

ENGLISH

English translation by Paula Olmos

The Prado Museum. An obsession.

Miguel Ángel Baldellou

When Floridablanca commissioned Juan de Villanueva to design the project for a new building that was to complete the Western side of the Paseo del Prado by occupying the layout of an unfinished construction, probably Sabatini's, he did not impose the author any definite programme. It was the architect, then, who took the responsibility of determining the building's requirements and their proper arrangement. There is, since then, a latent conflict in this work of architecture between the container, a perfectly defined formal composition, and the ambiguous and changeable contents, which has frustrated the satisfactory completion of a work which always aspired to be "finite".

The two facades, limiting its long North-South axis, parallel to the Paseo del Prado, defined its maximum length and restricted any possible expansion in that direction. This North and South facades, included in two pavilions whose masses seem to balance the composition, confine the building's main axis developed along the open gallery wing, which just seems to be a means to connect them and which bears a central element, dividing it into two halves and defining a transversal axis.

This basic scheme had to be built in a rather difficult site in which the surrounding conditions made of the project a prolonged obstacle race which the author traversed by means of rather witty solutions. But these became new obstacles and sources of uncertainty for the new architects who came to continue with Villanueva's work when he died and left it unfinished.

These "loose ends" of an uncompleted architectural work which was supposedly based on a powerful idea became the obsession of the architects subsequently appointed to solve the problems of the building.

The site's profile, with a marked double unevenness between its North and South, West and East extremes, suggested Villanueva the solution of this conflict by the arrangement of the building's contents in two autonomous stories with their access at different levels. The North entrance led to the upper floor (the North facade was just one-story high) and the South access, to the lower floor. This unevenness between the North and South extremes was visually absorbed by means of the fairly long Western facade, as it showed the building's two complete stories and bore a central element which interrupted the line of the site's pitch. The East-West slope was ignored by the composition as the building was almost erected against the site's rear embankment. But this solution, which left the rear end of the transversal wing at a rather lower level than the neighbor facade of Los Jerónimos, made of this part a controversial point of the project.

Thus, the initially adopted flat end was changed for an apse but left unfinished. In any case, this way of concealing the building's rear facade made possible the addition of new constructions to the original gallery which could be rather invisible but not at all innocuous.

The height of the North access (Goya square) in relation to the Eastern and Western facades was the origin of one of the basic problems of the building. Villanueva had built a curved ramp ascending from the Paseo del Prado towards the entrance with a concave supporting wall looking South and going along the full height of the lower story, but this solution was soon considered inadequate. This ramp was, nevertheless, well justified in the Academy's Project (see central poster). In any case, it was the source of a dilemma which might have admitted different solutions.

Another important conflict was the scarce connection between the building's two levels. Either the central wing, or the extreme pavilions could have served this purpose. But the project built by Villanueva was not conceived as a unique, two-story institution and there was no clear solution for that communication. The different interpretations of Villanueva's central wing determined posterior operations in this sense.

The building was rather difficult to complete as a mere architectural structure but it became even more of a challenge when the function finally assigned to this container was that of housing a Museum.

This was the source of many of its secular problems. When they decided to fill this container with its impressive artistic contents, the building became a secondary matter. Its architectural value was minimized in relation to the increasing requirements of the collection. There was not enough space, the building's arrangement was inadequate and difficult to adapt for mass visitors and, moreover, it was not comparable in size to other similar buildings in Europe.

The building was not prepared to exhibit such a collection and it had to suffer continuous adjustment and enlargement operations. Problems which could be imputed to the collection's tremendous requirements, and which were never clearly stated, were attributed to the building and, so, to its architects. The solution of the formal conflicts of Villanueva's unfinished work, became an obsession for them. This obsession affected as well the architects appointed to adapt the Museum to its many and increasing demands along the building's history, as those who have taken part in the many contests organized in the latter years. The general, even international, avowal of the building's

difficulties has revealed the significance of Villanueva's loose ends.

Many of the architects who have tried to solve these enigmas have based their approach on the search for the author's authentic intentions in designing the building. I have recently stated (*Arquitectura* No. 307) my opinion about the difficulties of trying to find these real intentions in extant documents after the author's decease. In the case of the Prado, the difficulties are even greater, as we almost have no documents at all. In this sense, Rafael de la Hoz's view (see his report to the Royal Academy in this same issue) is, probably, rather too radical. The really suggestive version of the project he refers to, the only one signed by Villanueva (see central poster), should, nevertheless, justify his exalted defense of the original possibilities of the design.

All the operations previous to the last contest have been dictated by a supposed interest in "respecting Villanueva's real intentions" and so, all the architects involved have been slave to an uncertain and, in any case, unknown idea.

The first post-Villanueva intervention was that undertaken by Antonio López Aguado between 1794 and 1826 in order to adapt the building to its new function, that of housing the Royal collection of paintings. Later on, in 1853, Pascual Colomer's project assumed the completion of the unfinished central apsed hall as a double height space with an upper gallery for the exhibition of paintings in two differentiated levels. This was the first of a series of unprejudiced and drastic operations so characteristic of the late 19th century. Another example could be Jareño's 1890 removal of Colomer's gallery and the erection of a floor structure supported by a line of metallic pillars parallel to the building's transversal axis which would bear the Velázquez Hall on the upper floor. The final operation undertook by García de Paredes in 1981 recovered Villanueva's original idea for this space as he wrote "Assembly hall" in the corresponding plans. By means of excavating several rows of seats, the building could finally count on a magnificent double height Assembly and Concert Hall.

Jareño was also responsible for the 1882 solution to the conflict between the North and West facades by means of an exterior staircase that was to be modified, in 1943, by Pedro Muguruza. This staircase permits nowadays, the access to both floors from the same (North) facade.

All the mentioned operations just completed or modified the original design. In 1914, though, the Museum suffered its first expansion which augmented and altered the building's original layout and was based on a project by Fernando Arbós who fortunately decided to preserve Villanueva's rear facade, although it became a facade over a court. But once the first enlargement was finished, it was necessary to undertake new projects. In 1956,

Chueca and Lorente added a new bay to Arbós' wings on their Eastern side and, in 1964-65, José María Muguruza occupied the courts left by Arbós between the original building and its expansion.

In this context, Lafuente's project for the building's climatization might be considered secondary.

The mentioned enlargement projects had almost been improvised, fostered or not by the Museum's authorities after considering their available budget and the proposals made by the Museum officially appointed architects. This was the case of Chueca's different proposals (the one realized and the frustrated ones). But this tendency was stopped once there was a determined resolution to "modernize" Villanueva's building. The old fabric began to be considered too old and obsolete and this was the origin of what, in my opinion, is the basic error of the posterior process regarding the Prado. The confusion between the container and its contents.

Only Carrero Blanco's death frustrated the approval for a new project by Chueca, supported by the Minister Julio Rodríguez, as the morning of the Prime Minister's assassination was the date appointed for the final interview with the architect.

It was the architect Rodríguez Orgaz, back from Exile, who, in 1975, demanded in the papers the necessary "modernization" of the Prado Museum. He even went so far as to

make a serious proposal to the Ministry, but his project was never undertaken. Our architect was, nevertheless, obsessed by the issue and continued with his proposals until 1993 adapting his ideas to the new circumstances. In 1995, the Cánovas Foundation published his work in a book whose indicative title was "El Gran Prado" (The Great Prado).

In 1993, the Ministry of Culture commissioned the architect Rodríguez Partearroyo to design a new project for the expansion of the Museum. His idea was not only extend the underground space of the institution, as in Rodríguez Orgaz's project, but also recover its original image.

Partearroyo's proposal, which implied a sensible respect for history, was nevertheless elaborated in a modern language.

It was an occasion to stimulate the attention of the public on the building's problems and provoke a debate that, fragmentary and biased as it might have been, has been kept alive until nowadays to be the basis of the successive contests. The first competition, a restricted one whose winning project by Hernández Gil and Olalquiaga is now being realized, was just intended to solve the urgent problem of the building's roof. The last one is the recently organized International Competition for the Prado Extension.

Regarding this last contest, I must say that what I have called Villanueva's loose ends have become the keystone of the different proposals. One of the supposed flaws of the original

building for its correct operation as a museum is the number of entrances. There are too many of them and none is adequate for the modern concept of a museum's reception hall. The institution requires an ample space as main entrance which could welcome, inform and orientate an incredible mass of visitors. The special disposition of the building volumes could suggest the location of this space either by its North or South extremes or before its main facade. In any case, the importance of the annex spaces would always advise the underground location of this expansion area. That was basically the solution adopted by Rodríguez Orgaz and Partearroyo in their respective projects, and this was the approach of many architects taking part in the recent competition. In most cases they decided to place the entrance by the North facade under the present Goya square. Muguruza's staircase suggested the appropriateness of this option. The contest's written documentation did also encourage it. The very structure of the building and its surrounding area, though, limited by Villanueva's Murillo Gate, could suggest the location of this great vestibule under the Museum's South square. This was precisely Chueca's proposal, which also included the addition of a new element, designed by Goya whose formal appropriateness was indubitable.

