

Measured drawings of travelling Architectures

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AT THE FINAL DECADES OF THE 19TH CENTURY AND THE FIRST THIRD OF THE 20TH SPAIN WAS A FAVORITE DESTINATION FOR EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN SCHOLARS, ATTRACTED BY HISPANIC HISTORICAL ARCHITECTURE. SOME OF THEM CONVEYED ROMANTIC PICTURESQUENESS, SUCH AS M. DIGBY WYATT. OTHERS WERE FASCINATED BY THE RENAISSANCE ARCHITECTURE, AS ANDREW NOBLE PRENTICE. THERE WERE ALSO ART DEALERS, SUCH AS ARTHUR BYNE, WHO MADE EXTENSIVE COLLECTIONS OF DRAWINGS AND PHOTOGRAPHS. THIS WORK WILL FOCUS ON MEASURED DRAWINGS OF SPANISH RENAISSANCE ARCHITECTURE MADE BY THOSE TRAVELERS. WORKS THAT ACCURATELY DESCRIBED THE FORMAL ASPECTS OF THE SO-CALLED *PLATERESCO*, MAINLY PATIOS, WOODEN CEILINGS, STAIRS, IRONWORK, ETC.

KEYWORDS: SPANISH RENAISSANCE ARCHITECTURE, DRAWINGS OF ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

Introduction

The present work proposes to analyze and compare drawings of different architects of the time (late 19th century, early 20th century). Using drawing as a research tool this study will approach the nuances that the travelling architects conveyed through their images. We are not as interested in picturesque drawings, but in technical, quantitative works. Our aim is to clarify, through the analysis of their geometric precision, as well as their constructive complexity, whether the drawings were made to understand better the works, or for didactic reasons, or as catalogs of constructive solutions, or even to reach the art market. Eventually, we will estimate their documentary value and the importance they had in their time, as a reflection of a story, still partially unknown.

The state of Spanish heritage during the nineteenth Century

During the 19th century the deterioration of the Spanish architectural heritage was on a rise. The processes of confiscation, the so called *desamortización* and the impoverishment of the aristocracy and the Catholic Church, can be seen as the main causes of the abandonment of countless palaces, castles, convents and churches throughout Spain (Socias, Gkozgkou 2012).

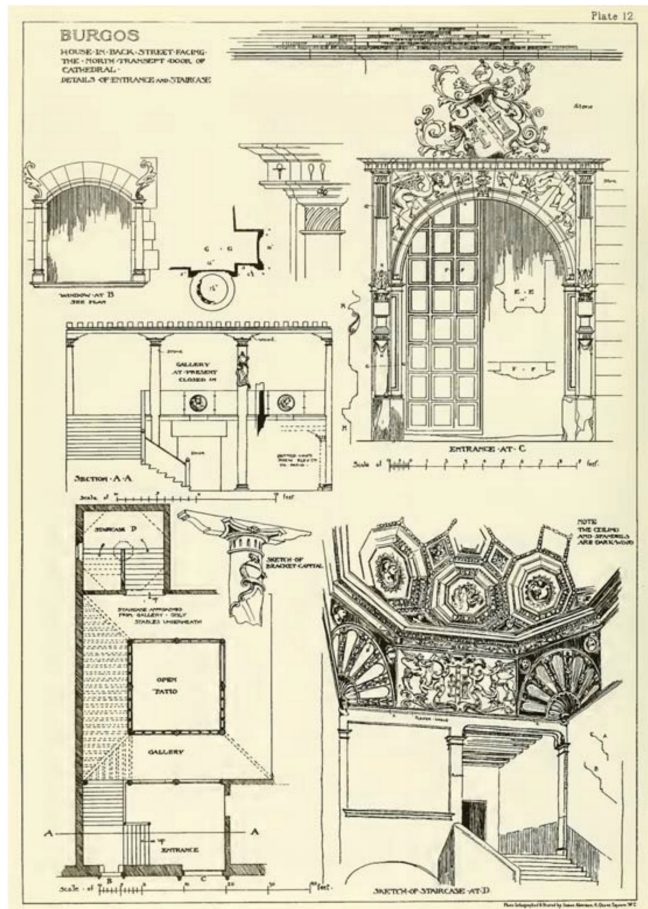
The confiscations carried out by the Spanish state from 1798 to 1924 in order to obtain money to pay off the public debt, had dramatic cultural consequences. Many historic buildings were emptied, especially those belonging to the Catholic Church, exempt from the payment of taxes. Buildings, paintings, monastery libraries or furniture, were sold at low prices, often exported to other countries, or just lost in the black market. Besides, throughout the 19th century, the Spanish aristocracy lost much of its territorial economic power. Nobles moved to the court and neglected their rural possessions. Many palaces and castles were left abandoned, and their possessions sold to unscrupulous merchants.

