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An unpublished legacy of Antonio Rubio Marín (1884-1980), an architect between Aragon and Madrid

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Abstract. An unpublished legacy of the architect Antonio Rubio Marín has been found in the library of the University of Alcalá. He was an important architect of the first half of the twentieth century in Madrid and Aragon, being responsible in Zaragoza for the Post Office building and the Grand Hotel.

Still in a state of certain abandonment, the legacy has great interest for its documentary quality, being a fairly complete set of the activity of an architect of the early twentieth century. Antonio Rubio combined other notable merits, such as his training as a mathematician and cartographer, or his work as dean of the College of Architects of Madrid between 1948 and 1954.

The inventory and cataloging process of the material found by researchers from the School of Architecture of the University of Alcalá is currently being carried out, with the collaboration of his family and those responsible for the archiving of the same University.

The legacy contains an important variety of drawings of different types. Most of them are freehand drawings in ink, in different formats and supports, highlighting large format ones using watercolors. These drawings are of great interest as they are a project commissioned by the city of Zaragoza in which the proposal included the square and the Basílica del Pilar. All these documents show the work of a not very well known architect, but of undoubted value through his interesting drawings.

Key Words: unpublished legacy; Antonio Rubio; COAM;

1 Introduction

In the 21st century, dominated by the world of digitalization, where information is stored and preserved in a virtual cloud, it is unusual to find forgotten legacies of totally unpublished architects. In the library of the University of Alcala we located some cardboard boxes with numerous architectural drawings corresponding to a mid-20th century unknown architecture office. Nobody knew where they came from, nor their authorship. After a thorough investigation, it was discovered that they belonged to Antonio Rubio Marín, a Madrid adoption architect, little known but of notable importance in Madrid and Aragon in the mid-twentieth century, since, among other merits, he became dean of the College of Architects of Madrid in the 50s.



Fig. 1. Boxes containing the legacy of the architect Antonio Rubio Marín. Alcala University, Madrid.

From the important localized graphic material it was necessary to inquire about the character and the origin of the material. Different inquiries were made among several contemporary architects, such as Antonio Fernández Alba, Gaspar Blein, Vicente Sanchez de León or Manuel Sainz de Vicuña. This work was completed with an intense internet search. This process allowed the location of two of the architect's grandchildren, who were willing to collaborate in the contextualization of their grandfather's legacy. At that time the rights and responsibilities of the parties were success-

fully established. From then on we were able to face the study of the architect legacy in its entirety, but by then some questions needed urgently to get solved:

From a legal point of view, what about the copyright of an abandoned legacy for a few dozen years and now recovered? Who owns the legacy?, Who owns the reproduction rights?, Who pays inventory and classification expenses?

From a conservation point of view, how should we act with those sheets of vegetable paper rolled in a not good state of conservation? What to keep?, What to expunge or throw ?, What to restore and at which level?

We will try to solve all these questions both in this communication and in different works developed by the research team in other forums devoted to architecture archives. [1]



Fig.2. Antonio Rubio Marín. Drawing of the casino project in Teruel. Source: Antonio Rubio Marín Legacy. University of Alcalá.

2 The architect Antonio Rubio Marín

Antonio Rubio Marín was born in Granada in 1884, and before entering the School of Architecture he graduated in Mathematics. He later graduated as a Cartographic Engineer, a profession he developed for years and that was an important technical-graphic background that would later result in his work as an architect and in his

knowledge of the territory. In fact, part of the legacy includes plans of the territory of the Aragon area. [5]

His work as an architect was mainly developed between Madrid and Aragon. In Zaragoza, the Post Office building built in 1926 on the site of the former Pignatelli Theater, and the old Grand Hotel of Zaragoza built in 1929 were two of his most important works. [4] In Teruel, he built the Casino headquarters and the Marín Theater opened between 1918 and 1920 [2]. Finally, his most outstanding work in Madrid was the “Musical Union” headquarters in the Carrera de San Jerónimo on the corner of Echegaray Street, a building representative of the eclectic style in the center of Madrid. He also designed some schools and numerous residential buildings, highlighting those of Castelló and General Oraá streets. Another of his important interventions was the "chalets" colony he built for Doctor García Tapia in the town of Riaza in the northern mountains of Segovia. From his office at Alcalá street in Madrid he took part in more than 200 projects, many of them collected in the inventory that we are going to carry out.

