

BEAUTY OF REGIONALISM IN HOUSING ARCHITECTURE IN SEVILLA – STYLE OR COSTUME OF STYLE

The term „regionalism” is not unambiguous. Regionalism was not even a homogeneous cultural phenomenon, and, depending on the political-social conditions, it used to take various forms. Regionalism as a cultural current emerged along with the appearance of movements such as the Félibrige Association, active in Provence until the first half of the 19th century, the Remaixença Movement in Western Catalonia, or the Galician Rexurdimento Movement ¹. The idea motivating such movants was to support and protect the cultural identities of particular regions and local languages. The Félibrige were the first to declare their movement as regionalistic, and distanced themselves from the then politics and endeavors toward the autonomy of the region.

The increasing civilizational transformations had their impact on the widespread of the concept of regionalism in Europe at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Both industrialization and urbanization entailed unifying processes. It was a period of the formation of the new social classes, the new society, and the mass culture. The reaction of the proliferate circles to those transformations was regionalism, understood as the protection of the cultural identity. In multi-national states, regionalism provided the opportunity to preserve the identity of a given group, and to build a national or local consciousness ². It was back at that time, when the regional culture began to be viewed as part of the national heritage³.

Regionalism in architecture has often been identified with attitudes being in contrary to uniformization, as well as with the reaction to stereotyping and simplifications within the scope of area development. In many countries, the regional construction became the basis for seeking of the national architecture understood through the folklore architecture embedded in the local context. The end of the 19th century gave rise to many ethnographic museums and national construction exhibitions, the latter being put up especially at the international exhibitions popularizing that national constructional trend. The turning point of the two centuries was the period in which the national style as the

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¹ E. Storm, 2016. La arquitectura Regionalista de Sevilla desde una perspectiva internacional. [In:] Andalucía: la construcción de una imagen artística, edit. L. Méndez Rodríguez and R. Plaza Orellana, Universidad de Sevilla edition, pp. 197-198; J. Grad, 2010, Współczesny sens regionalizmu. Sensus Historiae 1, p. 51.

² J. Grad, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-56.

³ E. Storm, 198-199.

testimony of the past or the means of expressing the national identity began to be universally sought for⁴.

The concept behind the regional architecture were simple constructions that were to adapt the spirit of the place that has been coming into existence throughout the centuries of interacting with the people and their natural environment. What it most often meant in practice, was the use of the traditional construction materials, and reliance on the local stylistic forms. The architects of the time used the traditional construction materials and the local stylistic forms in a creative manner, adapting them to the then conditions and needs of their customers. Genuine art rooted in tradition and at the same time being in harmony with the natural environment was sought for in the regional architecture⁵. At the beginning of the 20th century, regional architecture became a style that was promoted mostly for semi-detached and rural houses. Forms popular in one place were often replanted to another. An example of such a replantation can be the Swiss style, also popular in England, the German-speaking countries, or in Poland, too⁶.

Regionalism appeared in Spain at the beginning of the 20th century, and was the aftermath of seeking for the „indigenous”, vernacular style. During the VI and VII Spanish National Congress of Architects, took place a big debate on nationalism and regionalism. Discussed during the Congress were the most important aspects of the national, patriotic, and indigenous (tribal) architecture. By making the citizens aware of the historical cultural achievements of individual provinces, the Spanish regionalism was of political nature. The centers of Spain that stood out most in the context of such historical cultural achievements were Catalonia, part of Cantabria, Basque Country, and Seville. Catalonia and Cantabria became inspired the folklore and rural style construction of Catalonia, as well as by the architecture known as the mountain architecture from Cantabria respectively. The said inspiration by those styles served mostly for the purpose of sketching up the designs of villas and sub-urban recreational houses. The leading Catalanian architects of that time were more inclined toward the „modernismo” style. In the Basque Country, the national architecture was associated with the elites and the National Basque Party that was using its moment for the purpose of the state formation process. In case of the Basque Country, the inspirations were the local Baroque, mountain construction, and the neo-vasco style⁷.