The third option, the central position of the entrance, presents some formal problems which seem rather difficult to solve nowadays. That is also the reason why the suggestion of



the architect De la Hoz of recovering Villanueva's intended loggia as represented in the, so called, Academy project seems to be a rather hazardous operation. This could be, nevertheless, a possible way of managing the conflict imposed by the change of use in the Paseo del Prado transformed, nowadays, in a rapid route with high noise and pollution rates, rather different from the tranquil space known by Villanueva. If we consider the necessity to adapt the Museum to its new function as a mass leisure center, we must take in account, besides the creation of a new great vestibule, the necessary articulation and easy communication between its main spaces. It seems that, as in the case of the reception area, the possible positions for this connection are again, the extreme wings and the central section. It is rather difficult, though, to make the expansion bays (from Arbós' to Muguruza's) participate in this communication nucleus. The possible occupation of the apsed wing with a great staircase, apparently indispensable in any important international Museum, as has been suggested by many of the projects, does not settle the problem; moreover, it affects one of the most interesting operations undertaken in the Prado, the mentioned García de Paredes' assembly hall. It would even pose a new conflict. From the point of view of Villanueva's conception, a great staircase in such an enormous space, a clearly baroque and spectacular element, would contradict the sober spirit and relatively modest size of the building's main spaces. We should also take in account the formal difficulties of designing such a prominent and visible element. The recent competition has communicated the Prado obsession to many architects, so far unaware of such a challenge. And most have been affected by the syndrome of the myth (a myth is always more impressive in the intellectual distance, when its real power remains unknown).

Could we talk about a time before and after the last contest for Villanueva's building?

It seems rather evident that the building is not anymore such a sacred idol. We can say that the work has been deprived of its aura by the, many times rather bold, judgment of both the architects taking part in the contest and those who have just decided to observe and follow the events. But after all this process, after the contest and its result, the building and its author have been strengthened and revaluated.

It should be evident for the Museum's authorities, that they should be more prudent in the future.

The concept of Cultural Heritage should also be applied to the building and not only to its contents. Villanueva's work of architecture should not be altered, modified, expanded and manipulated as if its artistic value was just a secondary matter in relation with its function. Nobody would dare to suggest such operations with an exceptional painting by Velázquez, Goya or Bosch, for example. If the collection housed by the Prado is so problematic, its

requirements should be clarified and resolved. The number of works exhibited might be excessive. And, probably, it stores mostly minor works in its deposits. Visitors are probably too many and the structure of the building is not prepared for such an enormous mass. The building cannot be blamed for all these problems and, so, should not be chastised with alteration. On the other hand, the sincere and capable architects who have taken part in the competition, cannot be blamed for their incapacity, according to the jury, to solve the unsolvable problems posed by the Prado obsession.

The Prado Museum, the building and its collection, is something more than a museum. The appropriate management of such an institution should imply a kind of State Covenant, protected from political change and frivolous or just ignorant incompetence, independently from electoral uproar, untimely situations and fashionable waves.

The importance of the building has obsessed many architects who, although accepting the impositions of a mistaken approach, have employed their best arms: labour, imagination, sensibility and knowledge, in trying to save our victim. They are not responsible for the lamentable result of a process mistaken from the beginning.

Not long ago, I published an article, "Designing a Museum" (Arquitectura No. 298, pages 10-12), in which I exposed some

questions which I consider rather fundamental. A museum is a building which houses something which is worth being exhibited, something exceptional. The container should also be so. It seems evident that the building should try to match its collection and transmit its visitors that same message implied by its contents.

In this sense, an architect commissioned to design a museum should have a certain moral authority.

We are convinced of the fact that most architects have tried to offer respectful solutions to the problems posed by the competition's written documents, by employing their best arms before the jury. It seems they have not been able to persuade them. The question is that the solutions given to particular problems will never resolve the global difficulties disguised by the contest's acknowledged aims. It should never have been organized in such terms.

We could try to find again Villanueva and Floridablanca and rely on their moral authority. While this is not possible, let us wait.

Let us liberate the building of the burden we have imposed upon it and use it in the best possible way. Even as the plus-que-parfait museum for a plus-que-parfait collection (according to Pérez Sánchez).

In this sense, we can even say that the verdict of the last competition might have been correct. ■

The Prado Museum's constructive biography

By Pedro Moleón Gavilanes

The building of the Prado Museum, as we can see it today, is almost a collective work of architecture, a work in whose history we can trace the labour of more than twenty architects involved as well in significant or minor operations. The first one, as everybody knows, was Juan de Villanueva and, in fact, he is considered its real author in spite of the fact that his project was intended for a great "Arts and Sciences Palace" and he could not even finish it. We must nevertheless admit that, although the building we know is the result of the work of many, its architecture is the exclusive outcome of Juan de Villanueva's genius. That is, the idea which dominates the building as a whole and which provokes our emotion belongs to its real author. But the question about this idea and this strong emotion, about what is in the Prado Museum which provokes it, implies the study of the building's constructive biography. In fact, the answer should reveal us something about the Museum initially designed by Villanueva and the role of the subsequent reforms and

enlargements suffered by the building in its 200 years.

Some months ago, in this same magazine (Arquitectura, No. 304, pages 113-117), I commented the recent fac-simile edition by the C.O.A.M. of an interesting manuscript written by Villanueva in 1796 describing his work. In this text we can find four fundamental ideas which explain the project and which will help us to analyze the works undertaken during period between 1785 and 1808 under the direction of the author: First: the museum and the gallery are integrated into a unit, they are mutually identified (ideal and structurally) by means of their typological correlation. Second: the land's profile, as one of the site's conditions which determine certain features of the project, becomes rather important in the building's inner organization, as it permits the creation of different accesses at different levels by maintaining or altering the terrain's height. Third: the building houses two different institutions, the Museum and the School of Botanic and Chemistry, with entries at different

levels which are located on the opposed North and South facades perpendicular to the Paseo del Prado and whose dependencies occupy the whole length of the building, each at its own level. Fourth: the main facade of the building, developed along the Paseo del Prado, is, in fact, the lateral facade of two ground floors located one upon the other. The only element which responds to this front is the assembly hall, located in the center, perpendicularly to the main axis and dominating the composition. We will make a brief analysis which will reveal us the significance of all these elements in the present building and how their preservation or disappearance can be easily perceived.

Regarding the first point, the unity of Museum and gallery (which presides the image of this building whose architect just called the Museum), we see that it refers to the upper level which was gained by means of a curved ramp, unfortunately demolished, that climbed up to the Ionic portico of the North facade. From this portico, we enter an also Ionic Rotunda which is the main vestibule at this level and from which one gains a hallway previous to the great Gallery. This latter was the real museum, and was originally illuminated by means of upper clerestory windows under the barrel vault instead of the four current skylights. The big length of the gallery ends up in another rotunda which completes the route and the composition and directs us backwards towards the North gate which will be our exit now. So the whole public space at this level is conceived as a feasible route, a to and fro circulation in a controlled circuit closed over itself between the two rotundas. The gallery and the museum are a conceptual unit in which the use and the form, the function and the image are one and the same thing and which does not only determine the inner arrangement but still is clearly expressed along the facade over the Paseo del Prado by means of the Ionic colonnade which occupies the whole length of the gallery's lateral side.

Regarding the second point (the land's profile as one of the designing conditions), we notice at once how the site chosen for the building contains the seed of Villanueva's decision to take advantage of the significant unevenness. In fact, the building is erected over a doubly sloping site (with an important pitch towards the Paseo del Prado and a smooth one towards the Botanic Garden), whose apex is located at its Northeastern extreme. But this natural pitch of the land is not used as the building's bearing plane. Villanueva will mould the land and create a terrace on whose flat bottom the building will be laid. The rather smooth slope maintained for the building's settlement is visually absorbed by means of a granite socle and a loggia that was never built and which, placed in the same plane as the facade of the lateral pavilions, would go all the way along the Western facade, as an stylobate to the central

Doric portico. The loggia was intended to solve the relation between the sloped street and the building's longest facade. This same natural pitch permitted the ventilation and lighting, by means of five windows, of the only original basement area designed by Villanueva in the South wing, looking towards the Paseo del Prado and the Botanic Garden.

The third point (the building including two autonomous levels) can be thus analyzed. The upper level, accessible by means of the mentioned curved ramp at the North facade, housed the Museum-Gallery, and the lower level, whose entrance was placed on the South side, the Botanic and Chemistry Schools. From the South entrance one gains a hallway leading towards two corridors along the Eastern (demolished) and Western arcades. These two corridors enclose two large rectangular rooms. Circulation at this level surrounds these two rooms as if they were real covered courts and leads towards the crypt-rotunda at the North side which make us turn back towards the South entry.

