

## *Reuse and reception in the life of a sixteenth-century chimneypiece*

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Histories of reuse register important shifts in the way objects are valued at different points in time, and yet their tendency to disrupt stylistic categories and historical narratives has meant that they are often lost. In his recent study of Antique *spolia*, Arnold Esch observed that the crucial difference between the approach of the archaeologist and that of the art historian is that the former sees the appropriated object as being ‘removed’ from its original home, while the latter sees it as being ‘received’ from the past, a process through which it acquires new meaning within a new context.<sup>1</sup> While the appropriation or ‘translation’ of objects has proved fertile ground for art historians, provenance and stylistic origin still take precedence when it comes to conservation and display, such that evidence of such transitional stages is often removed or destroyed. A case in point is an Italian chimney-piece found in an upper room of the Palace of Charles V (hereafter referred to as the new royal palace), part of the Alhambra fortress-palace compound that overlooks the city of Granada, Spain (Fig. 1). A relatively unremarkable example of Cinquecento furnishing, its mantle spent nearly three centuries as the frame of a peculiar looking altarpiece in one of the Alhambra’s converted royal chapels (Fig. 2). During this time its figurative ornaments were dispersed and the former life of the Italian fireplace forgotten, when it was given pride of place within royal interiors. When restored to its original form in the early decades of the twentieth century by Alhambra architect-restorer Leopoldo Torres Balbás (1888–1960), its story was buried amidst the Alhambra’s long history of interventions and restorations. Ann Matchette has suggested that by shifting the focus from accumulation and display toward practices of recycling and dispersal, it becomes possible to see how the flow of goods from one interior to another shaped material

This subject of this article emerged from a lively and generative doctoral viva on 11 July 2011 with examiners Eva Frojmovic and D. Fairchild Ruggles, to whom the author is indebted.

<sup>1</sup> Arnold Esch, ‘On the Reuse of Antiquity: The Perspectives of the Archaeologist and of the Historian’, in Richard Brilliant and Dale Kinney (eds.), *Reuse Value: Spolia and Appropriation in Art and Architecture From Constantine to Sherrie Levine* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 14.



Fig. 1 Black marble chimneypiece with white carved ornaments, c. 1546, Genoa, current position in the Palace of Charles V (Museum of Fine Arts), Alhambra, Granada (photo: author)

and social experience.<sup>2</sup> In much the same way, by drawing attention to histories of reuse and restoration, the fluid criterion by which styles were valued and contextualized comes into historical view.

This article examines the chimneypiece's stages of production, reuse and restoration as a way of shedding light on changing Spanish tastes from the sixteenth century onward. Using its life a model for considering reuse and revaluation, it explores the period of building in Granada during and following the reign of Charles V alongside regional stylistic antecedents. Following Igor Kopytoff's model of cultural biography, I address questions such as: What is the

<sup>2</sup> Ann Matchette, 'To Have and Have Not: the Disposal of Household Furnishings in Florence, *Renaissance Studies*, 20 (2006), 701–16 (at 703). See also 'Credit and Credibility: Used Goods and Social Relations in Sixteenth-Century Florence', in Michelle O'Malley and Evelyn S. Welch (eds.), *The Material Renaissance* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2007), 225–41.



Fig. 2 José García Ayola, 'Capilla de Carlos Quinto' (chimneypiece incorporated into altar of the Mexuar Chapel, Nasrid palace complex, Alhambra), Archivo del Patronato de la Alhambra y el Generalife (APAG), Colección de Fotografías, F-05417.

'status' of the chimneypiece in the period and culture in which it was produced?; What has been its 'career' so far?; What are the recognized 'ages' or periods in its 'life'?; and perhaps most importantly, 'How does the thing's use change with its age, and what happens to it when it reaches the end of its usefulness?'.<sup>3</sup> The commission of the furnishing recalls a thriving period of trade and collaboration between artisans in Spain and Italy in which a number of classically inspired buildings appeared in Granada, most notably the city's cathedral and the new royal palace. And yet this is not the end of its story, for its transformation in 1630 indicates a dramatic turn away from this imported classical language and toward Granada's layered and pluralistic material heritage.

With an imposing black surround and white carved ornaments, the fireplace now sits unlabelled in a spacious gallery of the new royal palace (currently home to Granada's Fine Art Museum), its story of reuse threatening to subvert an already unstable narrative of the Spanish Renaissance. Thought to have been purchased from a Genoese workshop in 1546, it was almost certainly intended for the emperor's palace, which was under construction at the time. Nearly a century later, when work on the palace had all but ceased, it was incorporated into a new altarpiece in the 'Capilla del Mexuar', a converted royal chapel that had formerly served as a council chamber for Nasrid rulers.<sup>4</sup> At this stage the chimneypiece was stripped of its white ornaments and anchored on the south wall of the chapel. Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century photographs show an outsize frame placed atop a marble table extending the full

<sup>3</sup> Igor Kopytoff, 'The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process', in Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 66–7.

<sup>4</sup> Archivo del Patronato de la Alhambra y el Generalife (APAG), L-84: ledger, 3 August and 9 August 1630.

height of the ceiling. Within the frame is a painted scene of the Adoration of the Magi, and in place of the relief carving a painted night sky with the Star of Bethlehem. Two herms occupy recessed spaces on either side of the frame, having swapped positions with a pair of modest stone pilasters, and four decorative pyramid shapes adorn the upper lintel. Incredibly, the altarpiece remained in this state until 1929, when Torres Balbás recovered the white ornaments from a lower chamber of the Nasrid palaces and ordered the reassembly of the fireplace in an upper floor room of the new royal palace.<sup>5</sup>

Taken together, events in the life of the chimneypiece correspond with the unstable and contingent status of what is regarded as Granada's architectural and artistic Renaissance. Its appropriation involved the removal of its characteristically classical features, what might be interpreted as an act of 'de-stylization', while the destruction of the altar and the reassembly of the fireplace in the twentieth century can be read as an affirmation of Spain's historical participation in a wider European cultural and stylistic movement. Both reuse and restoration are significant, and highlight problematic gaps and conflicting agendas within the historiography. Torres Balbás also anticipates a pervasive trend within Spanish scholarship of evaluating Spanish Renaissance architecture in relation to Italian innovations, a practice exemplified in Manuel Gómez Moreno's 1941 *Las Águilas del Renacimiento Español* (a relativizing evaluation of the *oeuvres* of the four 'eagles' of the Spanish Renaissance: Bartolome Ordóñez, Diego Silóe, Pedro Machuca and Alonso Berruguete). This tendency has been challenged in recent years, most notably in the work of Fernando Marías, Felipe Pereda and Manfredo Tafuri, who have argued for a more historically grounded understanding of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish art and architecture that sees it as both distinct and as informed by larger networks of influence and exchange.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, while travel and trade increased between Spain and Italy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, partly inspiring a period of Roman-style building in Granada, historians of literature have pointed out that there was a well-established humanist tradition within Castilian culture stretching as far back as the fourteenth century.<sup>7</sup>

I suggest here that the import of classical styles should also be considered against a firmly established practice of incorporating multiple stylistic vocabularies within Spanish architecture and decoration of the long sixteenth century. The categories 'Plateresque' and 'Isabelline', while both nebulous in their multiple referents, are important to understanding the origins of this practice.

