

Between the Protection of the Urban Landscape and Cultural Tourism: Risks and Opportunities for the Painted Architecture of the Historic Center of Malaga (Spain)

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Abstract

The cultural legacy of the painted architecture constitutes an identity and unique urban landscape for the city of Malaga. However, it is currently highly modified and subjected to the demands of contemporary dynamics, especially in the face of uncontrolled tourism that affects the changes generated by the aggressive real estate dynamics in its historic centre. The vulnerability of this heritage is so great that it is doomed to disappear unless joint action is taken, and this type of research and knowledge is a manifestation of the implementation of strategies and opportunities that demonstrate its high heritage potential. The conservation of mural paintings, their effect on the colour planes, didactics and the incorporation of new technologies into the discourse of cultural tourism are the elements that constitute the axes on which our research is based. In this work, we present the technical work carried out for the cataloguing of the mural paintings in the historic centre of Malaga, an essential point of reference in all methodological processes of knowledge, treatment and enhancement of cultural assets. Our discourse also proposes, as an opportunity for the planning of a model for the development of cultural tourism, the incorporation of new technologies to add to the high degree of technification acquired by conservation and restoration in recent years, both in terms of scientific instrumentation and increasingly precise and sophisticated analyses.

Keywords: mural painting; Malaga; catalogue; heritage; urban landscape; tourism

1. Introduction. The mural paintings of Málaga in the definition and evaluation of the cultural landscape of the Baroque city

Painted architecture constitutes an urban landscape that has been modified over the centuries, at the same time as new planning and management instruments have been approved, such as the General Urban Development Plans and the Special Protection Plans, which have

made it possible to guarantee its continued existence to the present day.

Starting from the concept of immovable heritage, we consider it necessary to transfer this extension not only to the buildings themselves, but also to:

“Any elements that can be considered consubstantial with the buildings and form part of them or their surroundings or have formed part of them, even if they can be separated and form a perfect whole that can

be easily applied to other constructions or to uses other than their original one” (Law 16/1985, art. 14.1).

Looking at the figure of the catalogue, we should point out that it is a complementary instrument of the Urban Planning Law 7/2021, of 1 December, in article 72, developed in terms of its purpose, preparation or registration in articles 95 and 112 of its Regulations, the first of which states that “the purpose of the catalogues is to complement the determinations of the general and detailed urban planning instruments relating to the conservation, protection, enhancement and improvement of elements of historical, cultural, urban, architectural, natural or landscape heritage”.

Therefore, based on the following shared reflection as a working principle in the exercise of heritage protection, we understand cultural valuation as the origin of a working methodology that is progressively shaped and whose objective is to organize the processes of knowledge, reflection and characterisation of immovable heritage in order to establish criteria for action that guarantee compatibility between the safeguarding of heritage values and social function (Castellano et al., p. 37). These values have been forged as a result of continuous learning processes whose definitions may change over time, giving rise to great diversity in both the definitions of heritage resources and the associated values (Jokilehto, 2016).

However, the gradual disappearance of buildings belonging to the baroque period in Malaga, whose facades even include ‘hidden’ paintings, ornamental elements and other decorative resources, puts this unique pictorial heritage of Malaga at serious risk of irreparable loss. The protection of the urban landscape inherited from the baroque city is therefore a necessary exercise, the lack of knowledge of which is posing serious conservation risks and, consequently, the loss of heritage.

Taking into account the definition of the concept of value described by Jokilehto, we can say that values are fundamentally the product of human action, based on parameters found in the relevant socio-cultural and physical contexts. They are therefore the product of learning processes and need to be renewed by each generation of individuals. They are therefore not static, but subject to change over time and cultural times. In fact, values are not physically in heritage objects but associated with them through their recognition. Consequently, when approaching a place or a historical object it is necessary to start by assessing its current value, and in order to have a broader recognition, it will also be necessary to appreciate its history and becoming in time and its cultural context in the past, comparing it with other similar attributes and approaching a more recent heritage construction, that is, characterising it patrimonially.

In this way, cultural heritage values can be identified as layers of perceptions, associated with different aspects or attributes of the heritage resource (Castellano et al., 2024). In 2005, the Council of Europe adopted the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, the so-called Faro Convention. This Convention defined the concept of heritage community, as a key element in the exercise of identifying and adjudicating values: “A heritage community consists of people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage that they wish, within the framework of public action, to maintain and pass on to future generations”.

