

VERÓNICA RAMÍREZ MURO
AND MARIO UTRILLA TRINIDAD



SECRET MADRID



JONGLEZ PUBLISHING

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COLONIA MADRID MODERNO

⑥

A trip through time

La Guindalera district

Calles Castelar, Cardenal Beluga and Roma; Avenues Toreros, Cartagena, Francisco Navacerrada, Campanar and Ruiz Perelló
Metro Ventas



A walk around the streets of La Guindalera district is like going back in time. The houses are detached and some of them, such as those in Calles Roma and Cardenal Beluga, are neo-Mudejar in style.

This district was at least twenty-five years in construction, with the first phase of the project dating from 1890. The third and last phase, in Art Nouveau style, was carried out in 1905 by architect Valentín Roca Carbonell. The initiative for this project, known as Madrid Moderno, goes back to architect Julián Marín, but following legal problems the work was delayed for years, leading to a real architectural hotchpotch.

The houses are laid out in rows. Those of the first phase have circular neo-Mudejar towers, with a small garden and a brick and *azulejo* façade. The remainder, on the other hand, show no homogeneity, which led to numerous criticisms pointing out the poor taste and random planning of the district. However, a century later, the houses that are still standing, such as those of Calle Castelar, known as “Calle de los Hotelitos” (“Street of the Little Villas”), retain a certain charm. Unfortunately, many of them have succumbed to pressure from property developers.

Madrid desde Torres Blancas

The Torres Blancas building (No. 37 Avenida de América – Metro: Avenida de América) is noteworthy not only for its architecture but because it provided the subject matter for the painting *Madrid desde Torres Blancas* (Madrid seen from Torres Blancas) by Antonio Lopez, which was sold at auction in 2008 for 1.5 million euros, the highest price ever paid for a contemporary Spanish artist. In the painting, Lopez immortalises the view of Madrid which the inhabitants of the “white towers” enjoy every day.

Although the structure is in fact grey, it is called Las Torres Blancas because the initial project envisaged the two tower blocks being built in white marble. However, funds for the project were insufficient and the building was left incomplete, in spite of the commitment of Juan Huarte, a Spanish entrepreneur and patron of the arts who wanted a building that broke with the architectural language of the day. In 1961 the project was offered to the architect Francisco Javier Sáezn de Oiza, who created a skyscraper of organic form. In effect, the 21-floor building resembles a giant tree, with foliage overflowing from balconies placed along the trunk and the summit occupied by circular terraces.

THE ELF OF RETIRO

16

In memory of the flowers that changed colour as the king went past

El Retiro Park

Plaza de la Independencia, 7

April to September 6:00am—12:00am

October to March 6:00am—10:00pm

Metro Retiro



On the old stone cage where a bear used to live, there is now an elf with a flute standing in the undergrowth. This little “elf of Retiro” was born out of a legend surrounding King Philippe V, whose reign was the longest of the Spanish monarchy (between 1700 and 1746, with a short interlude of eight months).

Philippe V liked to walk through the gardens of Retiro, which were not open to the public at the time but were the private gardens of the kings’ secondary residence. According to the legend, Philippe V noticed that when he was walking in the gardens, the flowers would appear to change colour, even if he had been there for as little as an hour. The king summoned the gardeners, thinking that they were playing tricks on him. But they swore that they had not tampered with the flowers. They said that it was the work of an elf that they had tried and failed to capture more than once.

In memory of this legend, the artist José Noja was commissioned in 1985 to create an elf that would be placed in this special spot, la Casa de Fieras. The 18th-century zoo had animals, which were very exotic for the time, such as ocelots, macaws, Peruvian llamas and African gazelles.

King Ferdinand VI’s whim

Visitors passing through the O’Donnell gate will see a small artificial mountain, created on the whim of King Ferdinand VI, who wanted a mound from the top of which he could admire the fields of Madrid. Over the years, this mountain was given different names: the rollercoaster, the ink well and the cats’ mountain, as it was used as an animal refuge.

GUIDED TOUR OF THE MADRID ATHENAEUM ⑪

Where it was concluded that God does not exist

Calle del Prado, 21

www.ateneodemadrid.com

Appointment on request: 91 429 1750

Guided tours: Monday–Friday from 10am to 1pm (by appointment only)

Length of tours: 45

Metro Antón Martín or Sevilla



Founded in 1835, the Ateneo de Madrid is the oldest cultural institution in Spain as well as a very special place in its own right, with pre-booked guided tours (lasting approximately an hour). These fascinating tours not only reveal a number of anecdotes associated with the Ateneo but also provide explanations of the place's numerous Masonic symbols (see following page) and information about the history of the building and of each of its various rooms: the Annals Hall (Salon de los Actos), the vestibule, the portrait gallery, the Sala de la Cacharrería and the office of Manuel Azaña. The library is not included in the tour, but there is another way to visit it (see p. 168).