<sup>5</sup> Manuel Gómez-Moreno González, *Guía de Granada* (Granada: Indalecio Ventura, 1892) 103–06; 'Diario de Obras en la Alhambra: 1925–1926', *Cuadernos de la Alhambra*, 3 (1967), 108–110.

<sup>6</sup> Fernando Marías Franco, "'Trazas" e disegni nell' architettura spagnola del Cinquecento: la cattedrale di Granada', *Annali di Architettura* 9 (1997), 200–217; Fernando Marías Franco and Felipe Pereda, *Carlos V. Las Armas y las Letras* (Madrid: S.E.C.F.C., 2000).

<sup>7</sup> See for example Otis H. Green, *Spain and the Western Tradition: The Castilian Mind in Literature from El Cid to Calderón*, Vol. 3 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1963); Juan Bautista Avallé-Arce, *Lecturas (del Templo) Renacimiento a Valle-Inclán* (Madrid: Scripta Humanistica, 1987).

Derived from the Spanish *plata*, meaning ‘silversmith-like’, the Plateresque is vaguely linked to the plating or covering of existing Gothic buildings with silver or silver alloy decoration, although it more generally refers to a style that emerged in the late fifteenth century in the Spanish territories. A unique blend of high Gothic, Mudéjar and Lombard elements, it is considered by some scholars as a proto-Renaissance style which continued to flourish in centres such as Salamanca, León and Burgos throughout the reign of Charles V.<sup>8</sup> George Kubler has described the Plateresque as ‘invertebrate, composed of clusters of ornament which stress neither function (as in medieval design) nor total harmony (as in Renaissance design)’, although he acknowledges a second phase after 1530 which favoured an Italian conception of integral coherence.<sup>9</sup> His definition hints at the broad range of styles encapsulated by the term, as well as its changing composition throughout the first half of the sixteenth century.

The first phase of the Plateresque (also called Gothic-Plateresque), has much in common with the Isabelline style, typified in Granada’s Capilla Real, which elaborately combines Flemish, Italian and Mudéjar elements,<sup>10</sup> embodying the sophisticated, pluralistic visual culture that had grown over centuries of interaction between Christians, Jews and Muslims on the Peninsula.<sup>11</sup> A Spanish architectural style named after Queen Isabel I of Castile (1474–1504), the Isabelline is largely associated with the Flanders-trained architect Juan Guas, whose major works include the castle of El Real de Manzanares, near Madrid, and the Palace of El Infantado in Guadalajara. The latter phase, Renaissance-Plateresque (possibly coinciding with the publication of Sagredo’s *Medidas del romano* in 1526), is characterized by a more pronounced Italian classicism, but continues to feature Mudéjar elements.<sup>12</sup> Both stages demonstrate a lavish approach toward ornamentation, featuring high relief programmes of hybrid motifs, usually operating independently from the structures and surfaces to which they are applied. While the first Plateresque phase emerged in Burgos, Toledo and Valladolid, and spread to some other regions of Spain, the second phase spread beyond its borders, influencing and incorporating elements from Portuguese (Manueline) and Latin American architectural traditions.

I posit that integration of the chimneypiece within a room of the Nasrid palaces over a century later represents a continuation of these earlier incorporative approaches, suggested through the object’s elaborate integration into an already hybridized decorative programme. Taking this argument further, the

<sup>8</sup> See Ana María Arias de Cossío, *El arte del Renacimiento español* (Madrid: Encuentro, 2009), 90–91; Fernando Marías, *El siglo XVI: gótico y renacimiento* (Madrid: Silex Ediciones, 1992), 24.

<sup>9</sup> George Kubler and Martin Sebastian Soria, *Art and Architecture in Spain and Portugal and Their American Dominions, 1500 to 1800* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1959), 4.

<sup>10</sup> See J. B. Bury, ‘The Stylistic Term “Plateresque”’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 39 (1976), 199–230.

<sup>11</sup> For an overview of this material and cultural history see Jerrilynn D. Dodds, Maria Rosa Menocal and Abigail Krasner Balbale, *The Arts of Intimacy: Christians, Jews, and Muslims in the Making of Castilian Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

<sup>12</sup> ‘Plateresque’, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Renaissance*, ed. Gordon Campbell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003; online 2005).

chimneypiece conversion might be read in terms of a manifest disinterest or even rejection of the Serlian classical mode that had become emblematic of Charles V's power in Granada, in favour of a pluralistic and recognizably local tradition rooted in practices of reuse and adaptation. It is significant that by the time of its appropriation the new royal palace sat abandoned, having never been occupied by the emperor. In this way it may have served as an unwelcome reminder of Charles's unfulfilled promise to make Granada the seat of his vast empire. In any case, the disassembly of the fireplace suggests that its imported style was no longer valued as it may have been in the previous century. The simultaneous renovation of the Nasrid palaces suggests that Spanish governors supported a return to more integrative decorative tendencies that had characterized the reign of the Catholic monarchs. Such a reversion challenges a linear narrative of architectural development in Spain. Seen from this perspective, Torres Balbás's restoration of the fireplace was a corrective measure: he saw himself as putting a stray piece of a historical puzzle in its proper place.

A focus on material transferral and translation allows the historian to see exceptions or variations as conscious and considered interpretations, rather than blunders or misinterpretations of established models. It follows that the agency of individual designers, working autonomously or within collaborative networks, should be factored into discussions of style. I would also add that instances of appropriation, conversion and conservation are equally potent indicators of taste, in accordance with shifting personal and political agendas. In considering the chimneypiece's history of reuse value I am emphasizing what Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood have called the 'plural temporality' of the work of art, or its capacity to point both backward and forward in time from its moment of conception.<sup>13</sup> Comparing reuse with the practice of citation, they identify a process through which new sets of meanings are created through the appropriation of objects, or through 'the transfer of parcels of coded meaning from one text to another'.<sup>14</sup> These meanings become available 'once histories of making can be visualized . . . once form or materials are seen to have historical coordinates'.<sup>15</sup>

The seventeenth-century fireplace conversion hovers somewhere between Nagel and Wood's definitions of spoliation and citation, representing a case of both material continuity and intertextuality. Yet the 'historical coordinates' of the fireplace were at least partially obscured by the removal of its ornaments and its stylistic absorption into the Mexuar. Stating that not all reuse of previously worked materials can be seen as a meaningful citation, they explain that 'if the seam between container and contained is invisible, or visible only to modern scholars, then we are faced simply with a pragmatic recycling of scarce materials'.<sup>16</sup> The question of whether the conversion was a conscious re-

<sup>13</sup> Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance* (New York: Zone Books, 2010), 9.

