterrey style – that were to spring up all over the Iberian peninsula and even beyond its borders.

This neo-plateresque style made its international debut in 1900 with the Spanish Pavilion designed by José Urioste for the Paris Exhibition. The success of the pavilion at the Exhibition fuelled the prolonged life of this revival. Nevertheless, it would be an oversimplification to claim a direct causal relationship between the Disaster of ‘98 and this national architecture. Although the events of 1898 certainly paved the way for the rebirth of a national architecture, similar processes were taking place in other European countries. Furthermore, even before 1898, other noteworthy architectures in the Monterrey style had emerged. Consequently, the re-emergence of national architecture was simply another revival – albeit probably the last – in the long list of those already attempted in the 19th century.

At the beginning of the century, Spanish architecture was wrestling with the complex question of how to find an alternative path to eclecticism. In the final decade of the 19th century, Madrid had witnessed a major push forward in construction with the appearance of emblematic buildings whose common trend was classicist eclecticism. In the early years of the 20th century, the development of an eclecticism with a national or regional basis went hand in hand with the

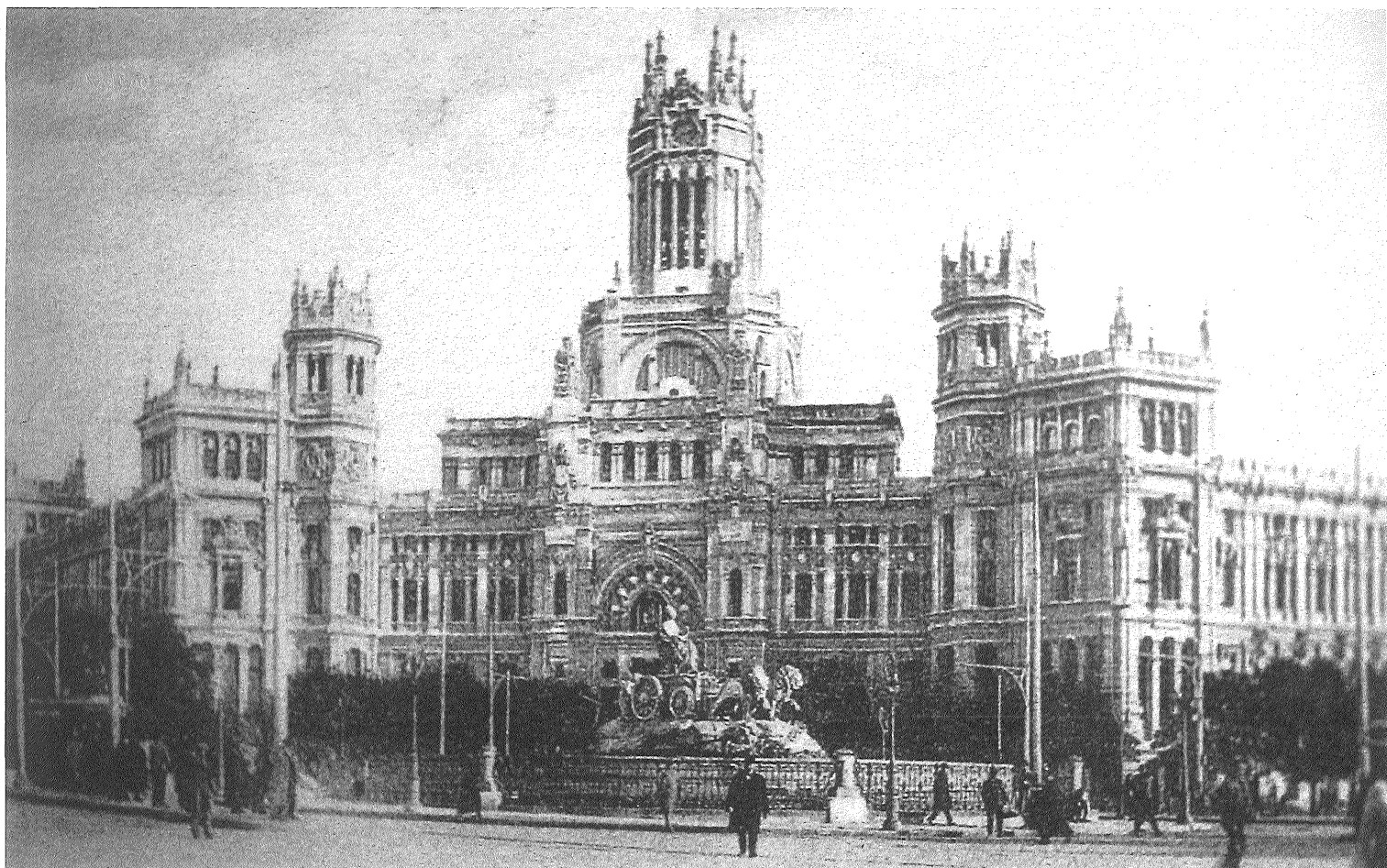
Metrópolis building,  
Madrid (1905-10),  
Jules and Raymond Février.



transformation of the city into a huge metropolis, where new types of architecture sprang up (large hotels, casinos, new commercial buildings), inspired by the International French Style (on the Gran Vía, for instance, Monterrey buildings were erected simultaneously alongside true imported architectures). On the one hand, city architecture opened itself up to a cosmopolitan internationalism and, on the other hand, it seemed to look inwards, reverting back to the nostalgia of lost glories.

The quest for an architecture linked to history and geography had already been embarked upon in Europe over the last decades of the 19th century. In fact, it should be remembered that in Spain, as early as 1877, an important representative of Catalan *modernisme*, the architect Lluís Domènech i Montaner, had explicitly raised this question in his article “In Search of a National Architecture”. The article took an openly eclectic stance and advocated a retrieval of the wildly different architectural trends that had existed throughout the history of Spain.

An essential name in this search for a new style is that of the architect, historian and lecturer at the Madrid School of Architecture, Vicente Lampérez (1861-1923). On the theory side, at least, he was responsible for launching this whole campaign for national architecture. Through the many studies and papers he produced on the subject, Lampérez became the leading light of the revivalist drive to produce national styles in contemporary architecture, with its important repercussions for regionalist architecture. His stance can be summarised as the pursuit of a style belonging to a specific place and time, which he called “the new national style”. This style was built on the foundations of the adaptation – rather than the imitation – of what he termed “the living styles” from Spain’s architectural legacy, and it was clearly opposed to what he condemned as “exoticism”, that “imitation, whether relevant or not, with logic or without it, either appropriate or ludicrous, of foreign styles and provisions which are more often than not contrary to the needs, customs, materials and climate of the country.”



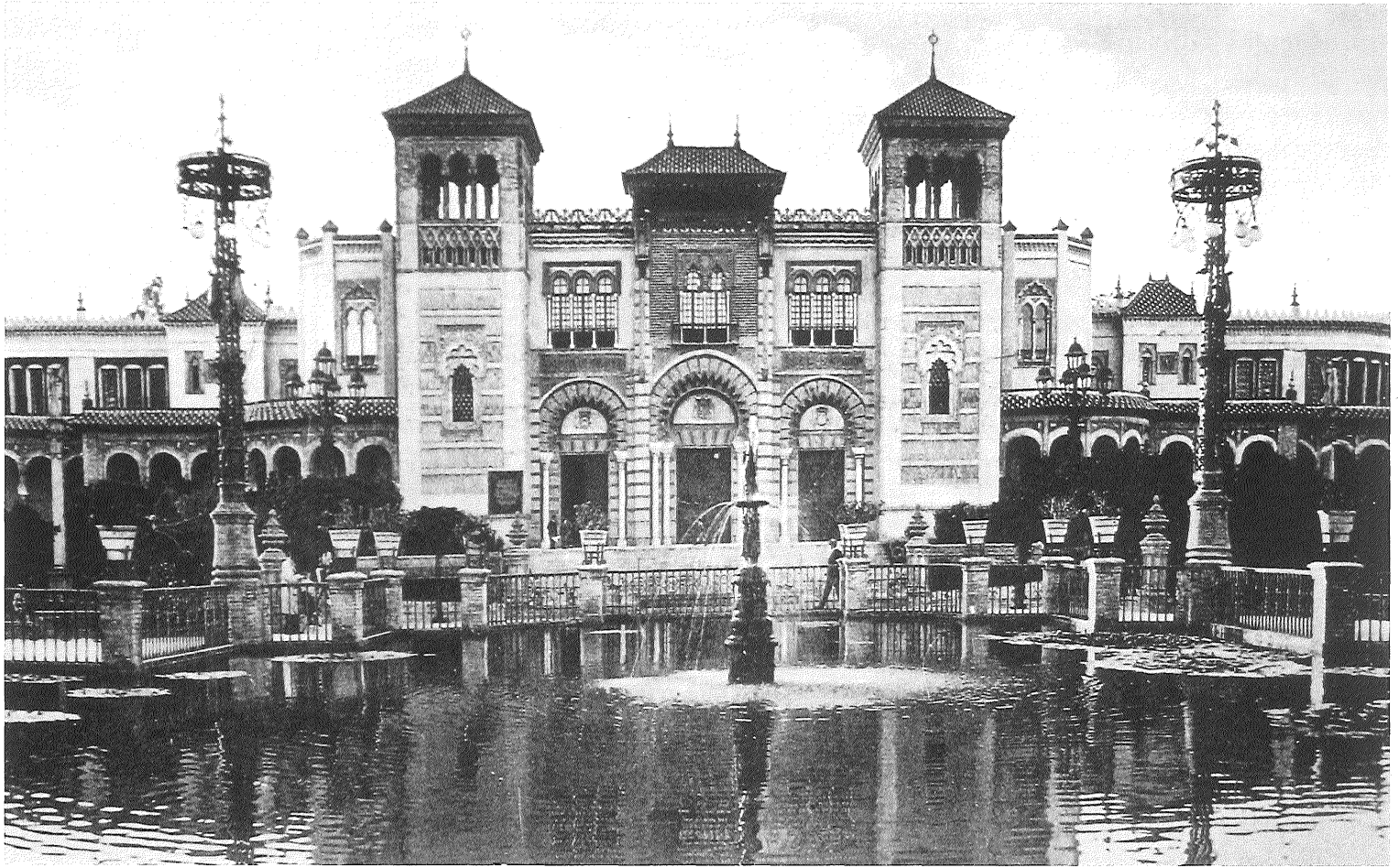
Post Office building,  
Madrid (1904-17),  
Antonio Palacios Ramilo.

