

Glauco Gresleri (1930–2016). Parole, progetti, relazioni

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# Ruskin's Impact on Spanish Architecture in the 1980s

Irene Ruiz Bazán  
Politecnico di Torino, Italia

**Abstract** This article analyses how Ruskin's texts were interpreted in Spanish architectural restoration, especially during the 1980s. Ruskin's influence impacted early twentieth-century Spanish culture, but it was forgotten during Franco's regime. Ruskin's ideas resurfaced in the democratic 1980s. Spanish theorists like Antón Capitel and Ignasi de Solà-Morales, among others, reinterpreted Ruskin's principles to shape their theories, recognizing his influence in notable Spanish architectural achievements of the time.

**Keywords** Ruskin. Spanish Architecture. Antón Capitel. History of Restoration.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 Ruskin's Reception in Spain. – 3 Architectural Restoration in Spain during the Francoist Dictatorship – 3.1 The General Tendencies. – 3.2 The Perception of Architectural Restoration at the End of the Dictatorship and the Beginning of Democracy. – 4 Transformative Shifts: Architectural Restoration from Dictatorship to Democracy. – 4.1 New Theories Reexamining Ruskin. – 5 Conclusion.

## 1 Introduction

John Ruskin's influence in the field of architecture has been particularly significant in the field of Architectural Restoration. Often attributed a key role in the *conservationist* positions, Ruskin's views are frequently seen as antagonistic to the *restorative* approaches of Viollet Le-Duc. This article does not aim to explore the origins of this interpretation – primarily based on the ideas expressed in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) and in *The Stones of Venice* (1851) and their subsequent interpretations – but rather to understand how a new reading of his works contributed within the

vast and fascinating architectural landscape of the 1980s in Spain. This case is especially interesting in the European context because Spain's unique circumstances – having been isolated from international restoration theory during the Francoist dictatorship (1939-45) – led to a curious and belated debate on Ruskin's ideas, more than a century after their formulation. This debate emerged during a period of fervent search for new architectural references, especially in the field of architectural restoration (Vitale 2008), reflecting the dynamic and evolving architectural landscape of that time.

## 2 Ruskin's Reception in Spain

John Ruskin's influence in Spain, although still represents a field to be explored in many aspects, was significant in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Among the most notable scholars

who have analysed this influence we can name Lily Litvak, a specialist in *fin de siècle* cultures throughout the Ibero-American world. Litvak has explored the intersections between the poetics of



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*Modernismo*,<sup>1</sup> the intellectual legacies of the *Generación del '98*, the artistic manifestations of the Spanish anarchist movement, and the impact of new technologies, landscapes, and cityscapes on visual and literary expression in Spain and the Americas from the 1800s onwards where she often acknowledges Ruskin's influence as in the case of Miguel de Unamuno (Litvak 1973). Ruskin's ideas spread among progressivist thinkers and significantly impacted various cultural domains, including literature, painting, and archaeology. His deep appreciation for landscapes and ruins, and his interest in past civilizations, resonated with Spanish cultural movements.

In the specific field of architectural restoration, María Pilar García Cuetos has examined the impact of Ruskin's ideas on conservation and restoration practices in Spain before the Civil War. According to García Cuetos, Ruskin's influence in Spain became prominent through the translation and dissemination of his works (García Cuetos 2019). *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* was translated into Spanish in 1900, and several of his other works were published in Spanish and Catalan.<sup>2</sup>

According to García Cuetos, Ruskin's influence was particularly evident in the late nineteenth century with the emergence of archaeological exotism, an aesthetic movement that valued the allure of ruins and decadence. This movement left a lasting imprint on Spanish culture and literature, especially among the Spanish *modernistas*. Along with William Morris, Ruskin played a pivotal role in the development of *Modernismo* in Catalonia. John Ruskin's ideas also profoundly influenced Spanish approaches to restoration and conservation of historical monuments. The ruinist aesthetics, which favored preserving the natural decay of ruins rather than attempting to restore them to a previous idealized state, found a strong proponent in Benigno de la Vega Inclán (1858-1942), Marquis of la Vega Inclán and Royal Commissioner of Tourism under Alfonso XIII. Vega Inclán was a vocal critic of the restoration efforts at the Alhambra in Granada, arguing for the preservation of its existing ruins as

they were shaped by time and nature. He believed that the true value of such ruins lay in their aged, decaying state, which should be maintained rather than altered by restoration efforts. This conservationist approach was echoed also by Josep Puig i Cadafalch (1867-1956), a Catalan architect and restorer. In his work on the Seu D'Urgell Cathedral, Puig i Cadafalch emphasized the importance of minimal intervention, advocating for cleaning and repair rather than complete restoration (García Cuetos 2019). Leopoldo Torres Balbás (1888-1960), another influential Spanish architect and restorer, further articulated the distinction between restoration and repair. According to Torres Balbás, restoration involved reconstructing parts of a monument to their original form, while repair focused on preserving the monument as it was, using new materials only when necessary to ensure stability without attempting to replicate the original appearance.