<sup>14</sup> Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, 178–9.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, 180.

inscription of meaning as opposed to a practical solution is difficult to answer. In either case, however, it can be read as a devaluation of a stylistic mode at a time when the power of the empire had waned and the Spanish court was being redecorated in a myriad of materials and regional dialects. Indeed, the very willingness of Spanish governors to destroy the coherency of such an expensive object and to place it within a reclaimed religious space, speaks volumes.

If the seventeenth-century altarpiece is understood as a coded fragment, then Torres Balbás's restoration can be read as an erasure of that code and the reconstitution of a previous set of signifiers. Returned to its original state, the fireplace confirms the presence of European networks in the development of Granada's architectural Renaissance. Its relocation in the new royal palace further reinforces this connection. Despite his pioneering role as a 'scientific restorer', committed to preserving evidence of the Alhambra's many stages of transformation (both Muslim and Christian), Torres Balbás chose to complete retroactively the new royal palace (a building that had ceased to serve a symbolic or practical purpose), and later to furnish it with the commissioned piece. A trained architect, academic and conservator, he oversaw the excavation and restoration of buildings, gardens and grounds from both pre- and post-conquest periods with an unprecedented level of objectivity. However, he took exception to interventions that he deemed 'fantastical', particularly the Orientalist works completed by the Contreras family in the nineteenth century.<sup>17</sup> This era of restoration is so controversial that only very recently have the contributions of the Contreras restorers been given serious attention within Spanish language scholarship.<sup>18</sup> Torres Balbás's decision to restore the fireplace suggests that he judged the seventeenth-century conversion on similar grounds, returning it together with its missing pieces to the new royal palace, irrespective of the extended period of time it had spent in the Mexuar.

The Alhambra's conservation department have since embraced the palaces' history of Orientalist contributions (reflected most recently in the restoration of the nineteenth-century polychrome scheme of the Comares Palace *hammam*), yet the former life of the Genoese fireplace remains conspicuously understated within official guides, and has only very recently been taken up within Alhambra scholarship.<sup>19</sup> In order to address this oversight, I here

<sup>17</sup> For an overview of Torres Balbás's restoration work and publications see Juan Calatrava, 'Architectural Restoration and the Idea of "Tradition" in Early Twentieth-Century Spain', *Future Anterior* 4: 2 (2007), 40–49. 'Diario de Obras en la Alhambra' was published as a series of issues of *Cuadernos de la Alhambra* and recently republished in Carlos Vélchez Vélchez, *La Alhambra de Leopoldo Torres Balbás. Obras de Restauración y Conservación 1927–1936* (Granada: Editorial Comares, 1988).

<sup>18</sup> On the Orientalist restoration period see José Manuel Rodríguez Domingo, 'La Alhambra restaurada: de ruina romántica a fantasía oriental', in *Luz sobre papel: la imagen de Granada y la Alhambra en las fotografías de J. Laurent* (Granada: Patronato de la Alhambra y Generalife; Junta de Andalucía, Consejería de Cultura, 2007), 83–98; Rodríguez Domingo, 'La Restauración Monumental de la Alhambra: de Real Sitio a Monumento Nacional, 1827–1907' (unpublished thesis, University of Granada, 1998); and Tonia Raquejo's biographical section on Rafael Contreras in *El Palacio Encantado: La Alhambra en el arte británico* (Madrid, 1989), 186–7.

<sup>19</sup> Esther Galera Mendoza, 'Espacios religiosos en la Alhambra en los Siglos XVI y XVII', in *Docta Minerva. Homenaje a la Profesora Luz de Ulierte Vázquez* (Jaén: Universidad de Jaén, 2011).

examine the history of the chimneypiece in such a way that treats both its appropriation and de-appropriation as meaningful. As it came in contact with a range of patrons, designers, artists, restorers and audiences, the chimneypiece was made, unmade and remade at the interface of stylistic trends and political motivations. In the following sections I sketch the three principle stages of its life: its arrival in Granada in the middle of the sixteenth century, its conversion and adaptation within the Mexuar Chapel just under a century later, and its restoration by Torres Balbás in the late 1920s. Through this biographical overview it is possible to 'make salient what might otherwise remain obscure', thus revealing a series of actions and reactions that underpin fluctuations in the production and reception of material culture across time.<sup>20</sup>

#### A GENOESE CHIMNEYPIECE IN GRANADA

The exact provenance of the chimneypiece remains a mystery, but the presence of the Lombard sculptor Niccolò da Corte in Granada at the time of its purchase in 1546 strongly suggests a link to the Della Porta workshop in Genoa.<sup>21</sup> Da Corte had been a third member of the workshop alongside Gian Giacomo and Guglielmo della Porta, and in 1537 he accompanied a large shipment to Granada containing a balustrade and a marble fountain for the private palace of Álvaro de Bazán – the same Marqués whose grandmother would later commission the fireplace for the new royal palace.<sup>22</sup> For reasons unknown, da Corte remained in Granada until his death in 1552. During this time he undertook a number of contracts at the Alhambra, including the design and construction of a marble casement window and decorations on the south façade of the new royal palace (the figure of *Fame* and socle reliefs with war trophies are attributed to him), and elements of the stone fountain located on the outer fortress wall known as the Pilar de Carlos V.<sup>23</sup> While there is no documentation of da Corte's involvement in the purchase of the fireplace, his proximity to the Spanish court and strong Genoese connections would have made him a valuable liaison in such matters. The Della Porta workshop received a commission for a large marble chimneypiece for the Palazzo San Giorgio only two years prior to the Granada fireplace, which, whilst more clearly shows the influence of Perino del Vaga and Giovanni Angelo Montorsoli, contains a similar ram head and garland motif.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Kopytoff, 'The Cultural Biography of Things', 67.

<sup>21</sup> On the Della Porta workshop see Hanno-Walter Kruft and Anthony Roth, 'The Della Porta Workshop in Genoa', *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa (Classe di Lettere e Filosofia, ser. 3)*, 3 (1973), 893–954; and for da Corte's work in Granada see Rosenthal, 'The Lombard Sculptor Niccolò da Corte in Granada from 1537–1552', *Art Quarterly* 29 (1966), 209–44.

