

Fernández-González, Laura. *Philip II of Spain and the Architecture of Empire*. University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2021, 240 págs.

Trained as a specialist in royal architecture and *propaganda*¹, and well read on the history of the Habsburg empire, Laura Fernández-González (LFG) brings attentions to sixteenth-century Spanish architecture overlooked in the literature produced before and after the centenary commemorations of Philip II and Charles V². This new study focuses on domestic and administrative space, urban planning, and landscaping.

In the book's introduction, LFG provides a theoretical framework for the project, justifying the sequence of chapters within the context of her main argument: namely that the royal architecture and artistic program pursued in the age of Philip II was not established by the king alone³, nor was it the pure expression of celebrated classicizing architects such as Juan Bautista de Toledo and Juan de Herrera⁴.

According to LFG, the visual and architectural production of Philip II's empire resulted from a long and painstaking process of circulation, adaptation, and hybridization of an envisioned ideal of the capital-city, adapted to the multiple practicalities of the Empire. Philip II was an interested, albeit distant, promoter of architecture. Therefore, the real protagonists of these interchanges were the agents of his vast, multiple, and hyper-organized building bureaucracy – royal inspectors (*visitadores*), foremen (*al-arifes*), architects and architectural agents of different kinds – who themselves circulated between the East and West shores of the Atlantic Sea.

Acknowledging but side-stepping the thorny debates regarding the circulation of architectural treatises and libraries in the Iberian world⁵, LFG focuses on material issues of architectural practice rather than theory and form. Her book draws our attention to the reality of building *in time and site* across the pan-Iberian world, implicitly drawing upon Trachtenberg's definitive *Building-in-time* (2010)⁶, and focusing on some examples only.

In recent years, historians of early modern architecture have embraced epistemology and anthropology in their study of the built environment, calling attention to topics/questions of facture and materiality, as

¹ Laura Fernández González, *Philip II of Spain & Monarchia Universalis: architecture, urbanism, & imperial display in Habsburg Iberia, 1561-1598* (Ph.D. dissertation, Edinburgh College of Art, 2012).

² From 1998 onwards-, see Javier Portús, "Exposiciones conmemorativas del centenario de Felipe II", *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna* XXII (1999): 238-42.

³ Rosemarie Mulcahy, *The decoration of the Royal Basilica of El Escorial* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) and, previously, her dissertation.

⁴ Agustín Bustamante García, *La arquitectura clasicista del foco vallisoletano (1561-1640)* (Valladolid: Institución Cultural Simancas, 1983); Fernando Marías, *La arquitectura del Renacimiento en Toledo (1541-1631)* (Toledo: Instituto Provincial de Investigaciones y Estudios Toledanos, 1983); José Javier Rivera Blanco, *Juan Bautista de Toledo y Felipe II: la implantación del clasicismo en España* (Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 1984); Catherine Wilkinson-Zerner, *Juan de Herrera: architect to Philip II of Spain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

⁵ Fernando Marías, "Diego de Sagredo y sus 'Medidas del romano' (1526), entre España y Francia", in *A constituição da tradição clássica*, ed. Luiz Marquez (São Paulo: Editora Hedra, 2004), 89-104; Fernando Marías, "La familia Mendoza y la introducción del Renacimiento entre Italia y España", *Quaderni dell'Istituto di Storia dell'Architettura* n.s. LX/LXII (2013-2014): 51-60; Fernando Marías, "Entre modernos y el antiguo romano Vitruvio: lectores y escritores de arquitectura en la España del siglo XVI", in *Teoría y literatura artística en España*, eds. Nuria Rodríguez Ortega and Miguel Taín Guzmán (Madrid: RABASF, 2015), 199-233. See also Nuria Rodríguez Ortega and Miguel Taín Guzmán, eds., *Teoría y literatura artística en España* (Madrid: RABASF, 2015); Rafael Moreira, ed., *Tratados de arte em Portugal* (Lisboa: Scribe, 2011); Rafael Moreira, "L'impact de l'humanisme bolonais sur la péninsule ibérique en fin du XV^e et début du XVI^e siècles", in *Arte e umanesimo in Bologna*, eds. Daniele Benati and Giacomo Alberto Calogro (Bologna: Bologna University Pres, 2019), 359-66; Antonio Nunes Pereira, "A relevância do *De Re Aedificatoria* na herança disciplinar da Arquitectura Clássica em Portugal", in *Na Génesis das Racionalidades Modernas*, vol. II, *Em torno de Alberti e do Humanismo*, ed. Mário Júlio Teixeira Krüger (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, 2015), 474-93.