Ruskin's influence culminated in the development of a conservative school of thought in Spanish restoration theory, opposing recreations of monuments and advocating for preservation of their authentic state. This perspective was incorporated into the broader international framework for restoration, as seen in the 1931 Athens Charter, and was reflected in Spanish legislation from 1933 onwards.<sup>3</sup>

We can also find Ruskin's influences in other prominent Spanish architects, such as Fernando García Mercadal (1896-1985), renowned for his work primarily in Madrid and Aragón. He emerged as a key figure of the *Generation of '25*, introducing Central European architectural rationalism to Spain and playing a pivotal role in founding GATEPAC (Group of Spanish Artists and Technicians) for the Progress of Contemporary Architecture.

While still a student at the Madrid School of Architecture, García Mercadal authored an article published in 1920 in the magazine *Arquitectura*, titled *Ruskin y la policromía de los edificios* (García Mercadal 1926). This text underscores the critical role of colour in architecture, drawing inspiration from John Ruskin's ideas. It highlights

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that, in Spanish, *modernismo* refers to the artistic style that developed between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century in the Spanish region of Catalonia, mainly in Barcelona, and that it is part of the broader European phenomenon of Art Nouveau, although with its own distinctive characteristics. See Sala 2008.

<sup>2</sup> As stated in Litvak 1973, the first translations and translators of Ruskin were: 1897) Atilio Fillier translated *A Joy Forever* with the title *La belleza que vive*. 1900) *La España Moderna* presented a translation of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*. 1901) Cebria Montoliu created an anthology of Ruskin with an interesting prologue for *L'Avenç*. The anthology was titled *John Ruskin*. 1901) The Rodríguez Serra publishing house released *Los jardines de la reina* with a prologue by Pedro Corominas. 1903) Montoliu published a selection of Ruskin's lectures in Catalan under the title *Instituciones de cultura social*. 1905) Manuel de Montoliu translated *Sesame and Lilies* into Catalan. 1906) E. González Blanco created an anthology of Ruskin for *La España Moderna*. 1906) The Prometheus publishing house in Valencia published Carmen de Burgos's translation of *Modern Painters*. 1907) M. Sigés Aparicio translated *The Bible of Amiens* and *Muñera Vulneris*. 1907) Julián Besteiro translated *Sesame and Lilies*. 1908) Sigés Aparicio translated *Unto this last* under the title *Estudios sociales*.

<sup>3</sup> The so-called *Ley de 13 de mayo de 1933 relativa al Patrimonio Artístico Nacional* which was very advanced for its time, remained in force until 1985, the year in which the current heritage law was enacted. However, its principles were ignored, as we will explain, during the Francoist period.

Ruskin's systematic approach, asserting that colour is indispensable for expressing architectural reality and discusses the significance of colour in making buildings more expressive, socially relevant, and optimistic.

We can see the appreciate the influence of these ideas in the project the building *El rincón de Goya* in Zaragoza (1928), which according to Siegfried Giedion, marked Spain's first departure from nineteenth-century tradition (Giedion 1931).

### 3 Architectural Restoration in Spain during the Francoist Dictatorship

#### 3.1 The General Tendencies

The history of architectural restoration in Spain during the Francoist period has only recently been studied through the Spanish R&D&I projects titled: *Reconstruction and Restoration in Spain (1938-1958): The General Directorates of Devastated Regions and Fine Arts*, funded by the Ministry of Science and Technology (2007-0); *Monumental Restoration and Developmentalism in Spain 1959-1975*, funded by the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (2012-14); and *Restoration Architects in Francoist Spain: From the Continuity of the 1933 Law to the Reception of European Theory*, funded by the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (2016-20). These projects aimed to investigate the restoration and reconstruction processes developed in Spain during the Francoist era.<sup>4</sup>

Research spanning over a decade reveals that Franco's regime significantly impacted the conservation and restoration of monuments in Spain, diverging from the progress made during the Second Republic (1931-39). While the Second Republic had begun renewing restoration practices influenced by Ruskin's ideas, the Franco

Dictatorship regressed to nineteenth-century methodologies.