Lampérez's chief follower in this view was Leonardo Rucabado (1875-1918), an architect from Santander. Together with the Sevillian architect Aníbal González, he headed the architectural regionalist movement in Spain. In 1915, Rucabado and González were the two leading participants in a major debate on Spanish architecture. The militant paper entitled "Guidelines for the Resurgence of a National Architecture" which the two presented at the 1915 Sixth National Congress of Architecture in San Sebastián constituted a true regionalist manifesto which provided material for controversy long after the congress was over. The stance advocated by Rucabado and González – and really by Lampérez – was contested by other architects like the Valencian Demetrio Ribes, who played down the importance of juxtaposed languages and advocated a more constructive and functional version of architecture. They also came up later against one of the heavyweights in Spanish architectural culture: Leopoldo Torres Balbás.

Rucabado, born in the province of Cantabria – referred to as *la Montaña* ("the Mountain") – was the man who initiated and carried through the regionalist style known as the *montañés* style. He began his professional career in Bilbao, where he cleverly played the eclectic card and was immediately fêted by the prosperous Basque bourgeoisie.

In Lampérez, he had found the point of departure he had needed to start out on the road which would veer him away from his former historicist eclecticism and lead him to opt quite militantly for a new national architecture. From then onwards, he threw himself into a fervent study and analysis of the vernacular architecture of his province of birth. It is worth mentioning, in order to demonstrate that the components of regionalist language went beyond architecture *per se*, that this immersion in local culture was accompanied by a comprehensive plan of practical study and lectures – Pereda, Menéndez Pelayo – which soaked Rucabado in the atmosphere of Cantabria.

In the almost ten years that elapsed between this renewal and his premature death in 1918, Rucabado defined and consolidated a style – the *montañés* style – that quickly spread, creating a school, over the north of Spain and even in cities like Madrid. He drew up his own model – see, for instance, the fine La Casuca house erected in Santander in 1917 – through a fair number of constructions. These were generally isolated architectures: large, expressive houses with an intelligent composition of volumes, featuring towers and large eaves, and explicitly incorporating elements taken from traditional Cantabrian architecture. Stripped bare of such elements, these architectures would very often have



Mudejar Pavilion,  
Ibero-American Exhibition in Seville (1911-16),  
Aníbal González.

displayed an approach to architecture much closer to the types being published by English and German magazines. In fact, Rucabado drew heavily on these types in the basic outline for his constructions. Lampérez wrote in Rucabado's obituary: "He was not, as has been said, the promoter of a servile imitation, but rather the implementator of a clever adaptation. As yet, nobody but him has been able to adapt the English hall to the Santander *estragal*; the window to the *solana*; the loggia to the *pórtico*; and the silhouette of the cottage or the villa to the noble *casona* or the Pas valley *casuca*."

Rucabado's architecture continues to be a representative example of the state of confusion prevailing at the time. Nevertheless, his enormous professional skill, his personality, his special devotion to the historical study of Santander's architecture, succeeded with rhetorical ability in applying a language to a solid and perfectly controlled constructive reality. The same cannot be said about the numerous groups of followers of his work who, in the main, did little more than produce a juxtaposition of elements that was no more than skin-deep.

Andalusian regionalism also underwent a major development in these years. The movement was led by the Seville-born Aníbal González (1876-1929), an architect with an outstanding personality and ideas that

were very similar to those of Rucabado. González took his first professional steps on the modernist track but soon turned his hand to nationalist architecture through the exploitation of mudejar brickwork, which together with the special attention he paid to the colour of other ceramic elements like tiles, was to be the architecture he would develop profusely throughout his career and the one that would come to characterise his style, though it maintained a certain eclectic freedom.

Together with the large number of residential buildings he constructed in his home city, establishing a highly recognisable Seville-style architecture, the work González executed for the Ibero-American Exhibition held in Seville is also worthy of note.

The Exhibition covered a large enclosure, including what is today the María Luisa Park, on the banks of the River Guadalquivir. González was in charge of the overall planning of the area and designed some of its most characteristic buildings. The way in which he summarised his architectural intentions regarding the "style and nature of the exhibition" is strikingly close to Lampérez's theories and thus very revealing. They consisted of "using an adapted version of the elements and provisions of the genuinely Spanish styles of previous eras to suit the needs, customs, materials and uses

of the current age". Two of the fundamental interventions which structured the ensemble can be highlighted within this overall plan: the layout of the Plaza de América and, more importantly, the huge Plaza de España area. The architect built three pavilions in the Plaza de América between 1916 and 1919, each of which reflected a different historical style (as if to exemplify the way in which Spain's architectural legacy offered a firm basis for such eclectic interplay). For the Plaza de España, the Exhibition's most emblematic work, he designed a porticoed architectural ensemble which was laid out in a semi-oval shape flanked by slender towers and opened out onto the María Luisa Park, to form an urban space of rare quality.

The evolution which had taken place in González's architecture since his design of the historicist pavilions which made up the Plaza de América can be traced in this ensemble, which was not completed until 1928. The language employed here by the architect drew its inspiration from classicism, although it was employed with ample architectural licence. The architect himself was to state that his inspiration had come from the Spanish renaissance, although he had "modernised" it. Beyond the national language employed on its surfaces, the ordering of the ensemble, the arrangement of its volumes, its interesting perceptive and scenographic aspects, its layout – where formal outlines that go beyond local typologies can be fathomed – reveal architectural intentions of a more general nature that turn this ensemble into a true urban monument, the swansong of historicist eclecticism in Spain.

Antonio Palacios (1874-1945) did for Madrid what González did for Seville. Although their architectural premises were very different, Palacios was also capable of stamping his own special imprint on Madrid, where

his works remain, even today, as astonishingly intuitive urban landmarks in the city's memory.

Antonio Palacios Ramilo was a contemporary of both Rucabado and González. Although born in Galicia, a region with a clearly defined identity, Palacios had nothing to do with the regionalist architecture practised by the other two architects. Instead, he chose to tread his own independent path without tying himself down to any local style. His complete independence from the prevailing trends made him unique in the contemporary architectural panorama.