<sup>22</sup> Earl E. Rosenthal, *The Palace of Charles V in Granada* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 69.

<sup>23</sup> For further details of these commissions see Rosenthal, *Palace of Charles V*, 69–84.

<sup>24</sup> Kruft and Roth, 'The Della Porta Workshop in Genoa', 906–07.

The chimneypiece is typical of the grand, ornate examples found in *sale principali* of Florentine palaces, with a sizeable hearth and upper mantle covered with decorative elements designed to visually lighten its bulk.<sup>25</sup> The decorative function of its tapered overmantel is sufficient proof that it was produced during the first half of the sixteenth century. Peter Thornton explains that this feature evolved from a purely conical structure which channelled smoke into a flue, into a wedge or pyramid shape that resembled a roof, subsequently called a *nappa* (or *cappa*) a *padiglione*, meaning 'pavilion-like'.<sup>26</sup> As the embedding of chimneypieces within thick structural walls became commonplace in the first half of the sixteenth century, the *a padiglione* became increasingly ornamental, such that architects were charged with the task of 'juggling with the proportions, trying to reduce its size, furnishing it with cornices and mouldings, [and] adding decoration of various kinds'.<sup>27</sup> During this time the import of Italian furnishings and architectural elements was commonplace. Many Italian producers relied solely on their own resources and labour force to extend their markets abroad, improving the quality of their goods whilst increasing variety and quantity.<sup>28</sup> Trade with Granada was well established by the middle of the sixteenth century, with a substantial number of Genoese bankers and financiers having relocated there. One of the outcomes of this close fiscal relationship was that residents of Granada became familiar with (and to some extent suspicious of) Genoese merchants, a perception reflected within literary accounts from the period.<sup>29</sup> During this time Charles V continued to pour resources from New World conquests into Italy in order to assure political allegiance and to strengthen a military base that would support international operations in the Mediterranean and could be mobilized against potential Turkish invasions.<sup>30</sup>

The chimneypiece was probably intended for the new royal palace, but missing ledgers between 1543 and 1550 make it impossible to confirm whether it was assembled upon arrival, or indeed, if it was installed at all. It was acquired at a substantial cost of one hundred thousand silver *maravedí* by Doña María de Manuel,<sup>31</sup> grandmother of naval commander and Marqués de Santa Cruz, Álvaro de Bazán. At the time of its purchase Charles' nineteen-year-old son Philip was Prince Regent, and much in the manner of his father, approved works on the palaces intermittently and in absentia. Construction of the new palace

<sup>25</sup> Brenda Preyer, 'The *Acquaiò* (Wall Fountain) and Fireplace in Florence', Marta Ajmar-Wollheim, *et al.*, *At Home in Renaissance Italy* (London: V&A, 2006), 284.

<sup>26</sup> Peter Thornton, *The Italian Renaissance Interior, 1400–1600* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991), 20.

<sup>27</sup> Thornton, *The Italian Renaissance Interior*, 20.

<sup>28</sup> Richard A. Goldthwaite, *Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy, 1300–1600*, (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 26.

<sup>29</sup> Ruth Pike, 'The Image of the Genoese in Golden Age of Literature', *Hispania* 46 (1963), 705–14. See also J. Heers, 'Le royaume de Granada et la politique marchande de Gênes en occident', *Moyen Age* 17 (1957), 91–188.

<sup>30</sup> Goldthwaite, *Wealth and the Demand*, 31.

<sup>31</sup> 'A doña María de Manuel, de mármol y piedra negra de figuras y talla de follajes, de Génova, que costo cien mil maravedis'. APAG, L-3-12: ledger, 29 December 1546.

and alterations to the Nasrid complex continued mainly under the guidance of Italian-trained painter and *maestro mayor*, Pedro Machuca (one of Gomez Mórano's *águilas*), and the governor or *alcaide* of the Alhambra at the time, Don Íñigo López de Mendoza y Quiñones (second Count of Tendilla and first Marquis of Mondéjar, referred to hereafter as Tendilla). The arrival of the fireplace coincided with a busy period of construction, with records showing numerous contracts for architects, sculptors and other skilled labourers. Charles initiated the palace project after spending a short time in the Alhambra during his honeymoon in 1526, and construction commenced around 1533 following protracted deliberation over the initial plans. Conceived as a grand and imposing symbol of the Habsburg Empire and a triumphalist monument to the Christian conquest, it was built adjacently and with direct access to the former Nasrid palaces. With the emperor distracted by demands in other realms, the half finished palace came to be seen as 'a monumental symbol of power by an absent king'.<sup>32</sup> To further complicate matters, construction was primarily funded by Morisco taxes, which was halted during a series of uprisings that began in 1568 and continued only sporadically until the expulsion of all remaining Muslims in 1609 under Charles' grandson, Phillip III.<sup>33</sup> Economic restraints and political circumstances meant that building and design work dragged over a period of a century, with many changes, reversals and adjustments made along the way. By the beginning of the seventeenth century the imposing monument overlooking the city of Granada had become a colossal, resource-draining failure, and was finally abandoned without a roof in 1637. It stands to reason that a chimneypiece purchased for its halls during a more optimistic period of building subsequently found itself at a loose end.

The disagreement amongst scholars regarding the nature and extent of Italian influence on the design of the new royal palace and its tumultuous history of revisions is worth mentioning here. Rosenthal, in his extensive study of the monument, has tended to explain the palace's many solecisms as the product of disagreements between Italian or Italian-trained architects and Castilian advisors who were unfamiliar with or rejected the Italian style.<sup>34</sup> Manfredo Tafuri has countered this argument, accusing Rosenthal and others of proposing a false opposition between 'rigorism' and '*maniera*' in studies of buildings of the 'Iberian Renaissance', rather than studying examples in relation to 'a system of figurative and cultural relationships of exceptional complexity'.<sup>35</sup> From this perspective, the so-called 'mistakes' found within the three *portada* facades

<sup>32</sup> Cammy Brothers, 'The Renaissance Reception of the Alhambra: The Letters of Andrea Navagero and the Palace of Charles V', *Muqarnas* 11 (1994), 98.

<sup>33</sup> 'Morisco', meaning 'little Moors', was the term used by Christians following the mass conversions of 1500 to describe converted Muslims living under Castilian rule (prior to that they were simply called *nuevos convertidos*). For the history of this and other terms relating to the period see Leonard Patrick Harvey, *Islamic Spain: 1250–1500* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 2–5.