⁶ Marvin Trachtenberg, *Building-in-time from Giotto to Alberti and modern oblivion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

well as concepts like failure, flexibility, site-specificity, and casualty⁷. LFG provides her own contribution to this body of scholarship, profiting from a comparative analysis of Latin American and Spanish architecture, drawing upon the canonical model established by Kubler and Soria⁸.

Chapter 1 dwells with the foundation of Iberian capitals explaining why, in her opinion, the idealized project Philip's capital did not manage to shape Spanish cities nor contain their growth out of the allowed perimeter. Censuring the limits of town planning was a major issue in early modern statecraft and urban planning. LFG argues that if ever there was a royal plan envisioned for the central capitals of the empire (Valladolid, Madrid), it failed due to pluralism and entrenched, local building & living practices⁹.

Chapter 2 focuses on the structuring of the Empire through information and timely communication. The author here focuses on Philip's obsession with bureaucracy and documentation, which brought to the construction of the most impressive control-machine of early modern Europe: the fortress and archive of Simancas. Still today, the Simancas General Archive, conveys a perfect diagram of Philip's imperial organization, being the best repository of his political and economic thought. This surprising and convincing chapter invites the reader to consider the relation between form, content and meaning in early modern architecture, outside the usual frames of residential, religious, and military architecture.

Chapter 3 and 4 enter the great debate on the visual representation of the King/Emperor in the global Iberian empire: a well-developed theme in Iberian studies worldwide. LFG's narrative considers pageantry, ephemeral festivals, and painted cycles¹⁰. Among all these topics, LFG results stronger in chapter 1 and 2.

Overall, LFG succeeds in by-passing the biographical model of studies on the relations between patrons and architects¹¹. She also, and quite intelligently manages to examine sixteenth-century Iberian architecture through a comparative study of construction practices and building legislation, leaving aside the vexed and complex debate on the meaning and the regional and courtly variants of the "Spanish Renaissance"¹². On this regard, the reader should know that literature on local classicisms and hybridization is increasing these days¹³. LFG also remarks on the long-lasting influences of *morisco* architecture in Andalusia and Castille, only to compare it with colonial architecture, which is a new idea.

By not mentioning the term "Renaissance", and using the term Iberian rather than Spanish, LFG detaches Spanish trans-regional architecture and building practices from Italian and even European archi-

⁷ Hermann Schlimme, *Practice and Science in Early Modern Italian Building: Towards an Epistemic History of Architecture* (Milan: Mondadori, 2006); Alina Alexandra Payne, "Materiality, crafting, and scale in Renaissance architecture", *The Oxford Art Journal* XXXII, no. 3 (2009): 365-86; Matthew Mindrup, ed., *The Material Imagination: Reveries on Architecture and Matter* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015); Sandra Karina Löschke, ed., *Materiality and Architecture* (London-New York: Routledge, 2016).

⁸ George Kubler and Martin Soria, *Art and Architecture in Spain and Portugal and Their American Dominions, 1500 to 1800* (New York: Pelikan Books, 1959, part 1).

⁹ See also Sabina de Cavi, *Architecture and Royal Presence: Domenico and Giulio Cesare Fontana in Spanish Naples (1592-1627)* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009) on a failed urban project for Naples in ca. 1600 (conclusions, pp. 246-262).

¹⁰ See also Laura Fernández González and Fernando Checa Cremades, *Festival Culture in the World of the Spanish Habsburgs* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015).

¹¹ Established with Wilkinson-Zerner, *Juan de Herrera*.

¹² Víctor Manuel Nieto Alcaide, Alfredo J. Morales and Fernando Checa Cremades, *Arquitectura del Renacimiento en España 1488-1599* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1989); Fernando Marias, *El largo siglo XVI: los usos artísticos del renacimiento español* (Madrid: Taurus, 1989); Fernando Marias, *El siglo XVI: gótico y renacimiento* (Madrid: Silex, 1992); Fernando Marias, "Geografías de la arquitectura del Renacimiento", *Artígrama* XXIII (2008): 1-17; Marias, "La familia Mendoza".