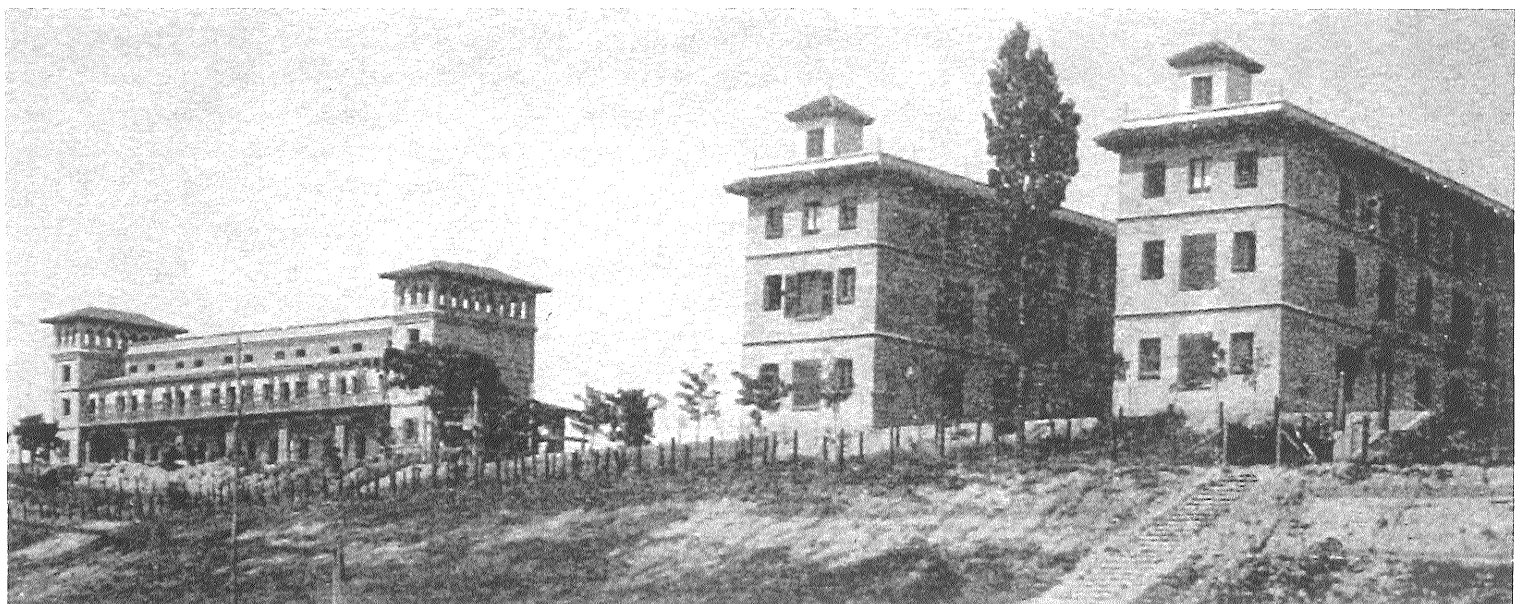
A disciple of the great architect of emphatic eclecticism in Madrid, Ricardo Velázquez Bosco, the highly spirited Palacios became a monumentalist architect who was often described as a megalomaniac due to his ability to always find some leeway for monumentality to creep into his work. Given that the compositional resources of regional architectures did not lend themselves to such irrepressible intentions, Palacios' architecture gave free, unprejudiced rein to the influence of the sources that were nurturing his fertile imagination in each case.

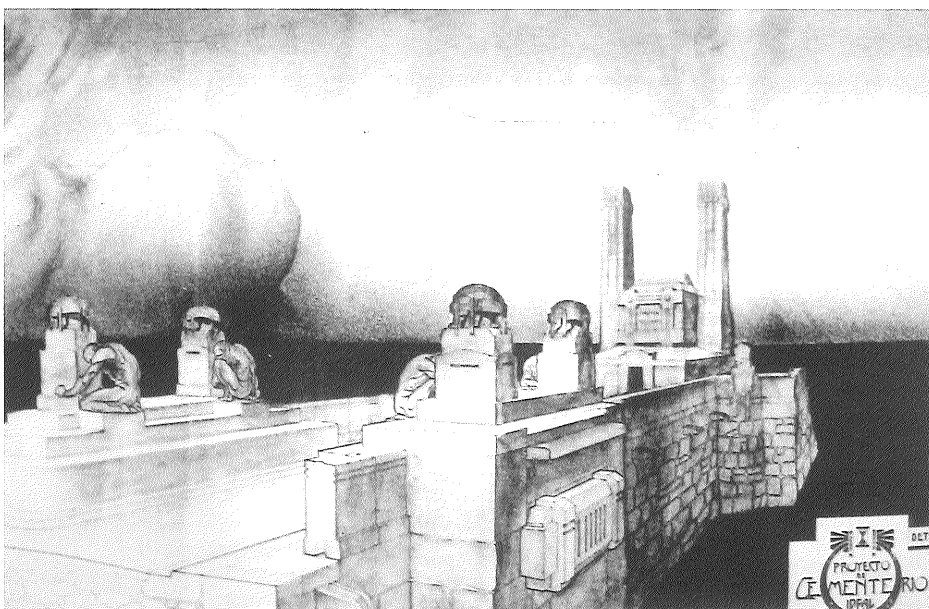
Palacios owes his prestige fundamentally to his monumental works in Madrid. He was behind such important buildings in the capital's repertoire as the Post Office building, in the Cibeles circus on Paseo de la Castellana, and the unusual *Círculo de Bellas Artes* building. The Post Office building (designed in collaboration with Joaquín Otamendi between 1904 and 1917), through which he cleverly introduced a daring dissonant note into the melodious classicist environment of the Cibeles circus, brought him success very early on in his career. It's eclecticism is both deliberate and unfettered, drawing on all kinds of formal references (from the Monterrey style that crowns the towers to other

Below:  
The Laboratories Pavilion – commonly known as the Transatlantic – and the Twin Pavilions at the Residencia de Estudiantes ensemble, Madrid (1913-15), Antonio Flórez.

Right:  
Villamarta Theatre, Jerez de la Frontera, Cádiz (1926), Teodoro Anasagasti.

Design for the Ideal Cemetery, (1910), Teodoro Anasagasti.



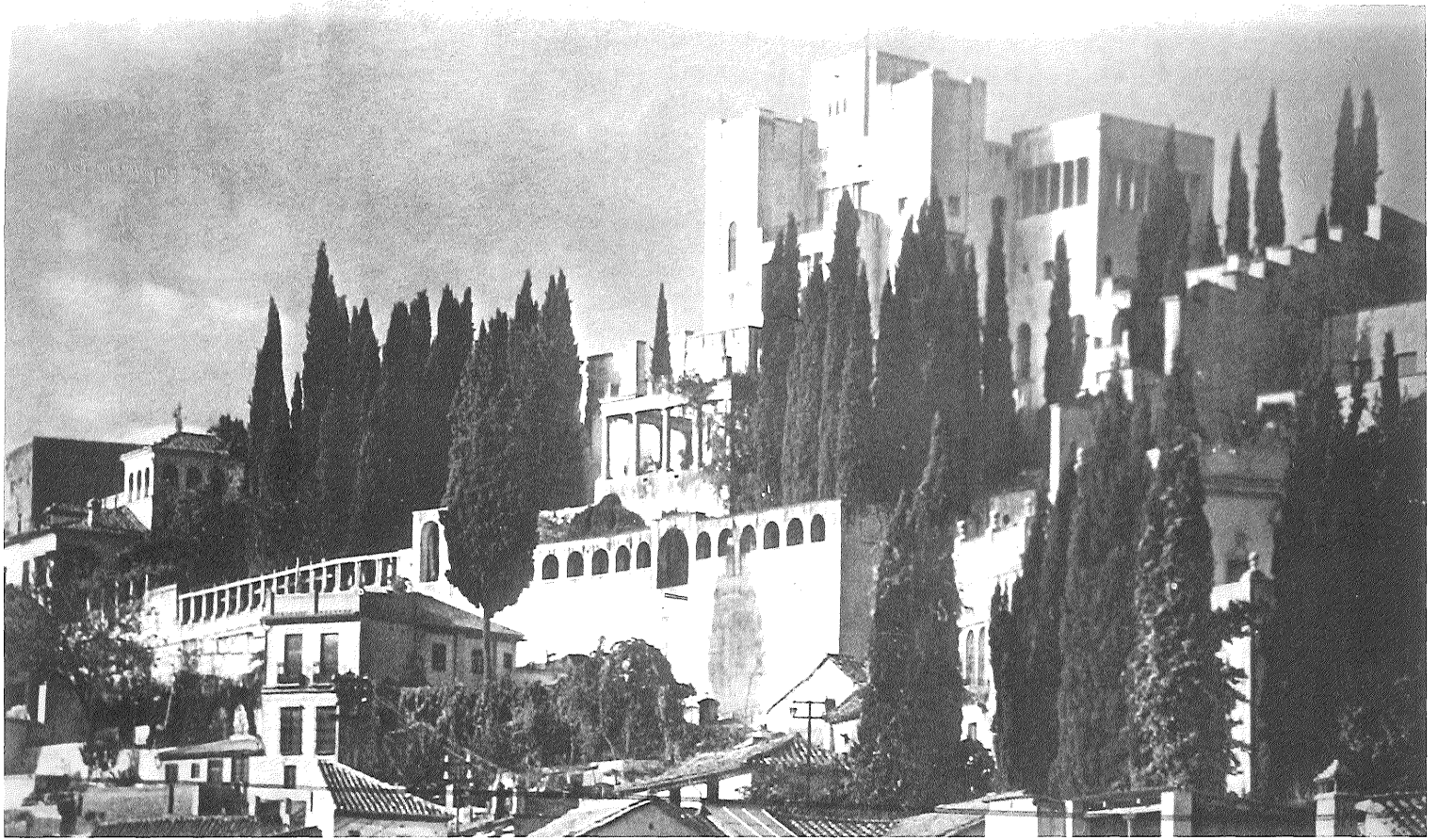


more contemporary European connections), and heralding what was to become his own magnificent style. Underneath the formal epidermis, the building's functional organisation is quite impressive, with its spectacular composition of interior spaces – in which he introduced expressive metallic structures – and is certainly of an unquestionably high urban standard. Luis Moya once said it was “one of the best placed buildings in Madrid”.

