

Reflecting on eclecticism in garden heritage: the Monforte Gardens in Valencia as a case study

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RESUMEN

Los distintos estilos históricos se analizaron y recuperaron por el revisionismo historicista y el revivalismo durante el siglo XIX. La falta de un estilo propio característico en la época condujo al eclecticismo, una tendencia que consistía en fusionar diversos repertorios ornamentales. En consecuencia, el diseño ecléctico de jardines empleó estilos históricos de diversos orígenes. A medida que las ciudades crecían, los jardines suburbanos se iban integrando en la nueva trama urbana. Los Jardines de Monforte en Valencia representan un caso de estudio relevante y característico de las grandes transformaciones del diseño y desarrollo de jardines del siglo XIX. Lo más significativo son los recursos y estrategias de diseño introducidos en el diseño original por Sebastián Monléon y, posteriormente, por Javier de Winthuysen, como demuestra esta investigación, que incluye un nuevo trazado exhaustivo del jardín. Los Jardines de Monforte representan un ejemplo de diseño ecléctico de jardinería urbana en el que las diferentes partes mantienen su independencia sin perder un concepto global unitario. Aunque tradicionalmente se han considerado jardines neoclásicos, esta investigación defiende que deben considerarse propiamente jardines románticos eclécticos.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Patrimonio de jardines, Jardines urbanos, Eclecticismo, Diseño de jardines, Jardines Históricos.

ABSTRACT

Precedent historic styles were analysed and recovered by historicist revisionism and revivalism during the nineteenth century. The lack of a style of its century lead to eclecticism, a trend that involved merging diverse ornamental repertoires. Accordingly, eclectic garden design employed historic styles of different origins. As the cities grew, suburban gardens were integrated within the urban sprawl. The Monforte Gardens in Valencia represent a relevant case study characteristic of nineteenth century major garden design and development transformations. Most significant are the design resources and strategies introduced in the original design by Sebastián Monléon and, subsequently by Javier de Winthuysen as this research –including a thorough redrawing of the garden layout– gives evidence of. The Monforte Gardens represent an eclectic urban gardening design example in which the different parts maintain their independence without losing an overall unitary concept. Although traditionally considered neoclassical gardens, this research argues they should be properly considered as eclectic romantic gardens.

KEYWORDS

Garden Heritage, Urban Gardens, Eclecticism, Garden Design, Historical Gardens Introduction: rethinking romanticism and eclecticism.

The famous and resounding controversy of the '*querelle des anciens et des modernes*' personified by Nicolas Francois Blondel and Claude Perrault at the time, has managed to epitomise the tension between tradition and modernity in architecture ever since. Blondel supported the archetypical use of the long-established classical orders because of their accredited sense of proportion; he understood them as a natural source of beauty. Perrault, on the contrary, considered that proportions were not an absolute value embodying beauty in themselves but rather something we had grown accustomed to in the course of history¹. This controversy opened the possibility to defy classicism and its conventions; naturally, it also triggered an increasing interest in History and other possible sources of inspiration. This debate echoed in theory and practice for decades and may be found with different approaches in treatises and books alike such as those by J.F. Blondel, Boffrand, Fischer von Erlach or Milizia. The latter could well exemplify the transition from Baroque to Neoclassicism and an embryonic modernity based on rationalism; he grounded architecture on necessity as its fundamental principle. Although he still acknowledged the three classical orders as the only ones to be used, he also questioned the validity of a fixed set of proportions for each of them, suggesting these could be altered².