¹³ Katheleen Christian and Bianca De Divitiis, *Local antiquities, local identities: art, literature and antiquarianism in Europe, c. 1400-1700* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019); Dora Catalano, ed., *Rinascimento visto dal Sud: Matera, l'Italia Meridionale e il Mediterraneo tra '400 e '500* (Naples: Artè'm, 2019); Ida Mauro, "Il foro provinciale di Tarraco e l'architettura tarragoniana negli anni dell'episcopato di Antonio Agustín", *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, LX, no. 1 (2018): 148-69; Ida Mauro, "Vivir en el palacio: los discursos cívicos y anticuarios de la élite de Tarragona (siglo XVI)", in *Arte, ciudad y culturas nobiliarias en España (siglos XV-XIX)*, eds. Luis Sazatornil Ruiz and Antonio Urquizar Herrera (Madrid: CSIC, 2019), 28-41.

texture (except for Flanders), debating it in a global perspective. In this regard, one might object to her single focus on Latin America (especially for the period 1580-1640), and to the absence of Portugal in her discourse¹⁴.

LFG is well acquainted with Latin American architecture and well versed in colonial studies and post-colonial theory, which she intelligently uses to address longstanding debates regarding Spanish architecture, such as the discourse on the *estilo herreriano* or on the *clasicismo a lo romano*. As Jesús Escobar, LFG sees a certain undeniable uniformity in building style from ca 1560 to the mid-1650s, which she calls into terms as *estilo Austriaco*: a theme at the core of Escobar's recent work¹⁵.

A most interesting chapter is n. 1, timely anticipated by an essay¹⁶. Here, the author casts light on the relevance of domestic, non-palatial architecture. This is an interesting chapter, and one certainly admires her ability to return to well-known sources and read them again, aloud, and anew, finding new readings and impacting evidence for her ideas: city building laws (*ordenanzas*), reports (*visitas*) on the right to avoid the *aposeno* tax, and the most famous *relaciones geográficas*. All these sources are known, but LFG reads them anew to discuss building practices across the Empire in ca. 1500-1600 (and beyond).

LFG also casts here and there some very interesting ideas. For instance, she reminds that colonial architecture pre-dated the urban planning of Madrid and Valladolid. She argues in favor of the contextual growth of Iberian capitals on both sides of the Atlantic in the late 16th century. She vindicates the importance of local building practices and materials – including the recycling of ancient cultures' *spolia* – across the globe as differentiating factors within the continuity of a pan-Iberian pluri-cultural architectural lexicon.

One remains hesitant on her unwillingness to include military architecture within her discourse as yet another mean of pan-Iberian architecture and a prime vehicle for the diffusion of Italian and central-European models. This theme is absent probably because already well established as a field on its own¹⁷. Readers may also be surprised by the absence of references to contextual urban planning in Italy or Central Europe and by LFG's bibliographical preferences. Beatriz Blasco Esquivias, for instance, is mostly credited for her studies on *ornato y policía* even though she deals with urban planning in 18th century Madrid, while Jesús Escobar Escobar and María José del Río Barredo have provided equally if not more relevant studies of the very themes that interest the author for an earlier period but are not equally praised¹⁸.

The reading of this book is sometimes difficult: chapters are specialized cut through the international literature. Some materials discussed in the text – such as urban and building legislation (*reales cédulas*, *visitas* etc.) – by nature unfriendly –make it difficult to sustain truly captivating writing. The quality of early modern Spanish architectural drawing is also a bit dry with respect to the generous impulse of Italian

¹⁴ Especially when considering the most recent stand of Fernando Bouza, Pedro Cardim, and Antonio Feros, eds., *The Iberian world: 1450-1820* (London-New York: Routledge, 2020).

¹⁵ Jesús Escobar, *The Plaza Mayor and the Shaping of Baroque Madrid* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) and Jesús Escobar, "Architecture in the age of the Spanish Habsburgs", *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* LXXV, no. 3 (2016): 258-62.

¹⁶ Laura Fernández González, "Architectural Hybrids? Building, Law, and Architectural Design in the Early Modern Iberian World", *Renaissance Studies* XXXIV (2019): 550-71.

¹⁷ Alicia Cámara Muñoz, *Los ingenieros militares de la monarquía hispánica en los siglos XVII y XVIII* (Madrid: Villverde, 2005); Alicia Cámara Muñoz, "Dibujo y secreto en el gobierno de la Monarquía Hispánica: la profesión de ingeniero en los siglos XVI-XVII", in *La formación artística: creadores-historiadores-espectadores*, eds. Begoña Alonso Ruiz *et al.* (Santander: Universidad de Cantabria, 2018, vol. I), 43-55; Pedro Cruz Freire, *Estrategia y propaganda: arquitectura militar en el Caribe (1689-1748)* (Rome-Bristol: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2020).