As a result, it is the community that is responsible for generating shared values associated with a particular heritage resource, be it an urban area or a cultural landscape. In this way, our efforts are aimed precisely in this direction, at giving a voice to the identity heritage of the city of Malaga, highlighting and recovering, through heritage protection, the value of the painted architecture of the Baroque city as a heritage resource and its projection into the contemporary city.

This being our context of work in relation to heritage protection, we should mention how, from the 1990s to the present day, the historic center of the city of Malaga has needed time to recover its 18th-century painted architecture for collective memory and to value it as the unique cultural legacy that it is. At the end of the 20th century, the deterioration of both religious and civil buildings was evident, revealing a decadent city, then elegant and modern as a result of the industrial prosperity experienced in the 19th century. This inherited image of a modern city lacking in colour, in keeping with nineteenth-century aesthetic taste, was revealing the vestiges of eighteenth-century Malaga, where the constant loss of more modern plastering gave a glimpse of colored ornaments on the city's facades. (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1 – Santiago church mural paintings, Málaga (Royo, 2024).

With regard to the recovery of old coatings and their chromatism, interest in their protection arose in the aforementioned chronological framework, with pioneering interventions in Andalusian cities such as Cadiz and Seville, and particularly in the case of Granada with the facade rehabilitation programme in the Carrera del Darro by the architect Gárate Rojas (Gárate Rojas, 1996). In the case of the city of Malaga, the protection of relevant buildings, which prevented their destruction and therefore their paintings, although not their deterioration, was

thanks to the General Municipal Development Plan of 1997 (BOJA of 26 July 1997) and the Special Plan for the Protection and Interior Reform of the Historic Centre of Malaga (PEPRI, 1992).

Other important milestones in the recovery of the paintings were the project entitled Plan del Color del Centro Histórico de Málaga (1996) by the architect Joan Casadevall or the research projects (1996 and 2000-2003) under the direction of Dr. Rosario Camacho where the painted architectures were inventoried and studied with a historical and artistic approach (Camacho Martínez, 2010).

In this context, the current General Urban Development Plan of Malaga (PGOU, 2013) includes in Title XII (art. 12.4.12) a list of 192 properties registered in the so-called 'Historic City' area and which have or are likely to contain 'Painted Architectures' that must undergo a specially regulated intervention for any licence for new construction, rehabilitation or demolition. Between 2021 and 2023, the Catalogue of Mural Paintings of Malaga was drawn up, revising, adapting and completing the list of mural paintings (art. 12.4.12), resulting in a selection and scanning of certain Malaga facades as a preventive conservation measure (Royo, 2023).

In the field of conservation of exterior painted architecture and its inclusion in colour plans, Barcelona was a pioneer with its slogan *Posat guapa*, which transformed a very different reality, thanks to Joan Casadevall and his team, who came to Andalusia. They were followed by Granada, and especially Malaga, whose General Urban Development Plan (2011) has given them specific treatment.

In general, progress was slow, with the exception of specific restoration or rehabilitation interventions that would support an element of this type. However, we do not recognise an interest in internationalising this cultural legacy

which, due to its idiosyncrasy, makes it a unique opportunity to get to know Malaga's cultural heritage. For example, no two painted facades are the same, in order to stand out and become a brand of its own that would resize the cultural tourism image of Andalusian cities (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2 – Mural paintings in Gaona Street, Málaga (Royo, 2024).

2. Working context. Risks and opportunities of cultural tourism in historic cities in the 21st century

Among the new latent threats in historic centers are urban pressure and tourism as risk factors. The thin and delicate line that separates tourist enjoyment from heritage conservation generates a series of obscure and negative issues associated with phenomena such as the overtourism process of heritage or the loss of identity in historic cities (Fig. 3).

With regard to the role of colour in the process of heritage recovery in historic centres, it is known that the cultural legacy of painted facades is represented in a wide area of central, northern and southern Europe. An approach to the different territorial areas of Italy, Spain and Central Europe shows the importance of the integration of these painted architectures, making them part of the historical construction of their urban image. However, with few exceptions,

urban regeneration plans do not show much interest in this cultural heritage. The recovery and conservation of these spaces should be carried out with the understanding and preservation of the principles that underlie the very image of the city.