The Annals Hall (see p. 166), with its decor inspired by Masonic motifs and symbols, is also one of the first expressions of modernism in Madrid. And it was in this room that in 1932, when Spain was a staunchly Catholic state, the conclusion was reached that God does not exist – a verdict that caused a great international scandal. It was also here that impassioned speeches in defence of freedom were made by the likes of Ortega y Gasset (on return from exile) and receptions held in honour of such figures as Einstein, Madame Curie and Mother Teresa.

The Portrait Gallery has an exceptional collection of works by the major Spanish painters of recent centuries, as well as a wide-ranging display of visual material relating to the cultural and political life of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. On one of the walls you can see the now-bricked-in doorway that used to lead directly through to the Chamber of Deputies. It was once said that what could not be discussed in the Chamber could always be readily debated here in the Ateneo (in particular within the Sala de la Cacharrería, which became a legendary “talking shop”).

Manuel Azaña's office stands next to the Portrait Gallery. In this room, at dawn on 17 July 1936, there was a breakdown in negotiations that ultimately led to the Spanish Civil War.

The first premises of the Ateneo de Madrid were a much more modest affair in Calle Montera; the present building in Calle del Prado was built, to designs by Luis Landecho and Enrique Fort, in 1884 and officially opened by Cánovas Del Castillo and King Alfonso XII. Since its foundation, the Athenaeum has been a champion of cultural liberty and freedom of thought, promoting conferences, debates and discussions.

PALACIO DE SANTOÑA

15

Luxury in the 19th century

Cámara de Comercio de Madrid

Calle de las Huertas, 13

Prior booking required for group visits (max. 25 people) with guides in period costume

For dates of free tours, see the ¡Bienvenidos al palacio! programme produced by the Office for Tourism and Culture of the Community de Madrid

91 538 3500

Metro Sol or Antón Martín

Visiting the sumptuous palace of Santoña, with its rather austere stone façade, is no easy matter. But it is really worth the effort. The last home of the politician José Canalejas, which is now the headquarters of the Chamber of Commerce, is one of only a few palaces still standing today in Madrid. It has kept much of its original baroque-style furniture, which was fashionable at the court in those days. However, the oriental works on display in some of the rooms also give it a decidedly avant-garde touch.

A spectacular grand staircase in Carrare marble, accompanied on either side by classical sculptures such as the goddess of Fortune, Minerva and an Amazonian, welcomes visitors as they arrive. Two lions,

one of which is sleeping, angels and the coat of arms of the last owners of the palace, the Dukes of Santoña, give a final touch to the atmosphere.

Among the rooms open to the public is Louis XVI's drawing room. It is decorated with gold leaf, wall hangings and silk drapes, along with a fresco representing dawn by José Vallejo Galeazo. The Turkish drawing room, of Moorish style, is spectacular with its *azulejos* (tiles) and its marble floor, as is the Italian-style Pompeian drawing room, which is hung with portraits of illustrious Italians such as Dante, Raphaël, Michelangelo or Brunelleschi. The former ballroom, which still has the boxes for the orchestra, was converted into a concert hall that holds 100 people.

Everything about this palace is surprising and as soon as you enter the building you get a feeling that time has come to a standstill; that is, if you ignore the Wi-Fi connection . . . Most of the rooms, and indeed the building itself, can be hired for events.

The building, which was declared to be "of cultural Interest" in 1995, was erected on a 4,470 square metre plot of land. It dates back to the 16th century and had already undergone several transformations when it was acquired by the politician and banker Francisco de Goyeneche in 1731, who then asked Pédro de Ribera to build a façade in granite. The palace remained in the hands of the Goyeneche family until 1874 when it became the property of Juan Manuel de Manzanedo, duke of Santoña. His wife, María del Carmen Hernández, decorated it with priceless artistic and ornamental pieces, which are still on display there today.





THE FAÇADE OF THE HOUSE OF ESCHER

A façade inspired by optical illusions

Conde de Romanones, 14
Tirso de Molina
Metro Tirso de Molina

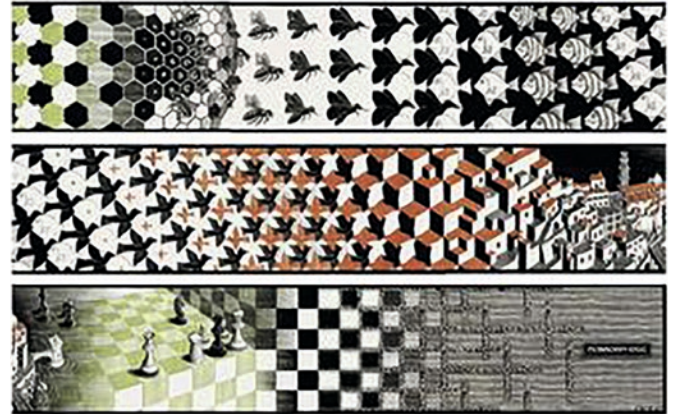
19



One of the most exceptional façades in Madrid can be found in a narrow street a few metres from Tirso de Molina square. The building, named “The house of Lizards” by locals, is an architectural curiosity in the neighbourhood.

