

## RESEARCHING AND CATALOGING NEW HERITAGE

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### ABSTRACT

The Spanish civil war left a devastated country. The losses were not only material but also of knowledge. Both because of the bombings and because of the ideological struggles, some irreproducible cultural assets were lost. The historical archives of many cities are some of these assets. It happened especially in small towns since their lack of means to safeguard the archives. This circumstance makes difficult to investigate the architecture carried out at the beginning of the 20th century in the affected areas. However, these adverse circumstances should not prevent the cataloging and study of works of deserved importance. Through the architecture of Vicente Sancho Fuster, it is shown how several buildings designed by him have been located despite the lack of written consultation documentation. The first step carried out was the study of la casa Roglà, in Valencia, of which is preserved the project. Subsequently, the defining characteristics of this building were compared with two existing buildings in Burriana and Turís. Finally, through the common characteristics it has been possible to conclude that the authorship of the three buildings belongs to the same architect.

### KEYWORDS

Vicente Sancho Fuster; Art Nouveau; Valencia; Heritage research; Burriana; Turís.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The devastation caused by wars is one of the greatest attacks that humanity can suffer. In addition to the human and material losses, war causes irreparable damages in the historical memory. One of those is the loss of historical heritage. It is not only caused by the destruction of existing buildings but also affects the archives that can lead us to the location, study and reconstruction of this heritage. The Spanish civil war was no exception. It left a devastated country where the bombings destroyed any kind of buildings and, later, the ideological struggles tried to erase the recent past. Because of this, irreproducible cultural assets were lost, such as the historical archives of many cities, especially, those placed in the smaller towns, since they lacked the material means to protect these archives. These losses make difficult to study the architecture of the first decades of the 20th century as it is impossible to search for references that help to locate and verify the authorship of some buildings. However, there are still other possibilities to achieve this cataloging. Focusing on the architect Vicente Sancho Fuster, the authorship of two of his buildings will be demonstrated through the comparative method despite the lack of support of original written documentation.

## 2. THE AUTHOR AND HIS WORK

### 2.1. Vicente Sancho Fuster

Vicente Sancho Fuster was born in *la Alqueria of La Comptesa* in 1875. After finishing his primary studies, he completed preparatory studies at the School of Fine Arts in Valencia and at the Faculty of Sciences in Zaragoza. Once finished, he studied Architecture in Barcelona, between 1892 and 1904. He obtained the title on March 30, 1904. Once he finished his studies he returned to Valencia where he made his first work in 1904 during that same year. The most notable during that year was the intervention in the Roglà house. Back in his homeland, he carried out countless works in several towns, such as Valencia, Requena, Turís, Oliva and Burriana, in addition to developing the work of municipal architect in Burriana and Turís (Mora, 1912). He had a very active life within the profession, earning the admiration of his peers, as demonstrated by the words of Francisco Mora in the article he published in *Arte y Construcción* in 1912, two years after Sancho's death:

“Los arquitectos, verdaderamente condolidos, acudimos a rendir el último tributo a nuestro inolvidable colega; los artistas, ante su compañero y alma del Círculo, supieron hacer sentir cuánto le querían, con delicado homenaje que no olvidaremos; los obreros, más que la pérdida del arquitecto, lloraban la del padre que tanto se afanó por ellos.” (Mora, 1912: 259). (The architects, truly sorry, went to pay the last tribute to our unforgettable colleague; the artists, before their companion and soul of the Círculo<sup>1</sup>, knew how to make you feel how much they loved him, with a delicate tribute that will not be forgotten; the workers, more than the loss of the architect, wept for the father who worked so hard for them.)