In Seville the range of inspirations was broader, as used were select forms of the Muslim architecture, the mudejar style, the plateresco style that was more decorative than the other, as well as of the native Renaissance and Baroque

⁴ J. Szewczyk, 2006. Regionalizm w teorii i praktyce architektonicznej. Teki Kom. Arch. Urb. Stud. Krajobr. – OL PAN, pp. 96 – 100; G. Rytel, 2015. Wernakularna, czyli jaka? Uwagi semantyczne na marginesie tematu konferencji. Budownictwo i Architektura 14(3), p. 144.

⁵ In contrary to historicism and academism that were accused of falsehood and pompousness, and to modernism that was criticized for being false and immoderate: E. Storm, *op. cit.*, pp. 200- 202.

⁶ J. Szewczyk, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

⁷ J.-M. Gonzalez Gonzales, 2005. La llegada del Regionalismo a la ciudad de Badajoz. Nobra-Arte XXV, pp. 166-167.

from the glory days' time of the city ⁸. The Seville architecture also had more of the urban nature to it. The emergence of regionalism was to its broad extent associated with the Ibero-American Exposition that was underway (from 1911, until opened in 1929) ⁹. The organization of the exhibition was to be a panacea for the city and serve the strengthening of its position ¹⁰. What was planned was not just large-scale modernization ¹¹, but also to rear an entire array of edifices, pavilions, and buildings in the regional (Sevillian) style, such as the, inter alia, Alfonso XIII Hotel.

At the beginning of the 20th century, a new generation of Sevillian architects educated in Madrid grew up to entering its profession who, after a short try with eclecticism and "modernismo", began designing the architecture characterized by regional features. The city authorities played their critical role in the promotion of the local identity, just like self-governor Francisco Javier de Lepe and his anti-modernism movement. The contest for designs of the Ibero-American Exposition (1911) and the façade of the „estilo sevillano" house (1912), turned out to be a substantive promotion of the Sevillian style. The „estilo sevillano" house was viewed as the beginning of the crystallization of the new Sevillian style. Accepted to the contest were designs sketched up by, inter alia, the leading local architects such as Antonio Gonzalez or Jose Espiau. The designs entered to the contest displayed how their authors were inspired by all the architectural trends present in the architecture of Seville, from Gothic to Neoclassicism. The contest design edifices were the first pieces of work to be officially recognized as the servillano style edifices ¹².

A specific quality of the Sevillian style was a combination of the historical trends with the local elements such as narrow-brick face bricks (often arranged in such a way so as to serve as ornaments), Arabic roof tiles, protruding eaves and canopies, towers, and observation loggie. Eventually, the constructional technique, craftsmanship, and the local construction materials such as brick, azulejos, and the Arabic roof tiles were creatively adopted to the various historical styles that were dominant in the period of the glory days of Seville ¹³.

Many architects of the young generation used to sketch their designs in the vein of the Sevillian regionalism. One of the more important figures was Aníbal

⁸ In the glory days' time of the city associated with trade with the overseas colonies from the end of the 15th to the first half of the 17th century, Seville was the 3rd largest city of the Western World of approximately 150.000 citizens. The Plague epidemics that outbreak in 1649 caused a gradual decline in the economic power of the city. The decline was even more so intensified by the sedimentation of sludge in the river of Guadalquivir, as a result of which Cádiz became the main harbor for the purposes of doing trade with the United States of America. The years that followed were a period of stagnation and collapse for Seville.

⁹ J.-M. Gonzalez Gonzales, *op. cit.*, pp. 166-167; E. Storm, *op.cit.*, pp. 200-210.

¹⁰ Edificio singulares da Sevilla la ciudad regionalista, Ayuntamiento de Sevilla, this year's edition, pp. 7-8. The first name of the exhibition as announced in 1908 was Hispania w Sewilli, more on the exhibition itself: M. Gimenez Fernandez, 1989, Sevilla y la Exposición de 1929. Controversias y problemas, Universidad de Sevilla editorship, Colección Bolsillo no. 99.