The *Círculo de Bellas Artes* (1919-26) is another example of Palacios' ability to create a unique urban sculpture, although, in this case, he did so by moving away from pseudo-historicist eclecticism and plunging headlong into the sphere of the classical language closest to other modern trends. This interpretation of Palacios' spectacular works as urban sculptures is completely warranted. The exterior volumes were composed with a clear sense of plasticity and the distribution of the interior spaces matched this outer appearance with rare mastery, fully meeting the criteria of urban monuments – it would be difficult to imagine the modern face of Madrid without them.

Many other contrasting personalities and trends ran parallel to the regionalist movement and the unusual figure of Palacios. Such was the atmosphere of diversity that prevailed when the journal *Arquitectura* was founded in 1918, destined to play a crucial role in the architectural culture of the time. In contrast to the marked line that other architectural journals were to take, *Arquitectura* aimed at being an open-minded publication with eclectic leanings that would, nevertheless, monitor and take due note of contemporary events in the world of architecture. Its aim was to delve into the complexity of the current architectural panorama. On the one hand, it was determined to become familiar with the architecture of the past (particularly of note were the learned essays by Torres Balbás which were fundamental insofar as they displayed a new awareness of architectural restoration) and, on the other, it was willing to embrace new trends. Right from the very first issues, Fernando García Mercadal, the architect who would shortly afterwards become the driving force behind the dissemination of the Modern Movement in Spain, started collaborating with the journal when he was still a student through the “notes” he wrote about the periods he spent in Germany, urging Spanish architects to take up modernism.

The counterpoint to this overhaul of the profession fostered by the journal was the attempt by certain young professors in the Madrid School of Architecture to breathe new life into the teaching of the discipline. In the wake of the implementation of a new syllabus in



1914, they stirred up a wide-ranging debate on what and how architects should be taught. The donation to the School's library of a splendid private collection – the Cebrián legacy – in the early years of the century was a tremendously significant event that made it one of the most important architectural libraries in the world. Thanks to the books and foreign journals in the collection, the donation was also to bring about an unexpected opening up of the School to modern-day architecture. Encouraged by the German journals and by the dissemination of German trends through *Architectura*, the new graduate architects began to take a lively interest in town planning, above all in its practical social side, and it became common to travel to Germany to study the Siedlungen.

Moreover, since the mid-19th century, an intellectual movement had already been consolidating itself in Spain through its very own brand of “Krausism”. This had been learnt at German universities but it was not until the beginning of the century that, with its secular principles and deep-seated belief in the power of education, it began to exert a notable influence in this field. The regenerationist views of the Free Education Institution gave rise to the claim that Spain not only equalled but was frequently better than neighbouring countries when it came to higher education. The regeneration was especially supported by popular culture. In the field of architecture, it defended the view that research into and knowledge of the principles of vernacular architecture – without falling into the trap of poor regionalist imitations – were important, and it promoted trips around the country as a vital educational

method of gaining first-hand knowledge of the architectural objects themselves. Some very notable architects from this period, such as Torres Balbás, Anasagasti or Flórez Urdapilleta, were all trained in this milieu and enthusiastically promoted such principles.

Brick construction was deeply rooted in Spain. These roots gave birth to the neo-mudejar movement that proliferated in the last quarter of the 19th century and also to the “brick architecture” which blossomed in Madrid, a living tradition which, despite making reference to its historical origins, tended to display expressive sobriety and constructive rationality and sincerity. In this same tradition, Antonio Flórez Urdapilleta (1877-1941) paved the way for the modern brick architecture of Zuazo, Lacasa, Sánchez Arcas and Bergamín.

Antonio Flórez was born in Galicia in 1877 but moved at an early age to Madrid, where he studied at the Free Education Institution and the Madrid School of Architecture. On graduating, he received a grant to study at the Spanish Academy in Rome and, shortly afterwards, he lived for a short time in Vienna, where he collaborated with Otto Wagner. In 1913, back in Madrid, Flórez embarked on the construction of the buildings that were to form the Residencia de Estudiantes ensemble. The Residencia de Estudiantes was linked to the Free Education Institution and became the legendary centre of Spanish culture in the 20s and 30s – outstanding personalities like Salvador Dalí, Luis Buñuel and Federico García Lorca all lived there under the same roof.

Although the design of these brick buildings (the twin pavilions and the laboratories building – known as

José María Rodríguez Acosta garden house, Granada (1914-28),  
Rodríguez Acosta / Santa Cruz / Cendoya /  
Anasagasti / Giménez Lacal.

the Transatlantic) did harbour some references to vernacular architecture, it fitted in with a new architectural approach distanced from neo-mudejarism. When speaking of Flórez' work, mention must be made of his fairly innovative emphasis on the crucial value of the function, the programme and the sanitary and lighting installations in the overall conception of the buildings.

The trend initiated by Flórez, which crystallised in architectural terms the aims propounded by the regenerationist movement, fitted the description of what Torres Balbás was to praise as "rationalist regionalism", a method of rational construction tailored to the function of a building, where the architect was able to take in the lessons of history without falling into the trap of producing the type of anecdotal imitations that became widespread in those years thanks to regionalist architects. Here, along the same lines as Unamuno's theories, tradition was regarded as something that was alive and open to change, rather than as a closed repertoire of forms. The line which Flórez followed in the Residencia de Estudiantes was to be successfully developed in his subsequent vast programme for the construction of school complexes in Madrid. The Menéndez Pelayo school buildings (1923-29), with their innovative glazed façade, offer ample proof of how his method – so keen on constructive sincerity – had broken all links with superficial historicist references.

At this point in our chronological account we are obliged to mention a new material: reinforced concrete. By this time, both eclectic and modern architecture had perfectly assimilated metal construction, which was easy to link up to traditional styles and methods. Reinforced concrete, however, was quite another matter. This technique cried out for a radical formal renovation. However, some time was to pass before architects were to take advantage of the seeds of the structural and conceptual renewal brought about by the new material.

It should be remembered that, even as late as the 20s, the technique of reinforced concrete was not taught as such at the Madrid School of Architecture, although it should not be inferred from this that the technique of reinforced concrete had not yet spread throughout Spain. Indeed, it had been evolving quite intrepidly through engineering works. One engineer in particular, Eduardo Torroja, was demonstrating the unexpected possibilities offered by the new material and earning brilliant international recognition for himself. Its exclusion from the syllabus, however, is illustrative of the gap which still existed between the understanding of what formed part of the sphere of architecture and what formed part of the sphere of engineering – a breach by no means exclusive to Spain.

Palacio de la Música concert hall,  
Madrid (1924-26),  
Secundino Zuazo.



In any case, the issue itself was soon overtaken by events themselves and by the enthusiasm of the young architects who, one way or another, researched and developed the use of concrete in architecture. The architect who initially and most significantly investigated the structural and expressive possibilities of reinforced concrete was the Basque Teodoro de Anasagasti (1880-1938), who acted as a hinge between tradition and modernity, becoming an essential name in the study of Spanish architecture in the 20th century.

Anasagasti studied at the Madrid School of Architecture, where he graduated in 1906 and where, years later, he was to become one of the School's most energetic and active lecturers. On graduating, he received a grant to study in Rome and established an ongoing contact with European countries, whose architectural culture he was to play an active role in bringing to Spain. From his earliest designs – many of which were fantasies (such as the Ideal Graveyard series of drawings, 1910, which he produced during his stay in Rome) – Anasagasti demonstrated his concern for a very personal quest. Taking the formal repertoire of the Wiener Sezession as a starting point, this quest led him to produce some characteristic architectures which were highly expressionist and romanticist.

With their sober monumental arrangement of volumes and their recurrent use of the tower theme, Anasagasti's compositions were clad in a simplified language which had one eye to tradition – the Post Office building in Málaga (1925) or the Villamarta Theatre in Jerez (1926), for instance – and the other determinedly looking towards new styles. The use of rein-



forced concrete helped the architect to put into practise this deliberate opening-up to new styles, as did his research into new architectural types, illustrated in the many large cinemas which he designed for Madrid in the 20s.