There were numerous testimonies of foreign architects and artists regarding the disastrous state of many buildings of artistic value. In 1869 the English architect Matthew Digby Wyatt (1820-1877) quit England for his first visit to Spain with the intention of drawing as many of its Architectural remains as he could. The further publication of those drawings and notes was aimed by “the consciousness that almost from day to day the glorious past was being trampled out” (Wyatt 2010) At the beginning of the 20th century one of the many problems which surround and beset the ruling powers in Spain was to find fitting uses for the many vast structures which had fallen into the hands of the Government, such as churches, monasteries, convents, colleges, palaces, etc. Those buildings were too beautiful to destroy and too costly to properly maintain, although they became almost useless for the original purposes for which they were planned and constructed. In 1928 Gerstle Mack (1894-1983) and Thomas Gibson (1865-1941) in their *Architectural details of southern Spain*, wrote about the state of the Spanish Architectural Heritage “Many of the buildings are in a lamentable state of dilapidation. Some of the finest examples are literally crumbling away” (Mack, Gibson 1928).

Nevertheless, there were several scholars who declared their fascination with Spanish Renaissance architecture in the second half of the nineteenth century. The already referred Wyatt travelled throughout Spain drawing and taking notes. His work was a travel book, made in his maturity. It was an artistic historical portrait of Spanish architecture, a phenomenological analysis of both urban and interior scenes. Although it emphasized the beauty of Spain, he was critical with its achievements “To assert that Spain can teach the lessons to the architect which may be gained from Italy, or even from France would, I think, be to claim too much for her, but on the other hand, it should be remembered, that it is a mine which has been very much less exhausted” (Wyatt 2010).

One of the most influential research works devoted to the Spanish Plateresque architecture was the book of the English architect Andrew Noble Prentice (1866-1941) In his *Renaissance architecture and ornament in Spain* he stated “It is somewhat surprising that many of these buildings, exhibiting such beauty of design and execution, should be so little known in this country (England)” (Prentice 1893) His book brought together a series of sketches and measured drawings of the early Renaissance in Spain (1492-1558) Most of the facades and plants included in it were of civil buildings because, as the architect argued, few churches were entirely Renaissance (Plateresque style). This work consists mostly in a delicate collection of drawings, with numerous plates. There are measured drawings, including different scales the architect uses in his practice, from the plants or sections to the most elaborate details. These documents are didactic, clear and precise (figs. 1, 2).

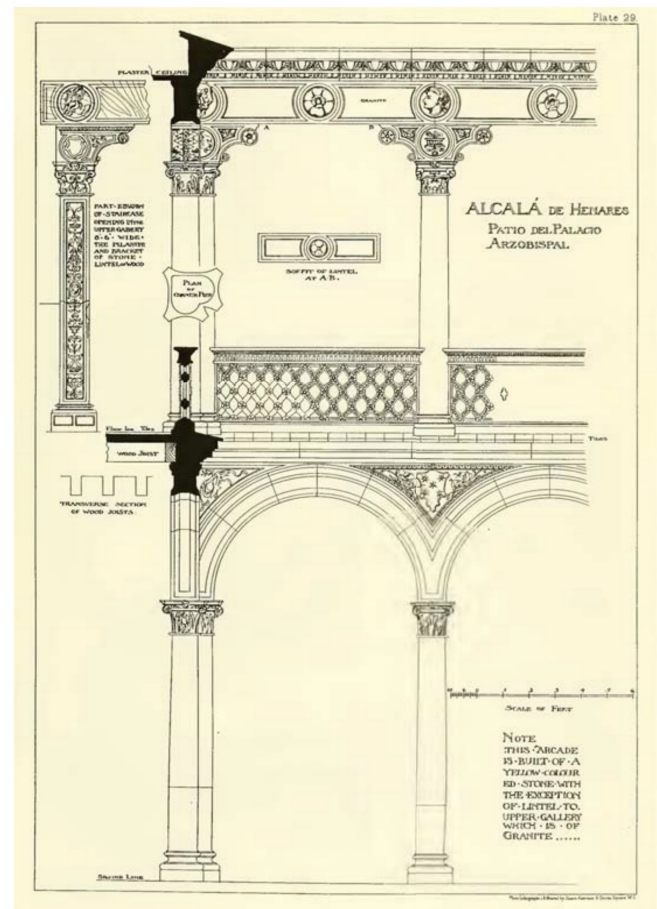
1/ House in Burgos. Prentice used to compose numerous measured drawings, including different scales the architect uses in his practice, from the plants or sections to the most elaborate details (Prentice 1893).