¹¹ The 19th century city reconstruction movement that encompassed the large cities in Spain such as Madrid or Barcelona, but did not encompass Seville. The capitol city of Andalusia was modernized and reconstructed as late as in the first decades of the 20th century.

¹² Edificio singulares, pp. 9-10.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

González Álvarez-Ossorio¹⁴, the chief designer and manager of the construction of the Ibero-American Exposition. Aníbal González Álvarez-Ossorio was connected with the Sevillian regionalism nearly from the beginning of his professional career. In his own words, he wrote: „Our buildings have to be regionalistic, since we have very rich architecture that should serve as guidelines and inspirations”¹⁵. Aníbal González Álvarez-Ossorio was the creator of the genuine forms of ornamentation and *ysería*¹⁶, visible on many elevations, including tenement houses, he restored the use of the face brick, elements made of wrought iron, and azulejos.

One of González's most talented competitors was Juan Talavera y Heredia who, just like González, was a graduate of the School of Architecture of Madrid¹⁷. Juan Talavera y Heredia claimed that an architect was no one but simply a well-educated mason, his stance on the matter being the explanation of his thorough knowledge of constructional techniques and craftsmanship. Heredia was inspired by historical edifices, at first in the vein of the *mudejar* style, such as it was the case in case of the Pontius Pilate's House in Seville, and in the later period by the Baroque style historical edifices such as the San Luis church or the San Telmo church, and also by palaces, such as the Archbishop's Palace. Talavera re-interpreted the Andalusian patio and gardens his own way, he used brick ornaments, wrought iron, azulejos, and polychromy wood which he transformed into the expression devices of his own¹⁸ (Fig. 1, 2).

The final figure worth mentioning is Jose Espiau y Muñoz, a graduate of the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando in Madrid (1907)¹⁹. His designs stood out by the structure and the ornamentation of the edifices he designed. Espiau y Muñoz was personally involved in designing of all the details of his buildings, the process which he attended with great importance. Espiau y Muñoz used many decorative elements, such as window and door bars, stained-glass windows, and opulent ornamentations of orifices and architectural elements, such as slender spires, loggie, avant-corps, and turrets.

There were many more architects active in Seville at the time who designed in the vein of regionalism. Among many sevillano style buildings, reared was also an entire array of tenement houses and villas that were the palaces belonging to affluent families. The sumptuous tenement houses were erected next to the Avenida de Constitución and other streets, located in the central and modernized districts of the city.

¹⁴ Graduate of the School of Architecture of Madrid (1902), he worked in Seville, where he was awarded numerous distinctions for his architectural activity. Aníbal González Álvarez-Ossorio's most notable works include the development of the Spanish Square and the development of the American Square. More on Aníbal González Álvarez-Ossorio to be found with: V. Pérez Escolano, 1973, Aníbal González. Diputación de Sevilla, Arte Hispalense. Sevilla.

¹⁵ Gonzales, La casa sevillana, „El Liberal", 02.11.1913.

¹⁶ A type of an ornamental decoration of Islamic origin, based on geometrical bonds or the motive of a stalactite, in most cases made in stucco.

¹⁷ A. Villar Movellán, 1977. Juan Talavera y Heredia. Publicaciones de la Diputación Provincial de Sevilla.

¹⁸ Edificios, op. cit., p. 27.

¹⁹ A. Villamar Movellán, 1985. Arquitecto Espiau (1879-1938). Diputación de Sevilla. Arte Hispalense Sevilla.



Fig. 1. Tenement-house of Manuel Noriega, Martin Villa 6 street, design A. Gonzalez, (1907-1908)



Fig. 2. La Adriatica, Av. de la Constitución 2, design J. Espiau (1914-1922)

