

RICARDO DE CASTRO



# SECRET SEVILLE



JONGLEZ PUBLISHING

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## MURAL OF THE TROOPS OF CHARLES V

④

*A spectacular ceramic panel from 1906*

Plaza del Museo, 6



Hidden at the entrance to a noble mansion opposite the Museo de Bellas Artes (Museum of Fine Arts), you'll see an enormous ceramic panel dating from the early 20th century. This is a faithful reproduction of a 1554 tapestry commissioned by Charles V entitled *Review of the Troops at Barcelona*.

This spectacular 3-metre-high mural was executed in 1906 by artist Manuel Rodríguez Pérez de Tudela, using the flat painted tile technique. It was initially installed at the Salinas palace, opposite the church of Santa Cruz, as was the panel opposite it: *The Surrender of Granada*, executed one year later by the same artist and based on a work by Francisco Pradilla Ortiz in the Palacio del Senado (Senate Palace).

Both pieces were purchased in the 1990s by art collector Mariano Bellver, who installed them at the entranceway leading to the spectacular patio of his home in Plaza del Museo.

The mural shows Emperor Charles V inspecting the troops as they prepare to embark from the port of Barcelona in 1535 to undertake an expedition against the feared pirate Hayreddin Barbarossa, a Turkish corsair serving the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman I. Barbarossa was a nightmare for Mediterranean maritime trade and threatened the safety of the coasts of the empire, so Charles gathered a huge force of Spanish, Portuguese, Italian and German troops, with 300 ships and 26,000 soldiers. The great victory achieved by this armada wasn't enough to put a stop to Barbarossa's excesses, however.

### *The original Madrid tapestry*

The original tapestry of the *Review of the Troops at Barcelona*, which served as a model for this ceramic panel, is the second in a series entitled *The Conquest of Tunis by the Emperor Charles V*. This work, by Willem de Pannemaker, the great Flemish Renaissance tapestry master, is held in Madrid's Palacio Real (Royal Palace) and is part of a series of 12 tapestries of which only 10 have survived. In the 1730s, very high-quality copies were made in silk and wool, of which six can be viewed today in the tapestry room of Seville's Real Alcázar (Royal Alcázar).

## MUDÉJAR WINDOW IN OMNIUM SANCTORUM

21

*A delicate work of 14th-century craftsmanship*

Calle Feria, 98

Monday and Wednesday–Saturday 10am–1pm and 7.30pm–9pm,

Sunday 10am–1pm



One could be forgiven for not noticing the beautiful ogival window in the main facade of the church of Omnia Sanctorum, above the entrance leading to Calle Feria. This delicate work was executed by master builders, using reddish bricks and tiles that were cut (using the *alicatado* technique) into little white, black, turquoise and honey-yellow pieces to make star-shaped mosaics.

The window dates to around the mid-14th century during the reign of Peter I, when the pre-existing church (severely damaged in the 1356 earthquake) was rebuilt. That church, known as Omnia Sanctorum (All Saints), had apparently incorporated the remains of a pre-existing Almohad mosque.

The epicentre of the terrible earthquake (magnitude 8.0) of 24 August 1356 was in Cape St Vincent (Portugal), but it caused widespread damage to many of Seville's buildings of Islamic origin. The worst was the fall of the Great Mosque's *yamur* – the four enormous bronze balls that crowned the tower of the minaret (today's Giralda).

### *Twelve heads*

The church's main facade, in Calle Feria, has a curious piece of relief work featuring 12 human heads (the 12 apostles?) on the magnificent, pointed 13th-century entrance arch, carved in stone with archivolts.

### *Uprising of the Green Pendant*

The church's baptistry was originally the funeral chapel of the Cervantes family, who (as may be seen from the top of the 17th-century grille) were '*Caballeros Veinticuatro*' (literally, Twenty-four Gentlemen) of Seville – something like town councillors – who belonged to the upper echelons of society.

The chapel housed the *Pendón Verde* (Green Pendant), a standard taken from the Almohad forces in battle and raised in the famous riots which broke out on 8 May 1521. On that day, the residents of the Feria district, who were starving, rose up against the authorities. After a lengthy struggle, the leaders were executed and their severed heads hung from the window of the nearby palace of the Marquises de la Algaba (see p. 51).