The past provided a generous formal and constructive repertoire previously experienced. Generally speaking, nineteenth-century society was deeply concerned by history as it became a fundamental reference. Accordingly, forms and compositions used by eclectic gardeners were intentionally chosen from historic gardens. For the first time in the history of architecture, looking back to the past did not imply solely seeking inspiration in the classical culture; Gothic and medievalism could also be considered a valid reference. Imitation of past styles not only intended the recovery of a formal repertoire but also what such an imaginary represented in history: a way of life, a certain *pathos*, and occasionally even an economic model; in this sense, the *Arts and Crafts* movement promoted by William Morris was to be paradigmatic³. We find a typical manifestation of revivalism according to which the past was not considered as a part of history but, on the contrary, it implied a denial of any separation between

past and present. Thus, the favourite architecture revival came from the medieval world as it was clearly opposed to academic classicism in accordance with the romantic fashion. This imitation of styles was common to many disciplines, including gardening.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, architects, academics and critics were unmistakably concerned about the inability of artists to create a style of its time. A crisis emerged due to the rise of materialism over political, religious or moral mind frames. Ruskin could be a clear example of an influential critic whose ideas were appropriated by some romantic artists. The Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood, which he joined, would embrace some of his conceptions and sources of inspiration, questioning the universality of classicism⁴. Semper's contribution to the definition of style itself within the architectural debate as well as the relation and justification of the discipline with regard to past experience and other *minor* technical or applied arts was of major importance⁵, although within the german-speaking cultural realm⁶. Moreover, Baridon⁷ vividly suggests a phenomenological approach connected to the ever-changing nature of the gardens themselves⁸.

The complexity of the nineteenth century is extraordinary from a cultural and artistic standpoint. Major social, political and economic changes directly or indirectly induced by the French Revolution, Napoleon's rise and the effect it all had throughout Europe greatly affected the epoch. Together with the increasing influence of the Industrial Revolution, all these circumstances played a very important role in the rapid sprawl of cities. This implied great urban transformations –Hausmann's renovation of Paris could be one of the greatest urban interventions–; the systematic demolition of city walls that constrained urban growth –Vienna's Ring was one of these operations–; as well as major city enlargements –Barcelona's case is paradigmatic to this regard–. Obviously, architecture, garden design and landscaping were inevitably part of those major developments involving urban design.

⁴ Frampton, 1981: 43.

⁵ Semper, 2004.

⁶ Surprisingly, as Harry F. Mallgrave has pointed out in the introduction to the book (Semper: 2004), this masterpiece has needed to wait for 140 years to see a complete translation into English.

⁷ Baridon, 1998: 5.

⁸ Haddad, 2010: 88-89. Turner, 1985: 209-212.

¹ Marchán, 2007: 16.

² Milizia, 1992: 95.

³ Morris, 1893.

The nineteenth century, besides proposing a different concept of garden, offered new typologies hitherto unknown. Among these innovations, emerging from the *milieu* of eclecticism, suburban or *banlieu* gardens are to be highlighted. Challenging the growth of the city within its outskirts, large gardens began to be developed basically playing a ludic role together with the demonstration of a high social status⁹. Their owners belonged to the upper aristocratic classes and to those bourgeois with large fortunes alike. Their size was smaller than that of urban public parks, but it was still considerable¹⁰. A significant number of these gardens still remain, perhaps due to their location out of the reach of cities' expansion, often subjected to property speculation. Currently, they are rarely private and have become gardens for public affluence because of their historical and often artistic character¹¹. All of these spaces have evolved throughout history as quality urban designs, acquiring civic character identity acknowledged by the citizens. In fact, some contemporary urban interventions on romantic nineteenth-century gardens have transformed the original ludic use into civic use¹².

For this reason, historical gardens are considered world heritage monuments, an aspect that as has been highlighted by the World Cultural and Natural Heritage Convention since 1972. Almost a decade later, the Florence Charter of 1984 reflected on the importance of historical gardens and the need to protect and preserve them for generations to come. In Spain, the *Ley de Patrimonio Histórico* of 1985, pointed out the importance that historical gardens have for society, as a legacy of the cultural heritage that its ancestors had bequeathed.