The evolution of regionalism in the architecture of Seville can be divided into three substantive stages²⁰. The first one of those stages began at the beginning of the 20th century, at the time when people were getting ready for the sevillano style. The architects often combined the elements of the then modern modernismo with the elements of the native architecture that were being added with greater and greater audacity, especially in the vein of neomudejar. An example of such a combination can be the tenement house designed by Gonzalez in 1905 and located at the Luis Montoto 3-5 street. The said building was the combination of the final stage of modernismo with the first step taken toward regionalism. The entire façade of the tenement house was finished in red brick juxtaposed with light elevation used for enframing of apertures and lesenes dividing uttermost axes. In later time, brick became the inextricable part of the elevations designed by Gonzalez. In the case of another residential-commercial tenement of his design at the Martin Villa 6 street, Gonzalez made use of a foundation made of narrow bricks, as well as an array of forms pertaining to the local architecture. The orifices were made as arches inspired by the Granadian architecture (semicircular arches), polilobulado (arches made of lobes and wave) made of colorful voussoirs. Gonzalez also used relief decorations in the form rhombuses made of brick (sebka), and colorful ceramic mosaics inspired by azulejo mudejar. In addition, Gonzalez also used the Moorish forms of roofs, laid with the Arabic roof tiles. The building became a specific manifesto of transition from the

²⁰ Edificios, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10.

eclectic modernism, to the regionalistic neomudejar. In case of a different construction from the same period of time (the house erected in 1909, at the Tomás de Ibarra street), the simple block of the building got covered with a opulent stucco decoration inspired by the flagitious elements of the patio of the Pontius Pilate House.

Diffident attempts to employ the regional elements can be found in Casa Grosso by Jose Espiau (San Pablo 3 street, 1908 – 1909). The ornamentation and details of Casa Grosso were still under the influence of the modernismo style, but at the same the concept behind the building structure and the architectural elements were the predictor of the endeavor for the new regional style (Fig. 3, 4).



Fig. 3. Ciudad de Londres, Cuna-Cerrajería 14 street, design J. Espiau, (1912-1914)



Fig. 4. La Adriática - windows, Av. de la Constitución 2, design J. Espiau (1914-1922)

The second one of the stages is the period of the consolidation and strengthening of the regionalistic style, known as the Primero Regionalismo, that was evolving from 1910 to 1917. It was the time when the neomudejar and neo-plateresco forms were keenly employed. The source of inspiration were, inter alia, the palaces dating back to the end of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th centuries, with the Pontius Pilate House at head of them all, preserved in Seville. The final point of this second stage was the aforementioned VII Spanish National Congress of Architects that took place in Seville.

Jose Espiau included in his designs curious concepts. What Jose Espiau did was that he translated his inspiration by the interiors of the palaces from the 16th century, especially the inspiration of his by the arcade patios, into façades. The most standing out of all of his constructions, were the two of Jose Espiau's constructions located at the street junction point, namely La Adriática, and Ciudad de Londres that constitute a synthesis of his achievements from the time period of the first stage. Within the edifice of La Adriática (1914-1922, al. de la Constitución 2 street, erected for an insurance company), Jose Espiau employed types of arcades in loggie, and sets of windows mimicking such arcades, surmounted with acute- or plane-angle arches buttressed on top of slender columns with enhanced imposts. The arches on the inside of the construction are finished with the so-called lobes, and the spaces above those lobes ornamented with geometric reliefs, inspired by the Moorish yaseria made in yellow stucco, as well as

with glazed colored ceramics bearing tiny geometric patterns. The same types of elements were used to ornament the loggia walls. Red brick and light plastering was used to finish the elevation of the construction. The main highlight of the building is a corner circumscribed on a circle that is covered up from the top with a dome made of ceramic tiles arranged in white-blue stripes. The other tenement, namely Ciudad de Londres (1912-1914, Cuna-Cerrajería 14 street), was also constructed with a highlight of a corner circumscribed on a circle that is different from the first corner by the fact that the Ciudad de Londres corner is set between straight, slightly protruding bays which are constructed as turrets covered up from the top by pavilion canopies. The same type of bays surmounts the ends of the building. In case of Ciudad de Londres, Jose Espiau exhibited an even greater mastery of ornamentation than in case of La Adriática, enriching it with a molding pertaining to the plateresco style.