## SOLOMONIC SYMBOLS IN THE CHURCH OF SAN LUIS DE LOS FRANCESES

26

*The temple that heralds the heavenly Jerusalem*

Calle San Luis, 37

954 55 02 07

Tuesday–Sunday 10am–2pm and 4pm–8pm

For group tours: [sanluis\\_visitas@dipusevilla.es](mailto:sanluis_visitas@dipusevilla.es)



San Luis de los Franceses – the masterpiece of architect Leonardo de Figueroa – is the most magnificent Baroque church in Seville. Built between 1699 and 1731 for the novitiate of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), the church (currently deconsecrated) hides a number of secrets from the uninitiated. The most striking is that it was designed as a temple of Solomon, the ‘perfect’ temple, the place of divine wisdom, conceived of as a complex series of symbols heralding the heavenly or New Jerusalem, the city of God.

Its floor plan consists of a large circle inside a Greek cross whose arms point to the four cardinal points in reference to the imagined plan of the temple of the Israelites. Although Renaissance and Baroque scholars thought that the Old Testament temple had a rectangular floor plan, the Jesuit Order went back to the medieval idea that linked it to the Dome of the Rock and the basilica of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, both of which had circular floor plans.

Sixteen pillars rise up towards the dome, flanking niches and chapels. These pillars – known as Solomonic or barley-sugar columns due to their corkscrew, helicoidal appearance – are a representation of the two pillars, Boaz and Jachin, which stood on either side of the entrance to the temple in Jerusalem, symbolising strength and stability. Another two Solomonic engaged columns feature prominently in the upper level of the facade.

The Solomonic symbols are seen most clearly in the impressive dome. Here the frescoes by Lucas Valdés faithfully include all the elements of the temple. In the central recess and behind the allegorical figure representing religion is the *Ark of the Covenant*, the central element of the Holy of Holies (the most sacred part of the temple), the details of whose construction God explained to Moses (Exodus: 25–31). The Ark is protected by a gold lid known as the *propitiatory* (mercy seat), with two gold cherubim facing each other, their wings unfurled.

Further to the right are depictions of the *Menorah* (the great golden seven-branched oil candlestick), the *Brazen Altar*, the *Veil* that closed off the Holy of Holies, the *Molten Sea*, the *Altar of Burnt Offering*, where animals were sacrificed in God’s honour, the *Table of Showbread* (with its 12 unleavened loaves in two columns of six) and the *Altar of Incense*, which even features the smoke of burning incense.



## EQUESTRIAN STATUE: *THE EXPLORER*

33

*A Native American to commemorate the twinning of Seville and Kansas City*

*Corner of Avenida de Kansas City and Calle Samaniego*

One of the city's most unusual urban features is found at the back of Santa Justa train station – the statue of a Native American on horseback, surveying the horizon and shielding his eyes from the sun as



he looks towards the El Greco district. Although local wits have argued that he's looking towards the old Cruzcampo beer factory, you have to go back to 1922 to understand what a Native American is doing on an avenue in Seville.

That year, the Kansas City (Missouri) real-estate promoter J.C. Nichols visited Seville and, impressed by what he'd seen, went home with the idea of using Andalusian-style decorative and engineering features in the design of what was probably the world's first shopping centre, the Country Club Plaza, which opened its doors to the public in 1923.

Although Nichols originally intended to include such recognisable elements as the Giralda or the fountain in Plaza Virgen de los Reyes, this didn't happen until 1967, by which time he had died. Two years later Seville and Kansas City were twinned. This explains why the last stretch of what had previously been known as the San Pablo highway was renamed Avenida de Kansas City. Soon afterwards, a monolith with the Kansas City coat of arms was installed.

The current monument – the equestrian statue known as *The Explorer* – was erected on the remains of the old monolith.

Based on an original work by American sculptor Cyrus Edwin Dallin, it portrays a Native American explorer on horseback. The statue was exhibited at Seville's Expo '92 and was subsequently gifted to the city. It is a half-size replica of Dallin's 6-metre-high statue *The Scout*, erected in Kansas City as a permanent monument to the indigenous communities.

This sculpture (designed in 1910) was displayed at the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco, where it won a gold medal.



### *Native Americans in Kansas*

The US state of Kansas was home to many Native American peoples, and from 1829 it took in numerous communities that had been expelled from other states. Although they were assured that they would not be moved on again, that promise was broken after the Civil War. Currently there are four reservations for tribal nations in the state of Kansas: Iowa, Kickapoo, Potawatomi and Sac, and Fox.

## ATLAS FIGURES ON THE DOME OF THE CHURCH OF LA MAGDALENA

②

### *The secret of the indigenous warriors*

*Church of La Magdalena, Corner of Calle Bailén and Calle Murillo*



If you look up at the rooftop of the church of La Magdalena from the corner of Calle Murillo and Calle Bailén, you'll see some surprising Atlas figures: eight powerful Amerindian warriors holding up the cupola of the dome, each with a blue sun at his feet. At the corners of the roof of the tower, you'll also spot indigenous masks in glazed polychrome tilework casting a mocking look over the Seville roof terraces.