Monforte Gardens and their historic evolution redrawn

Monforte Gardens¹³ are located in the Spanish city of Valencia and they have been subjected to a special legal status of protection since 1941, as

they were declared as an Asset of Cultural Interest –Bien de Interés Cultural (BIC)–, only granted to significant heritage monuments, something that has greatly contributed to their preservation. They are grouped with other remaining Spanish nineteenth century gardens such as those of *Alameda de Osuna*, in Madrid; *Laberinto de Horta*, in Barcelona; the *Raixa Gardens*, in Palma de Mallorca; the *Santos Gardens*, in Penáguila; or the *Huerto del Cura Gardens*, in Elche. However, as it is argued in these lines, they should be more precisely regarded as romantic eclectic.

The original conception of the garden is due to its promoter, Juan Bautista Romero Almenar, Marquis of San Juan¹⁴. He was a Valencian landowner with a large fortune from the silk trade and real estate investments¹⁵. Despite his affluent position, Romero did not overlook the underprivileged and contributed to the development of the Valencian society by founding charitable institutions, such as the asylum of *San Juan Bautista*¹⁶. Romero bought the plot in 1849; he decided to plant a beautiful garden to rival others that existed in Valencia at the time¹⁷, in the vicinity of the trendy *paseo de la Alameda*, within the skirts of the city and its surrounding orchards. His intention was to forge a property of leisure and sumptuousness, spending large amounts of money for its embellishment. He abandoned bookkeeping when the sum of half a million pesetas was surpassed¹⁸.

¹⁴ The change of its original denomination as *Gardens of Romero* to the current *Gardens of Monforte* is due to the premature death of the direct heirs of its owner and creator, Don Juan Bautista Romero Almenar. Borrás, 1962: 39–41.

¹⁵ Alike the Marquis of Salamanca in Madrid, Juan Bautista Romero, was of a very humble origin, and a self-made man achieving considerable power and fortune through trade. He became an influential and philanthropic character in Valencia. He would be appointed Marquis of San Juan by Queen Isabel II, and eventually became a parliament member of the Spanish Senate between 1864 and 1868.

¹⁶ Certain parallels can be established between Juan Bautista Romero Almenar and the Monforte Gardens with Juan García Naveira and the gardens of *El pasatiempo* (in Betanzos, A Coruña). Although built several decades later, Naveira had also made a large fortune through trade when he emigrated to Argentina. On his return, he built these gardens of encyclopedic scope triggered by his philanthropic nature (Cortés, 2018: 31). The students of the Schools García-Imans (pertaining to the *Free Institution of Education*) would use them for excursions and as a museum (Teijeiro, 2019: 370).

¹⁷ Such as the following: Huerto de Pontons (Patriaix), Jardines de la Glorieta, Jardines del Príncipe (hoy Parterre) y los Jardines del Real.

¹⁸ Carrascosa, 1932: 86. At the time that was a quite large amount of money.

⁹ De Terán, 1999: 54–55. Ariza, 1986: 23–26; 1979: 376–378.

¹⁰ Assunto, 1988: 34–35. Sitte, 1965: 15–16. De Marichalar, 1933.

¹¹ Vlad, 2009:74–75.

¹² García-Doménech, 2015: 64–65.

¹³ Existe una interesante monografía sobre los jardines (Santamaría, 1993) que se recomienda consultar para mayor detalle en aspectos que exceden los contenidos de esta investigación.



Fig. 1. Building designed by Sebastián Monleón. Source: Authors

The site was not far from the city so there was no need to construct a large building in accordance with his social position, just a place to rest or shelter during his escapes to the gardens¹⁹. For this purpose, he asked architect Sebastián Monleón Estellés –who is also attributed most of the design of the gardens– to project and build a rather small two-storey house to entertain his guests, lunch, rest and cool off while spending his days visiting the gardens (Figure 1). Monleón was undoubtedly one of the most active and relevant architects of his time in Valencia²⁰. Compositionally, the house is based on a square floorplan, although it is elongated to absorb the irregularity of the plot resolved by a trapezoidal floorplan. It serves as the entrance and architectural filter into the premises. The main volume is crowned by a *miramar*²¹. As Ruiz de Lacanal's study has shown, the *miramar* or "watchtower", although common in Valencia, was not an exclusively local architectural feature²².