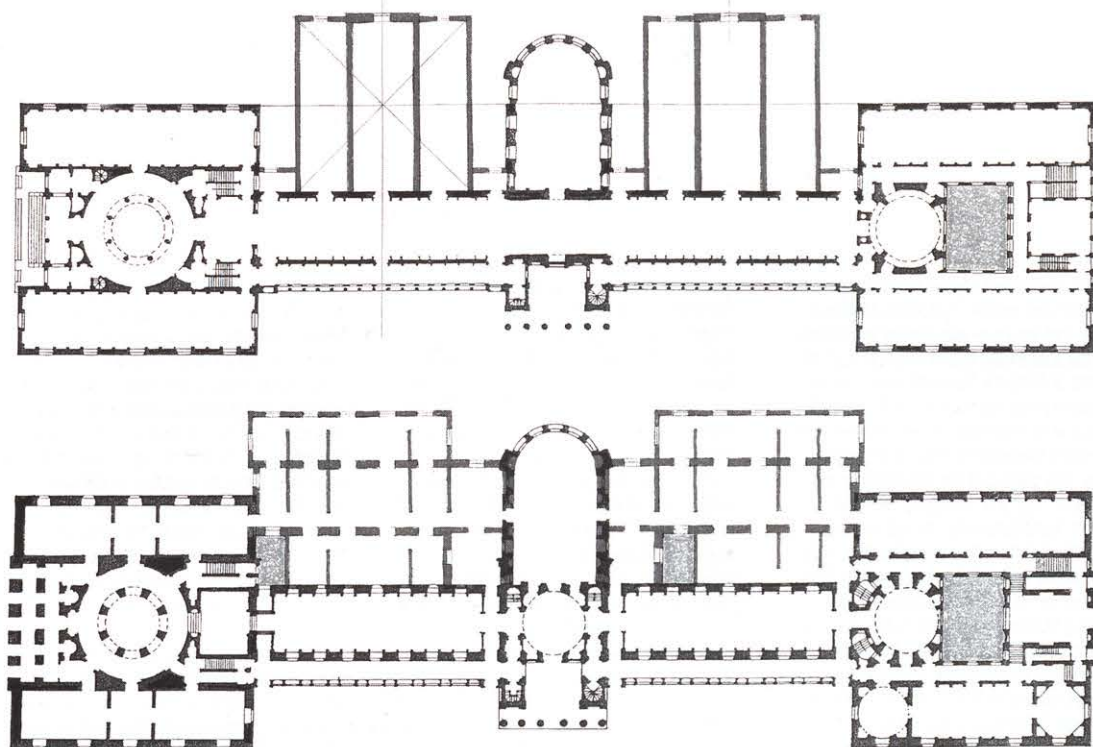
Therefore, Villanueva's building is not at all, as it might seem, a building with a long main facade over the Paseo and scarce depth, but exactly the opposite: the facade over the Paseo is, in fact, the lateral side of each level as their real fronts are placed on their respective entrance planes, the two smaller facades which give way to two rather deep autonomous buildings, placed at different levels in relation to the Paseo. Thus, we can understand the absence of a large and visible staircase connecting both levels as Villanueva did not consider it really necessary. But the connection is made possible and rather simply by means of three almost concealed but wide staircases and other smaller ones. But these are not at all representative and solemn stairs. The most visible way of connection between both levels was the mentioned curved ramp which was demolished. It almost replaced the expected staircase and it was a simple solution to communicate the lower level of the Paseo with the Gallery. The ramp produced a natural continuity between these two layers without perturbing the interior arrangement of the Botanic and Chemistry Schools with a magnificent staircase which would have been an alien element in its disposition. Moreover, the ramp was a means to indicate the gallery as an alternative walk to that along the street, a covered walk along the whole building and between the two rotundas. The Museum was proposed as an architectural promenade parallel to the traditional walk of the Court at the street's level. The ramp opened this alternative and related the building to the city life.

And, finally, the fourth point, the central axis of the facade over the Paseo del Prado. Its explanation is the existence of a third independent building which would complete the complex made up by the Ionic Museum-Gallery, placed at the same level as the Church of Los Jerónimos, the lower walled building, related to the Botanic Garden (both conceived

as a unique prolongation parallel to the Paseo del Prado which bears its two lateral facades) and the third Doric building of the main portico. An different body with an also scarce facade and developed in depth, the transversal link of a five pieces chain whose columns preside the whole composition of the Western facade and which was dedicated to assembly and conference hall serving the whole Arts and Sciences Palace.

The four mentioned points define the fundamental keys to Villanueva's conception of his own Museum. It took him the first half of 1785 to conceive and design it. In March 1808, when the French Cavalry conquered the Spanish Court, the three main facades were finished, both levels were already vaulted and the lead and slate roof was completed. The rear facade was erected up to the cornice which went around the whole building except the apsed hall, whose walls were just raised up to the second impost and which remained uncovered with just the foundations laid of its Corinth columns, of which up to thirteen bases were already carved and placed. That is, the building was near its conclusion but unfinished after twenty three years of works. The building had to suffer its military occupation and, of course, the army put an end to the works and despoiled the interior. In 1826, the architect and disciple to Villanueva, Antonio López Aguado, who was commissioned by Ferdinand the Seventh to restore and consolidate the building, wrote the well known "Description of the Royal Museum", in which he says: "Its capacity and situation were rather convenient for our enemies who gave it a rather different use to that of being an Institute, which was clearly incompatible with the preservation of its beauties. They damaged the fabric and even removed its lead roofing. Uncovered and abandoned to its own sort during the years of the French occupation, its vaults endured the rain and bad weather, were almost completely ruined, and precipitated the damage of the rest".

From 1814, and in exchange for a rather scarce weekly remuneration, Aguado undertook the cleaning and consolidation works in a building which had no definite destination yet. The objective is just stop the wreckage of a "necessary, useful and beautiful public building" of which the Nation is so proud. Aguado began by demolishing the vaults and the damp walls and by erecting a provisional cover for the remains made out of a timber structure and neglected bricks and tiles. He just tried to slow down the damage process and had no other clear objective. This was a rather indefinite period during which the works continued without a clear intention. But on March 3, 1818, the Gaceta de Madrid published a rather famous article in which the King publicly accepted "the responsibility of concluding this most important establishment (...) with the intention of promoting, in a significant way, the part destined to Gallery of the Noble Arts which will house, as H.R.M. most generously assures, the many precious



paintings now adorning His royal palaces, for their efficient preservation, the examination of the professors and the leisure of our public".

When the Museum was opened to the public, without any solemn ceremony, on November 19, 1819, it already had a collection of 1531 paintings of which just a fifth could be exhibited in the three firstly inaugurated galleries; the two rooms at both sides of the North rotunda and the antechamber leading to the great gallery.

The two former were not very damaged and their vaults were complete thanks to the attic level. The dome of the square antechamber had to be torn down by Aguado and replaced by one which was not anymore a real masonry vault but a suspended vaulted ceiling. The triple layer brick springers of Villanueva's original vault, which was higher than the current one, can be seen in the dormer space left by Aguado when he raised this volume over the original walls, which was conceived as a square hall with a helmet roof which allowed the opening of four clerestory windows.

Thus, the building of the Museum began to be transformed in order to adapt it to a new function that was not very different from that imagined by Villanueva, at least in the upper level, that accessible from the ramp ascending towards the convent of Los Jerónimos. The space of the great gallery, in fact, from whose entrance the works were begun, was a most convenient room for the building's new destination and, therefore, Antonio Aguado centered on its reconstruction after the opening of the three first halls on the North side. The museum-gallery, whose vault had been completed by Villanueva, had been the most damaged part when the lead and slate pieces of its roof were removed. Aguado had to demolish the remains of that soggy and decayed vault and was forced to rebuilt it without its primitive quality, by means of a suspended plaster ceiling which simulated the same form and ornament. In 1826, the two halves of the gallery were finally covered by means of a suspended barrel vault decorated

with casing, bearing eight skylights (four on each half). The central section was articulated by means of an also suspended dome pierced by a circular lantern. The upper windows opened on the vault's lunettes were covered with curtains and, thus, the illumination of the paintings was supposed to come out of the skylights. The final rotunda was also covered by means of a fake suspended and profusely decorated dome.

When the great gallery was finished, the works centered on the rest of this main level. In 1828, the Royal Rest Room, with its balcony located over the Corinth portico and looking at the Botanic Gardens was completed. This room was also covered by Aguado by means of a suspended vault whose scarce height allowed the creation of an attic level above it. Villanueva's conception of this space was completely different as he had prolonged it vertically towards the roofing. This room and the contiguous toilet were decorated by the painter Francisco Martínez in 1835. But this decoration was transformed in 1867 when the frieze surrounding the whole room was concealed under the mouldings which adapted it to the dimensions of Vicente López's canvas brought there from the Queen's Casino to be installed as new ceiling.

There were also alterations on exterior details that had been left unfinished. The works on the upper level continued and that same year, the two long rooms of the South extreme were completed, although they were not opened to the public until 1830. With these, the main level, the part declared as top priority in 1818 in order to convert the building into a Painting Museum, was completed.

But the institution was supposedly dedicated to other Noble Arts which demanded their place. Some rooms of the lower floor, accessible from the South facade, in front of the Botanic Garden, were destined to sculpture. Thus, Villanueva's scheme proved again to be the best way of using his own building. Aguado had perceived the inner sense of his work and, again, the building was

divided into two autonomous levels respectively dedicated to painting and sculpture, with two separated entries and opposed orientation. This specialization of the two floors of Madrid's Museum was something rather fashionable along Europe in those days. K.F. Schinkel's Altes Museum at Berlin, built between 1822 and 1830, presented the same disposition. In the Prado Museum, the sculpture rooms were finished in 1827 occupying the space originally intended for the Botanic and Chemistry Schools. The lab-rotunda located by the court and the rectangular hall of the Carolian Museum's primary school were now the first and second sculpture galleries of the museum. The Rotunda, in which a new door connecting it with the rectangular hall was opened (as it is now visible), could be visited by Ferdinand the Seventh in 1828, although it was not opened to the public until 1830. That same year, the sculptor Ramón Barba accomplished the sixteen circular medals decorating the facade over the Paseo del Prado which represent illustrious artists according to the list elaborated by Ceán Bermúdez in 1828. Barba was also the author of the bas-relief decorating the Doric portico's attic. This work was placed in its position nine years latter, between March and July, 1842.