These figures are reminiscent of the famous colossal Toltec Atlantean figures from Tula, which keep guard over the temples, alluding to the civilisation's fallen warriors, and whose mission was to accompany the sun on its heavenly course.

In its financial and social heyday, Seville alternated constantly between two continents as it was the headquarters of Casa de la Contratación de las Indias (House of Trade of the Indies), which was in charge of overseas commerce between 1503 and 1717.

The church of La Magdalena was built over the ruins of the Gothic-Mudéjar church of the monastery of San Pablo – the biggest Dominican monastery in Andalusia – which housed many monks before they set sail to evangelise the Americas and the Philippines. The first Dominican mission arrived at La Española (Santo Domingo) in September 1510. They reached Mexico in 1526, in the midst of Hernán Cortés' war with the Mexican empire. Some of these missions to the Indies were organised by the Dominican Bartolomé de las Casas, known as the 'defender of the Indians of the New World'. He was named bishop at this monastery and ordained bishop of Chiapas (Mexico) in 1543.

### *Leonardo de Figueroa*

The commission to build the Baroque church of La Magdalena went to Seville's most prominent architect of the day, Leonardo de Figueroa (Utiel, Valencia, c. 1654 – Seville, 1730). He completed it in 1709. Figueroa was the architect behind such major works in the city as the church of San Luis (see p. 54), the palace of San Telmo (see p. 246), the church of El Salvador and the Hospital de La Caridad.

## GRACE KELLY MEDALLION

11

### *Stories from the facade of the town hall*

Seville Town Hall  
Plaza de San Francisco



On the facade of Seville Town Hall, jostling with imperial coats of arms, statues of Hercules and Julius Caesar, and stone reliefs of mythological animals, there is a surprising relief of Grace Kelly sculpted inside the medallion under the penultimate central window. But how did an image of the Hitchcock muse end up here?

Work on the Renaissance town hall got under way in 1526, to a design by architect Diego de Riaño. That year, Seville was chosen as the venue for the marriage of Charles V to Isabella of Portugal, taking on the prominent mantle of imperial capital. The magnificent stone building, two storeys high, took almost half a century to complete. The Renaissance building occupies one third of the left-hand side of the current edifice, including the *arquillo* (little arch), that led to what was once the convent of San Francisco. Centuries passed before extension works were undertaken on a building that was clearly no longer large enough to meet the city's needs. In 1868 Demetrio de los Ríos was commissioned to build the new facade, which was supposed to follow the plateresque style of the old town hall. Although sculptor Pedro Domínguez started the carvings on the facade in 1890, the work dragged on for almost a century, passing from one sculptor to the next until it was abandoned in the 1970s, with the relief stone carving left as seen today. The last in this long line of stone carvers was Manuel Echegoyán. Born in Espartinas (Seville) in 1905, from an early age he excelled as a master sculptor, creating the monument to Emilio Castelar (president of the First Spanish Republic) in the Cristina gardens when just 25. He became Professor of Drawing at the San Fernando Academy in Madrid, which was where he was when the uprising against the Republic broke out. During the Civil War he worked as a topographer for the army and was imprisoned in Madrid until, in 1940, he returned to Seville, where he was barred from practising his profession. Over the years, Echegoyán regained his prestige and was commissioned to complete this neo-plateresque facade. It so happened that in 1966 the actress Grace Kelly visited the city's Feria de Abril (Seville Fair) with her husband, Prince Rainier of Monaco. It was thus that Echegoyán decided to use her as a model for one of the medallions.

#### *Self-portrait of the sculptor and his wife*

The relief of Grace Kelly was Echegoyán's penultimate female figure; the last was the effigy of his wife, opposite a profile of the sculptor, who carved his self-portrait for posterity ... an exercise in poetic justice.

## SECRET DOOR TO CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS'S TOMB ①

*The travelling remains of the discoverer*

Seville Cathedral  
Plaza del Triunfo  
catedraldesevilla.com  
Monday–Saturday 11am–7pm, free admission Monday–Saturday 2pm–3pm

In the nave on the epistle side of Seville Cathedral, just opposite the San Cristóbal entrance, there is an impressive funerary monument executed by Arturo Mélida in 1891. On the left-hand side is the coat



of arms the Catholic monarchs granted Columbus in 1493, which conceals a secret compartment.