His work reached its zenith with the superb Grenadine garden-house built for the painter José María Rodríguez Acosta (1914-28) in a privileged location next to the Alhambra. In this construction – whose composition of clear-cut volumes so perfectly in tune with the towers of the nearby Alhambra is quite austere and astonishing – the architectural ideas which had only been hinted at in Anasagasti's early fantasy drawings took on full-blown form.

Anasagasti's influence is not restricted exclusively to his architectural work. His value as a true renovating force also stemmed from a combination of his different facets as architectural theorist, professor, polemicist, tireless fighter of lost causes and the intellectual who put forward and disseminated his views, presented papers and manifestos, published articles and books (such as his invaluable *Enseñanza de la Arquitectura – Architectural Teachings* – published in 1923) and even founded and directed the daring and militant *ANTA* journal.

The value of Anasagasti's work was somewhat obscured by the appearance on the Spanish stage of the Modern Movement. Despite being the architect who best knew how to reflect the complex cultural reality of his times, he has been – in the words of Fullaondo – “one of the great forgotten men of our modern tradition”. But he was not the only architect who was to be forgotten in the swirling currents of history.

Perhaps the only architect who remained a benchmark figure for the younger generations was the Basque Secundino Zuazo (1887-1970). Although his initial designs were dominated by the eclecticism of the time, sometimes featuring allusions to regionalism, Zuazo opted for a classicist line with a modern spirit which went hand in hand with a quest for modernity and rationality. This quest showed itself early on in buildings such as the Palacio de la Música concert hall (1924-26) on Madrid's Gran Vía and reached a critical point in the form of the Post Office building in Bilbao (1927), a building with clean brick facing walls and a rational layout that signalled a deliberate move towards modern architecture.

As the first quarter of the century came to an end, the winds of change began to blow through Spanish architecture. Although the eclectic and regionalist trends still lingered on for a few more years, the focus of the debate shifted beyond added-on languages to

the strictly architectural front. The Generation of 25 emerged, the group of architects who started practising their profession around that date and who turned the rudder of Spanish architecture sharply towards a brilliant new era. Rafael Bergamín, Luis Blanco Soler, Luis Lacasa, Manuel Sánchez Arcas, and Fernando García Mercadal were among them.

From this point onwards, events took a conclusive turn. In 1927, three programme-based modern works



Post Office building,  
Bilbao (1927),  
Secundino Zuazo.

endorsed the change that was afoot: in Zaragoza, the Rincón de Goya municipal hall designed by García Mercadal, and in Madrid, the Porto Pi petrol station designed by Casto Fernández-Shaw and the Marqués de Villora house designed by Bergamín. 1929 saw the opening of the Ibero-American Exhibition in Seville and the International Exhibition in Barcelona, which were the final flourish of regionalisms (in the Barcelona event, the German pavilion designed by Mies van der Rohe was to be an exciting stimulus for Spanish architects). In 1930, the GATEPAC was founded as the first group of architects who were truly committed to modernism and who were at the forefront of European avant-garde tendencies. The same year marked the creation of professional chambers of architects in Spain, the Colegios de Arquitectos, which led to a new kind of professional architect.

Shortly after this time, the fall of the monarchy and the new hopes and expectations raised by the Republican regime would form a framework within which the new architecture which had at last been achieved would develop with renewed vigour.

## Historicism and academicism

1900-1930

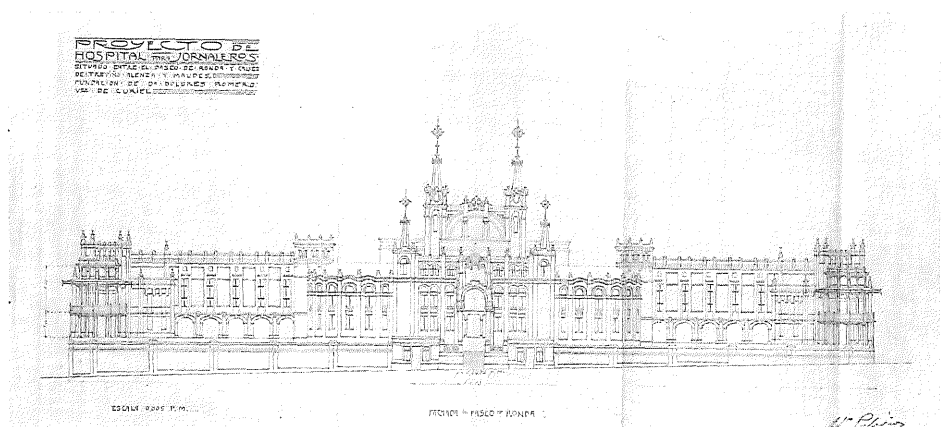
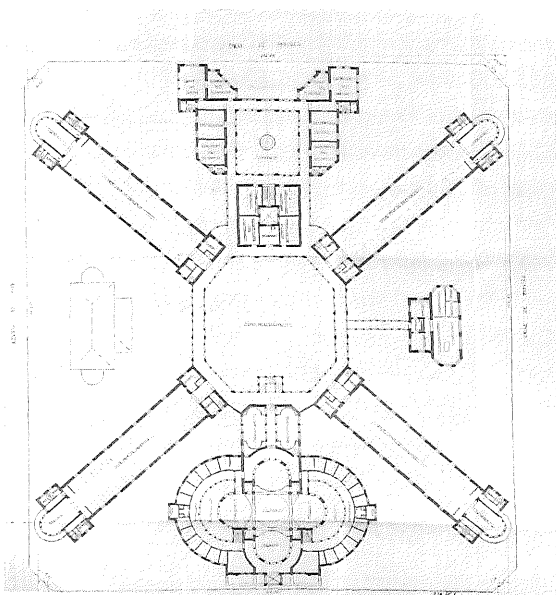
Historicism was also a consequence of the 19th century, but it veered away from its international stance in the Beaux-Arts style as the 20th century took hold to focus on “national” versions with a severe bias towards all things Spanish. What this often meant in practise was that the works actually sought to be an expression of the different Spanish regions or their peoples. The Galician-born architect Antonio Palacios reflected this “national” historicism in Madrid (San Francisco de Paula labourers’ hospital), whilst Aníbal González did so quite passionately and brilliantly in Seville (Plaza de España square), and Leonardo Rucabado made his own contribution in Cantabria (La Casuca house). The national styles also prospered in the Basque Country and in nearly every region of Spain with the exception of Catalonia.

Academicism or classical continuity is paradoxically more modern and more characteristic of the 20th century. Palacios practised it in Madrid on repeated occasions (the Círculo de Bellas Artes building is a rather complex “romantic” version), but it also spread nationwide. Other outstanding examples of it which gave a foretaste of the different nuances of what has come to be called modern architecture were the José María Rodríguez Acosta garden house in Granada (by the Bilbao architect Anasagasti and other architects), which was also built in the romantic style, and the educational complex in Madrid designed by Antonio Flórez (Menéndez y Pelayo state school). One of the last and most highly qualified examples of the style is the former Banco de Vizcaya office building in Madrid (now the Banco del Comercio building), which was the work of the Basque architects Galíndez and Arzadún, both from Bilbao. Some of these works and many others built in both styles coincided with the initial development of modern architecture.

## San Francisco de Paula Hospital

Raimundo Fernández Villaverde 18 corner with Atienza, Treviño and Maudes, Madrid, 1908-16  
Palacios Ramilo

The San Francisco de Paula hospital, also known as the labourer's hospital owing to the charitable nature of the institution, occupied a complete urban block of the 19th-century expansion in an area which, at the time the building was constructed, formed part of the suburbs of Madrid. The hospital was surrounded by a sturdy stone ashlar wall with which Palacios solved the difference in grade of the site and hid the clear academic order of the pavilions inside. As in many of the other works designed by Palacios, including the Madrid Post Office building (1904-17), the hospital used an eclectic language that stood mid-way between the Beaux-Arts tradition and the modern tradition which he never fully embraced. This turn-of-the-century contradiction was displayed in the combined use of a modern material, steel, for the exposed structure and of a traditional hospital typology that clearly belonged to the previous century. The building was organised around an octagonal courtyard and was fitted with a corridor of generous proportions to articulate the four long and narrow wings of the clinical pavilions in a radial pattern. The administration building and the main entrance were placed at one end of the central axis; the church – which stood out for its enormous stained glass windows and its immense volume in relation to the hospital – on the opposite end. The ensemble was completed by two pavilions – the infectious diseases wing and the surgery wing – which were placed transversally to the entrance axis and which were linked to the central ring by way of elegant, light metallic footbridges.