<sup>34</sup> Rosenthal, *The Palace of Charles V*, 98.

<sup>35</sup> Manfredo Tafuri, *Interpreting the Renaissance: Princes, Cities, Architects* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press in association with Harvard University Graduate School of Design, 2006), 190, 183.

of the new royal palace at Granada might be understood as the product of 'an offhand combination of innovative aspirations, erudite culture, and archaisms'.<sup>36</sup> Along similar lines, Helen Nader has observed that the asymmetries and innovations of the palace reflect 'the architectural anachronisms in a Spain already evolving its own plateresque [*sic*] style'.<sup>37</sup> While a Serlian sensibility is clearly evident in the clean symmetry of the palace's overall design (particularly within its square outer structure and circular inner courtyard, and the spatial division of the portal facades), its unique decorative features, such as the unusual juxtaposition of Doric and Ionic pilasters within the south *portada* and the 'leather roll' volutes of its ionic capitals, can be taken as unique and playful variations on established decorative themes.

Unlike the palace, the Genoese chimney is unequivocally rooted in the Serlian tradition, bearing a strong resemblance to the Italian architect's designs for chimneypieces in the fourth book of *I sette libri dell'architettura* (*Seven Books of Architecture*, 1537–47), especially the *padiglione* types depicted in folios 43, 58 and 62. Yet even though the invocation of classical style and symbolism complemented and coincided with the imperial heraldry created for the emperor, it is important to recognize that many members of the Spanish court remained loyal to the artistic and cultural traditions of the monarchy.<sup>38</sup> Having lost power and influence under the Hapsburg regime, the Mendoza family found itself fighting to retain their court customs against the new regime. The family had remained dedicated supporters of the Castilian Trastámara dynasty since 1369, and it was Tendilla who was largely responsible for the revival of a humanist school thought in Granada and its corresponding architectural tradition. Many saw Charles as an outsider, a Burgundian who spoke little Spanish and struggled for control over his inherited territory and its mixed ethno-religious population.<sup>39</sup> For the young emperor, imperial symbolism was tied up with reinforcing his Spanish maternal family's hold over 'reclaimed' Muslim territory while expanding the borders of his father's empire, which at the time of his accession included Austria, the Netherlands, and southern Italy. Tendilla, by contrast, was openly tolerant of remaining Muslims and Moriscos, and upheld a humanist vision of Granada that involved the integration of minority groups through a gentle programme of conversion. Unlike his father, Luis Hurtado chose to strategically align himself with Charles, and was the first court member to recognize his role as King Designate of Spain in 1516. This shift in loyalty appears to have coincided with the changeover in 1524 of the Alhambra's governor from the local architect Juan de la Vega to the Italian-trained

<sup>36</sup> Tafuri, *Interpreting the Renaissance*, 193.

<sup>37</sup> Helen Nader, *The Mendoza Family in the Spanish Renaissance, 1350 to 1550* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1979), 199.

<sup>38</sup> See Earl Rosenthal, 'Plus Ultra, Non Plus Ultra, and the Columnar Device of Emperor Charles V', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 34 (1971), 204–28.

<sup>39</sup> For more on Charles's background see J. H. Elliott, *Imperial Spain, 1469–1716* (London: Edward Arnold Publishers Ltd., 1963), 154–203.

Machuca, indicating a preference for a more 'rigorous' interpretation of classical forms, or at least a tacit acceptance of Italian examples. The chimneypiece was commissioned at a time when the court, either by its own volition or under pressure from the emperor's advisors, was embracing a more unified European style. Almost a century later, the extensive renovations to the Mexuar and the incorporation of an Italian furnishing that all but obliterated its stylistic origins, are indications that much had changed.

#### A NEW ALTAR FOR THE MEXUAR CHAPEL

The appropriation of the chimneypiece in the first half of the seventeenth century, apart from anything else, is a demonstration of resourcefulness. It resulted in a new altarpiece and prevented the deterioration of an expensive furnishing in the yet-uncovered (and not-so-new) royal palace. The grand scale and lavish material of the mantel was doubtless considered fitting for royal visitors and court congregations, and the removal of its ornaments may simply have been a pious measure to allow its integration within the chapel. Esther Galera Mendoza has observed that the Alhambra fortress of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was a reduced-scale city adapted to the needs of liturgy and devotion, with many of its buildings converted to convents, chapels and churches.<sup>40</sup> The Chapel of the Palace of the Lions (also called the Chapel of the Kings) housed the parish church of the Alhambra from 1576 until 1618, when the Blessed Sacrament was moved to the new Church of Santa Maria of the Alhambra, built on the site of the former Great Mosque. The remaining chapels of the Nasrid palaces continued to function as private spaces of worship well into the seventeenth century, yet records show that after 1579 funds for the construction and restoration of buildings on the Alhambra grounds were drastically reduced. Furthermore, under the strict jurisdiction of the Junta de Obras y Bosques (Board of Works and Grounds), all requests, decisions and budgets were to be approved by the emperor or his ministers, often resulting in long delays or rejected applications (previous to 1580 the resident governor of the Alhambra had held full decision-making rights).<sup>41</sup> In 1604, Luis Hurtado, the last in the line of influential Mendoza governors, was succeeded by his brother-in-law Cristóbal Gómez de Sandoval y Rojas, who had almost no architectural experience. In the years between 1620 and 1637 he was assisted by the Spanish architect Francisco de Potes, whose attempts to cover some of the exposed areas of the new royal palace were continually frustrated. De Potes was successful, however, in gaining approval for the installation of a number of fireplace flues in 1621, works that had been agreed in 1580 but for some reason not undertaken. According to

<sup>40</sup> Galera Mendoza, 'Espacios religiosos en la Alhambra', 191. Other prayer spaces in the main royal houses included the Chapel of the Baths, the Emperor's palace chapel, the Chapel of Comares and the Oratory of the Stove (*Estufa*). Of these, the last two appear less frequently within the documentation and may have been of less importance.

<sup>41</sup> Rosenthal, *Palace of Charles V*, 128.

Rosenthal, the flue on the south side of the palace's main hall was the anticipated home of the commissioned chimneypiece.<sup>42</sup> Purchased nearly a century earlier, it then may finally have been assembled in the new royal palace, before being relocated to the Mexuar nine years later.