¹⁸ Beatriz Blasco Esquivias, *Arquitectos y tracistas: el triunfo del Barroco en la corte de los Austrias* (Madrid: CEEH, 2013); Escobar, *The Plaza Mayor*; María José del Río Barredo, *Madrid, Urbs regia: la capital ceremonial de la Monarquía Católica* (Madrid: Marcial Pons Historia, 2000).

architectural design¹⁹. Nevertheless, it is a pleasure to see the de Mora architectural family revealed to the great public²⁰, and we would love to hear more about non-Italian architectural drawing and practice²¹.

With this book LFG has pointed to some important critical points in the debate which deserve future research. For instance, her book calls for the need for more integrated research between art history, architectural design, and urban studies in early modern global Spain (and Europe). The framework of municipal/guild/and royal collaboration in city-founding and city-building is equally underdeveloped in current studies on Spanish (and Portuguese) cities. Her book is the first attempt to discuss them comparatively.

Her useful reckoning and new reading of wonderful bureaucratic sources and archives offers an example to follow, especially nowadays. We might hope that in the twenty-first century students will still be able and willing to return to archives and enjoy discovering new sources that re-frame many questions of European early modern architecture. Indeed, a comparative study of building practices and knowledge in Iberia in ca. 1400-1700 has yet to be written.

In the end, one leaves this reading with the impression that LFG voluntarily drifted away from the traditional writing on the architecture of Philip II, to write a book on less known chapters of Philippine architecture worldwide, sustaining her discourse through a generous opening to (and knowledge of) recent scholarship on colonial culture and architecture in Latin America. The frame of imperial & global Iberia, as much as her engagement with the discourse on multiculturalism and hybridity in art and architectural circulations provide a much sought-off shelter for new approaches to old material²².

We may conclude by saying that the author went very far away to eventually return home. LFG's work will – in fact – definitively impact on the state of the arts of architectural and urban studies in Spain (and Europe), where the influence of colonial and post-colonial theory and studies is yet far from defining the mainstream of university education.

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¹⁹ See Elisabeth Kieven, ed., *Von Bernini bis Piranesi: römische Architekturzeichnungen des Barock*, exh. cat. (Stuttgart: Hatje, 1993); Golo Maurer, *Michelangelo – die Architekturzeichnungen: Entwurfsprozess und Planungspraxis* (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2004); Cammy Brothers, *Michelangelo, drawing and the invention of architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); Alexander von Kienlin, ed., *Entwurf, Planung und Baupraxis im Zeitalter Michelangelos* (Petersberg, Kr Fulda: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2020).

²⁰ Long after Agustín Bustamante García and Fernando Marías, eds., *Dibujos de arquitectura y ornamentación de la Biblioteca Nacional [Tomo I] Siglo XVI y XVII*, exh. cat. (Madrid: Biblioteca Nacional de España, Publicaciones COAM, 1991).

²¹ On architectural drawing in Spain: Fernando Marías, “Trazas, trazas, trazas: tipos y funciones del dibujo arquitectónico”, in *Juan de Herrera y su influencia* (Santander: Universidad de Cantabria, 1993), 351-9; Delfin Rodríguez Ruiz, *Dibujos de arquitectura y ornamentación del siglo XVIII* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nacional de España, 2009); Sabina de Cavi, ed., *Dibujo y ornamento: trazas y dibujos de artes decorativas entre Portugal, España, Italia, Malta y Grecia. Estudios en honor de Fuensanta García de la Torre* (Cordoba-Rome: Diputación de Córdoba-De Luca Editori d'Arte, 2015). On architectural drawing in Germany: Sigrid Kleihues, *Deutsche Architekturzeichnungen des 18-19 Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Susanne-Gropp-KG, 1992); Sebastian Fitzner, *Architekturzeichnungen der deutschen Renaissance: Funktion und Bildlichkeit zeichnerischer Produktion 1500-1650* (Cologne: MAP, 2015). On architectural drawing in Sicily: Marco Rosario Nobile, ed., *Ecclesia triumphans: architetture del Barocco siciliano attraverso i disegni di progetto; XVII - XVIII secolo* (Palermo: Edizioni Caracol, 2009) and Sabina de Cavi, “Giacomo Amato, Pietro Aquila e Antonino Grano: Collaborazione grafica in uno studio/bottega del Barocco Siciliano”, in *Giacomo Amato (1643-1732): I disegni di Palazzo Abatellis. Architettura, arredi e decorazione nella Sicilia Barocca*, ed. Sabina de Cavi (Rome: De Luca Editori d'Arte, 2017), 504-32.

²² Must refer to Peter Burke, *Hybrid Renaissance: culture, language, architecture* (Budapest-New York: Central European University Press, 2016).

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