After Antonio Aguado's decease in 1831, his son (1835-38) and Custodio Moreno (1838-44) were subsequently appointed directors of the Museum's works. But the real transformations operated in Villanueva's project were brought by Narciso Pascual y Colomer, Moreno's successor after his dismissal as royal architect. The idea of undertaking the only significant work which was still unfinished in the building, that is, the completion of the central apsed hall, was not conceived until 1847. The building process of this operation can be traced from 1847 to 1849: the works began under Colomer's direction who renovated the inner side of the already built perimeter. The openings of the facade were then walled in and a new granite

cornice was carved, visible today at the height of the second impost. In October 1848 the timber roof structure was already prepared to bear the suspended plaster vault. In the first months of 1849 the lead and slate covering was placed over the finished parts while the carving work continued in the cornice and the carpenters prepared the frames and plaster vaults. The glazing of the oval skylight was realized in July and, in August, with the gypsum and plaster over the walls and the completion of the interior cornice, this phase of the works was considered complete. The construction of the upper platform, at the Painting Museum level, was then undertaken. It was supported by an oval ring of twenty wrought iron columns with Corinth capitals and was quickly accomplished as in December the timber flooring was being laid.

The works continued until 1852 when the new wing was completed. The final invoices regarding the iron railing placed in the new hall bear that date. The idea was to exhibit in it the most outstanding paintings and sculptures owned by the Museum as in the Louvre's contemporary Salon Carré. The other significant operation undertaken in those days, while the oval hall was being finished, regarded the great gallery. On the 14th of January, 1852, Pascual y Colomer presented the budget for his idea of opening the gallery's ceiling by unifying the four skylights into just two on each half of the hall. The works began that same summer and were accomplished a year later. And these were the main works undertaken by Elisabeth the Second's architect in our Museum.

Years latter, some decisions taken out of the institution's realm had a direct impact on the building's destiny. The site occupied by the Buen Retiro Palace and the orchard of Los Jerónimos convent were segregated from the rest of the Retiro Park by the layout of the Granada Street (today's Alfonso XII street). Carlos María de Castro proposed in 1866 a new division of the mentioned site into nineteen plots. But, in spite of the Royal Sanction for his project in 1867 and the beginning of the demolition works in 1871, Castro could not complete his urban design. Fernández de los Ríos and the architects of Madrid's Town Hall opposed him and supported the creation of a new garden according to Agustín Felipe Peró's proposal of 1875. The Ministry of Finances which was then responsible for the management of the Crown's Land decided in 1877 to build a new residential area in our site just keeping the convent's Church and cloister and the Palace's Casón and Salón de Reinos (which were both refurbished and enlarged to be used as Museum of Artistic Reproductions and Museum of Artillery, respectively). In this same operation, the Ministry donated to the Town Hall the irregular and narrow strip of land behind Villanueva's building to be transformed into a green area which would include the access to the Museum from the

new residential area. The architect in charge of the landscaping project for this uneven and irregular piece of land was Francisco Jareño y Alarcón, employed by the Ministry of Public Works, then responsible of the Museum. His first commission was to design, in 1879, the new staircase of the North wing that had been made necessary when the Town Hall accomplished the layout of the surrounding streets and removed the ramp, leaving the Ionic portico 6.70 meters above the street's level. The staircase was concluded on November 25, 1881, when the architect signed the work's windup. The Town Hall then began the landscaping works in the surrounding spaces which were concluded on September 30, 1882. That same year, in January, Jerónimo Suñol had presented his monument dedicated to the Three Noble Arts to be placed over the Ionic portico of the North facade. This was accomplished in May, 1885.

Jareño's staircase presented six flights describing a cross shape around four landings and a stone balustrade. It solved the unevenness between the street and the portico after the clearing of the soil and it fulfilled the same function as Villanueva's ramp: to create a direct access to the upper floor. But, after this operation, Chueca's definition of the building as "two superimposed ground floors" did no longer apply. Thus, one of the most significant features and interesting findings of Villanueva's design was lost forever. But, from our point of view, Jareño's staircase implied the discovering of the Eastern facade which had never been intended as a public front and which was then liberated from the many additions that concealed and diminished it.

The site's excavation implied the demolition of Villanueva's curved ramp and also the tearing down of the wards' houses and the supporting wall between the Museum and the old convent's orchard and the clearing away of the ramp descending onto the rear court and the ground behind the building. The renewal of the Eastern facade after such operations was something completely necessary. The less problematic part was that to the North of the site. Here the foundations had to be underpinned and the walls clad with granite after the opening of five new windows copied from the symmetric ones on the South side, according to Jareño's refurbishment project of 1883-84. The works began in November 1884 and were concluded in July 1885.

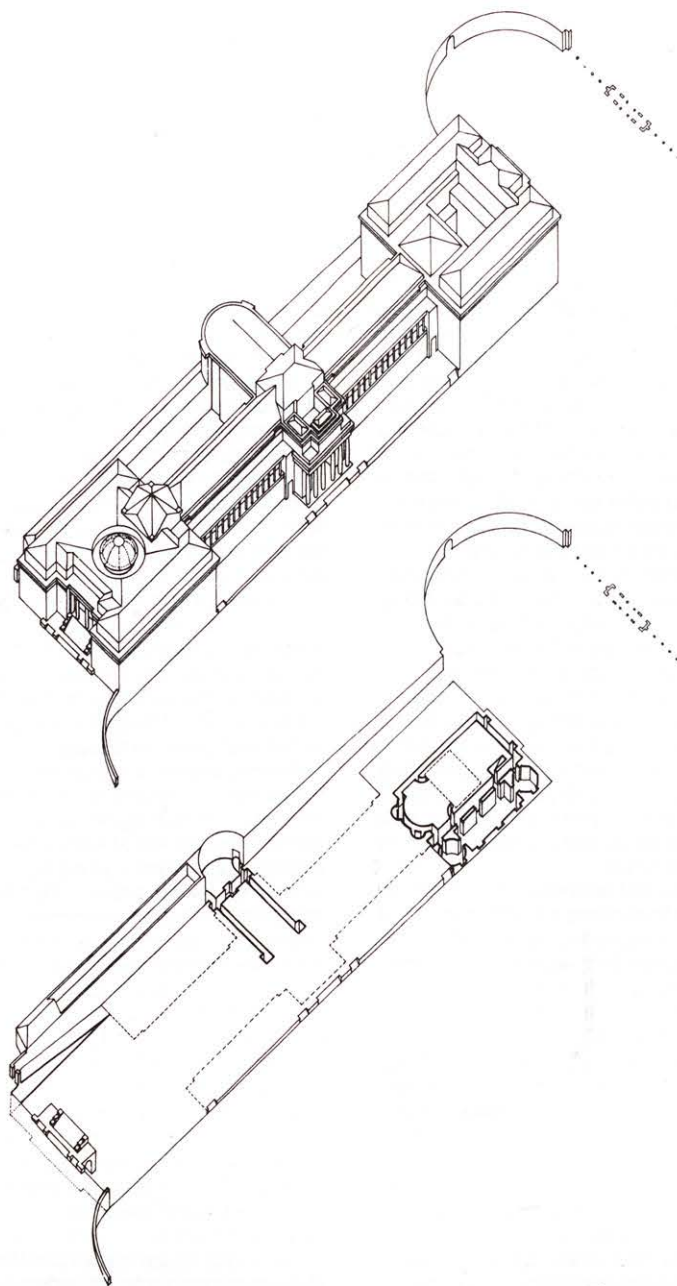
Jareño's proposal for the apsed hall included the dismantling of Pascual y Colomer's platform to be replaced with a complete steel frame floor. This body would have from then on two separated levels. Jareño did also unify this element with the rest of the building by incorporating it to the general cornice and elevating its height after dismantling Pascual y Colomer's timber frame and roofing as he had already done with his iron columns and railing.

Jareño had to amend the interior solution of this apsed wing when the Museum's Works

Council required from him a project to locate on its ground floor an sculpture gallery, the future Greek Hall, whose exhibits had to be illuminated by a row of windows. On June 2, 1885, the architect submitted a new project in which he suggested the erection of a new structural line of nine steel columns placed along the long axis of the hall to bear the new steel floor. After the sanction of the San Fernando Academy, Jareño's project was approved in June 1886 by the General Direction of Public Instruction and, once its many complications solved, the refurbishment operation on the apsed hall was completed in June 1892.

Francisco Jareño was the architect whose work was worse treated after his intervention. Most of his operations have been completely lost or thoroughly transformed. And he was, after Villanueva, the architect whose work would have affected in a most significant way the building's outer appearance if it had remained. There is nothing left today of his staircase and his renovated design for the Museum's Eastern facade which made of it a complete and secluded building. We just have a fragmentary image of what that facade could be in Jareño's days as new additions, different from the original ones, came to conceal it. All the operations undertaken in our Museum so far, had limited themselves to Villanueva's built perimeter. It was Fernando Arbós y Tremanti, an architect belonging to the Ministry of Public Works who replaced Jareño on the 12th of January 1893 as director of the museum's works, who decided to surpass that perimeter with an enlargement project for the exhibition galleries which restricted the possibilities of posterior works.