Despite limited funds and congested bureaucratic channels, the Mexuar underwent a major structural and cosmetic overhaul between 1629 and 1632, with multiple contracts for stonemasons, bricklayers, glassworkers, ceramicists, painters, carpenters and locksmiths documented in ledgers from the period.<sup>43</sup> Windows were repaired, tiled windowsills and iron balconies added, plaster ornament repainted, new floors of brick and decorative ceramic tiles (*olambriilas*) laid, and brownstone pools made to contain the Holy Water. The records state that at this time a chimneypiece surround was anchored to a stone base using lead.<sup>44</sup> It was subsequently relieved of its ornament including two seated nudes, a rather salacious relief carving of Leda and the Swan, and a crown piece depicting a pair of ram heads connected by a garland and an upper fringe of flames. Its black stone armature, together with two remaining white 'herms' (tapered stone posts bearing carved male busts) that supported its mantle, comprised the unlikely new altarpiece.

Additional masonry for the new altar was designed by Diego de Oliva and crafted by Bartolomé Fernández Lechuga, including two marble support beams fitted with plain pilasters (replacing the two herms supports), decorative 'pyramid' capitals, a tier of white stone and a white marble altar table.<sup>45</sup> Jerónimo Carminato, a Spanish artist believed to be of Italian descent, was commissioned to paint the Adoration scene.<sup>46</sup> The second oval composition depicting yellow stars on a dark background (with one larger star representing the Star of Bethlehem), painted by local artist Francisco Ruiz, was inserted in place of the Leda and Swan carving. Ruiz also produced the two moulded crowns found above the imperial heraldic tiles on either side of the altar.<sup>47</sup> Gold plated candlesticks and a walnut lectern were fashioned for the altar, and a number of additional changes were made to the Sacristy.<sup>48</sup> Records shed little light on the impetus behind these major works, but it is likely that following a visit from Prince Philip IV in 1624 during which he and his entourage were lodged in the Nasrid palaces (the new royal palace remained under construction), the space was upgraded in anticipation of future visits. The chapel was refurbished a third and final time in preparation for the arrival of Philip V in 1729.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Rosenthal, *Palace of Charles V*, 149.

<sup>43</sup> For a full account of restorations see Galera Mendoza, 'Espacios religiosos en la Alhambra', 193–9.

<sup>44</sup> '...una arroba de plomo... para pegar y asentar las piedras que se ponen en el altar que se hace en la capilla real del Mejuar', APAG, L-84: payroll, 3 August and 9 August 1630.

<sup>45</sup> APAG, L-84: contracts dated 6 July and 14 September 1630.

<sup>46</sup> APAG, L-84: contract dated 5 October 1630.

<sup>47</sup> APAG, L-84: contracts dated 29 November 1630 and 20 September 1630.

<sup>48</sup> APAG, L-84: ledger, 1 February 1631; APAG, L-84: contract dated 19 April 1631.

<sup>49</sup> For an overview of the 1729 restoration see María Cruz Ramos Torres, 'Preparativos en la Alhambra ante la venida de Felipe V (Álbum de la Alhambra)', *Cuadernos de la Alhambra* 8 (1972), 91–8.

Stylistically, the new altarpiece was unconventional by even the most imaginative standards, and to my knowledge it has no correlatives. This highly creative appropriation seems at odds with Counter Reformation policy, which greatly inhibited the freedom of patrons to design altars in accordance with their own devotional interests and stylistic preferences.<sup>50</sup> On the other hand, at least in terms of materials, the marble altar frame did conform to the new reforms. In a pre-Tridentine programme launched by Pope Paul III (1534–49) it was decreed that private altars must be fixed or immovable, and made exclusively of masonry or materials more permanent than wood.<sup>51</sup> Philip Mattox writes that the objective in acquiring altar rights after this period was ‘to create, as much as possible, a powerful centre of sacrality in one’s dwelling, which in furnishings and rituals, if not in canonical status, functioned as a church’.<sup>52</sup> This might offer another explanation for why the Mexuar Chapel was refurbished and its altar refitted, despite squeezed resources. It also accounts for the removal of almost all classical symbolism and figurative decoration from the chimneypiece and their replacement with devotional imagery. This conservatism did not, however, prevent the rather bizarre admixture of motifs and materials found in the Mexuar. On the one hand the heavy frame and its marble pilasters (which are echoed the imperial Pillars of Hercules murals that flanked the altarpiece) reflect a classical austerity, but on the other hand elements such the four painted ‘pyramids’ added to the top of the altar and the gypsum crowns embedded above each mural, are the products of a more ornate, jumbled eclecticism. Perhaps because of their discontinuity, these accoutrements seem successfully to integrate the structure into the Mexuar, which already contained Nasrid, Castilian and Habsburg heraldry bound together in a rich and colourful arrangement of tile, wood and plaster decoration.

Given its centrality within the Mexuar, the altarpiece is perhaps best understood in relation to the room’s own story of reuse. With construction, conversions and restorations dating as far back as the thirteenth century, separating its layers has proved a formidable challenge for both archaeologists and art historians. In his 1978 study Oleg Grabar dismissed the space as a ‘hodgepodge of ruined or restored features’, inferring that its multiple stages of intervention have made it an unviable object of study.<sup>53</sup> Built on the foundations of a private palace erected for the Nasrid king Ismā‘īl I, which was levelled and rebuilt by his grandson Muhammad V between 1362 and 1365 for the *marwālid* or Birth of the Prophet celebration, it thereafter served as a council chamber.<sup>54</sup> Following

<sup>50</sup> Peter Humfrey, ‘Co-ordinated Altarpieces in Renaissance Venice: The Progress of an Ideal’, in Martin Kemp (ed.), *The Altarpiece in the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 191.

<sup>51</sup> Philip Mattox, ‘Domestic Sacral Space in the Florentine Renaissance Palace’, *Renaissance Studies* 20 (2006), 665.

<sup>52</sup> Mattox, ‘Domestic Sacral Space’, 666.

<sup>53</sup> Oleg Grabar, *The Alhambra*, 2nd edn. (London: Penguin, 1992), 97.

<sup>54</sup> See Antonio Fernández Puertas, ‘El poema de la fachada del Mexuar’, *Cuadernos de la Alhambra* 41 (2006), 36–57; and Ma Elena Díez Jorge, José Manuel Gómez-Moreno Calera and Pedro A. Galera Andreu, *The Alhambra and the Generalife: An Art History Guide*, 2nd edn., trans. Bryan Robinson (Granada: Universidad de Granada and Junta de Andalucía, 2008), 114.

the Catholic conquest of Granada in 1492, the formerly square space was elongated to accommodate a private chapel, part of the monarchs' royal residence. It retained this function in various incarnations throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. From the middle of the eighteenth century the Alhambra palaces were abandoned by the crown and occupied by a succession of Romani, Napoleonic troops, merchants, criminals, prisoners and livestock.<sup>55</sup> Badly damaged through decades of neglect and vandalism, the Mexuar underwent numerous restorations in the nineteenth century, as well as invasive attempts to return the space to its 'original' Nasrid state, resulting in a complicated assortment of materials and styles that bear little resemblance to any one stage of its development. Its structural and decorative fabric is the product of changing circumstance. Large sections of its ceramic dados and stucco panels have been adapted from others areas of the palaces, while a row of balcony windows and a painted wooden balustrade are all that remain from its first incarnation as a private chapel.