Key findings from the investigations include (García Cuetos 2013) are that the regime strategically employed monumental restoration and reconstruction as tools to propagate its ideology and serve its propaganda needs. This practice often involved revising history to create symbolically significant sites and monumentalize structures that aligned with the regime's values. Despite this overarching agenda, restorer architects generally enjoyed considerable autonomy, except in cases involving monuments of high symbolic importance to the regime. During this period, a methodological shift emerged in the field of restoration, with a new approach favouring reconstruction over conservation. This approach prioritized certain historical phases, particularly the medieval period, and was characterized by minimal documentation of the interventions. Starting from the mid-1950s, the introduction of new materials and techniques, such as concrete, began to significantly impact the future conservation of historical architecture.

#### 3.2 The Perception of Architectural Restoration at the End of the Dictatorship and the Beginning of Democracy

The situation in Spain, compared to other European countries, was also compounded by a lack of specific training in the field of architectural restoration, especially at the theoretical level during those years (Ruiz Bazán 2023). Restoration work was concentrated in the hands of a small group of professionals, the so-called *Arquitectos de Zona*,<sup>5</sup> who, for almost forty years, formed an exclusive circle of specialists

with the authority to work on buildings designated as monuments in Spain. This made the very concept of architectural restoration intrinsically linked to the work of these regime-affiliated architects. It is not surprising, therefore, that the advent of democracy, solidified by the Spanish Constitution of 1978, brought about a true revolution in restoration theory and practice, as it obviously did in many other fields.

<sup>4</sup> See García Cuetos, Almarcha Nuñez Herrador, Hernández Martínez 2010; Almarcha Núñez-Herrador, García Cuetos, Villeña Espinosa 2019.

<sup>5</sup> The *Arquitectos de Zona* were responsible for the restoration of all monuments within a geographic area. They reported to the Ministry of Fine Arts but were not government employees, allowing them to balance their role with other professional commissions. Moreover, they were appointed without undergoing any formal selection process.

#### 4 Transformative Shifts: Architectural Restoration from Dictatorship to Democracy

As evidenced by numerous studies (e.g., Muñoz Cosme 2020), the 1980s marked a true revolution in the field of architectural restoration, but it is worth noting that it will no longer even be called that, favouring the term 'intervention' over 'restoration', thus reflecting a radical shift in ideas and approaches towards the conservation of architectural heritage. This change in terminology is symptomatic of a new understanding of the relationship between the past and the present, as well as a greater awareness of the importance of historical authenticity and the need to adapt architectural conservation practices to the demands and challenges of that time (De Solà-Morales 2006). During this period, we can highlight that restoration as a specific discipline was intentionally omitted from the architectural panorama, drawing from a general position that was willing to include it as a normal architectural practice, as noted by Javier Gallego Roca (1955). Back then, discussing restoration at the Madrid School of Architecture was frowned upon (Gallego Roca 2008). Indeed, as mentioned from the 1980s onwards, the term *restoration* was rarely used.

The rejection of the term and by extension the discipline itself, coincided with a period of intense debate about interventions in historical heritage. This debate, as Javier Rivera notes, was also political and influenced by the unique circumstances of Spain at that time (Rivera Blanco 1990). After nearly forty years of isolation from international discourse, there was a lack of theoretical guidelines for restoration practices.

In this context, Javier Rivera explains that monuments - understood as significant historical buildings - were reclaimed in a "fervent wave of restoration, intervention, and rehabilitation" (25) where the sole purpose was to imbue these structures with their past values and transfer them to the present. This effort was directed by the new democratic Spanish institutions whether stata, regional, or municipal.

According to Rivera, politicians in these institutions viewed themselves as legitimized by society, seeing themselves not only as saviours of the collective cultural heritage but also as heirs and redeemers of its profound historical significance. This reflects the conception of "historical architecture as an institutional instrument of power" (26).

This situation was pivotal in triggering an unprecedented boom in heritage interventions during this decade. A vast number of buildings were restored to house the new democratic institutions and other public uses. More importantly, many architects approached the discipline for the first

time without adequate theoretical foundations.