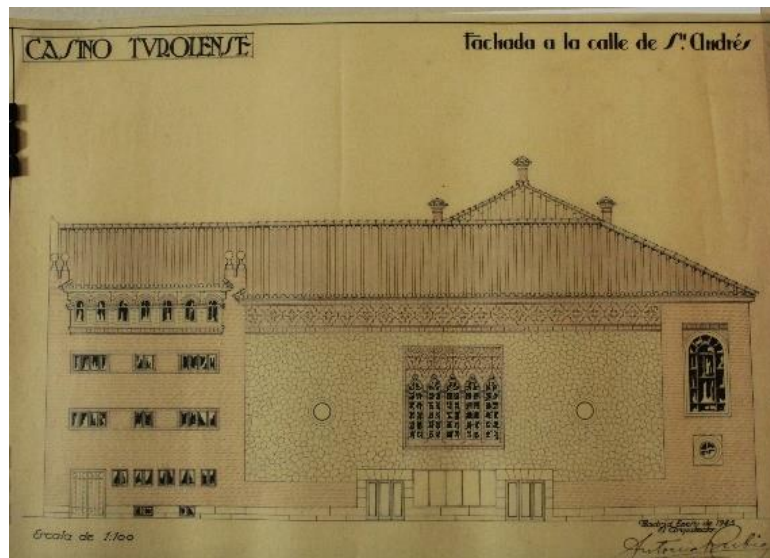


Fig. 3. Antonio Rubio Marín. Drawing of the casino project in Teruel, 1945. Source: Antonio Rubio Marín Legacy. University of Alcalá.

In 1949 he was elected as dean of the College of Architects of Madrid, COAM, and held the position until 1953. His election as dean was the first elected position of the reborned College after the Civil War, since the designation had so far been nominal by the political authorities. During the period of his mandate, and under his initiative, the library was developed, incorporating a significant amount of bibliographic funds. He also established the figure of a professional librarian as director of the library, since until then the library had been managed exclusively by a member of the

board, so that with this impulse the institution has perpetuated to the present, standing out for its development of library and archival architecture services.

3 The legacy and its administrative process

The processing of such a legacy has important administrative issues to resolve. First, the ownership of the material and who can use it must be defined. As a first step is to get in touch with the author is necessary; in this case with his heirs. This process started with the internet search from the few data we had. The first contact was with the architect Antonio Fernández Alba since part of his legacy donated to UAH coincided in date with the found boxes of Antonio Rubio. Fernández Alba confirmed that the shipment had been made from his office, but could not remember where they had come from or who had provided them. Then, through forums on the Internet we contacted one of his granddaughters, with whom we agreed to organize a meeting. In this session, which was attended by two grandchildren and a great-granddaughter, we were able to establish the guidelines of what will be the future record of donation of goods. From the will of the family as donors, it was necessary to organize the complex administrative procedures of the University as a recipient, where the Legal Services, the General Secretary, and finally the person in charge of the Archive should participate. This process has already been resolved in recent months, now it is up to technical decision making.