Evidence of its imperial makeover later in the century is found in the peculiar rendering of Charles V's heraldry (the double headed Hapsburg eagle and the Pillars of Hercules), to match the style and materials of the room. These emblems are found in various guises within the converted Nasrid quarters and the new royal palace, though usually rendered in stone or marble. In the Mexuar these symbols were executed by Morisco artisans at some point before 1550 using the Nasrid *alictado* technique, which involved the cutting and trimming of individual ceramic pieces with delicate pliers.<sup>56</sup> A series of star shaped tile inserts (Figs. 3 and 4) and a pair of rectangular wall murals which originally straddled the altar, each bearing one column of the 'Plus Oultre' or Pillars of Hercules emblem (Fig. 5), are all in keeping with the colour scheme of the Nasrid geometric dados, comprised of light and dark blue, green, gold and white tiles. I argue that the decision to adapt the marble altar to the decorative programme of the Mexuar in the seventeenth century is an extension of a practice of stylistic and technical augmentation that began in the years immediately following the conquest. The black marble mantel is integrated through the use of decorative flourishes and material juxtapositions that signal a bold departure from the sparse classicism briefly celebrated during the reign of Charles V. This transformation left the former chimneypiece floating precariously between stylistic categories, a problem perceived and rectified by Torres Balbás nearly three centuries later.

<sup>55</sup> Richard Ford's *Hand-Book for Travellers in Spain and Readers at Home* (London: John Murray, 1845) remains one of the only accounts of this period, though strongly biased against the Spanish government and predominantly informed by oral testimonies.

<sup>56</sup> German traveller Hieronymus Münzer reported in his 'Itinerarium' of 1494 that Morisco workers were restoring the Nasrid palace in conformance with its style, however, after 1550 increasingly intolerant policies ended the involvement of Moriscos in the reparation and decoration of the palaces.



Fig. 3 'Plus Oultre' or Pillars of Hercules heraldic device conceived as star *aliclado* tile, north wall dado, Mexuar (photo: author)



Fig. 4 Habsburg double-headed eagle emblem conceived as star *aliclado* tile, north wall dado, Mexuar (photo: author)

#### PICKING UP THE PIECES IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

It was amidst the Mexuar's 'hodgepodge' of styles and materials that Torres Bálbas encountered the unusual altar. Responding to an appeal made fifty years prior by architectural historian Manuel Gómez Moreno to restore the fireplace 'in the service of art history', Torres Balbás set about the task of collecting its pieces (one remains missing, possibly the corbel on the left side of the surround) and reassembling it in one of the upstairs rooms of the palace of



Fig. 5 One of two twin murals dating from the reign of Charles V relocated to the eastern wall of the Mexuar Hall, featuring column and 'Plus Oultre' signature of the Pillars of Hercules emblem (photo: author)

Charles V.<sup>57</sup> He condemned the seventeenth-century conversion as 'primitive', arguing that the fireplace, complete with its figural ornaments, represented one of the Alhambra's many 'spectres' of civilization.<sup>58</sup> He rather cryptically explains that, 'Jupiter and Leda, nymphs, satyrs and fauns, worthily represent one aspect (Dionysian and eternal) of human history.'<sup>59</sup> The white marble pieces were recovered from a dark vaulted chamber under the Hall of the Boat in the neighbouring Comares Palace, which had subsequently been named the 'Hall of the Nymphs'. The crown piece and relief carving rested on the lintels

<sup>57</sup> Torres Balbás, 'Notas de la Alhambra: historia de una chimenea', *La Esfera: ilustración mundial*, 15:752 (June 1928), 34; Gómez Moreno, 'Chimenea del Renacimiento en la casa real árabe de la Alhambra', *El Liceo de Granada* 6 (1875), 17.

<sup>58</sup> Torres Balbás, 'Notas de la Alhambra', 33.

<sup>59</sup> Torres Balbás, 'Notas de la Alhambra', 34.

of the doors, and the nudes had been inserted within niches running along the jambs. Legend has it that their gazes pointed toward the location of a buried treasure, a tale recounted by Washington Irving in his *Tales of the Alhambra*.<sup>60</sup> Torres Balbás speculated that following their removal the ornaments were probably kept as 'profane forms' within the private quarters of the royal residence, and only at some later point collected and displayed in the lower chamber. He was bemused by the decision to retain the two supporting satyr figures within the altarpiece, despite their mythical denomination. He marvelled that even though they had been moved to a more recessed position, these two 'pagan souls' would have regularly witnessed the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.<sup>61</sup>

Born in Madrid in 1888, Torres Bálbas studied under Gómez Moreno in the archaeological section of the Historical Studies section of the Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura, where he became secretary of the journal *Arquitectura*. He strongly objected to Eugène Viollet-le-Duc's theories of stylistic restoration, which prioritized the overall unity of a monument over its individual elements. At the Seventh National Congress of Architects held in Saragossa in 1919 Torres Balbás delivered a lecture on the legislation of Spanish historical and artistic monuments, outlining the following tenets of conservation: 'To preserve buildings just as they have been passed on to us, to protect them from ruin, to maintain them and consolidate them, always with great respect for ancient construction; never to complete them or remake the existent parts'.<sup>62</sup> This philosophy underpinned his scientific restoration programme at the Alhambra, where he served as architect-conservator between the years 1923 and 1936. Reacting against the expressive historicism of the previous century, he is celebrated for rescuing the 'true' Spain that had hitherto been 'hidden under historicist tinsel and folkloric frivolity', and reconciling the notion of the 'traditional' with a modern conception of Spanishness.<sup>63</sup> In addition to marrying academic research with restorative practice, Torres Balbás is also credited for putting in place permanent measures for conservation, thus ensuring the survival of many of the Alhambra's buildings, complete with post-conquest interventions. Shortly after taking up the post, and influenced by the conservation programme of his predecessor Ricardo Velazquez Bosco, he wrote the essay 'Granada, la ciudad que desaparece' ('Granada, the disappearing city'), in which he forbade the removal or alteration of any 'testimonies' or works that

<sup>60</sup> 'On each side of the portal sat the figure of a nymph, wrought out of alabaster. Their heads were turned aside, and their regards fixed upon the same spot within the vault. . . "These discreet statues watch over a treasure hidden in old times by a Moorish king. Tell thy father to search the spot on which their eyes are fixed, and he will find what will make him richer than any man in Granada.'" Washington Irving, *Tales of the Alhambra: To which are Added Legends of the Conquest of Spain* (Paris: Baudry's European Library, 1840), 190.