Antonio Gonzalez was no exception when it came to employing an entire array of historical forms at this stage. Antonio Gonzalez employed elements of neoplateresco, combined with wide stripes of white-blue ceramics with medallions and classical grotesque-based ornamentations in a commercial-residential building at the Villais 1 Square (1914-1915). Gonzalez's attempt to make the façade of the building look like in the costume of style from the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries is materialized by the Arabic-style arches and eaves making parts of the house made for prince Ibarra (San Jose street Conde de Ibarra corner, 1912 -1913). The construction is characterized by exceptional moderation and continence in regard to the use of ornamentations, as well as the contrast between the dominant color white and the elements made of red brick partly shutting the apertures and small areas filled with azulejos. The design of the house for Álvaro Dávila (de la Constitucion 18 Avenue, 1915-1917), also of Gonzalez's, is somewhere in between the *First and Second Regionalism*. Beside the mudejar style and the plateresco style, in the case of this house Gonzalez was also inspired by the majestic façades belonging to the Sevillian Baroque. The elevations of the house are ruptured with rectangular windows enframed within opulent, non-Baroque frames at the 2nd and 3rd storey, surmounted by a shallow neomudejar arcade loggia. At the corner where the streets converge into one, located is torreon – mirador (an observation turret), faced with light brick, with panels covered in a ceramic ornamentation, surmounted by a small dome covered with colorful, glazed roof tiles, with a small lantern and an iron crucifix.

A standing out construction from the first stage of regionalism was the house of Talavera's design that was situated at the de la Borbolla 55-57 Avenue (1913-1915), set in the esthetics of the mudejar style. In this case, Talavera used decorative motives inspired by Sevillian palaces from the 16th century. At the first floor of the building, Talavera placed against the white background of the elevation windows ornamented with a frame made from red brick and a mosaic made of azulejos from the top. The second floor, over the windows, is placed with a ceramic ornamentation. The 1st and 2nd floor of the building are divided by a ledge made of colorful bricks (the ledge has the form of a narrow eaves). The façade of the building is decorated with avant-corps in the form of turrets with pavilion canopies laid with Arabic roof tiles to its sides.

The final stage, known as Segundo Regionalismo, began in 1917 and lasted until the beginning of the 30s of the 20th century. At that time, architects resorted

to two basic variants of neo-Baroque forms. The first one of the two variants was inspired by historical constructions belonging to the Sevillian Baroque of the 17th and 18th centuries, while the second one was inspired by the rural architecture of Andalusia of the 18th century. Forms of both of the variants can also be found in the tenement architecture.

The architect inspired by the creations from the period of the Sevillian Baroque, and especially by the creations by the master of the period, Leonardo da Figuera, was Juan Talavera. One of Juan Talavera's creations was the sumptuous edifice of Central Compañía Telefonica, next to Plaza Nueva. Talavera resorted to the Baroque form also when designing his private buildings. Out of his constructions, stands out his tenement at the Almansa 19 street (1925-1926). The opulent Baroque window frames made from red brick and the navy-blue color ornamentations made of ceramic stand out against the white, plastered walls. The corner of the building is surmounted with a turret bearing the identical ornamentations. The last storey was divided using a miter-jointed brick ledge, while a brick railing with panels ornamented with navy-blue color ceramics was placed over the eaves. Everything is complemented by subtle, wrought balcony railings. Also in case of the tenement at the Villegas 1-3 street (1926-1928), Talavera used similar architectural motives. The apertures are enframed in opulent, neo-Baroque, brick frames, and while the building itself is surmounted with turrets, it misses whatever ceramics ornamentation. The tenement was inspired by the San Salvadore church that was partially reconstructed by Leonardo de Figueroa at the end of the 17th century (Fig. 5, 6).



Fig. 5. House of Maria Chafer, San Francisco square, design Juan Talavera (1914)



Fig. 6. House of Anastasio Serrano, Almansa 19 street, design Juan Talavera (1925-1926)

A later creation by Antonio Gonzaleza was a tenement at the Arfe 5 street, finished in 1921. This tenement was no exception as far as the employment of a brick detail inspired by Baroque temples and set on the background of light plaster is concerned. The lobby is arranged in the form of arcades with Roman arches. Everything is complemented by iron railings preceding the tall porte-fenêtre and spanning between the solid stanchions at the roof part.