The upper field of the shield features the royal arms of Castile and Leon, while the lower section is taken up by those granted to the admiral of the Oceanic Seas: a group of islands in gold to represent the lands discovered, and five anchors.

Look closely and you'll see three keyholes hidden in the shield: on the castle gate, one of the islands and in the eyelet of one of the anchors.

The keys to these three keyholes (one of which is in the possession of Columbus's descendants, the Ducal House of Veragua) open a trapdoor that leads onto a little chamber containing a gilt lead casket holding the bones of the explorer. But are they really his remains?

The story surrounding the tomb of Christopher Columbus is very much a reflection of how his life was. If he lived a continuous toing and froing from one sea to another, from one court to another and, finally, from one continent to another, his tomb has matched him, pace for pace.

Columbus died in Valladolid in 1506, where he was buried until three years later when his remains were moved to the Cartuja monastery in Seville. At some unspecified time, well into the 16th century, his remains moved on to the cathedral of Santo Domingo, constituting his fifth crossing of the Atlantic. There they rested until 1795, the year Spain lost control of Hispaniola (today's Haiti and the Dominican Republic), which led to his remains setting sail once more, this time heading for the cathedral of Havana. The final journey made by the discoverer's remains took place with the loss of Cuba in 1898; the mausoleum awaiting him in Seville cathedral was his destination.

To mark the 500th anniversary of his death, the University of Granada undertook a complete analysis of all available DNA from near relations (brother and son), and concluded that the remains are indeed those of Christopher Columbus. After so many comings and goings, only a part of him returned; the contents of the urn weigh barely 150 g, which would account for 15 per cent of his entire skeleton.



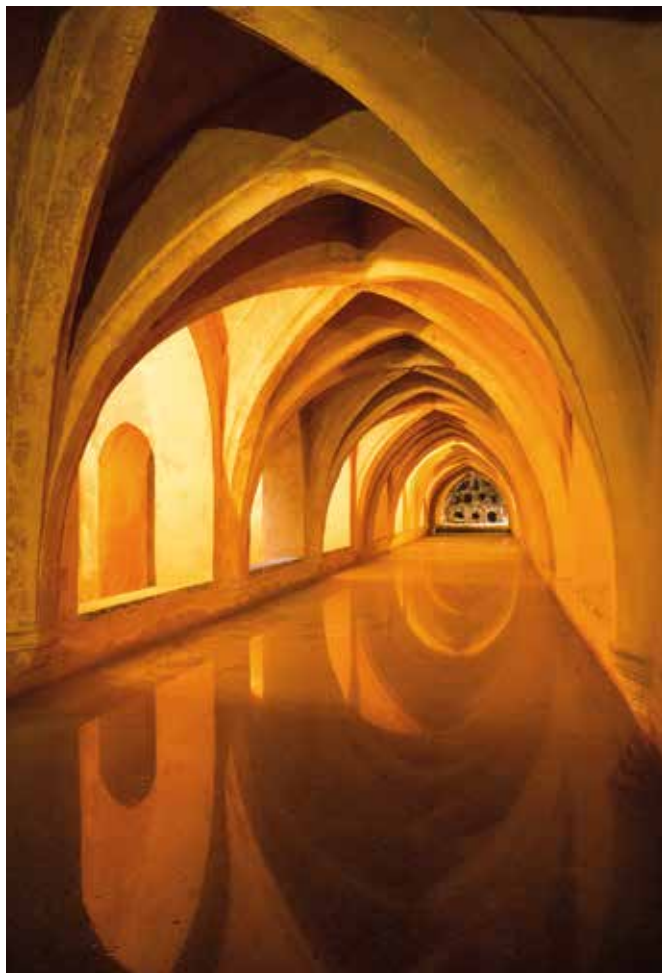
## BATHS OF MARÍA DE PADILLA

15

*The favourite spot of the woman who became queen after her death*

Plaza del Triunfo  
Calle Miguel Mañara  
alcazarsevilla.org

Every day 9.30am–5pm (in winter) and 9.30am–7pm (in summer)



A tunnel from the Jardín de la Danza (Dance Garden) winds its way under the foundations of the Gothic palace, leading to a secluded and magical spot that seems frozen in time. The orange-tinged light filtering from the ceiling blurs into the silent body of water covered by three stone galleries, making up the baths of María de Padilla.

This is an Almohad *aljibe* (underground water reservoir), located underneath the Patio del Crucero, 5 metres below the rest of the palace for use in the hot summer months. In the 13th century Alfonso X, known as ‘the Wise’, ordered it be covered by a Gothic rib vault.