He was part of the team that was in charge of drafting the statutes for an Association of Architects of Valencia. And he was the vice president of the Círculo de Bellas Artes, with his friends Vicente Ferrer and José Luis Calvo (Mora, 1912). Unfortunately death befell him at the age of 35, after having developed only his profession for 6 years. Like most of his colleagues, Vicente Sancho developed various styles within the period known as Eclecticism that defined the early stages of the 20th century (Goerlich, 1981). As for Art Nouveau, it arrived late to Valencia and it was first introduced by Cortina. After him, Vicente Sancho, together with his colleagues Vicente Ferrer (Mestre, 2010), Demetro Ribes (Aguilar, 2007), Carlos Carbonell (Valles, 2017) and Francisco Mora (Jimenez, 1987; Magro, 2017), settled the foundations of Art Nouveau in Valencia. These young architects had been influenced both by Otto Wagner who participated in the VI *Congreso Internacional de Arquitectos* held in Madrid in 1904 (San Antonio, 1996) and by the great modernist architects who were already working in Barcelona, such as Domeneque i Muntaner.

### 2.2. Roglà House

One of the first emblematic works of Vicente Sancho Fuster was the intervention in the refurbishment of Pedro Roglà's house, at 12 Bordadores street in Valencia. He carried it out in 1906. It was an intervention project on an existing building. There are different documentary sources that relate this performance of Vicente Sancho. The most important is the work license file in the Historical Archive of the city of Valencia. It includes the project carried out by Vicente Sancho. Despite the project only includes the modifications to the façade, by consulting the building license application, the intervention was on the entire building. The authorship of this building is corroborated in different journals such as *Arte y Construcción*, where in 1912 Francisco Mora published a laudatory paper about Vicente Sancho.

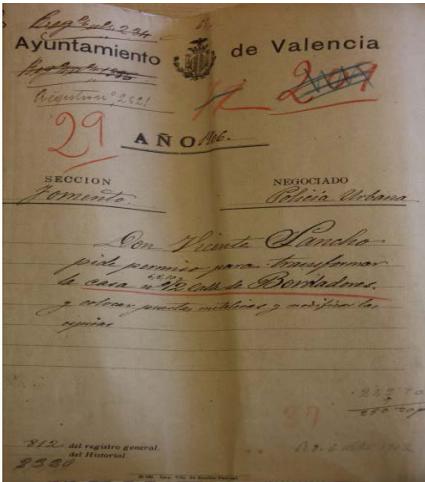


Figure 1. Valencia Municipal Historical Archive works dossier. Source: (Burguete 2017)



Figure 3. Magazine. Source: (Mora, 1912)

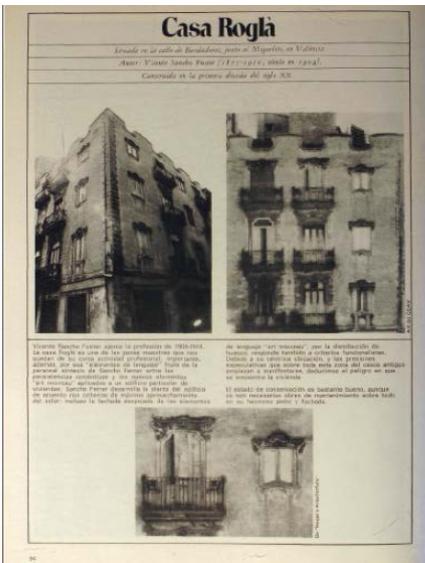


Figure 2. Magazine. Source: (<http://www.a16-01.com/pdfs/CAU/1975/CAU750901096.pdf>)

In this building, Vicente Sancho showed characteristics that he repeated throughout his work. First of all, he organized the façade openings (windows and doors) in a grid to achieve the proper order of its style, following the characteristics that remind the Secezion. This characteristic is found in another of the reforms carried out by Vicente Sancho, Espert Building and also in other of his new buildings such as the House of the Swallows or in the projected building on Felix Pizcueta Street, all of them located in Valencia. Another characteristic of Vicente Sancho's work is to place the windows in the plain panels of the façade and the decoration around them. With this stylistic device he highlighted the decoration which usually was based on floral elements reminiscent of the JungenStil (Mestre, 2007). This resource can be seen in another building by the same author in Valencia, such as the House of the Swallows.