This fact allows us to establish a scientific methodology of systematic studies of architectural and urban colour in order to establish the most appropriate conservation and treatment criteria for each case. In this way, we propose to maintain the unique characteristics of the urban environment, especially in areas of heritage interest such as historic city centres.

This methodology of colour studies for their integration into protection plans has only been applied in a few Spanish cities such as Barcelona, Malaga and Valencia, among others. In the case of Malaga, the actions carried out by the Archaeology Service of the Urban Planning Department stand out for the amount of work carried out to safeguard this heritage, and for its capacity to take on work that was hitherto pioneering even in terms of methodology, initially using the methodology of the Archaeological Risk Charter for facades with mural paintings.



Fig. 3 – Tourists in the historic centre next to the Church of Santiago in Malaga, with mural paintings on its exterior (Royo, 2024).

However, many buildings with mural paintings on the facade correspond to popular domestic architecture that does not have architectural protection, and in some cases, their state of conservation is ruinous. Hence the need to promote preventive actions and new approaches to the protection also of those paintings identified in the interior of dwellings, establishing, when necessary, the carrying out of subsidiary actions among buildings declared to be in ruins.

3. The project. The protection of Malaga's mural paintings as a challenge for the protection of urban heritage

The conservation of mural paintings, their influence on colour plans, as well as didactics and new technologies incorporated into cultural tourism are the backbone of our work, the result of the project carried out by the research group of the University of Seville HUM1050 in collaboration with the 360 BIM Architecture studio.

Since the end of the 20th century, a strategy of approaching cultural heritage has been considered not so much as an isolated object or set of objects, but as a continuous complex reality in which action is taken on plots of land with diffuse limits.

This intervention methodology forces us to work on the generation of knowledge and transversal views, from different disciplines that add and contribute to the complex heritage fact with which we work. For all of the above reasons, from the beginning of the work of drafting the Catalogue, it was proposed as a fundamental principle to draft a preliminary research phase, capable of providing the necessary knowledge to address the future intervention on a set of real estate assets that represent a series of unique values whose importance and uniqueness make the work we are dealing with significant. (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4 – Mural paintings church of San Agustín, Málaga (Royo, 2023).

Technical and scientific research assumes the methodology of the heritage project, including in a collaborative and coordinated manner the work and research from different disciplines, still in progress and to which this cataloguing project is incorporated. In this way, the methodology is the result of multidisciplinary work and includes different sections that address the following tasks: knowledge based on research and field work, valuation of the assets, diagnosis, definition of criteria (for protection, intervention and/or restoration) and a working framework for the proposals set out.

The research carried out was also aimed not only at defining the instrument for the protection and preservation of the mural paintings of the 'Historic City', but also at limiting the risk of loss of this unique heritage and establishing a systematic knowledge of the mural paintings already recovered. In this context, the following specific objectives are proposed:

- To catalogue individually the properties with facades with recovered mural paintings.
- To make an inventory of the buildings which, although not recovered, leave visible pictorial remains which make them susceptible to protection.
- Inventory newly located buildings that are likely to contain mural paintings as they present formal elements characteristic of this period (ceramic gutters, balcony ironwork, etc.) on their facades.
- Exclude the properties in which it has been found that the paintings do not exist and should therefore be removed from the list.
- Select the most relevant and suitable facades for 3D scanning.

The Catalogue of Mural Paintings of Malaga (2023) represents an advance in terms of precision in the classification of properties with respect to the list of mural paintings (art. 12.4.12). The catalogue includes a list of buildings with recovered wall paintings and those

likely to contain them. The latter buildings are included because possible remains of paintings can be seen or because they present elements characteristic of buildings from the Baroque period. In this way, the proposed list presents a reasoned classification, divided into five groups: A. Buildings with mural painting on facades. Intervened, B. Buildings with mural painting on facades. Not Intervened: visible or tastings carried out, C. Paintings removed and restored not on the original facade, D. Susceptible and E. Out of catalogue.

