



***Philip II of Spain and the Architecture
of Empire***

By Laura Fernández González

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**Reviewed by: Annemarie Jordan
Gschwend**



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In 1959, the Yale Historian of Architecture, George Kubler, and the Art Historian Martin Soria at Michigan State published *Art and Architecture in Spain and Portugal and Their American Dominions, 1500 to 1800*, a substantial volume of the renowned Pelican History of Art series. Their book provided scholars and students with a comparative analysis of Spanish and Latin American art and architecture for the first time in the English language. The Kubler and Soria monograph has since become a solid canonical model for studying architecture in Habsburg Spain and its impact overseas. Kubler pointed to the prime characteristics of Spanish architecture in the Iberian Peninsula and demonstrated how it expressed itself in Latin America. A vast body of scholarship on this topic of Renaissance and Baroque Spanish art and architecture and its imprint in the Spanish colonies has grown since Kubler's and Soria's ground-breaking study. Some of the leading historians who followed in their steps are Agustín Bustamante García, José Javier Rivera Blanco, Fernando Marias, Catherine Wilkinson-Zerner, Beatriz Blasco Esquivias, Véronique Gerard, María José del Río Barredo, Jesús Escobar, Krista de Jonge, and Alicia Cámara Muñoz, who specialise in the military engineers and military architecture spanning global sites across the Spanish Atlantic world.

Laura Fernández González, who first trained as an architect before moving into the history of architecture and royal festivities at the court of Philip II of Spain, has set out an ambitious curriculum for herself, and I must underscore here that the bibliography tackled is overwhelming. By revisiting this vast literature on fêtes, pageants, and architecture in Renaissance Spain and its empire, a style she qualifies as the *estilo Austríaco*, she aims to focus on issues of sixteenth-century Spanish architecture previously overlooked since Kubler and Soria. By revisiting a very well-trodden field, Fernández González, in her Introduction, provides readers with a concise framework for her book, its four chapters, which are chronologically organised and presented as case studies, and an epilogue. The book is profusely illustrated while providing a helpful glossary.

Fernández González's agenda is clear: she addresses the imperial character of architecture in the reign of Philip II. She aims to contextualise the circulation of visual culture in Philip's extended world. For many of her arguments, she has also relied upon a re-reading of archival sources, many of which are cited, such as building legislation for Valladolid, Madrid, and cities across the Iberian world. The case studies explored in this book are wide-ranging. Town and house design, archival architecture, festivals with ephemeral architecture, and the circulation of Philip II's royal imagery are all looked at in-depth. Architectural drawings, floor plans, and digital recreations by Fernández González and Harry Kirkham are included, which add new, exciting dimensions to this book (for instance, on page 56, figs. 27–28). Kirkham and Fernández González had previously collaborated in the digital reconstructions of the *Rua Nova dos Mercadores*, in Renaissance Lisbon, for the volume edited by the author and K. J. P. Lowe, *The Global City: On the Streets of Renaissance Lisbon* (Paul Holberton, 2015), which contributed significantly to our understanding of this now lost commercial street.

Chapter One is dedicated to urban planning and the implementation of new architectural innovations in Spain and the Americas by Philip II and his architects. However, he equally relied upon his Italian military engineers, not discussed here, such as Battista or Bautista Antonelli (1547–1616), who travelled several times to the Caribbean (Panama, Cuba, and Cartagena) to build hydraulic works and fortifications. Venetian ambassadors at the Spanish court reported in their missives how Philip II was a hobby architect, devoting much of his free time to the remodelling and building of his royal palace, the Alcázar in Madrid, his palace-monastery at El Escorial, and his chain of pleasure retreats outside his capital: El Pardo, El Bosque (near Segovia), and Aranjuez. He attended to the minutest details of these construction sites, their gardens, and fountains, as numerous documents in the Archivo General de Palacio in Madrid confirm, in which the king is recorded working closely with his court architects, the most famous among them being Juan de Herrera (b. 1530–1597). These royal residences were shaped by Philip II's tastes and personal choices. In this chapter, the circulation of models, materials, and new technologies are looked at in-depth to understand better the king's imprint of his architectural style in Spain and abroad, primarily promoted by his royal agents, administrators, and many architects.

The medieval castle of Simancas is the focus of Chapter Two. Simancas is located in Northern Spain, near Valladolid, and its impressive fortress there was used not only as a residence but also for decades functioned as a depot for the belongings and wardrobes of Emperor Charles V and the first wife of Philip II, *Infanta* Maria of Portugal (1527-1545). Royal inventories attest to the chests of clothes, Flemish tapestries, and paintings temporarily stored there. Subsequently, in the mid-sixteenth century, Simancas was transformed into the official repository of Philip II's papers, becoming the archive of his kingdom and the overseas empire. It remained, together with the Archivo de Indias, the principal storehouse of the administrations of Habsburg and Bourbon Spain. As the seat of his government in the sixteenth century, Philip II commissioned Juan de Herrera to make necessary structural reforms. This is the first time Simancas has been studied in this way, and Fernández González compares the Simancas archive to other similar structures in Europe, such as the Lisbon royal archive, Torre do Tombo, which was lost in the 1755 earthquake (62).

Chapter Three centres on Philip II's conquest of the kingdom of Portugal in 1580 and its ramifications, as two global trade empires were merged under one crown. The principal thrust here is the royal entry, or *joyeuse entrée*, carefully planned by Philip II, who designed an extravagant presentation with the city councillors of Lisbon. The themes deployed on painted panels, statues, and columns, incorporating fifteen triumphal arches Fernández González digitally reconstructed, conveyed Philip II as a global ruler in the tradition of ancient imperial Rome. To make his forced rule more acceptable to Lisbon's citizens, a prize was offered for the best-decorated windows and doors as Philip progressed through the city's streets, admiring the entry's ephemeral structures.

Fernández González published her findings on Philip II's residency in Lisbon in a book she co-edited with Fernando Checa, *Festival Culture in the World of the Spanish Habsburgs* (Routledge, 2015). As the new king, Philip II appropriated the Portuguese crown treasury and all the royal residences, rebuilding the Lisbon palace, the *Paço da Ribeira*, to which he added a monumental tower dominating the Tagus waterfront designed by Juan de Herrera and the Italian engineer Filippo Terzi. Although Lisbon

was projected to be the king's capital of his new world empire, after 1583, this idea was abandoned.

The last two chapters (Chapter Four and the Epilogue) are devoted to what Fernández González has qualified as “sites of memory” from Philip II's reign; the first is the “Hall of Battles” frescoes in the El Escorial monastery complex, which present an expansive, painted panorama of the chief military events of his reign. The second is the posthumous memory of Philip II and the various funerary exequies held in his honour in Spain, Europe, Mexico, and South America. Fernández González argues that the published funerary accounts had a far-reaching impact because of the circulation of repeated, set images, and text.

Each chapter is a case study that stands alone; sometimes, there is repetition. Nevertheless, this book has raised new, pertinent questions, provoking a debate which calls for more research, especially in archives. As Fernández González has rightly said, scholars in the field must undertake a more integrated dialogue and investigation between art history, architecture, and urban studies in early modern Spain and its empire.

ANNEMARIE JORDAN GSCHWEND

Centro de Humanidades, Lisbon & Zurich