To understand this situation, we have a key text written by Humanes Bustamante (1990) which is the prologue of the catalogue of an exhibition of the work of the central administration during the first eighties, summarizing the understanding of the restoration's concept under the Spanish Central Administration. Between 1980 and 1985, the Ministry of Culture embarked on an ambitious adventure in the restoration of monuments under its care, including those expressly declared as National Monuments and those of monumental character within Historic Sites. According to Humanes Bustamante, this experience proved to be of great interest as it represented a radical change in the understanding of architectural restoration in Spain. Traditionally, the restoration of monuments in Spain had been carried out by a small group of specialist architects, generally associated with the Chairs of History of Architecture. These architects, forming an elite group of no more than thirty professionals, considered monuments exclusively as works of art, prioritizing aesthetic aspects. This led to numerous excesses in the reinterpretation of monuments and a focus on partial, often decorative or stylistic, elements rather than more modest but effective global conservation efforts. The shift in restoration policy began in 1980, driven by several key factors. An administrative body, the *Servicio General de Restauración*, was created, and architect Dionisio Hernández Gil (1934-2021) was appointed as its director. Additionally, architects Manuel de las Casas (1940-2014) and Antón Capitel (1947), associated with the Chairs of Architectural Projects and Composition, successively led the Technical Service. The restructuring of the *Consejo Asesor de Monumentos*, which previously controlled project programming, transferred this task to the *Servicio General de Restauración*. This new approach received strong political support from that point onward.

The catalogue includes 1,372 interventions. The system of cataloguing, which aimed to give an educational sense to the exhibition, reflects the notable terminological confusion of the time: structural interventions, repairs and restorations in general, replacement and removal of deteriorating elements, interventions on surfaces, introduction of new uses and renovations, monument expansions and conditioning of ruins and archaeological sites

According to Humanes, new restoration policy promoted by the Ministry of Culture could be summarized in three fundamental lines.

First one was that administration viewed restoration as an operation dedicated to the comprehensive conservation of architectural heritage,

applying limited resources extensively *to reach as many monuments as possible*. This involved focusing on structural consolidation and roof repairs to ensure stability and watertightness. The concept of monument was expanded to include not only declared buildings but also many other structures and entire areas within historic centres.

Secondly, restoration was seen as a public service, aiming to repurpose vacant historical buildings for public use, such as local museums, archives, cultural centres, town halls, and public libraries. These interventions required not only consolidation and restoration but also interior remodelling and sometimes expansion to accommodate new uses. According to Humanes, the goal was to balance the preservation of historical or architectural record with the security provided

by the building's new use, under the belief that the best way to preserve a building was to give it a functional purpose.

Lastly, restoration was generally not seen as a specific problem requiring specialization but as a purely architectural issue. Following the text of Humanes the *supposed* specialization of restorer architects had historically led to guidelines favouring either preservative or historicist approaches, rejecting creative intervention. The failure of these stances necessitated reconsidering the problem of working on historical buildings as an architectural challenge. Historical, archaeological, formal, and structural analyses, along with critical evaluations of the architecture, became essential parameters alongside the usual considerations of any architectural project.

#### 4.1 New Theories Reexamining Ruskin

The principles enumerated in Humanes Bustamante's text echo the restoration theory formulated, among others, by one of the directors of the service, Antón Capitel. This theory, known as *Restoration by Analogy*, is one of the few genuinely Spanish contributions to the field of restoration theory. It is detailed in the article *El tapiz de Penélope*, published by Capitel in the magazine *Arquitectura* in 1983 and later expanded in his book *Metamorfosis de monumentos y teorías de la restauración* published in 1988.

In his analysis of John Ruskin's thoughts on architecture, Anton Capitel emphasizes the radical nature of Ruskin's ideas and their significant impact on modern mentality. Capitel interprets Ruskin's opinions on completion works, noting that Ruskin discredits restoration in style and emphasizes the futility of seeking the original form. This perspective underscores the necessary change inherent in all actions and highlights the importance of independent architectural quality. Ruskin warns against copies and imitations emphasizing the necessity of high-quality work over mere replication. Capitel explains that, according to Ruskin, the quality of architecture in "historical falsehoods" (reconstructions in style) (Capitel 1988, 35) is complex and ambiguous. While such reconstructions might accurately interpret the formal structure and details of the original work, determining authenticity remains a central debate. Capitel suggests that these reconstructions can alternatively be viewed independently as architecture, aiming for appropriate completion rather than faithful imitation. Regardless of the restoration criteria, architectural quality must always be a primary objective. This quality is essential to the discipline, and only its instruments can provide the necessary solutions.