The figures on the building change and warp depending on the angle from which you view them. The cubes become lizards as the eye moves up along the building. This façade was inspired by the work of the Dutch artist M.C. Escher (1898-1972), which is characterised by its impossible shapes and optical illusions. The painting that was used as a model for this is called *Métamorphose II*, dating from 1940.

The building, which houses seasonal rentals, was renovated by Julio Barbero's studio using a technique that consists of drawing on paper to make a stencil with vegetable carbon. The work was created in two tones with natural pigments.



NEARBY

Pablo Picasso's trompe-l'œil works

20

On the corner of San Pedro Mártir Street and Cabeza Street

Pablo Picasso, originally from Malaga, lived for just two years in the house on the corner of San Pedro Mártir Street and Cabeza Street, but four of his *trompe-l'œil* works — one on each floor — can be seen there, commemorating his stay in what was to be his first home in Madrid (from 1897 to 1898).

The scenes depict the painter, who came to Madrid to study at the Academia de San Fernando, only to drop out soon afterwards when he found that it was not open to the Catalan modernism he wanted to embrace.

LAS ESCUELAS PÍAS LIBRARY

22

On the ruins of the church

Calle Sombrerete, 15

91 467 5871

Monday–Friday from 9.15am to 10am and from 9pm to 9.45pm

Guided tours: visitasbiblioteca@madrid.uned.es

Metro Lavapiés



The library of the Escuelas Pías de l'Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED, National University of Distance Learning) was, rather amazingly, built upon the ruins of the Escuelas Pías de San Fernando church. For years, these ruins had been nothing but an unofficial rubbish tip, then – over the period 1996 to 1999 – the architect J.I. Linazasoro undertook the complicated project of restoring and refurbishing the ruins to create a nine-storey building. Despite the total transformation of the site, the characteristic feature of the school – the immense rounded arch surmounted by the crest of the original Escuelas Pías – has been preserved; it is through this that you enter a rotunda of eight columns supporting a magnificent cupola.

The Escuelas Pías, founded in 1729, was the first school in Madrid run by the Order of the Piarists (*Escolapios*). It provided education for children from poor backgrounds, and was also considered revolutionary for its day because it set up the first school in Spain specifically for deaf-mutes.

The ruins on which the present-day library was built were those of the school church, built in 1763–1791 to designs by Friar Gabriel Escribano and destroyed in 1936 during the Civil War, when arson and pillage reduced the school to a bare skeleton. After the Civil War



a cinema was installed here, and there was a plan (never implemented) to turn the whole site into a public garden.

To gain admission to the library and reading rooms, you must have a user pass. These are provided free; just bring your passport/identity card and two photographs. The facilities are open to those interested between 8pm and 9pm, or by appointment (arranged by phone).

MUSEUM OF SAN ISIDRO COLLEGE

22

A real cabinet of curiosities

Calle Toledo, 39

91 365 1271

Monday to Friday from 5pm to 7pm, telephone booking required

Metro Tirso de Molina



Founded by Jesuits, San Isidro College is the oldest educational establishment in Madrid: teaching has continued uninterrupted here since 1566, the one exception being during the Civil War when the building served as an air raid shelter. Students have included monarchs, great writers and Nobel prizewinners, and their school records are carefully preserved in a small museum in the cloister area.

The place is a real wonder: with limited means and a collection that is not very extensive, the teachers and students involved in the project have produced an accurate reflection of the world of education in the early twentieth century. The material in the display cases gives a vivid idea of a period when education relied on visual images, books and the sort of anatomical models that now strike us as very old-fashioned – indeed, as collectors' items.

A wide period staircase in stone and wood links the five floors, where display cases contain a variety of surprising objects. For example, there are various stuffed animals, some of them now threatened with extinction (such as the capercaillie). There are also such veterinary curiosities as stuffed "Siamese twin" goats.

The most astonishing exhibits are perhaps the veterinary models that can be taken apart and reassembled. These were intended to explain the internal workings of animals and let students identify the different parts of such creatures as a viper or a snail.

The real gem of the whole collection, however, is a wooden skeleton dating from the late nineteenth century; it too can be fully dismantled and reassembled.

