

Monastery of San Pedro Regalado in La Aguilera, Burgos (Spain)

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Introduction

The enlargement of the Monastery of *La Aguilera* responds to the settlement of the *Iesu Communio* Institute¹ from the nearby town of Lerma, in a former Franciscan establishment dating back to the fifteenth century.²

The enormous empathy and sensitivity of the nuns, manifested in their attention to the pilgrims that visit them, led to the need to complete the program of the original monastery with some new buildings planned independently although logically linked by covered circulations: a church, whose inner space would favor a participatory and meeting liturgy with pilgrims; several buildings of parlors – as a new meeting point between the Community and the pilgrims – qualified by their size; and a specific training area within the cloister. Similarly, the strength and youth of this Community invited to a functional landscape treatment, both in the area dedicated to the nuns and the pilgrims, leading to a group of open spaces ranging from the reception square to the inner recreational areas.

In the treatment of exterior spaces it was intended to recognize the pre-existent elements such as – presence of water, woodland, agricultural plantations etc. – to bring necessary uses: hostel for pilgrims and spaces in front of the Church and parlors; recreational areas within the cloister and walking zone in the grove by the spring. In short, to design an alliance with the forces of nature and intervene as little as possible, getting a low maintenance environment that could be used to soften any possible hardness of the intervention.

Another issue would be the relationship between our project with the original monastery. In fact and despite the formal contrast set by the proposed geometry for the expansion, right from the very beginning we understood that a very close look at the historical lot would be very useful in order to discover the successive enlargements that the monastery had experienced ranging from its foundation in the fifteenth century to our days. Therefore, it was fairly easy to track down in the cattles, towers and covers a relationship of order, moderation and restraint.

Those interventions offered a response to the changing needs of the communities that inhabited it, always with respect to what it existed and the responsibility to respond in a faithful way to the new formulated requirements.

Therefore we also wanted somehow to contribute to this order – which caters more to the deep facts than formal ones – and whose best definition was given by the architect Víctor López Coteló:

*«It was quite conspicuous the exciting arrangements in the place of some pieces close to others, although some patina spoke about the age of some of them. However, it could be easily seen that not only the patina could give us data of its real age but also the materials and systems used in its construction. Its internal consistency and respect for neighboring pieces allowed not only the magnificent presence of each one of them but also the enhancement of the others».*³

¹ Iesu Communio is a female religious institute of Pontifical Right, adopted don December 8, 2010 by the Apostolic See.

² To assess the historical importance of this Shrine, we must go back to the Reform Movements, called Observance. Introduced by the Franciscans between the fourteenth, fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, in which Cardinal Cisneros establishes the reform of religious orders. Pedro de Villacreces founded in 1404 the hermitage of La Aguilera, which Pedro Regalado arrives with only 14 years old, who will enthusiastically propagate the Villacrecean reform until his death in 1456.

³ Víctor López Coteló, “Érase una vez...”, *Quaderns d'arquitectura i urbanisme* 169-170 (1986): 106.



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