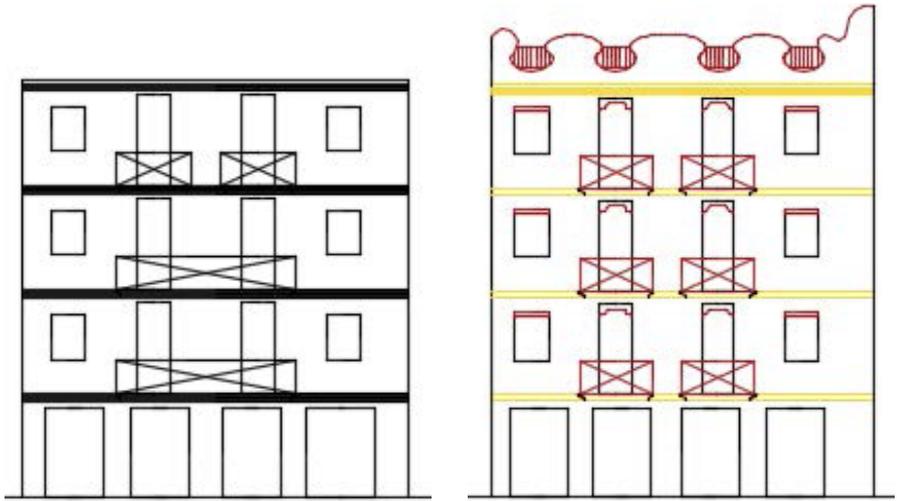


Figure 4. Drawing of the original façade and the refurbished façade. Source: (Burguete, 2017)

A third characteristic is the treatment of the materials of the façade. The treatment of the ground floor is different from the rest of the façade so that it becomes, in all its height, the plinth on which the building sits. In the same way, as it has been said, the parts of the façade where the decoration is placed have flat finishing so as not to get mixed up with this. Finally, one of the most notorious characteristics of this building was the cornice made through warped shapes that seem to give the building a finish formed by harps. With this, Sancho hid the roof of the façade while giving it dynamism.

In conclusion, in this building we can discover several characteristics that Vicente Sancho will reproduce in all his works. These are the composition and symmetry both on the facade and on the floors, the treatment of the materials, the decoration and the cornice.

### 3. ANALYSIS

In the magazine *Arte y Construcción*, Francisco Mora names two buildings

designed by Vicente Sancho, the house at 7 Mayor Street in Burriana and the house of *Lamberto Lacasa* in Turís. Unfortunately there are no historical archives in these towns in which the license application of these constructions were collected. On the other hand, inquiries to the corresponding Cadastral Offices provide confusing data. In the house placed in Burriana, 1920 is the year of construction according to the Cadastral Office. On the other hand, the house in Turís is dated in 1940 by the same office. Both dates prevent the assignment of their authorship to Vicente Sancho, since he died in 1910. But, the National Cadastral Agency advice that the dates included in both files are approximate, due to the lack of data indicating the exact year of its construction. So there is still the possibility that both buildings were built by Vicente Sancho.

Given the lack of written documentation, the only remaining possibility is to carry out a comparative study of the characteristics that define the work of Vicente Sancho in order to corroborate or reject Vicente

Sancho's authorship of the Burriana and Turís buildings.

As previously mentioned, there are 4 essential points in the architecture of Vicente Sancho:

- Order and symmetry
- The decoration
- Treatment of materials
- And the originality of the cornice

Analyzing each point separately it could be verify the similarity of these three buildings.

### 3.1. Order and composition

Following some trends marked in Art Nouveau, such as it is observed in Otto Wagner's work, composition, order and symmetry characterized the work of Vicente Sancho. These characteristics were reflected in all his buildings. In the House of the Swallows these concepts were taken to the extreme since symmetry and order not only affected each building but, at the same time,

were extrapolated to the group formed by the three. In other of his works on an existing building, Espert house, one of the main actions he carried out was the modification of the windows so that they remained within the grid that marked the order of the façade. In the house in Bordadores street, the windows were also located within this grid on both façades. This characteristic was also used in the Lamberto Lacasa's chalet, since the windows of all the facades are places in the same grip.

Symmetry is an important characteristic represented both on the façade of the house in Burriana and in that of Turís. On the main façade of Lamberto Lacasa's chalet, the axis of symmetry is marked by the central balcony. This was designed in a different size and coincided with the access door. In this way, both openings marked the central axis on which the façade folded. In the case of the house in Burriana, the axis of symmetry is located in the center of the façade, not being highlighted by any characteristic element.