<sup>61</sup> Torres Balbás, 'Notas de la Alhambra', 34.

<sup>62</sup> Leopoldo Torres Balbás, *Legislacion, inventario grafico y organizacion de 105 monumentos historicos y artisticos de Espana* (Zaragoza: 1919), 21 (repr. in *Cuadernos de Arte de la Universidad de Granada* 20 (1989), 195–210).

<sup>63</sup> Juan Calatrava, 'Architectural Restoration and the Idea of "Tradition" in Early Twentieth-Century Spain', *Future Anterior* 4 (2007), 48.

had subsequently been added to its original buildings and monuments.<sup>64</sup> As previously stated, such works did not include more 'creative' or interpretive forms of restoration. As Juan Calatrava has noted, Balbás did not hesitate to 'restore the restored' when it came to nineteenth-century interventions.<sup>65</sup>

Torres Balbás also took part in the congress that resulted in the 1931 Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments. In addition to longer term conservation plans and the inclusion of areas surrounding heritage sites, the charter also stipulated that, 'when, as the result of decay or destruction, restoration appears to be indispensable, [...] that the historic and artistic work of the past should be respected, without excluding the style of any given period.'<sup>66</sup> Torres Balbás mainly adhered to this rule, but he made exceptions when he felt that a building or artefact was in some way fictitious, misleading or at least unrepresentative of its contemporary style or period. It was according to these subjective standards that the altarpiece was deemed unworthy of conservation, even while other aspects of the Mexuar's hybrid programme were preserved. The reassembly of the fireplace in the Palace of Charles V (perhaps for the first time) shows the restorer's insistence on the designation of certain objects according to established categories, rather than their actual material histories. Torres Balbás effectively denied the object a place in the Alhambra's complex history of material and stylistic appropriation, favouring its former life as an imported 'Renaissance' furnishing over a less clearly defined afterlife when it became part of a practice of freely combining and juxtaposing objects and motifs from different periods. Continuing the work of his former mentor, Gomez Moreno (who had in his own career fought for the equal recognition of the Spanish Renaissance 'masters' alongside their Italian counterparts), Torres Balbás was attempting to restore art historical order to a space that was characterized by a meaningful form of disorder.

The restoration might be understood in parallel to the much larger cultural-historical problem of formulating a modern Andalusian identity at a time when the complex socio-religious heritage of Al-Andalus was being simultaneously rejected and embraced in response to the European fascination with Spain's Islamic heritage.<sup>67</sup> The imperial style projected a more unified image of sixteenth-century Spain, and in restoring the fireplace Torres Balbás discontinued the life of an object that resisted this image. The seventeenth-century adaptation of the fireplace signalled the return of a hybrid, Andalusí style that sat uneasily with historicizing narratives. If the commission of a Cinquecento

<sup>64</sup> Leopoldo Torres Balbás, 'Granada, the Disappearing City', *Arquitectura* 5 (1923), 305–18.

<sup>65</sup> Calatrava, 'Architectural Restoration', 45.

<sup>66</sup> For a full record of the Charter see <<http://www.icomos.org/en/charters-and-texts/179-articles-en-francais/ressources/charters-and-standards/167-the-athens-charter-for-the-restoration-of-historic-monuments>> [accessed 24 July 2014]

<sup>67</sup> Hishaam D. Aidi, 'The Interference of Al-Andalus: Spain, Islam and the West', *Social Text* 87:24:2 (2006), 67–88.

object represented for early twentieth-century historians Spain's participation in the development of a European imperial style, the stylistic recoding of said object in a highly specific regional style signalled its rejection. The replacement of clearly recognizable classical figures with an arrangement of hybrid elements was to Torres Balbás the equivalent of a backwards step in Spain's stylistic evolution. Despite his determination to uncover and preserve Granada's architectural heritage in all its complexity, conserving the adapted and significantly embellished chimneypiece was a step too far. The reuse value of the converted mantle and the decorative elements that stitched it into the Mexuar was decidedly less than the classical elements it obscured.

The fireplace is only one example of an object 'reversed' during Torres Balbás's tenure. Another is the polychrome domes that replaced some of the pitched roofs in the Courtyard of the Lions, created by restorer Rafael Contreras Muñoz in 1859, which Torres Balbás destroyed and replaced with a facsimile of the original Nasrid roofs, based on his studies of Maghrebi court architecture.<sup>68</sup> Like the altarpiece, the cupolas failed to conform to a valid (read: recognizable) style or period. I argue that such objects, precisely because their biographies defy historical narratives and stylistic categories, are an integral part of the Alhambra's long and often contradictory material history. It remains the task of the historian to rescue these forgotten histories of reuse and reception. Esch has argued that reuse 'grants life', both terms of the survival and subsequent afterlives of objects.<sup>69</sup> While he cites the primary motive for using late Antique *spolia* in the Middle Ages was to speed building projects and minimize costs, he stresses that it is not 'accidental' use (determined by circumstances and convenience) but rather conscious, targeted choice, that should become the focus of material studies.<sup>70</sup> In the case of the Mexuar chimneypiece, stages of reuse should be viewed in terms of the legibility of historical coordinates, and how these were read or misread by certain individuals. Each interpretation and subsequent transformation constitutes a 'citation', or transference of meaning and value. Thus viewed, the seventeenth-century restoration is an example of meaningful recoding, the material translation of a formerly prized Italian import into the stylistic vernacular of post-conquest Granada. Torres Balbás's reversal of this translation is therefore another act of coding, re-establishing Spain's links to wider European developments in the sixteenth century. Also implicit is his view that the particular assortment of styles and materials found within the Mexuar failed to constitute a style worthy of conservation. What is obscured or destroyed in the life of the chimneypiece is key to understanding how stylistic developments were evaluated at different points in

<sup>68</sup> For an overview of the controversy surrounding the restoration see Carlos Vilchez Vilchez, 'La cupola del template oriental del Patio de los Leones', in *Leopoldo Torres Balbás* (Granada: Editorial Comares, 1989), 53–66.

<sup>69</sup> Esch, 'On the Reuse of Antiquity', 17.

<sup>70</sup> Esch, 'On the Reuse of Antiquity', 22.

time. The reuse value of the object is here revealed through its untold stories, that, when considered as a series of events in a longer 'life', illuminate moments of reinterpretation of Spanish cultural identity in relation to a rich and varied history of stylistic expression.

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