The Spanish Craze

In the 1890s the so called “Spanish Craze” began (Kagan 2010) as an American remarkable appreciation of Spanish architecture and works of art. During the following decades North American architects toured Spain drawing and photographing architectural heritage. Several authors at the time recognized the Spanish Renaissance as one of the most valuable sources of design for “modern” architecture in the US. Surprisingly this movement coincided with the moment when the relations between the two countries were marked by political tensions over Cuba that culminated in the Spanish-American War (1898). The man who promoted anti-Spanish propaganda was the magnate William R. Hearst, interestingly a collector that imported a vast number of works of art from Spain to the United States some years later (Kagan 2010)

2/ Archiepiscopal Palace of Alcala de Henares, patio (Prentice 1893).



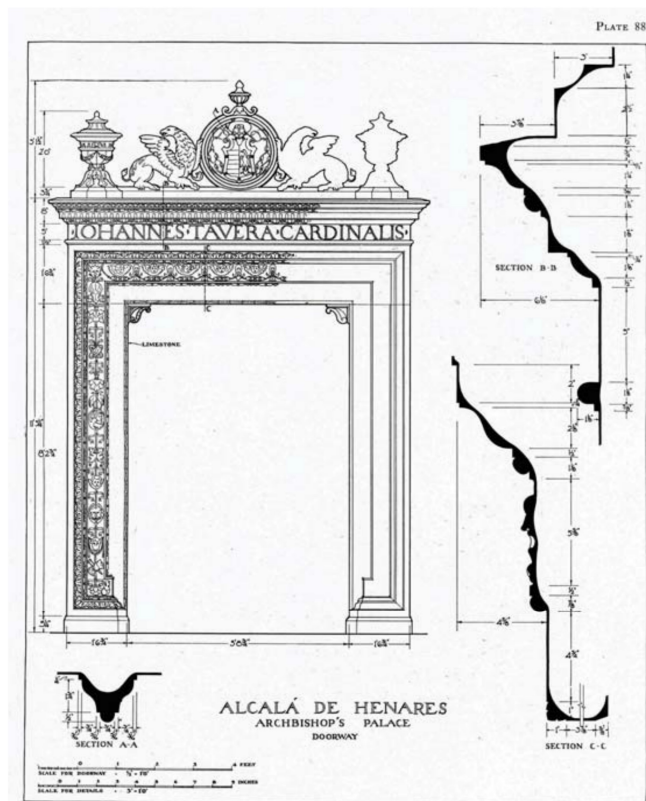
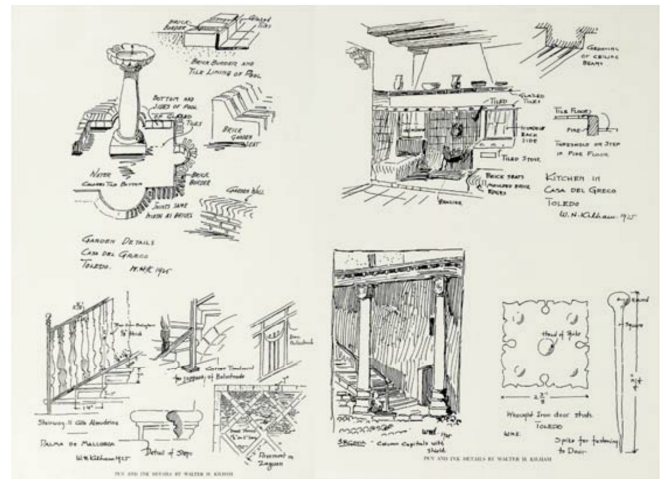
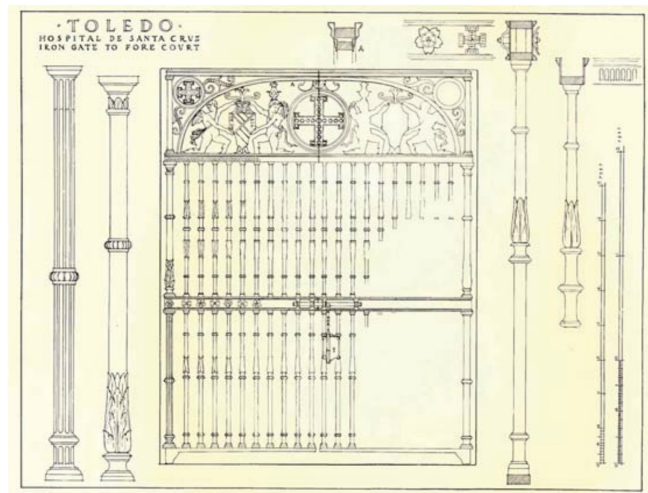
Paris was the epicenter of the artistic market until the end of the 19th century. A few years later, the enrichment of the American bourgeoisie raised the number of significant collectors in America. The art dealer market was that way gradually displaced from Europe to America. New York, Los Angeles, Chicago were the places where the greatest patrons were building their great collections (Socias, Gkozgkou 2012) In 1904 Archer Milton Huntington (1870-1955) founded the Hispanic Society of America in New York, an institution that even today promotes the Hispanic culture in the United States.