According to legend, this was the favourite place of María de Padilla, the lover of King Peter I (see p. 110). The fact is, in the summer the temperature here is several degrees lower than in the rest of the city. María moved in with the king, taking up residence in the Real Alcázar in 1352 and bearing four of his children. Although Peter I officially married two other women for political reasons, when María de Padilla died in 1361 he forced the Archbishop of Toledo to annul those marriages and consecrate the secret wedding he had had with his lover, with witnesses present.

We can be sure about that secret wedding from 1352, as there is a royal privilege by which María de Padilla was granted the city of Huelva as a wedding gift. As such, Parliament recognised her as queen, ensuring that the children she bore would be legitimate, and that she could be buried in the Royal Chapel of Seville Cathedral, where she lies to this day. That at one time this space was put to recreational use became quite apparent following the 1997 discovery, and subsequent restoration, of some Renaissance mural paintings that had been hidden by damp and decay. The delicate polychrome works, which are not currently available to visit, were executed between 1565 and 1579, and depict agricultural and hunting scenes, along with other subjects from courtly life.

### *María de Padilla, queen of magic*

The figure of María de Padilla has had quite an impact on collective cultural imagination over the centuries, from the popular romances that were widespread throughout the Iberian Peninsula to the opera bearing her name premiered by Donizetti in Milan’s Scala in 1841. Perhaps oddest of all is her assimilation as queen of magic in Brazilian religions of African origin, where she is considered a powerful and terrible seductive she-devil.

## COLOMBIAN PAVILION FROM THE 1929 EXPO

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### *Sacred nature in pre-Columbian cultures*

Colombian Consulate

Paseo de las Delicias

csevilla@cancilleria.gov.co

Admission free by prior appointment

The Colombian Pavilion from the 1929 Ibero-American Expo is reminiscent of Latin American Baroque architecture, with some astonishing decoration that draws inspiration from pre-Columbian



indigenous cultures, reinterpreted through art deco forms by Colombian sculptor Rómulo Rozo. The building currently houses the Colombian Consulate, but is open to the public by prior appointment.

The main facade features the myth of Bochica, the sun god and creator of the arts and civilisation, depicted in the celestial sphere towards the top. The myth of the origin of humankind is represented towards the bottom of the pavilion. The two worlds are separated by a ceramic frieze symbolising the ritual procession and sacrifice of Guesa, a child raised in the sun temple who was led by a procession of masked priests to the pillar of Bochica, to which he was tied and then shot at with arrows, his heart finally being offered to the sun god.

Two coiled serpents guard the entrance, as in the temple of Bachué, the mother-goddess of the Chibcha people, reflecting the myth of the snake-woman. The main doorway is flanked by the figures of two warrior goddesses dressed sumptuously and covered in necklaces, bracelets and colourful feathers.

The mouldings around the doors represent the Earth through maize and flowers, and the air through tongues of fire.

The magnificent iron gateway is a reference to the myth of the Muisca culture regarding the journey made by souls to the centre of the Earth, traversing rivers and crossing ravines in rafts made from spiders' webs. In the middle of the gate there is a sacred frog on top of a warrior's weapons, and an underground river represented by fretwork depicting fish and frogs, which also feature on the balconies of the towers. In the culture's mythological symbolism, an extended frog stood for happiness, bountiful harvests and domestic plenty, being considered above all as a sacred animal with a protective function.

The foyer is dominated by two large-scale mosaics portraying Colombia's relationship with the world and with the Iberian Peninsula, leading to a large patio with a gallery reminiscent of colonial houses, including the coats of arms of Quimbaya warriors as well as four enormous dragonflies in the corners, representing bad luck, love, rain and the harvest.



RICARDO DE CASTRO



**SECRET**

# SEVILLE

Why is there a stone relief of Grace Kelly on the wall of Seville Town Hall and how can you track down the railway from the Ibero-American Expo of 1929? Where might you find the legacy of Christopher Columbus' son, a medieval Jewish cemetery in a car park, the oddest of barbershops, forgotten souvenirs from the Guadalquivir steamboats, Masonic symbols in a church, the last remaining vestiges of the Andalusian pavilions from the '29 Expo, a little-known modernist electric power station, an example of the Nazi Enigma machine, a collection of Chinese and Japanese art in a Renaissance mansion or the pillars of a medieval synagogue?

Far from the crowds and the well-worn clichés, Seville still has many hidden gems it only reveals to locals and visitors who head off the beaten track. An essential guide for those who thought they knew Seville well or are seeking to discover another side of the city.

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