Figure 5. Symmetry axis of the façade. Turís and Burriana building. Source: (Burguete, 2017)

### 3.2. Decoration

One of the most outstanding characteristics of the work of Vicente Sancho was the decoration. Due to his training as a sculptor, he pampered the details and production of his work. In all his buildings, he placed the decoration on the flat panels of the façade to highlight it. At the same time, he placed it around the windows. In another element in which he focused his attention in terms of decoration were the cast iron balconies. In the Roglà house this decoration was of floral motifs. In this case, the decoration consisted of a central cluster of flowers completed in both corners with a flower vine. The whole set was framed in a sinuous frame in relief. In the same way, plant elements were observed in the balconies.

Plant motifs were repeated throughout the work of Vicente Sancho. The decorative set of the windows in the Roglà house coincided with the design of the stained glass windows by the same author in the British cemetery in Valencia. The decoration of the windows in the house in Mayor street of Burriana was identical to that of Bordadores street, both in design, composition and execution.

The Chalet located in Turis lost all its decoration. It only preserves the shape of the outer frame that encompassed it. The shape of said frame coincides with the two previously described, which suggests that it would contain a decoration similar to the one they have. This idea is reinforced by the decoration of the central balcony. This one, although in a simpler way, is decorated with plant forms in the same way as the other two houses.



Figure 6. Window decoration. Casa Roglà. Calle Bordadores, 1. Valencia. Source: (Burguete 2017)



Figure 7. Stain glass window. British cemetery. Valencia. Source: (Benavent 2017)



Figure 8. Window decoration. Calle Mayor, 17. Burriana. Source: (Burguete 2017)



Figure 9. Window decoration. Lamberto Lacasa House. Turís. Source: (Burguete 2017)



Figure 10. Cornise of the three building. Source: (Burguete 2017)

### 3.3. Treatment of the materials

The use of different finishes in the façade materials was the third characteristic commonly used by Vicente Sancho. In the Roglà house he used a much repeated resource in his work, which is to give a different treatment to the ground floor in all its height. In this way, it managed to settle the building in a very powerful way by making a one-story-high base.

In this way, it also contrasted the upper floors by giving them a flat finish. This finish allowed emphasizing the decoration of the windows, highlighting it, since there were no interferences between the decoration and the finish of the materials.

### 3.4. Cornice

The cornice used by the architect in the finishing of the house in Bordadores street reflected originality. It was formed by curved lines that resembled lyres. This action was not found in any other building in Valencia. However, it was reproduced in the two buildings under study. Both in Burriana and in Turís, this unusual type of action was repeated, showing the originality of the author of both.

them with the defining characteristics of the work of Vicente Sancho extracted from the study of those buildings that do have prior documentation. Those were order and symmetry, reminiscent of the Secession, and the special treatment of materials and decoration with more representative tendencies of the JungenStil. Added to these generic characteristics, there was an especial characteristic of one of his most emblematic works, the performance he carried out in Pedro Roglà's house, which is its special cornice. According to all the characteristics extracted, a study of the buildings of Turís and Burriana was carried out. They fulfilled both the generic characteristics of Vicente Sancho and the particular characteristics of the Roglà house. All the facades were design according to a grip, with the same material treatments and with a symmetry axis. But at some points, comparison was not necessary since the decoration of the windows and the cornice are exactly the same in the three buildings. The result of this analysis allowed to affirm that, despite the lack of documentary data, the architect of the three buildings was the same, Vicente Sancho. In this way, new buildings can be cataloged both for their study and for their conservation.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

During the study of the work of Vicente Sancho Fuster, reliable information about it could only be found in the Municipal Historical Archive of Valencia, apart from the data collected in the article by Francisco Mora published in 1942 and in some sporadic mentions of his work in other publications. Due to the disappearance of the historical archives in the smaller cities, information about of the chalet of Lamberto Lacasa in Turís and the house located at 17 Mayor Street de Burriana was not possible to be found. For this reason, the procedure that was decided to follow to corroborate the authorship of these buildings was to compare

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