Capitel emphasizes also that the contradiction between cultural values and architectural values must always be resolved. For Capitel, "in the most qualified stylistic restorations" (1988, 28), such as those by Viollet, the analysis of original architecture and professional sense of the best authors were accompanied by techniques and traditions similar to the original craftsmanship, providing coherence through constructive authenticity. This authenticity challenged Ruskin's view of medieval work as a romantic myth. However, over time, this coherence between architecture and construction has eroded, leading to what Ruskin described as "vile copies" (Capitel 1988, 35), not only stylistically but also constructively. Modern techniques have shattered architectural authenticity, replacing it with the deceit of "pastiche" (36).

Capitel interprets Ruskin's view on the value of architectural additions, suggesting that these additions should not imitate the original building but rather complete it with architectural quality. This concept later becomes fundamental to restoration by analogy were one of the main ideas is that by conducting a typological analysis of the building and understanding its internal laws, a project can find a compromise for being completed. This involves balancing the modern tradition's principle of maintaining independence between new and old structures, with the dimensional, typological, and figurative correspondence between the old and new parts, aiming for a reciprocal correlation that unifies the whole entity.

Capitel reinforces this argument by emphasizing the specificity of architecture. He asserts that there must be a distinction between true material and support, where architecture and design arts diverge from other traditional plastic arts,

aligning somewhat with literature and music. Architecture, being an object of design, is fully and scientifically represented through drawings and model fabrication, creating an exact correspondence between representation and reality. This correspondence allows architecture to express itself in two different planes. What may not be suitable in the real plane can still be a necessary and legitimate artistic and scientific exercise on paper. Ideal reconstructions serve as a higher-order investigative mechanism, comparable to reproductions in painting or sculpture.

According to Capitel, architectural additions should therefore highlight the firm existence of the concept of archaeological authenticity and substantiate objections to restoration in style.

Therefore, Ruskin contributed a clear understanding that all architectural restoration involves inevitable change, and rigorous conservation is the only viable means of preserving old buildings. From his thoughts, Capitel derives what could be considered a *Golden Rule* for treating valuable historical buildings and cities: if the alternatives are historical mystification and work not fully qualified as such, abandonment or even disappearance is preferable. The conservationist ideology that dominates recent conventional mentality, favouring superficial, deceitful, and merely apparent preservation, is profoundly anti-Ruskinian, contradicting the clearest part of his message.

Capitel relates the restoration positions of recent past Spain, favouring superficial, deceitful, and merely apparent preservation, as fundamentally anti-Ruskinian, aligning the new positions with Ruskin's ideas and as he stated:

Ruskin's most important message, in my opinion, was to say that in reality, there is no possibility of restoring, there is no possibility of recovering the old building. That is why every operation that is done on it is a new operation, a change. (*Monumentos y Proyecto* 1990, 337)

Ignasi de Solà-Morales (1942-2001), an influential architectural theorist and practitioner, expanded on John Ruskin's theories in his work on restoration by analogy. In his 1982 text *Teorías de la intervención arquitectónica* Solà-Morales emphasizes that Ruskin's attitude signifies not merely a rejection of any counterproposal to the existing building but also a denial of any positive action in response to existing structures (De Solà Morales 1982). For Ruskin, a work of art is an intangible entity, a remnant of a grand shipwreck that must be preserved as best as possible. According to Ruskin, nothing should be done to complete, improve, or enhance a work of art. The only permissible action is to save its remains and preserve them

until they endure naturally, without attempting to extend their life beyond their inherent strength.

Solà-Morales states that Ruskin's approach is immensely influential because it has profoundly shaped the contemporary conception of architectural intervention. For Solà-Morales, art is presented as a vestige from a time when artistic creation still thrived. Both Viollet-le-Duc and Ruskin understood the perilous nature of artistic creation's timeline, a concept deeply rooted in Hegelian philosophy. However, while Viollet-le-Duc advocated for aiding the remnants of artistic creation, Ruskin preferred a preservative approach – preventing further destruction rather than trying to prolong the work's existence artificially.

In the introduction to the re-edition of *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* in 1989 Solà-Morales emphasizes that

this apparent contradiction between an extensive written oeuvre and a primary focus on the visual is one of Ruskin's most original aspects. Morales points out that this highlights the conflict and necessity to articulate through written words the excellence of texts where form and content originate from non-verbal discourses – discourses Ruskin deemed more essential and fundamentally experiential than written ones. (De Solà Morales 1989, 10)

Morales also explains that Ruskin's merciless criticism of restorers targets not just the simplistic stylistic imitation of the old academic system, but also reflects a societal malaise stemming from the discontinuity between past and present. By leaving open the question of which formal model to follow and not mandating the primacy of certain medieval styles, the Ruskinian position, according to Morales, established a new framework that would characterize modern artistic discourse from that point onward.