In December 1896, Arbós submitted a project for replacing the Museum's timber frame roofing with an iron structure, a six stage project which should be undertaken between 1897 and 1907. Just the first stage of the project (the roof of the Museum's North wing and the renewal and enlargement of the staircase leading towards the attic level) was then initiated and, in 1901, the works of the second stage, affecting the South wing, began. The celebration of the Third Centenary of Velázquez's birth, in 1899, was the occasion to renovate the Queen Elisabeth Gallery, exclusively dedicated to this painter. The works consisted on the addition of an opaque screen under Jareño's great skylight. Just by the apsed room and accessible from it, Arbós prepared, in 1902, a small hall to exhibit "Las Meninas". There are no plans left of this small operation which was demolished just thirteen years later. It was evident that the Museum was in need of more exhibition space. Thus, in 1911, Fernando Arbós elaborated two enlargement proposals whose plans have not been preserved. The enlargement project was something much more attended than the remaining four stages of the roof renewal that had not yet been initiated. Arbós' two proposals were submitted to the Ministry of



Public Instruction and Beaux Arts, then in charge of the Prado's works. The institution had to choose one of them that would be subsequently developed. But the decision was not taken until June 9, 1913, in which day the Museum's Board of Trustees which had studied both projects unanimously chose the less costly, although it required some variations and a rapid elaboration. The official commission was made on next year's 21st of June and Arbós was then able to submit, on the 30th of September, his "Enlargement Project for the Prado Museum" which attended the petitions of the Board of Trustees which the Civil Works Consulting Assembly posteriorly ratified. A complementary project dedicated to the heating service and the interior decoration was also elaborated and submitted by Arbós on January 31, 1914. In his 1913 project, Arbós described his new constructions: "the erection of two two-story pavilions dedicated to the wards' housing" and located on the North and South chamfers of the rear facade, thus, liberated from the existing grating; and "the creation of two new

galleries located between the Velázquez's Hall and the actual North and South pavilions, with two small adjacent rooms connected with the new and the present galleries both parallel to the building's long axis. Both these exhibition galleries and the small rooms will be two-story constructions". The expected term for the accomplishment of all these works was seven and a half years. The enlargement project was approved by means of the Royal Decree of the 4th of November, 1914. But while the work was still on site, Arbós died on the 18th of December, 1916. In January 1917, he was replaced by the architect Amós Salvador Carreras as director of the conservation, reconstruction and enlargement works of the Prado Museum. This architect continued with his predecessor's plans until their conclusion and "provisional delivery" signed on the 5th of July 1921, although the new areas were not opened to the public until 1923.

Arbós' enlargement project for the Prado Museum can be analyzed nowadays from two different points of view. On one hand, we can consider the relations it establishes with the

original building. On the other (with our privileged knowledge about the Museum's posterior history), we can analyze the conditions it imposed on posterior enlargements whose scope Arbós could not foresee. The Arbós' project establishes rather particular relations with a complete composition as it is Villanueva's building in which the circulation system was so thoroughly studied that it was the basic element organizing every part and every level, in which the really fundamental principle of the plan design was the idea of the cul-de-sac route. Arbós did not seem to take much heed of these principles of which he probably was not even conscious at all. His enlargement project created a new itinerary parallel to that of the great gallery which duplicated the circulation system and, consistently, dismantled the previous scheme of the double ground floor. The new areas concealed once and for all Villanueva's Eastern facade and embraced and made disappear on its North and South sides the straight sections of the apsed hall just leaving the final exedra free. Another inconvenient of this Arbós' project was, moreover, that it forced the position of posteriorly undertaken enlargements and, thus, today we can count up to four parallel bays including that of the great gallery whose parallel circulations frustrate any possible logical and unitary route.

Going back to our story, on November 30, 1922, Amós Salvador resigned as director of the Museum's enlargement, renewal and decoration works and the then young architect Pedro Muguruza Otaño, was appointed to replace him. He began by trying to recover Arbós' project for the replacement of the combustible parts of the roof system, although his own approach to the matter was completely different. Muguruza's proposal implied the isolation of the roof frame by means of an incombustible material which would, at the same time, strengthen the building's fabric. This double aim would be accomplished by erecting a new reinforced concrete vault along the whole gallery and under a supposedly future metallic roof frame. So the old Antonio Aguado's suspended plaster vault was demolished and used as model for the new one. In January 1924, Muguruza submitted his proposal, in whose dossier he explained how the ornamentation of the new vault would be exactly as that of the demolished one and how he would maintain the double glazed skylights whose linings and intersections with the curved tile roof would be repaired.

There was another issue which worried Muguruza in those days. An important issue of which we are well informed because on the 2nd of May of that same year the architect sent to the Ministry a new project for the erection of a four flights staircase located by Velázquez's Hall, occupying one of the rooms of the Arbós' annex. This project was undertaken and finished in September 1925. Now the building had a new central staircase exactly equidistant

from the two original ones placed by Villanueva on the North and South extremes. This new staircase had become really necessary once the whole building had been finally dedicated to the almost unique function of exhibiting paintings, that is, once it had renounced to the functional and formal autonomy of its two levels.

The different stages of the mentioned project for a new concrete vault on the Museum's main level were approved between February and June 1926. The final formula included some novelties. The great gallery's antechamber was deprived of its clerestory windows, its vault was lowered and a skylight was added to it. The final rotunda, on the other hand, was covered by means of an, also lowered, octagonal vault which modified the original circular perimeter designed by Villanueva. Muguruza did also alter the design of the great gallery by differentiating its central section. He designed two triumphal arcs resting on double columns backed by Ionic pilasters for which he used the Corinth bases left by Villanueva and supposedly intended for the apsed hall. Leaving aside Muguruza's flaw (the Ionic capitals over Corinth bases) which is really anecdotic in a 1927 project, we must say that his idea of differentiating the central section of the gallery interrupts its carefully designed linear development. Villanueva had also conceived a clearly defined center but without threatening the gallery's crystalline visual continuity. He had just placed a spherical vault cut into four vertical planes ("vaída" or "a vela" as he liked to say in an Italianized form). Antonio López Aguado would later reproduce this design in wood and plaster. His suspended vaults did not obstruct the perspective, "not to interrupt the principal lines", in his own words. Nowadays, we can compare the gallery's appearance after Muguruza's reform with old pictures of the same space. From an architectural point of view the effect produced is completely different in each case. These works, undertaken between 1927 and 1931, which affected the great gallery and its surrounding areas did probably include the glazing of the Ionic colonnade over the Paseo del Prado. This glazing was Villanueva's original idea and he had placed for such purpose the rear row of pillars behind the Ionic columns, but it was never realized according to his plans. It was Muguruza who accomplished it and who, in February 1931, suggested to the Museum's Board of Directors the utilization of the Ionic balcony as a visitors' refreshment area and information center. Muguruza designed and accomplished some other minor reforms during his first period working in the Museum, which lasted until the Civil War. In October 1928 he directed some underpinning works in the apsed hall's foundations and, between 1929 and 1931, he reformed the attic level of the North wing which had been already made easily accessible by means of the 1928 staircase and was intended to exhibit the Fernández Durán legacy.

That is more or less all that was done by Pedro Muguruza before the coup d'Etat of July 18, 1936. On the next August 30, the Museum was closed to the public until July 7, 1939, in which day it was reopened. Pedro Muguruza's most important proposal during his second period as architect of the Museum works was just intended as a mere provisional solution. It consisted of the removal of Jareño's staircase and its replacement by an exterior one that would make possible the direct access to the ground floor from the North facade and into the lower rotunda, now easily illuminated and converted into the building's fourth vestibule. In July, 1943, Muguruza submitted two possible designs for the new staircase although he made clear from the very beginning that its construction "should not prevent the necessary future refurbishment of the building's exterior that would transform the present depression into a real square leading to the building's main access; according to Juan de Villanueva's original design in which this facade was clearly composed without any basement level".

We must take account of this commentary which reveals us how our architect was conscious about the irregular situation of Villanueva's North facade (the original main entrance to the museum) to which neither Jareño's staircase nor the very Muguruza's did any good. The facade has lost its classical proportion and Muguruza hoped that it would recover it someday. The erection of the new North staircase was approved in December, 1943 and accomplished in the first months of 1946, the year of the celebration of the Goya's birth second centenary. A statue dedicated to this painter and realized by Mariano Benlliure was placed before the facade.