The transfer of art objects is a delicate subject. In Spain, the traffic of historical assets was limited since 1779 (Gabardón De La Banda 2017) nevertheless, it is well known that many pieces were disassembled and

3/ Ironwork at Hospital de Santa Cruz, Toledo (Whittlesey 1920).

4/ Pen and Ink details from Palma de Mallorca and Toledo (Kilham 1925).

5/ Doorway from the archiepiscopal palace of Alcala de Henares (Mack, Gibson 1928).



moved during the first decades of the 20th century. That was the case of the ironwork of the choir from the Cathedral of Valladolid, today exhibited in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Coddington, Jiménez-Blanco, Lenaghan 2017) as well as many others architectonic elements imported by the magnate William Randolph Hearst (Merino de Cáceres 1985).

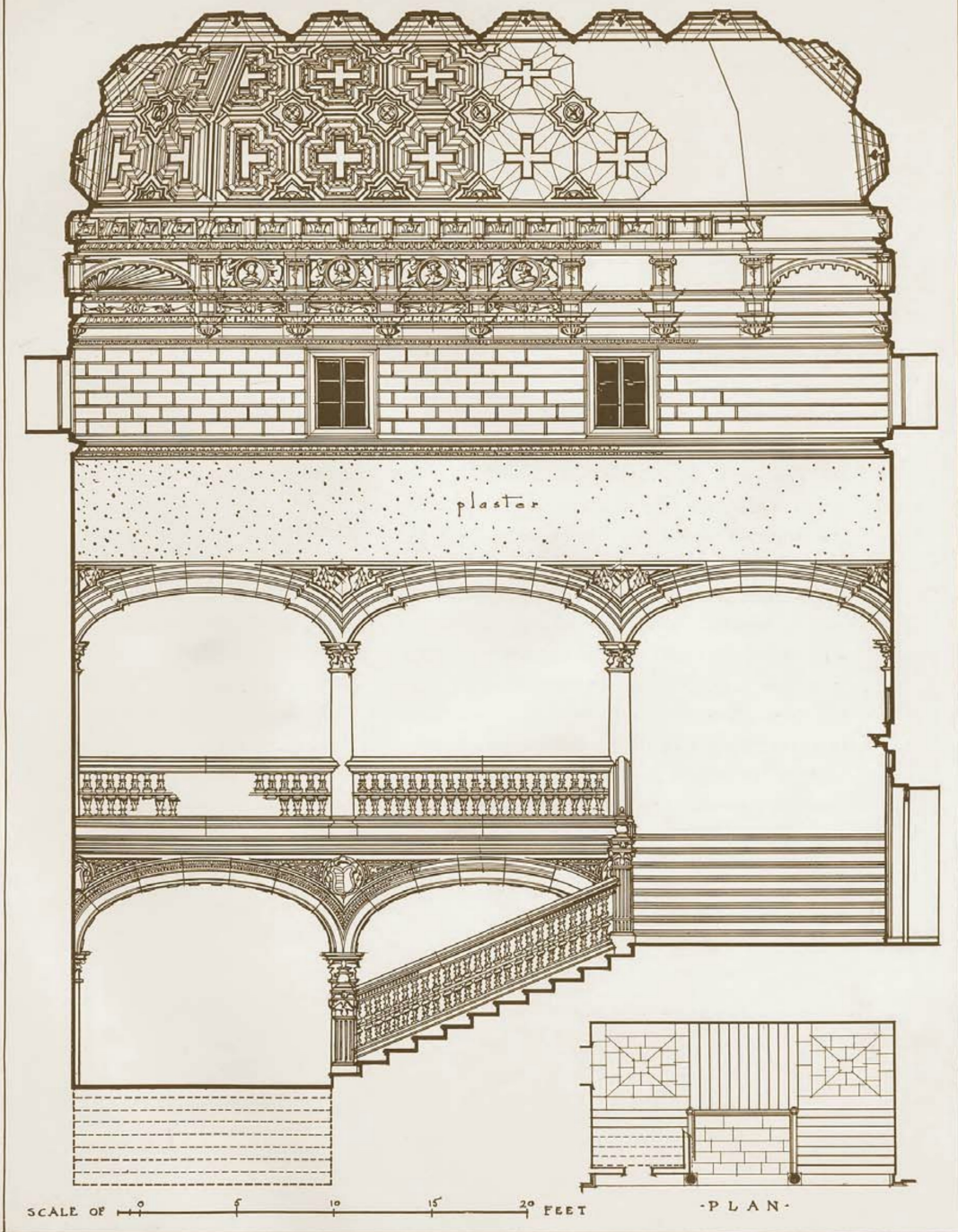
A remarkable circumstance is that, despite the Spanish economic and political situation, explained above, during the First World War and the following years, Spain became the only European land undevastated by wars. It was still possible to travel and draw in Spain, as Bertrand Goodhue asserted in the introduction to *Minor Ecclesiastical, Domestic and Garden Architecture of Southern Spain* (Whittlesey 1917).

During the war several works were elaborated by American architects visiting Spain. Such was the case of Austin Whittlesey who published two books, the first of them focused on Southern Architecture while the second in Central and Northern. In fact, those works are two collections devoted mainly to illustrate the decorations of the Renaissance style with photographs and a few drawings of the most superficial details. The author even presented his work as a photographic complement to those drawings of Prentice (fig. 3).

In 1925 the Boston Architectural Club issued a monography devoted to Spain. There is a series of photographs and drawings by different architects (fig. 4). The book is a miscellaneous work that includes details of all kinds, from works of religious art to rural scenes (Kilham 1925).