The regionalismo style structures often combined in them the historical forms and the traditional forms of ornamentation with modern skeleton constructions and concrete, subsequently being put over with historical costumes. Modern structures were used especially in case of representative municipal constructions, or the constructions meant for the Ibero-American Exposition, albeit they were also used in case of the private architecture as well, for example when rearing round building corners, turrets, or commercial spaces ²¹.

RECAPITULATION

Taking a closer look at the Sevillian "regionalismo", a question rises whether you can regard it as a new style, or perhaps as yet another costume of historicism? On the one hand it is a costume of style operating on the basis historical forms, and, on the other, the elements used are so specific of the architecture of Seville that they stand out firmly against the ground of other buildings belonging to particular historical styles. The combination of the constructional techniques with the other stylistics of regionalism, especially in the case of the buildings that were reared for the Ibero-American Exposition, once again speaks for regarding "regionalismo" as the aforementioned costume of historicism. Even though they often serve as solely an ornamentation of an elevation of a building, the syncretically selected forms and stylistic elements together make a plan that not only is clear at first glance, but also brings to mind the architecture of the city. Also, the piously employed elements of craftsmanship and the techniques of the past – such as the local and simple blocks of buildings – all prove the thoroughly considered selection of the forms and the architectural ornamentations that make the specific "sevillano" style. Moreover, the style had a significant impact on the development of regionalism to the South of Spain. The support of the creation of the regional style through the selection of that stylistic in particular for the Ibero-American Exposition coming from the city authorities, the promotion of the city esthetics and of the symbolical architecture specific of Seville, the contest for the "sevillano" style façade – it all was consistent enterprises that were meant to facilitate the transformation of the esthetics of the city and incorporation of the new architecture into the development of the old days as yet another nexus of its development after the years of stagnation.

The picturesqueness and exoticism of the „sevillano" style is heavily based on the inspiration by the local architecture coming to the surface under the Moorish impact which results in a significant distinction of the regional architecture of Andalusia from the regionalisms present in other European countries, or even in provinces of Spain, where the impact of the Arabic architecture was

²¹ A spectacular example of the use of a structure made of reinforced concrete, and then „dressing" it in the Sevillian costume, is the Plaza España development of Aníbal González's design; Storm E., *op. cit.*, 167.

lesser. I think that the question raised cannot be answered unequivocally. For some, the Sevillian regionalism will be nothing more than just a historical costume, while for other it will be a style that expresses the culture of the region and emphasizes the one of a kind nature of the city. However, due to the creative continuance of the historical development, the terrific situation of the new buildings within the context of the city, and the firm inveteracy of the forms used in the esthetical identity, the said style can definitely be referred to as „estilo sevillano”.

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ESTHETICS OF REGIONALISM IN THE RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE OF SEVILLE – STYLE OR COSTUME OF STYLE

SUMMARY. The term „regionalism” has reappeared in culture numerous times, carrying various types of meanings along with it. The herein article discourses on regionalism understood as seeking a value of the past and the regional architecture, and transforming the forms of the latter so that they meet the contemporary needs. Architecture was regarded as the symbol of the splendor of the past, and so the return to the former styles was meant to elevate the prestige of the particular regions or countries. The phenomenon of regionalism occurred in the European countries at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. The result of the said regionalism was architecture characterized by multifarious and historical forms. What comes to mind, then, is the question can you call regionalism considered the way mentioned above a style in its own merit, or yet another style costume of historicism? The regionalism movement had its specific expression in Spain, and in Andalusia in particular, where it resulted in curious architectural forms of picturesque nature. It was the time when many tenement houses that combined in them the achievements of the constructional technique and craftsmanship of Seville, as well as the local materials such as the combination of brick, the Arabic roof tiles, and ceramics (azulejos) of diverse historical styles, were erected.

Key words: regionalism, architecture from the beginning of the 20th century, Sevilla