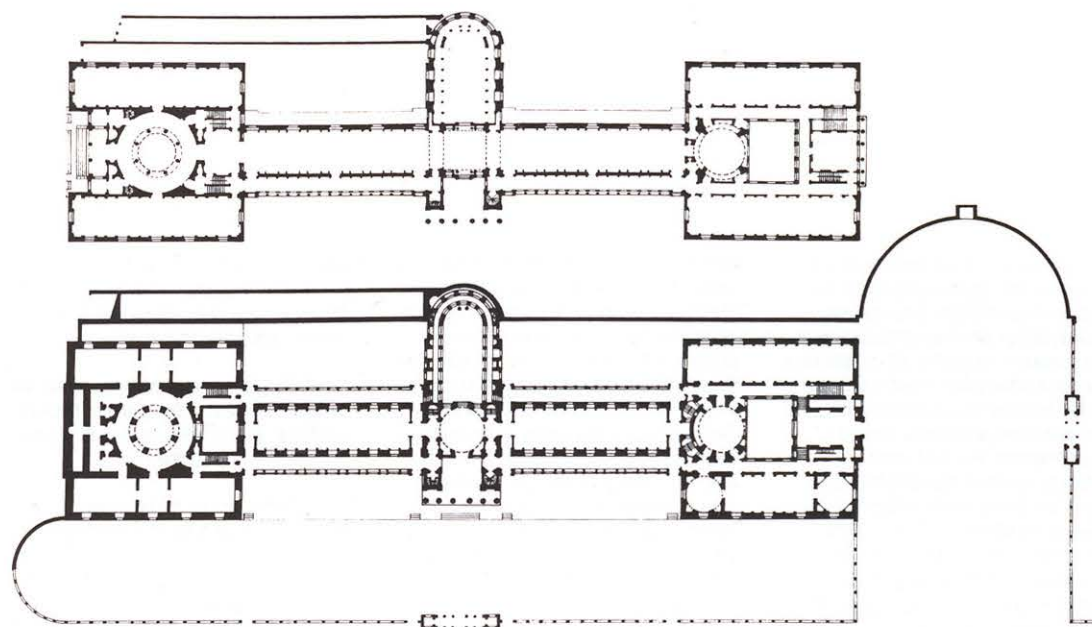
The architect Pedro Muguruza, who had so thoroughly marked his imprint on the Museum's functional scheme and on its exterior and interior appearance, died in Madrid on the 3th of February, 1952. The North facade is nowadays almost exactly as he left it (just the central sculpture is missing) and both levels are still accessible from it. The black marble floorings, socle and door jambs so characteristic of the museum galleries were specified by him; Muguruza's central staircase is still used as the main connection between the ground and main floors; the present concrete vaults were realized after his designs and the perspective of the great gallery, probably the Museum's most recognizable image responds to his own spatial ideas.

It became difficult to match Pedro Muguruza's work in the Museum. The only possible thing, after him, seemed to continue with his designs without contradicting them. His brother and successor, the architect José María Muguruza Otaño, that was appointed Museum's curator after him, decided, thus, to follow his steps. Other architects, though, Fernando Chueca Goitia and Manuel Lorente Junquera, were to receive the commission for the new enlargement project that the Museum

was so in need of, to exhibit its increasing collection. Their proposal, submitted in May, 1953, was approved on the 27th of November, 1954 and prepared to be accomplished in just ten months under the direction of José María Muguruza. The Chueca-Lorente enlargement project consisted of the addition of a new bay parallel to the Arbós' one and developed at both sides of the Velázquez Hall. The new wings would be shorter than those designed by Arbós in order to leave the central hall's apse free and their width would be conditioned by the position of the property's perimeter grating.

The best quality of the project, according to its authors, was the lack of alteration suffered by Villanueva's building as they did not touch it. In fact, there is no physical point of contact, but their architecture modified the complex by means of the addition of a new element which altered the structural relationships between the original ones. Consequently, it is my personal opinion that the Chueca-Lorente enlargement project committed the same error as Arbós' and aggravated the problems originated by it. It consisted of a new bay, parallel to that of the great gallery which established another linear itinerary which tripled the original one. It is true that the second enlargement was almost dictated by the first one and that both determined the third one accomplished in the sixties and which completed the Museum's interior labyrinth. The new wings were two story buildings with both upper levels dedicated to exhibition and a basement service floor. The works were accomplished in less than a year and in March, 1956, the architect-curators designed a complementary project to finish the new sections which were inaugurated on June 9.

Since 1952, the year in which José María Muguruza had accepted his appointment as Museum's curator, he had also been involved with other matters related to our building. In that same year's July, he was designing a refurbishment plan that would transform Villanueva's basement service rooms into new exhibition areas. He did also continue with his brother's strategy of replacing the wooden flooring with marble and installing electrical fittings. In 1959, he submitted his plan for continuing with the substitution of all the combustible parts integrated within the building's fabric, including the timber frame roofs, the wooden floors and even the wooden shelves of the offices and archives (this operation would last until the first seventies). He also suggested the renewal of all the electrical fittings, the installation of a fire protection system, the improvement of the heating service, the renovation of the sanitary appliances and the introduction of an air conditioning system for the building. These matters would keep him rather busy in subsequent years. In 1962, Muguruza did also suggest the enlargement of the basement level and, in 1964, he concluded the roof of the circular corridor created around the drum of



the Ionic rotunda's cupola which was intended for the exhibition of drawings and which was never used so. A new enlargement project was to be accomplished between 1964 and 1968. The Prado would occupy the only extant soil available for it: two areas between Arbós' bays and Villanueva's Eastern facade which were, so far, open courts at both sides of the apsed hall. The works consisted of the erection of a new floor structure at the same level as the main floor and the excavation of a basement story. The operation began in the North court in which three new rooms were obtained in each floor (a double one in the main level) and continued with the South court, which accommodated three rooms on the ground floor and a great hall on the main one. On March 31, 1967, Muguruza informed the Ministry of the completion of the works in the South court. The new exhibition galleries were inaugurated in 1968 and, thus, the third and last enlargement project was accomplished and the four parallel bays of the Prado, packed and unified.

After our detailed account, we can now consider how would have been the effect of the Arbós enlargement if it had consisted of two new wings perpendicular to the great gallery and placed in the center of its both sides, that is, parallel to the Velázquez Hall, reproducing the effect of Villanueva's apsed wing, the nucleus of the whole Museum's design. If these two wings, accessible from the great gallery would have been conceived as the apsed hall, with just one point of contact with the building's main body, they would have worked as cul-de-sac structures. Posterior enlargement necessities could have been solved by means of new galleries parallel to these and similarly accessible from the great gallery through a unique exit and entrance opening, that is, new cul-de-sac schemes. The result would have been a museum with almost the same exhibition capacity in which the scheme of the interior itineraries would be coincident with Villanueva's architectural lesson: cul-de-sac galleries and orthogonal intersections placed on the axis of the composition. It might seem easy now to imagine alternative solutions with our detailed knowledge of the building's posterior

evolution. But the truth is that our opinion about the building's present state cannot be very favourable.

In 1969, Jareño's Greek Hall was dismantled; the excuse was the lack of proper lighting. And, in October, that same year, after Muguruza's retirement, the architect Jaime Lafuente Niño was appointed new Museum's curator. In 1970, Lafuente suggested a new enlargement which would occupy the only extant space within the museum's perimeter, that is, the small court over the vault covering the Doric portico, enclosed by the walls of the attic level and the raised height of the great gallery's central body. The idea was not immediately accepted and was submitted again in 1973 with the intention of increasing the administrative area. This new proposal was finally approved and the works undertaken. In 1974, the museum's technicians suggested the building's climatization and, in 1975, the clearing of the, so called, Murillo's court in order to arrange a new facilities cluster including both public and employees' toilets. This latter operation would finally solve the damp problems occurring in this area. The project was designed by Jaime Lafuente in 1977 and was accordingly accomplished as we can see it nowadays. Thus, the Museum continued with the excavation of its underground areas as the original basement floor by Villanueva, occupying the South-Western bay, had been completed with the lower level of the Chueca-Lorente enlargement and, years latter, with the basement areas hollowed by José María Muguruza under the covered courts, as we have already mentioned. This new underground space beneath the South wing court was connected with the old Villanueva hallways. During the eighties decade, the Museum authorities approved a new climatization and lighting project which was initiated in October 1980 and accomplished throughout the building in the following years. In 1983, Jaime Lafuente amplified this services project, concluded the refurbishment works in the South attic level, which included a new staff area and the library and opened the staircase located in the Murillo vestibule which led to the new cafeteria, inaugurated in 1982.

After the removal of the Greek Hall sculptures, this space had been left unoccupied. Between 1981 and 1984, the architect José María de Paredes received the commission to design the Prado Museum's conference room in this vacant area which was finally dedicated to its original purpose. The ceiling of this new central hall is the old Jareño's floor, once supported by eight metallic pillars that were removed, once the structure was modified. The five lower windows on the apse were opened and the ground was lowered in order to make place for an upper tribune and a rather high ceiling. This operation changed the way in which this space was used. Villanueva had created an axis leading to the apse on which the entrance was placed. The new conference room works now as a theatre hall, with the accesses at both sides coming from the Arbós enlargement area. García de Paredes did also create a new vertical nucleus with three large elevators in a symmetric position to Pedro Muguruza's staircase. In 1986, Francisco Partearroyo was appointed architect of the Prado Museum. He undertook the renewal and cleaning of the exterior facades in 1988 and the landscaping project for the rear sloping garden in 1991. Partearroyo did also design the third, fourth and fifth stages of the lighting and finishes renewal project affecting almost thirty galleries in the whole museum. This latter refurbishment is clearly visible in the modern and simple ceilings and the clean lighting system adopted. He also designed the new temporary exhibitions area located in the lower level of the North body.