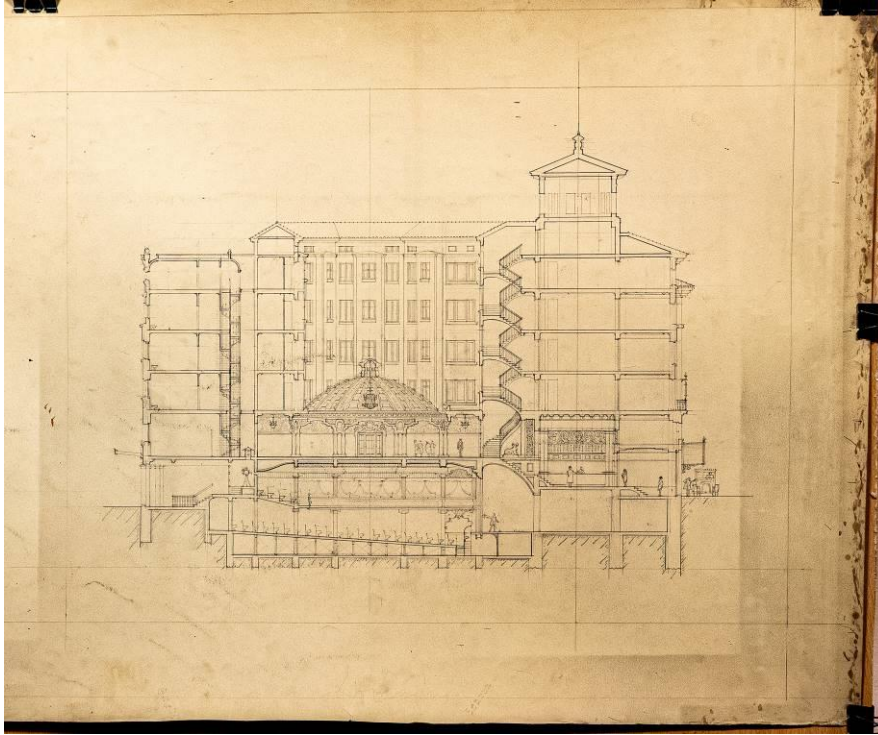


Fig. 4. Antonio Rubio Marín. Drawing with pencil. 1927. Source: Antonio Rubio Marín Legacy. University of Alcalá.

4 The order

The legacy is mainly composed of paper rolls that group plans corresponding to the same project. There are approximately one hundred rolls of different thicknesses and sizes. Along with the plans, there was also a record book containing numerous chronologically ordered projects. It will be necessary to check if the list corresponds to the projects found and to what extent the information is complemented, and if all are included in the list, or if others are missing or there are some incomplete ones. In a first exploration work, we have already found some disruptions of plans, therefore, it must proceed in order, generating records of each of the recognizable architecture projects, both at the preliminary project level or executed project [3], as well as its complete documentary study.

5 The processing of the legacy and its treatment

The material is in an acceptable state of preservation, although many of the plans are rolled and without protection tubes, so it will be necessary to first stretch on large tables to assess their state of conservation. We have the collaboration of a restorer who will establish guidelines for document restoration based on dirt, the presence of metallic, plastic or fatty elements and the existence of tears. [3]

The legacy is made up of drawings on different supports: cartons, tracing papers, cloth paper, sketch paper, so each of them will need a different treatment and protection. Many of them are ink drawings in an acceptable state of conservation, others are graphite, degrading with the handling process, so it will be necessary to protect them with appropriate papers. Some of them will only need to be flattened, others will require restoration work. Finally, all of them must be filed in tubes or in filing cabinets in such a way that their degradation is prevented.

6 Antonio Rubio's drawings

The set of drawings found in this legacy could be classified as corresponding to architectural drawings of an architectural office in the beginning of the twentieth century.

The graphic documents include sketches, preliminary projects, basic projects, execution projects. These last ones are very far from what would currently correspond to an execution project if we consider the current requirements of the technical code and the new technologies devoted to an execution project.

The materials are diverse: cardboard paper, tracing paper, sketch paper, tissue paper, ammonia copies, these are in different colors, blue or brown, and in positive and negative formats. As for the techniques, the most frequent are: graphite pencil, black ink, red ink and watercolors, apart from copies on paper or tracing paper. The sizes of the sheets do not follow a recognizable norm by the current systems UNE, but do maintain approximate standard dimensions surely conditioned by the drawing scales and the boards where they were drawn.

Within the set, some large-format drawings that correspond to an unbuilt building of the municipality of Zaragoza stand out, on a plot next to the Pilar Basilica in Zaragoza. These are drawings made in watercolor with the tempera technique of flat and opaque colors, almost without glazes. These are three large-format drawings up to two meters long, where the residues found in their trasdos indicate they had been stuck on a wall. This project must have been important in the architect's production given the size of the drawings, the care with which they were made and their extreme quality.

There are also some very interesting and large-format drawings (close to the current din-A0) that correspond to a project of the Archbishop's Palace of Madrid next to the Almudena Cathedral, a project that was not carried out.



Fig.5 Antonio Rubio Marín. City Hall project in Zaragoza, 1921. Source: Antonio Rubio Marín Legacy. University of Alcalá.