The catalogue is in itself a conservation tool that contributes to preserving the identity of the city. In addition to this, there is another complementary instrument that provides a still photo of the mural paintings, by means of a 3D survey of 13 facades from among the 73 buildings listed as buildings with mural paintings on intervened facades (group A). The selection of these buildings is based on the following criteria: relevance of the ornamental repertoire (Constitución, Plza. 13-14 or Consulado del Mar, Montepío de Viñeros), relevance of the building



Fig. 5 – Taking of scanning points Arco de la Cabeza, cl. 2, Virgen de las Penas, Plza. 5 (360BIM, 2021).

(Convento de Santo Domingo, Iglesia de San Felipe Neri), stylistic variety of the mural paintings (Carretería, cl. 23 corner Postigo de Arance cl. o Carretería, cl. 42 corner Puerta de Antequera), accessibility (Arco de la Cabeza, cl.2- Virgen de las Penas, Plza.5) and opportunity (Fresca, cl.8).

In the practical case of Malaga and the digitized facades, the methodology used has opted to work with the Leica-RTC360-3D Reality Capture Solution laser, capable of allowing scanning at 2,000,000 points per second and advanced HDR image system, in the creation of 3D point clouds in colour, allowing its completion in less than 2 minutes, a range of up to 130m and an accuracy of 1mm at 10m. with 3 HDR 360 cameras that generate a combined image of 345MPx (Fig. 5).

For the captures, at least three positions of the building were taken to achieve an accuracy of 1mm. The point cloud created by the laser scanning made it possible to generate a BIM model of the current state of conservation (a process known as Scan to BIM). This model (Fig.6) has been used to establish the current state and the main dimensions of the paintings and elements to be analysed, which would be difficult to obtain by other means.

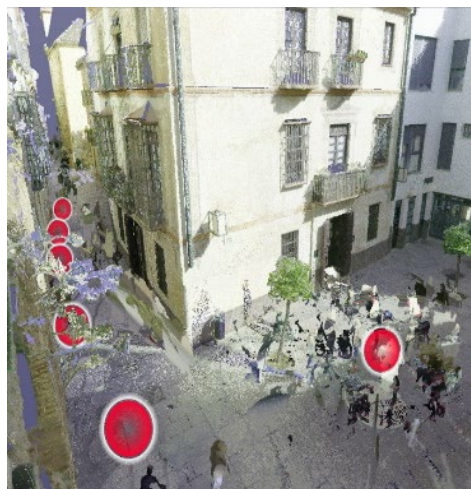


Fig. 6 – Example of scanning process (360BIM, 2021).

4. Conclusions

The conservation and recovery of architectural heritage is a priority for heritage management, a sign of identity and added value for future cultural proposals in terms of sustainability.

The incorporation of new technologies plays an increasingly relevant role in the intervention work, being an essential reference in all methodological processes of knowledge, treatment and enhancement of cultural assets, given the high degree of technology acquired by conservation and restoration in recent years, both in terms of scientific instrumentation and increasingly precise and sophisticated analysis.

There is still much work to be done, especially when it comes to including both aspects of heritage conservation in the same experience. In relation to the degree of innovation of the work presented, it is important to point out that never before have studies like the one we present been carried out in the specific case of mural painting in the city of Malaga, where, in addition to the pathologies obtained, a complete knowledge and approach to the state of conservation of the property in its urban context and its landscape could be collected and identified.

The evolution of the historic center of the city of Malaga, the changes brought about by urban planning, changes in aesthetic tastes over the centuries, health needs at certain times and climatic events have had a significant effect on the conservation of the mural paintings on the façades of buildings dating from the 18th century and belonging to the Modern Age, and have meant an increasing risk to their conservation. Preserving this type of heritage requires conservation policies backed by specific conservation plans. In the case of Malaga, the instrument tendered is the Catalogue of Mural Paintings of Malaga (2023), as a measure for the conservation, protection and improvement of the architectural heritage.

Within this context, the company 360BIM has scanned the facades that, according to defined criteria, have been proposed as significant and representative of the architectural pictorial panorama in order to capture not only the essence of the past but also to contribute to the digital conservation of this unique heritage. This is an important step forward in documenting and recording the current state of conservation of the buildings, being a document of great relevance for the study, monitoring and evolution of deterioration and facilitating future assessments of the state of conservation. Although the field of cultural heritage is full of intentions related to digital approaches and community engagement, there is still much work to be done, especially when it comes to including both aspects of heritage conservation in the same experience and recognition of the community's heritage value (Royo, 2022).

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