In contrast, we can still find articles such as Fernando Chueca Goitia's 1984 piece *John Ruskin. Un mito olvidado* (Chueca Goitia 1984). Chueca Goitia (1911-2004), one of the *restorer architects* of the Francoist period, argues that Ruskin's theories were untenable today. However, he acknowledges that in their time, these theories made a significant impression due to their vehemence and their magnificent, resonant prose.

The text delves into Ruskin's dilemma regarding the acceptance of modern materials like iron and his advocacy for a return to craftsmanship. It discusses his views on the importance of time in appreciating architecture, the role of shadows, and the significance of historical preservation. The text concludes with a brief biography of Ruskin, highlighting his social and reformist ideals.

The fact that, at the same time, 'the old line' of restorer architects considered Ruskin 'forgotten' while new theorists were reexamining his works illustrates the situation of change and rediscovery that occurred in Spain during the 1980s.

Those years were also very interesting in the professional sphere, with a great number of congresses addressing this topic, albeit avoiding the word 'restoration'. In this context, we must mention the 1987 *Monumentos y Proyecto. Jornadas sobre criterios de intervención en el patrimonio arquitectónico* a meeting held in Madrid, initiated by Dionisio Hernández Gil, then director of the *Instituto de Conservación y Restauración de Bienes Culturales* (*Monumentos y Proyecto* 1990). The meeting generated a fertile debate, though it did not progress as expected, involving prominent Spanish and Italian figures in the architectural field.

The outcome of this debate was fortunately captured in the transcription of the three round tables, with all their "aridity, colloquial style, and extensive

anecdotes" (*Monumentos y proyectos* 1990, 10).

These transcriptions become very interesting for understanding how the figure of Ruskin was perceived and recalled in order to define the different positions of the architects present in the congress. For instance, Salvador Pérez Arroyo criticized the trend of repurposing old buildings, advocating for letting structures age naturally without invasive restorations, declaring that he was aligning Ruskin's principle of allowing buildings to die rather than artificially preserving them. Antoni González Moreno-Navarro clarified that Ruskin did not favour letting buildings fall into ruin but rather emphasized careful maintenance without reconstruction, advocating for visible, honest repairs.

The dialogue between Pérez Arroyo and González highlights the tension between preserving the aesthetic value of ruins and integrating historical awareness into modern architectural practice, reflecting the ongoing relevance of Ruskin's ideas in contemporary architecture.

## 5 Conclusion

With the advent of democracy in the late 1970s and 1980s, Spain experienced a transformative shift in architectural restoration, during which the figure of Ruskin was recovered and reexamined. Contemporary Spanish theorists such as Anton Capitel and Ignasi de Solà-Morales revisited Ruskin's theories, highlighting their continued relevance in modern restoration practices. Capitel's concept of 'Restoration by Analogy', which emphasizes architectural quality and independent additions to historical buildings, drew from Ruskin's views on the futility of stylistic restoration and the importance of maintaining architectural integrity. Ruskin's open-ended approach to formal models, suggesting that the primacy of certain medieval styles should not be strictly adhered to, influenced the new coordinates of modern discourse on art. This adaptability of Ruskin's ideas was integrated into the Spanish approach to heritage intervention, reflecting the evolving understanding and application of his principles in the context of Spain's architectural restoration practices.

We believe that reinterpretations of Ruskin's ideas were fundamental in breaking away from the prevailing historicism in restorations conducted during the previous period. From the 1980s onward, Ruskin's teachings have been understood as advocating for the preservation and consolidation of buildings in their existing state, respecting their history, but followed by the introduction of new design proposals. Crucially, these interventions did not have to adhere to any specific style. These new proposals, whether by contrast or analogy, that is, following to a lesser or a greater extent the compositional principles of the existing building, aim to engage in dialogue with the existing structure without directly altering it. The extreme interpretations of Ruskin's vision, often colloquially reduced to doing nothing or allowing vegetation to overtake the building, are counterbalanced by more reasonable perspectives for contemporary restorations. These perspectives view Ruskin's texts as providing a foundational principle of respecting the integrity of the remains of the building while opening up new design possibilities.



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