7 Conservation and digitization.

Once the inventory and the cataloging of the material have been completed, the digitization work will proceed. This process will progressively be carried out depending on the resources and the needs of using these images. The use of non-invasive and non-contact systems is proposed. For this reason the use of a scanner should be rejected since deformation of the support paper would be an added difficulty, so a scientific photography system will be used. For this work an appropriate photographic studio has been designed for scanning all the material. Large format supports have been made where the plans can be extended. Next, adequate lighting has been arranged with several strategically located spotlights so as not to cause shadows and with a temperature as neutral as possible for the best reproduction of the colors of the drawings. Finally, a high quality digital camera with a good lens will be used, with angular objectives so as not to distort the lines and the quality of the images, all acquired with the advice of experts in digitalization.

The system used to hold the plans and tension them in the best possible way, will be carried out using a metal support where the plans will be held with clamps at the

ends and magnets in the central areas to avoid bulges. Finally, clamps and magnets will be eliminated in a post-production process through digital image processing tools, such as Photoshop.

All images will be made leaving a free space around the plan of at least a centimeter wide so as to visualize the entire document and the support in case of irregularities or tears. On this empty space three scales will be placed, a graphic one, a color one and a ten tones of gray one, allowing on the same document all the necessary data to reach, once manipulated or modified, the maximum fidelity in future reproductions.

8 Conclusions

The knowledge, from the primary documentary sources, of a legacy like the one we are lucky to know first-hand, will let us have an idea of how an architecture office worked in those complicated years of the mid-twentieth century. We have samples of Antonio Rubio's architecture before and after the Civil War, which will also help us to know the evolution of society in those years.

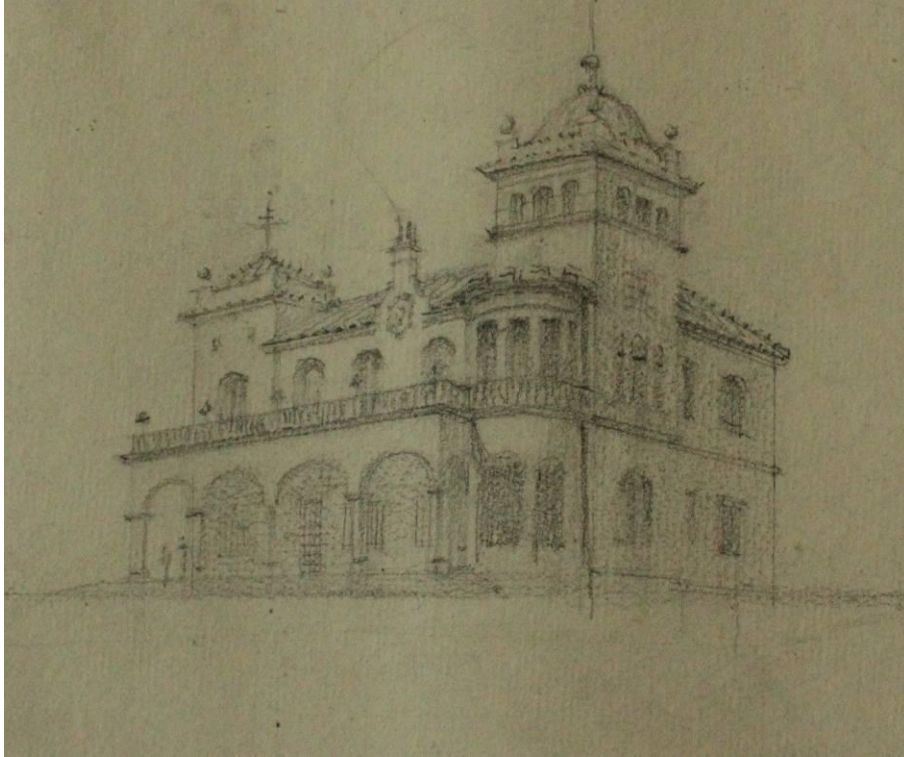


Fig. 6. Antonio Rubio Marín. Drawing of the proposal for a ville, 1945. Source: Antonio Rubio Marín Legacy. University of Alcalá.

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