The most singular proposal of Partearroyo's period, though it was never brought about, was submitted in October, 1992. He elaborated an study in which he suggested the creation new service areas for the museum by means of a return to the building's origin. The museum would be, thus, enlarged and the North facade would recover its original proportion by means of a comprehensive restitution of the access complex. Villanueva's ramp would be reconstructed and be the roof of two underground levels, housing the new service areas, offices and galleries in more than ten thousand square meters with almost no

exterior presence. This has been, so far, the most serious and rigorous proposal for the expansion of our museum, a realistic and conscious design which would easily provide for the museum's necessities without altering a recognizable urban environment in which other important buildings as Los Jerónimos Church or the Spanish Royal Academy demand a singular treatment. The most recent architectural operation regarding the Prado Museum was the restricted contest organized, in 1995, by the Ministry of Culture for the refurbishment of the building's roof. The prize was bestowed upon the architects Dionisio Hernandez Gil and Rafael Olalquiaga whose project consisted of the installation of a lead roofing on the whole building, the recovery of the original pitches in Villanueva's original parts and the reduction of the skylights. But one of the most significant features of this winning project (on site since last august) was its interpretation of the three parallel bays of

the extension. These are unified by means of a similar treatment, in spite of the different dates of construction, and clearly differentiated from the original fabric by Villanueva. The new skylights in the expansion bays (the Arbós and Chueca-Goitia buildings), five at both sides of the apse, are perpendicular to the great gallery. These make up a total number of ten North orientated lights. The two courts covered by José María Muguruza will have flat roofs in order to separate the new systems from the powerful Eastern cornice of the main building, which will be, thus, revealed again by means of a project in which we can perceive, at last, an architectural ideal capable of overcoming the occurrences of so many historical operations.

The present text is a summarized version of the first part of Pedro Monleón's "Proyectos y obras para el Museo del Prado. Fuentes documentales para su historia". Madrid, Prado Museum, 1996. ■

area will increase to occupy the rooms vacated by administration area will increase to occupy the rooms vacated by administration, the service rooms, the cafeteria, etc.

K. In addition, new exhibition rooms will be created in the new annex-wing. These are connected directly to the existing Villanueva building to form a compact unit.

L. The rooms for the temporary exhibitions will be housed in the former Museo del Ejército building.

M. The administration, the library, the restoration rooms etc. are located around the walls of the former cloister of San Jerónimos. The administration building has a direct underground connection to the museum complex and access to the newly created place. Together with the Real Academia and the church of San Jerónimos, the museum administration occupies the place as the third important institution.

N. The entire complex is held together functionally and spatially by the annex building, which however gives the impression of being the end wing of the Villanueva museum. This part of the museum contains the main entrance and all service rooms for the visitors. All other buildings are entered from here. The entrance hall is also accessible from the upper level of the place via ramp or staircase of generous dimensions.

O. The main entrance, entrance hall, ticket office, museum information room, group reception, cloakrooms, book store, shop and assembly hall are located on the ground floor. The cafeteria, which can be operated independently of the museum, is located on the upper floor, at the level of the newly created place.

P. All other rooms of the new building are exhibition rooms which are used for the collection.

Q. The underground connection to the Casón del Buen Retiro and to the former Museo del Ejército (temporary exhibitions) starts from the new entrance hall. The three underground connections together are designed as technical tunnels. Moving pavements carry the visitors quickly and conveniently of one another. With the exception of two round skylights, they are artificially illuminated and ventilated.

R. The connecting tunnels intentionally differ in their technical character from the classically designed exhibition rooms.

S. The new exhibition rooms are intended to differ as little as possible from the existing ones. The lighting, the form and the size of the exhibition rooms and their access and material are derived from Villanueva's existing museum. The visitors concentrating on the

Explanatory report on Museo del Prado, Madrid, 2nd stage.

A. Juan de Villanueva has not drawn the back of his museum. As is evident from his plans, two rear supporting walls have to integrate the building into the terrain.

The observer thus cannot obtain a classical view of the facade. On the south side, the semicircular wall forms a place and connects the museum spatially to the Jardín Botánico.

B. Subsequent additions at the back do not succeed in creating a conclusive an obvious termination of the museum to the east. In particular, there is no solution with regard to the connections of the building to the terrain dropping away in both directions.

C. The current extension now makes it possible definitively to round off the museum building architecturally and in terms of town planning. The Prado will thus be appropriately integrated into the district and the city.

D. A repeatedly graduated and harmoniously organized structure terminates the main building and its various extensions to the east. This new rear facade together with the existing buildings forms an irregular, elongated and triangular place along the Calle Ruiz de Alarcón. The Real Academia and the Church of San Jerónimos thus now face a traffic-free place instead of a road as in the past. Without a doubt, this action has meant an upgrading for these two institutions. The administration building of the museum and the

upper entrance of the building will also be accessible from this new place.

E. The highly organized facade of the rear with its continuous recesses is in conformity with the blocks of houses and roads adjacent to the place.

F. The progressive, harmonious organization of the new rear facade corresponds to the main front of Villanueva's museum, but without competing with the latter in its wonderful symmetry.

G. Architecturally, the arms of the new wing symbolize a termination and an introduction simultaneously. The new wing definitively completes the building to the east after over 220 years and puts the museum in an inner city place. At the same time, the extensively projecting arms span the arc to the Jardín Botánico, without which the Villanueva building would be difficult to imagine.

H. The two side arms of the new wing continue well beyond the original building and are indicative of large museum extensions lying behind. They are immediately visible from the Paseo del Prado but, thanks to their materialization and their set back position, are not intrusive.

I. The existing museum building of Villanueva and the Casón del Buen Retiro continue to hold the collection. The exhibition

pictures will notice practically no difference between old and new building.

T. On the other hand, the new entrance hall is very large and spacious. The reception room lit by skylight sets a strong accent and is able to give the museum a new face.

U. In addition to the exhibition rooms, the entrance hall and the cafeteria, the assembly hall, too, has natural illumination. All other rooms of the wing are artificially illuminated and ventilated.

V. The functional and technical access to the entire complex is from the south. It is here that there is a closed delivery area with goods lift and access to the car parking with 73 spaces. The parking spaces for the coaches are along the eastern facade of the wing.

W. The new building will be lined with the same materials as Villanueva's museum. It fits into the Madrid tradition of red brick and yellowish grey granite. The inner rooms closely resemble Villanueva's building in their materials. ■

The Prado. Uncompleted Symphony.

Report on the recently found "Description of the Building for the Royal Museum by its author D. Juan de Villanueva". As read before the General Assembly of the San Fernando Royal Academy of Beaux Arts, gathered in the Mengs Hall at the Prado Museum, by Rafael de la Hoz Arderius, member Academician on the 22th January 1996.

There are very few buildings indeed as enigmatic as the Prado Museum.

D. Nicolás de la Cruz y Bahamonde, Count of Maule, in his "Travels around Spain", relates how in the summer of 1798 he visited the works of the so to be Science Museum and Academy and felt really impressed by its magnitude.

After a detailed description of the half finished building and an arduous and futile search for the project, he finally made an unusual and rather alarming petition.

The architect, D. Juan de Villanueva, who has directed the works, should, after its conclusion, present the plans to the general public with a detailed dossier of such a beautiful building.

That, obviously, means that just eight years before its conclusion there were no complete plans nor architectural dossier yet.

And this is precisely one of the reasons of the enormous importance for our History of Architecture of the so much looked for and recently found "Description of the Building for the Royal Museum by its author D. Juan de Villanueva".

The mentioned document belonged to our late and dearest colleague D. Ramón Andrada Pfeiffer who planned to write a paraphysis to be published together with the manuscript.

Unfortunately enough, he was not able to fulfill this secret aspiration and it has been D. Ramón Andrada González-Parrado, who continues with his father's good professional labour and humane demeanour, who has donated the manuscript to Madrid's Professional College of Architects which has, on its part, commissioned a careful fac-simile

edition of the original document.

This finding is one of the keys of the mysterious behaviour of Villanueva who seemed to design the Prado Museum on site as if he had no project for it.

And the marvelous thing about all this story is that that was exactly what it happened.

In this sense, the recently published dossier is also a very important document for this Academy which owns the only extant project of the Prado bearing the author's signature. This project in spite of its many discrepancies with the finally built fabric has been identified, by means of the new information obtained, with the original document approved by Charles the Third.

The mentioned dossier bears the date of 1796, when the works had already lasted for eleven years and the building was still unfinished. Villanueva was then, according to the same document, fifty six years old. His protector (the King) had been dead for eight years then and his beloved Maecenas, D. José Moñino y Redondo, first Secretary of State and Count of Floridablanca had been dismissed four years before.

Villanueva, on his part, had also been removed from his post as Director of the Royal Academy of the Three Arts.

This was, therefore, an excellent moment to recapitulate.

The dossier relates the many difficulties occurred during both the project and erection phases. This makes of it a kind of black box of the works which is followed by a detailed report of the architectural composition of the parts already realized and those already planned.

It is not, therefore, a description of the original project but an "a posteriori" report of the works accomplished.

The document is undoubtedly authentic and is carefully written but it contains some mistakes in the descriptions, says nothing about the building's measures and bears no signature.