## José María Rodríguez Acosta Garden House

Callejón del Niño del Rollo, La Alhambra, Granada, 1914-28  
Rodríguez Acosta / Santa Cruz / Cendoya / Anasagasti / Giménez Lacal

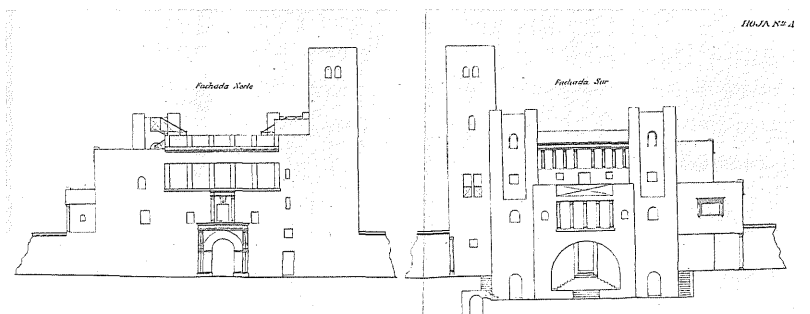
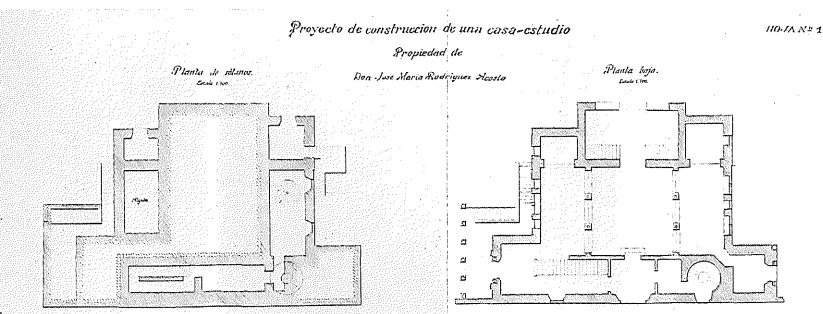


This building, which is now the headquarters of the Rodríguez Acosta Foundation, hugs the slope of the Antequeruela on a site near the Alhambra and the Manuel de Falla Auditorium. Made up of a series of prismatic volumes arranged according to height, it combines modern design attributes with a classical layout and a series of historical references that can be found in both its figurative elements and its building devices.

Its insertion within the landscape is determined by the synthesis between its architectural components and its gardens. This synthesis is further emphasised by the very concept on which it is based, the Grenadine *carmen* (house with garden), which articulates the rooms inside with the gardens outside. The former – which are now the exhibition rooms – establish both their unified conception and their functional differentiation through the different levels on which they are situated.

The main exterior feature is an open-plan terraced garden in the traditional mudejar style, where the orderly line of cypresses forms a discontinuous plinth that establishes a dialogue with the architecture itself. Some of the solutions adopted – like the main body of the building with its twin towers and the spacious opening of the entrance arch – are reminiscent of Anasagasti's design for the Ideal Cemetery (1910).

Anasagasti's hand was decisive in the global appearance of the work, in particular in its complex spatial structure and the details of the main block, which rises above the rest and acts as a central focus from which the rest of the building appears to unfurl. The final result, however, is tainted by a series of overlapping viewpoints which, to a certain extent, detract from the architect's aesthetic intent.



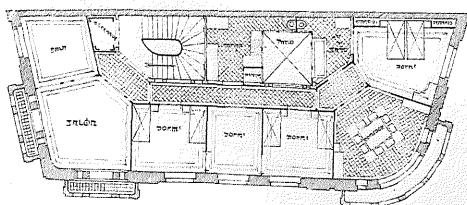
## Alfonso Molina Housing Block

Avenida de Montoto corner with Santiago 2, Puerta Real, La Coruña, 1915  
González Villar

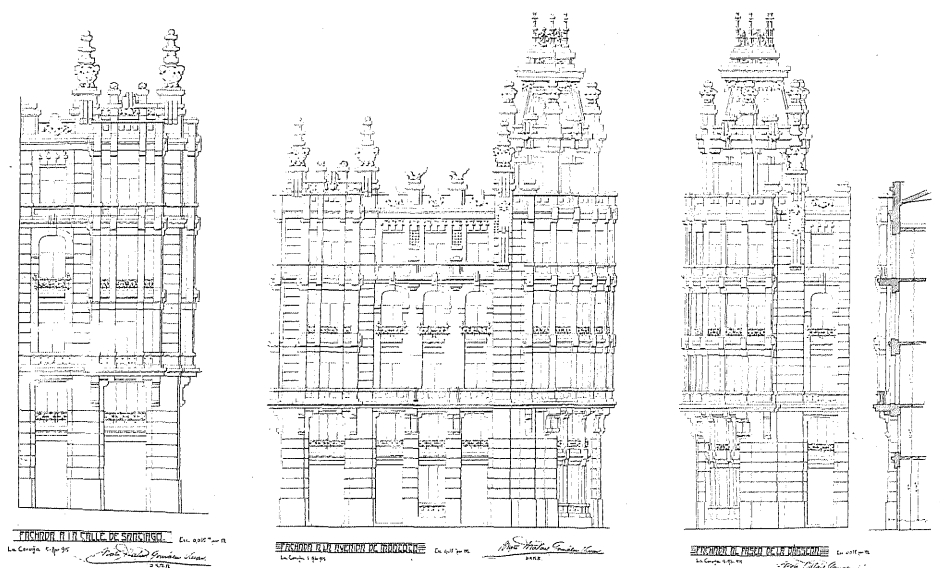
There can be little doubt that this building, located on a corner plot of the garden city of La Coruña, is the most balanced of the works produced by the Galician architect Rafael González Villar. Here, he used to advantage the lessons he had learned from past experiences in order to produce a work that aptly sums up his personal search for a hard-won poetic style. The result is a brilliant exercise in eclecticism that draws on a series of influences, ranging from the language used by his teacher Antonio Palacios to that of the Wiener Sezession, and which is dominated by formal expression and the free use of volumetric resources and compositional and linguistic elements of very different origins.

The building contains two houses, each with a separate entrance and a different ground plan – one square and the other rectangular – arranged in three bays separated by load bearing walls to form a compact volume of dihedral shape that opens out onto the back garden. The plinth which serves as the entrance to the garage is arranged around the door which offers access to the landscaped platform, thereby separating this from its surroundings. Bereft of any classical influence in the codes, orders or symmetries used, its formal whimsicality is reinforced by the skilled attention paid to ornamental and compositional details.

The image of the building as a single volume is mitigated by the complex silhouette of the work, in which a predominant role is played by the different sloping roof solutions adopted for each separate unit and the decorative bands of coloured tiles and rough textures that characterise the façades and organise the system of door and window openings that punctuate the building. Overall, the Alfonso Molina block is an important example of the coherence and brilliance achieved by González Villar in his use of the linguistic resources of contemporary architecture and of a compositional style based on the rounded integration of complex volumetric combinations.



PLANTA DE LOS PISOS 2.º Y 3.º  
La Coruña 9.10.1915. *Rafael González Villar*



SECCIÓN II LA SALIDA DE SANTIAGO  
La Coruña 9.10.1915. *Rafael González Villar*

SECCIÓN III LA ENTRADA DE SANTIAGO  
La Coruña 9.10.1915. *Rafael González Villar*

SECCIÓN IV EL PASO DE LA MONTOTO  
La Coruña 9.10.1915. *Rafael González Villar*

## Rucabado House – “La Casuca”

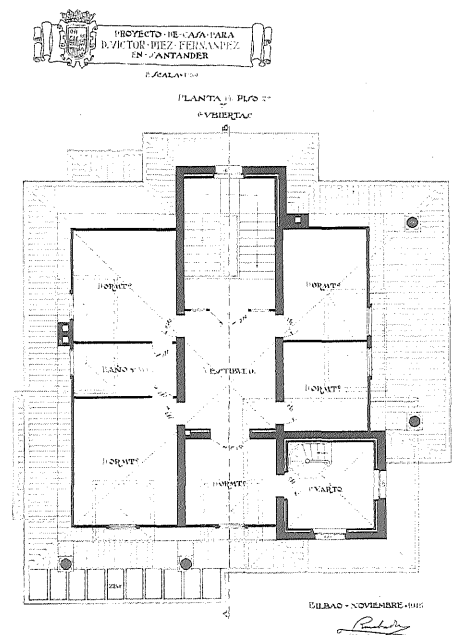
Paseo de Pérez Galdós 39, Santander, 1917

Rucabado



The first quarter of the 20th century was marked by the emergence of the two movements – nationalism and modernism – that were to close the door on 19th-century architecture. Nationalism, which arose as a search for Spanish architectural alternatives that offered a true reflection of the country, gradually broke up into a number of regional architectures. This process reached its climax in 1915, at the Sixth National Congress of Architecture held in San Sebastián, an event that brought together two of the most outstanding exponents of Spanish regionalism: Leonardo Rucabado, the architect who led the Santander School, and Aníbal González, the architect who best exemplified the Sevillian style of regionalism. La Casuca was Rucabado's first work in Santander and the most outstanding example from a large, coherent group of house designs executed in his native land that gradually consolidated a fresher, more personal style brimming with all kinds of popular references. His enormous compositional talent and the ideological strength of regionalism left a legacy that was carried on by a large group of architects, who copied this Santander style before diverging off down other architectural paths more suited to the 20th century.