If the guide has time, the tour might finish by passing through the monks' crypt, the burial ground of those who died during the religious persecutions of 1936.

THE BRIDGE OF CASTILLA LA MANCHA PARK

⑨

The first footbridge in the world that was printed in 3D

*Calle del Pintor Murillo, 25
Metro Manuel de Falla; Regional train Valdelasfuentes*

In Castilla La Mancha de Alcobendas Park you can walk across the first footbridge in the world that was printed in 3D. This innovative work, printed in concrete, is 12 metres long and 1.75 metres wide. It was designed by the Institute of Advanced Architecture of Catalonia (IAAC) using the principles of biometrical organic architecture: its shape was inspired by nature and it is environmentally friendly. The bridge was designed to optimise the use of materials, reduce waste and recycle any surplus.

This white bridge, which crosses over a peaceful stream, was part of a large joint venture set up to highlight cutting-edge technology in Spain. The IAAC has been working for over 15 years to develop 3D printing systems on a large scale in a field that has not yet been fully explored by architecture.

The footbridge (comprising eight parts) was built by Acciona, a company that specialises in the development of infrastructures and renewable energies. Acciona set up the project with a multi-skilled team of mechanical engineers, architects and professionals from the town of Alcobendas. The project equally benefitted from the expertise of Italian architect Enrico Dini (known as “the man who printed houses”), the inventor of the printing system on the largest scale in the world (D-Shape).

Inaugurated on the 14 December 2016, the footbridge is open to the public. There are no signs to it in the park, but it’s easy to find.



THE HIGHEST CHAPEL IN THE WORLD

12

A shining light that guides locals to the chapel

Espacio Tower

Paseo de la Castellana, 259D

Every working day at 8:30am, except Wednesday when it opens at 2:05pm

www.capillatorreespacio.es

Metro Begoña



At night, halfway up the north face of the Espacio Tower, a flashing green light can be seen coming from a truly original business centre: Cuatro Torres Business Area. On the 33rd floor of the tower (33 being the age of Christ when he died) there is a Catholic oratory chapel for the use of the occupants of the skyscraper. It has a large crucifix and a statue of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception, patron saint of Spain.

Perched some 135 metres over the Paseo de la Castellana, this chapel is thought to be the highest of its kind — although not the highest above sea level; other churches in Quito (Ecuador) and La Paz (Bolivia) are said to be higher.

The chapel covers an area of barely 150 square metres; it seats thirty people and as many standing. Mass has been celebrated there every working day of the week since 2009.

The chapel is closed to the public outside worshipping hours. Bearing in mind that places are limited in the church, it is advisable to book a seat at least one day in advance through the website (see above). For safety reasons, children under ten cannot visit.

The 230 metre-high Espacio Tower is the fourth highest skyscraper in Spain. In 2007 it was briefly the highest, but was rapidly overtaken by the 249 metres of the neighbouring Crystal Tower. Its façade is clad with glass and its square floors progressively change shape the higher up they are, becoming ogive-shaped as they form a curve representing the mathematical function cosine.



CHURCH OF SANTA MÓNICA EN RIVAS-VACIAMADRID

18

A spectacular contemporary church

Calle Libertad, 17

Rivas-Vaciamadrid

Mass times are Mon—Fri 9:30am and 8pm, Saturday 10am and 8pm, Sunday and public holidays 10am, 11:30am and 1pm

Metro Rivas Urbanizaciones



Situated in the agglomeration of Rivas-Vaciamadrid, the parish church of Saint-Monica (2008) is the spectacular contemporary work of the architects Ignacio Vicens and José Antonio Ramos.

Clad in weathered Corten steel, the building looks like a hand pointing towards the sky. The façade is made up of a series of protuberances and volumes that catch the daylight and send it into the church through its skylight windows.

The magnificent retablo, comprising seven cubes that bring in the daylight, symbolises the gifts of the Holy Spirit through which God enlightened his people. The gold leaf gilding with which it is covered expresses the beauty and greatness of the Lord. In the centre of the retablo, a sleeping Virgin Mary rises up to the sky. To the right, a little further down, is a figure of Saint Monica.

The two women are the work of Javier Viver, who has twisted the faces, hands, feet and the drapes together in such an implausible way as to create a kind of figurative magma.

There is an altar in the centre of the presbytery with, to its left, a bronze crucifix sculpted by José Luis Sánchez in the 1960s.

At the entrance of the church, The Holy-Sacrament Chapel is decorated with a fresco called “The Creation” — the work of the contemporary expressionist painter José Manuel Ciria.

The aim of this project was to create a building that symbolises peace and spirituality within the everyday urban hubbub and chaos of a city, while fitting into its social environment in a lasting way.