The text presents many literary sections

and syntactic discontinuities and a rather rhetoric "I said" at the end. So it rather seems to be a rough copy of the discourse as dictated to a clerk in order to be read aloud in public.

The speech is intended for a group of intelligent people whom he asks to postpone their lawful reproach for the errors that will surely be noticed, remarked and criticized "until my reasons would be heard". What means that this is a sort of "explicatio sic petita" apparently addressed to a high authority in the Art's world well respected by the speaker.

On the other hand, he refers to himself on several occasions along the speech not as Architect, but as Professor, clearly a more academic term. This fact, together with the mentioned suggestion about the addressee, make us conclude that our speech was probably intended for no other than the very Academy of the Three Arts.

It has also been a sensible choice on the part of the C.O.A.M. to accompany this publication with a reproduction of the drawing kept in the Prado Museum which is a graphic image of the discourse's contents. As it happens with the text, the drawing presents many important differences with the finally realized building, it is uncompleted and bears no scale nor signature.

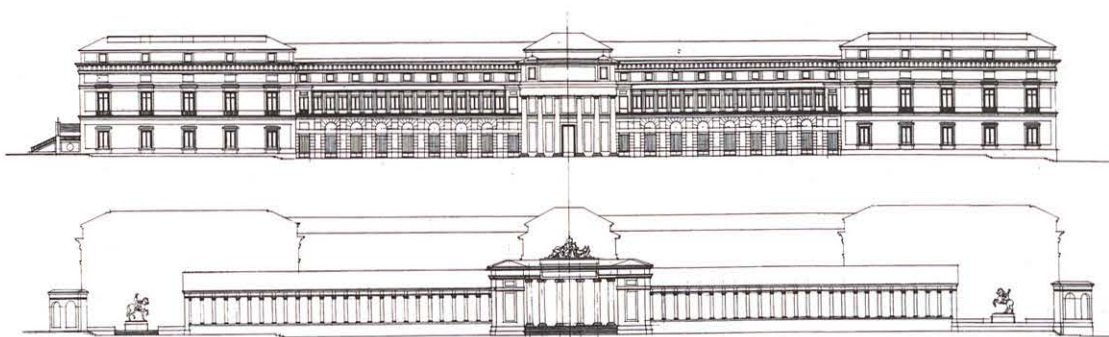
It is therefore a kind of recapitulation while the work is still on site, a graphic complement to Villanueva's declaration which is the first historic example of the so called "as built" plans which reveal the state of the building once finished.

Years ago, in 1925 to be exact, the plans of the original project for the Prado Museum were found in the Academy archive. It was a sensational discovery: four superb drawings dated on the 25th of May of 1785 and signed by D. Juan de Villanueva and probably handed in by the very author for their preservation.

They present a monumental building of three bodies linked by means of a large nave. The same organization as the one realized but with an apparent variant, a beautiful loggia placed along the whole facade over the Paseo del Prado which was the seminal idea of the whole architectural composition. In our report, the author, with visible pride, comments his ambitious intentions:

- "As in those days the funds were unlimited, I employed all my imagination; I am not really sure if I exceeded myself just for the sake of my own renown, in order to display and make visible to my own land the magnificent beauties I had already seen and studied in the ruins of antiquity and the modern buildings of Rome. Thus I decided to arrange both the building layout and elevation in all its particular parts in a way completely different to that employed in our land."

The amazing thing is, obviously, that the elegant and exceptional stoa designed by our protagonist did not only "not exist in other buildings of our land", but neither in the finally built Prado.



Thanks to one of Floridablanca's records, we already knew that Villanueva had first proposed two different solutions; we have now learned that he chose one among them and presented it to Charles the Third who had no objection to accept it.

As the project found in the Academy and the built reality were rather dissimilar, a theory was suggested which maintained that the former was a project rejected by Floridablanca while the works were based on the elevation kept in the Prado.

But Maule's testimony eliminates such possibility and then the speculation of our historians devised a story in which the French troops would have burnt the original plans in a fire to get warmer. The hypothesis, referred to the French occupation of the building in the summer of 1808 and its use as the Great Duke of Berg's Cavalry Headquarters, is rather implausible.

The survival of the highly combustible scale model proves it.

D. Luis Blanco Soler, on his part, who was to become Director of the Academy, proved himself rather clearheaded when, in an article published in 1926 in "Arquitectura" which revealed the discovery, did not doubt to identify it with the original project. He wrote then:

- "The recently found 1875 plans by Villanueva reveal us the evolution of the project and the transformations introduced by the author, either voluntarily or forced by the San Fernando Academy or the Royal Chamber of Castilla".

Our Andrada document corroborates how Blanco Soler was right. But it was not the Royal Chamber of Castilla nor the Academy nor, of course, the very author who restricted the project.

It was the author's good friend and protector, Floridablanca.

Years before, D. José Moñino had accepted before the King and before any one that could hear him the challenge of building the Prado "without any expense for the Public Resources".

Amazing as it seems, he counted on some strange secret shares of the expropriated Society of Jesus, that is, on the so called Jesuit Money, to back the works.

But once the foundations laid, the Minister realized that those shares would not be enough to pay off the whole building. In 1791, the accumulated shortage reached the two million reales over a total budget of fifty.

When he saw his own honor threatened by such a situation, Floridablanca decided to delay "sine die" the construction of the most dispensable part of the project, that is, the great portico, in spite of the architect's intentions.

The benevolence with which Villanueva relates this great disaster is an example of understanding on the part of the author of the many difficulties faced by the politician, his

client, and of loyalty to his old and dear and then disgraced friend.

His words reveal us a noble and sensible gentleman. He just says:

- "Once the excavation and the filling of the foundations begun, and once the customary difficulties of any construction occurred, which any scrupulous and honourable Professor must suffer with resignation in order to become conscientious and moderate, comforting himself with the recollection of greater woes bravely endured by men of higher merit who had to consent and overcome every difficulty imposed by the capricious ignorance in order to be placed in their due position, the works continued with a much more modest arrangement and a general form supposedly more simple and convenient and obviously less costly. So this record just describes this last mentioned situation as we consider useless, fastidious and rather burdensome to recall the previous stages".

In spite of the generosity of this heroic "As we said yesterday", the passage reveals some rather understandable bitterness and frustration.

The master was completely disappointed. His fixed look in Goya's portrait is not easy to forget.

His masterwork had been deprived of its facing.

The classical saying "Cedit persona manet res" had been observed.

Most certainly: the precious mask was dropped and just the inert matter remained.

The real expressive appearance of the facade had vanished with the loggia and Villanueva had to face the tremendous challenge of transforming "in situ" the just sketched inner facade (the neuter matter suddenly uncovered) into his building's main front over the Paseo del Prado.

An elevation one and a half times larger than that of the Royal Palace.

Only a genius like this man, a born architect, could successfully accomplish such a feat.

And although it took him the rest of his life to finish his "in situ" design, it is a pride for human beings to learn how this was the case.

On the other hand the facade gained in dimension what makes of it one of the most remarkable examples of the European Neo-Classical monumental architecture.

The impact of this episode was so significant that it affected the profession's collective memory. When the works for the New Ministries began, the academician D. Secundino Zuazo Ugalde ("The best Spanish architect after Villanueva", according to Lafuente Ferrari), insisted on beginning the great complex by the porch over the Paseo de la Castellana (trying to avoid the problem of the Prado).

Even if we could not enjoy the "non grata" stoia of the Prado Museum, its spectre seems

to be still there, in the coincidences between the built solution and the original plans: the intended length of the whole building, 729,30 Castilian feet is identical to the 203,20 meters we can now see.

On the other hand (and until 1883, when Carreño demolished it), the strange circular shaped supporting wall creating a ramp ascending towards the building's upper level, remained intact, according to an 1824 drawing by Colonel Carlos Vargas (on which many 19th century engravings were based and which is also under custody in our archives).

Most of Madrid's maps, including the 1846 one by López-Cortijo confirm it. This singular supporting wall which, according to the plan included in the original project, closed the North extreme of the loggia was a living testimony of the undubitable intention on the part of the author of building the loggia sooner or latter.

These are, no doubt the basic data mentioned by Blanco Soler in his article, when he affirms Villanueva's will to finish his interrupted project.

- "There are undubitable data which confirm us the existence of a complete project by the same Juan de Villanueva to renovate the whole Paseo del Prado from the Royal Convent of San Jerónimo to Atocha's olive groves, beyond the old Gate. This urban project defined the site of some of his latter buildings as the Astronomic Observatory and probably dictated not just the arrangement of the Museum wings but also his idea of building a covered portico".

A strong statement which is now being confirmed and which can help us to summarize our conclusions:

The design of the Prado Museum was developed during the works.

The elevation and the scale model kept in the Museum are valuable tools which define the unfinished building.

The secret of the differences between the built work and the project found in the Royal Academy is now clearly solved; and, so, the latter is identified as the original project accepted by Charles the Third for the construction of the Museum as designed by D. Juan de Villanueva.

So both the History of Art and the Academy can well be satisfied, although we might feel a certain nostalgia.

Unlike Music, Architecture ceases when the score is not played, when a project is not built in its moment, it always remains as an Uncompleted Symphony.

That's the drawback of the so called "Andrada's Document".

"The Prado, an Uncompleted Symphony". Members of the Academy, Gentlemen: I said.

Rafael de la Hoz Arderius.