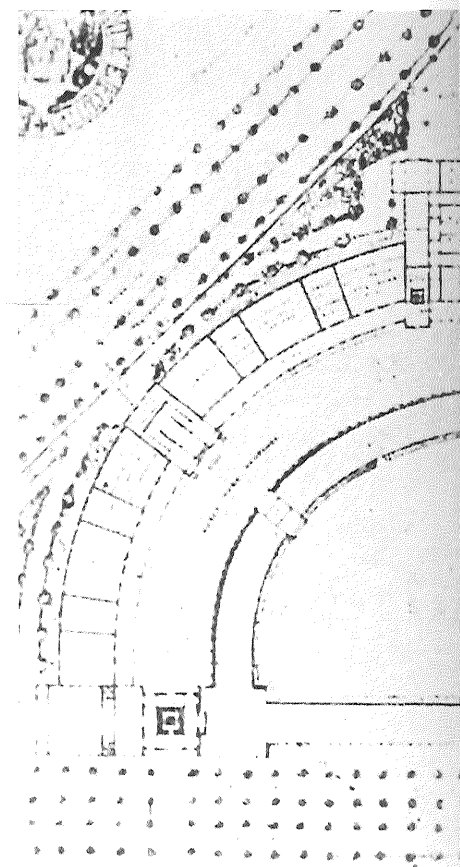
In 1929, the year the architect died, the first Montañés Artistic Exhibition was held, demonstrating the hold that local Santander sentiments had taken in a much wider sphere than the architectural field to which Rucabado made such an important contribution.



## Plaza de España

Seville, 1914-28

González Álvarez-Ossorio

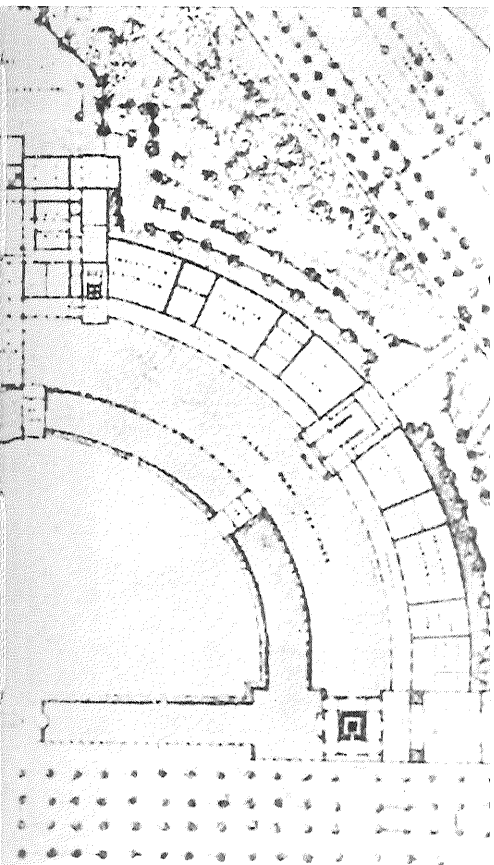


The Sevillian regionalist style reached its zenith in Aníbal González's Plaza de España, one of the large squares designed for the Hispano-American Exhibition which was to be held in Seville in 1914. González's design melded a monumentalist intent with a skilful blend of historicist references to produce a work that became a symbol of Spain's nationalist architecture. The Plaza de España's location next to the María Luisa Park, which was re-landscaped by Forestier in 1914, and near the Plaza de América, turned it into a kind of theatrical arena or ideal gathering place.

The outbreak of the First World War meant that the Hispano-American Exhibition that was to be held in 1914 had to be postponed. Fifteen years later, the exhibition, which by that time included the participation of

Portugal and Brazil and encompassed recreational, industrial and historical-artistic areas, was held under the guise of the Ibero-American Exhibition of 1929. During this period, Spanish architecture dithered between the flow of the modernist avant-garde tendencies that rolled in from Europe and the strong nationalist undertow, tainted by political connotations, that was taken up by numerous Spanish architects with academic and institutional backing.

González's proposal, which was modified on successive occasions, was well-suited to the underlying goal of the event: that of extolling and showcasing examples of national pride and quintessential Sevillian architecture despite the international character of the exhibition. The design for the Plaza was conceived as a



huge monumental place where people could congregate and public events could be held. The outright geometrical emphasis of the design drew on classical patterns and produced a huge arc that stretched out into a more dynamic ellipsoidal shape using arcades for continuity. This shape was extended even further by the platforms and the bridged canal that drew on Palladian influences. The designer's intention was for all of these elements to provide a backdrop for the huge central space, although the placing of a fountain by Traver in the centre of the square somewhat spoiled the overall effect. González's eclectic disposition emerged in the two 70-metre high towers of baroque inspiration built onto either end of the ensemble. The use of traditional materials and techniques for the construction of these

two elements – miniature versions of Seville's Giralda Tower – link them to the Sevillian regionalist style. Even though reinforced concrete was used for the formwork, local materials and techniques were employed for the enclosure walling and the façades in line with both the architectural practise of the time and the methods encouraged by institutions such as the Schools of Arts and Trades, which promoted pressed brick work for walls, ceramic tilework, and other similar techniques.

All in all, the design for the Plaza de España is highly illustrative of the nationalist style that prevailed at the time, both in terms of the building types adopted and the patriotic functions performed by the exhibition's architecture, which was further enhanced by the presence of works from all the provinces.



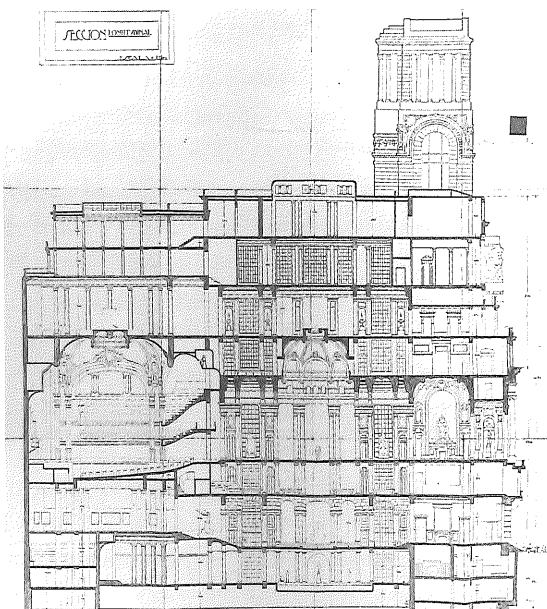
## Círculo de Bellas Artes Building

Alcalá 42, Madrid, 1919-26

Palacios Ramilo

The building designed to house the artistic and cultural association known as the Círculo de Bellas Artes (Fine Arts Circle), which continues to make an important contribution to the cultural programme of the city of Madrid, was the work of the architect Antonio Palacios. Erected on the capital's oldest major axis, the Calle de Alcalá, it was one of the significant works undertaken during the first third of the 20th century with a view to overhauling the street in architectural terms. It also marked a turning point in the professional career of its designer, Palacios, who turned his back on national historicism to embrace classicism in this work.

Palacios Ramilo first achieved fame as an architect in Madrid when, together with fellow architect Otamendi, he won the competition to design the Palacio de Comunicaciones, the central post office building (1904-17), on Plaza de la Cibeles, in the very heart of the capital, barely three years after graduating. This first work went hand in hand with the San Francisco de Paula labourer's hospital (1908-16). Both buildings should be viewed in the context of Palacios' aim to produce a Spanish version of historicist architecture, a task which he campaigned for in Madrid, as did Aníbal González in Seville and Leonardo Rucabado in Cantabria.