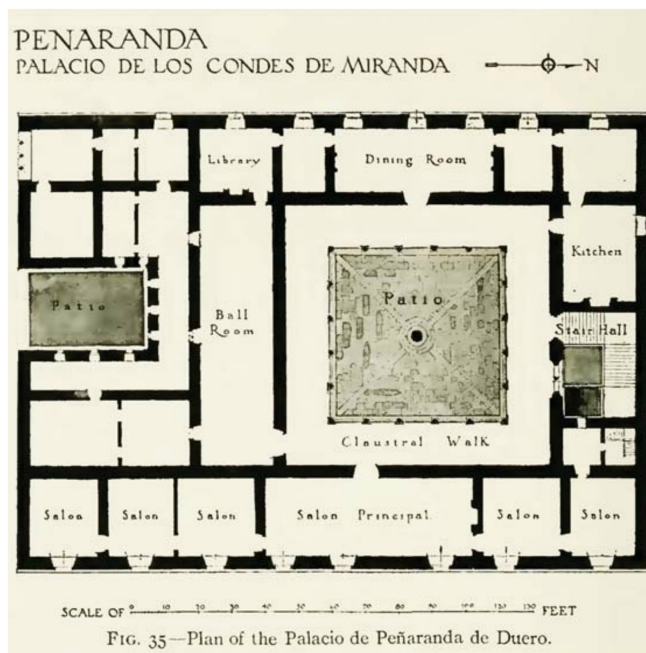
A parallel work to Whittlesey's can be found in the two books published by Gerstle Mack (1894-1983) and Thomas Gibson (1865-1941)

ALCALA DE HENARES: Stairway in the Archbishop's Palace



6/ Stairway at Archbishop's Palace in Alcalá de Henares. Missing building (Byne, Stapley 1917).

7/ Plan of the Palace at Peñaranda de Duero (Byne, Stapley 1917).



These two American architects chose to draw details “selected to the architect who undertakes to design modern buildings based on Spanish prototypes”. According to the authors, Renaissance produced styles that were suitable for adaptation to modern requirements, especially in those parts of the New World in which similarities of climate and topography combined with Spanish settlements (Mack, Gibson 1928). However, their plates are again very similar to those of Prentice but showing a bigger effort to draw details at a larger scale (fig. 5). This change, far from being more clarifying became a confusing option since there was no study of the construction system that justified such detailed work.

Another American architects, such as Arthur Byne (1884-1935) and his wife, Mildred Stapley (1879-1941) travelled in 1910 to Spain to spend their honeymoon there. The couple soon became experts in Spanish art, and in 1913 they managed to be hired by Archer Milton Huntington as authors of several monographies for the Hispanic Society. The books that Byne and Mildred published combined photographs and drawings (fig. 6) Those drawings fol-

lowed also the legacy of Prentice, although they demonstrated a great expertise in the representation of the artistic elements and the finest criteria in the selection of the works. Some years later the ambitious Byne tried to convince Huntington to buy some pieces available in the Spanish market, but the collector refused. In 1921 they left the Hispanic Society to develop a new carrier as art dealers. The Spanish elite saw in the monographies of Byne real showcases in which they discreetly disclosed their precious works of art to potential collectors in the United States, far from the eyes of their society (Socias, Gkozgkou 2012).

On the other hand, William Randolph Hearst used the same monographies to give instructions to Julia Morgan, his architect, about the pieces he wanted to acquire. Julia Morgan and Mildred Stapley happened to be friends since they were students. In 1925 Byne, working for Hearst, dismantled the monastery of Sacramenia (Segovia) to be transferred to America. In 1930 he did the same with the Cloister of the counts of Ayamans (Palma de Mallorca) and one year later with the monastery of Óvila (Guadalajara) (Merino de Cáceres 1985). In less than fifteen years, Byne sent to the United States up to 83 wooden coffered ceilings, huge quantities of doors, windows, arches, columns, etc. Some transfers were frustrated, such as the Palace of Peñaranda (fig. 7), a building that Byne considered a perfect example of Spanish Renaissance. However, according to Merino de Cáceres, many of the great architectural elements did not come to be rebuilt in the United States, or they did in an inadequate way.

Conclusions

These drawings have been studied as didactic works so far, within a romantic stylistic fashion. As we saw, they also became documents intended to either highlight works of art as a model and as a material asset. Many of the architects initially declared the desire to be useful for house-builder or designers. Also remarked the Spanish Renaissance as a very suitable style to be adapted to modern design in North America. They certainly used drawing as a tool to spread the architecture they wanted to represent, however, they mainly copied the external form without understanding the techniques that gave meaning to the constructed object.

Eventually, these architectural books, in addition to being didactic documents, became catalogs for collectors to acquire architectural elements or even entire buildings. Nevertheless, these drawings were not meant to be a technical tool to disassemble, move and rebuild architectural elements, so it is understandable that very few of the transferred works of art were adequately reconstructed.

Notes

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