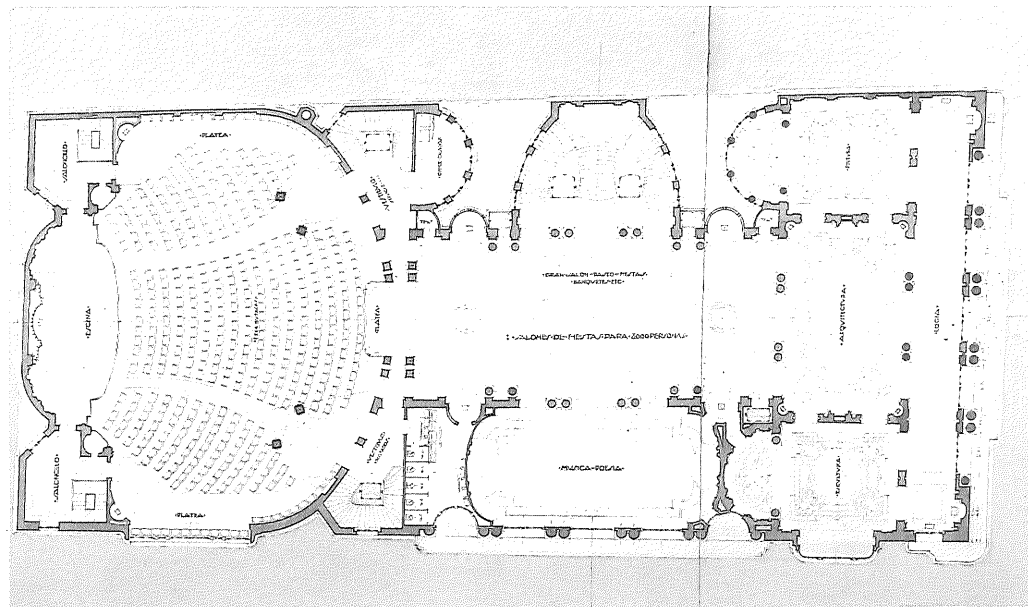
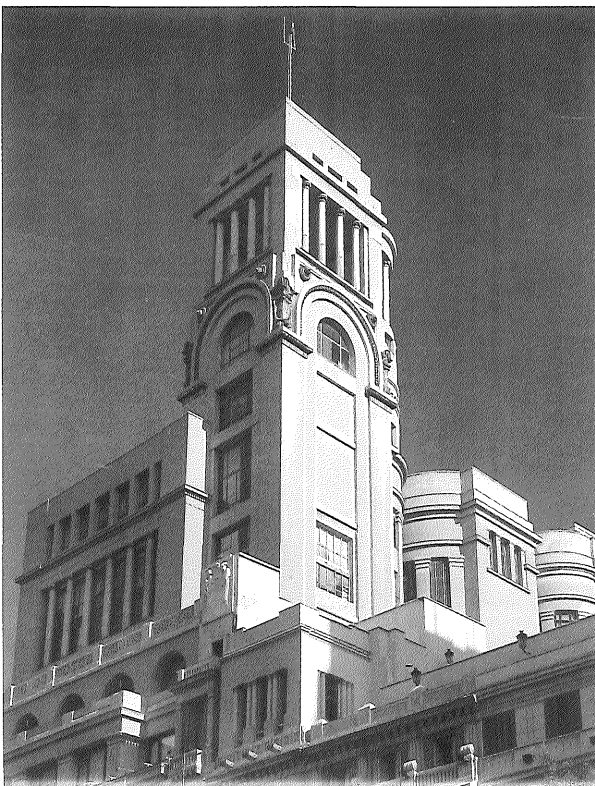


For Antonio Palacios, the *Círculo de Bellas Artes* building marked a move in the direction of a much more abstract, updated and international classicism which was more suited to modern programmes and problems. As the architect abandoned the “Spanish styles” in favour of this new line, he joined in with the stream of moderate renewal led by the younger generation. However, whereas this same cold, abstract classicism subsequently led the younger generation to adopt postures more akin to modern architecture, in Palacios’ case it was a purposefully defined stance which, over time, became passionately opposed to anything that could be described as modernism.

The location of the building on a corner site in an architecturally important area of the city and several of its features, including its height and its lateral tower, make it a true urban landmark. The brief for a building that was to serve a range of different cultural, recreational and administrative purposes, together with the possibility of a relatively substantial height, led to a design featuring a rather odd, modern “stratified” arrangement where an assortment of differently sized and shaped halls and rooms were systematically superimposed at diverse levels to fill its compact volume.

This singular arrangement in the architecture produced in Madrid at the time is only comparable to that of the buildings standing in large American cities such as New York and Chicago. In stylistic terms, however, this oddly attractive internal arrangement was accompanied by a staged classical decoration devoid of any hints of renewal. The exterior was also expressed in rather unyielding classical terms, although the door and window openings and the exultant melange of features reflected a move towards modernisation that was more patent and successful in its objective to achieve a unified appearance.

The outcome is a building with both a classical and a romantic look to it, derived from the note of variety already mentioned and from the asymmetrical tower and the huge statue of Minerva standing close to it that certainly make it a sight unique to behold on the urban map. In a way, its appearance can be compared to the utopian compositions of the architect Teodoro de Anasagasti, a contemporary and rival of Palacios, and more specifically to the brilliant *carmen* or garden house which he designed, together with several other architects, for the painter José María Rodríguez Acosta in Granada (1914-28).



## Menéndez y Pelayo State School

Méndez Alvaro 16, Madrid, 1923-29

Flórez

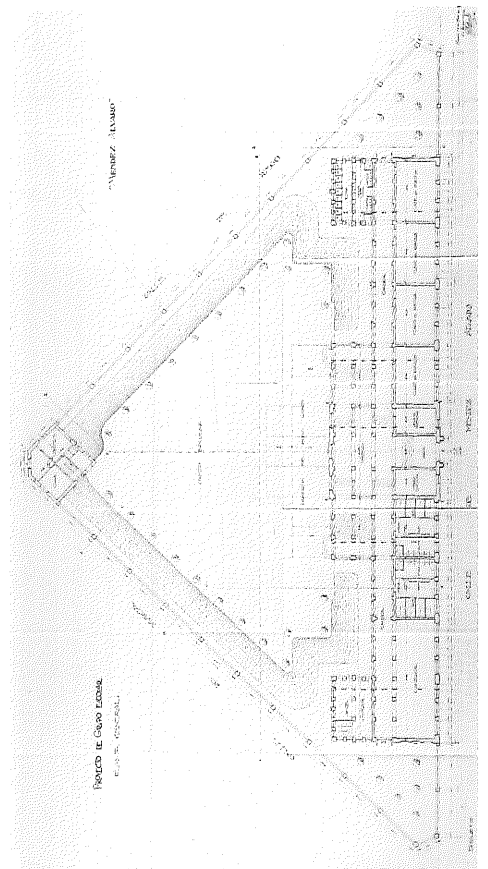
The grand scale and refined academicism of this state school make it the most highly developed example of the six educational facilities which Antonio Flórez built in Madrid. Also the author of most of the buildings which make up the Residencia de Estudiantes ensemble (1913-15), Flórez devoted virtually his entire career to the design of educational centres. Overall, most of the schools for which he was responsible adapted abstract models based on functional efficacy and structural pragmatism to specific individual requirements in a critical, updated reinterpretation of vernacular architecture.

In both its organisation and its construction, the Menéndez y Pelayo school rigorously observed the strictly rationalist criteria which its creator imposed on all his work. It also preserved, albeit in essence, the classical linguistic elements of regionalist inspiration – including wooden eaves, large towers and arcades – found in his other building, all of which used economi-

cal but lasting materials such as masonry brickwork, wood and granite details.

The axial symmetry of the complex, softened by the forceful simplicity of its volumes, continued to be reminiscent of typically academic patterns. Concerns for health, however, led to the building being situated and oriented in such a way as to make the best use of natural light and to the incorporation of a flat roof, concerns which were to place Flórez firmly within an early local tendency of unorthodox rationalism. The magnificent north side of the building was solved in such a way as to be viewed from a long way off with the syncretic combination of a classical order on a monumental scale and large windows of industrial inspiration.

The refinement of the school designs produced by Flórez bridges the gap between the neo-mudejar tradition that had prevailed in Madrid and the later rational school of brickwork typical of Madrid.



## Banco de Vizcaya Building

Alcalá 45, Madrid, 1930-34

Galíndez / Arzadún



Erected on a site between party walls, the Madrid head offices of the Banco de Vizcaya formed part of the changes that were wrought on Alcalá street in the first third of the 20th century, and which were aimed at endowing this major thoroughfare with a metropolitan look of American inspiration. The frontal emphasis of the building's symmetrical façade is revealing of the Beaux-Arts training of its Basque architect, Manuel Galíndez. This same academicism is tinged with Sezesionist and Art Deco elements, as witnessed by the low-relief employed on the attic set back from the façade line of the building and by the sculptural groups on the pylons that frame the central section of the façade.

The pilaster-style pylons integrate the work into its urban setting by aligning its frontage and height with those of the adjoining buildings, thus allowing the central body to be set back. The smooth white granite surface of this central body is treated in an almost graphic manner by means of grooved pilasters that divide the façade into five sections. The vertical openings formed by four storeys of windows, with their gilded metallic parapets at the height of the slabs, act as an allusion to the Chicago School. The loggia crowning the building is set back in the same way as the pylons, providing continuity for the rhythmic sequence of the pilasters by means of two further grooved pillars. The attic with its five round arches, and the blind upper stretch of wall emblazoned with the name of the bank, confer a solemn, monumental aura on the work which is echoed on the ground floor by the black Scandinavian granite employed for the doorway.