¹⁹ Gómez-Gil/García-Doménech, 2018: 36-39.

²⁰ His authorship include works as relevant as Valencia's Bullfighting ring, Valencia's first city enlargement, the School of Medicine, and the Main Theatre.

²¹ A *miramar* is a characteristic architectural element or tower with openings to its four sides. At the time, the lack of tall built typologies within the city of Valencia allowed to overlook the sea on the distance from such vantage point.

²² Ruiz de Lacanal, 2007: 36. For instance, in Cadiz, as Sierra (2004:64) has noted: "[...] from the end of the seventeenth century and, above all, during the first decades of the eighteenth century, the construction of these type of domestic watchtowers became generalised, and they

Romero tried to surround himself with beauty and artistic quality throughout his lifetime. Accordingly, the decoration of part of his house was entrusted to the painter Vicente López, an outstanding disciple of Francisco de Goya despite the rather modest size of this architectural piece²³. The building is preserved almost unchanged and its abundant mural paintings have been recently restored. It responds to the distributive-constructive general scheme proposed by Durand (1760-1834) in his treatise²⁴.

Considering the layout of the overall design and the relationship of the architecture with the gardens it must be noted that the position of the building as a gate establishes a transition to the gardens in a very subtle way. The house is built on the lower level of the terraced garden. The two axis of the house connect it with two courtyards that are more rigidly limited by walls and sit on the same level. This transition echoes that of other palaces with gardens, such as Le Petit Trianon, although in the case of the Monforte Gardens, the sloping landscape and the position of the building on the lower level has a more similar relationship with those of the *Palacio de la Granja* in Segovia where this relationship between architecture and gardens is also inverted.

ended up becoming an essential element of domestic architecture [...]."

²³ Borrás, 1962: 19.

²⁴ Durand, 1981 (*Précis des leçons d'architecture données à l'École royale polytechnique*, 1805).

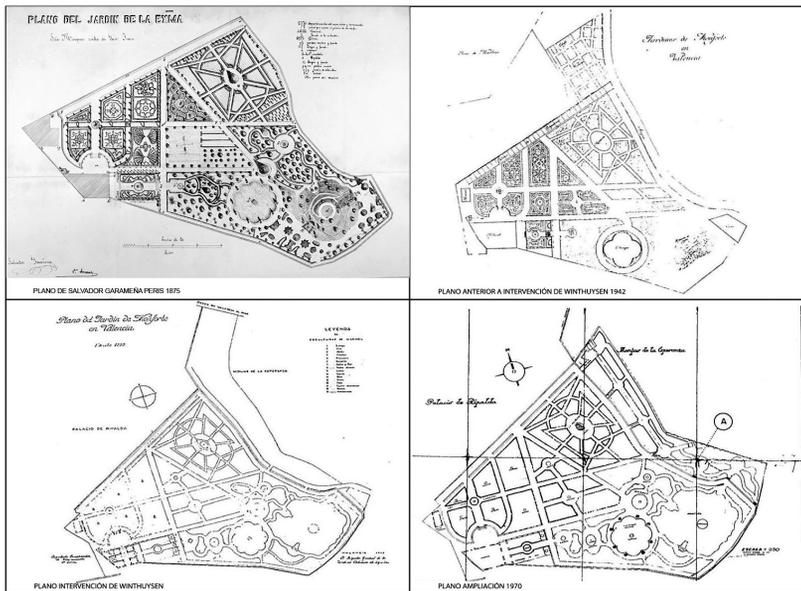


Fig 2a. Historic evolution of the garden. From left to right and top to bottom: Plan drawing by Salvador Garamena Peris 1875 (source: catalogue of the exhibition Alamedas y Jardines en la Valencia del XIX, p.10). Plan with state previous to Javier Wynthuysen's intervention in 1942. Plan by Javier Wynthuysen 1950. Plan from the Archivo Histórico Municipal de Valencia (AHMV) 1972. Courtesy: Archivo Nicollau Primitiu, Biblioteca Valenciana.

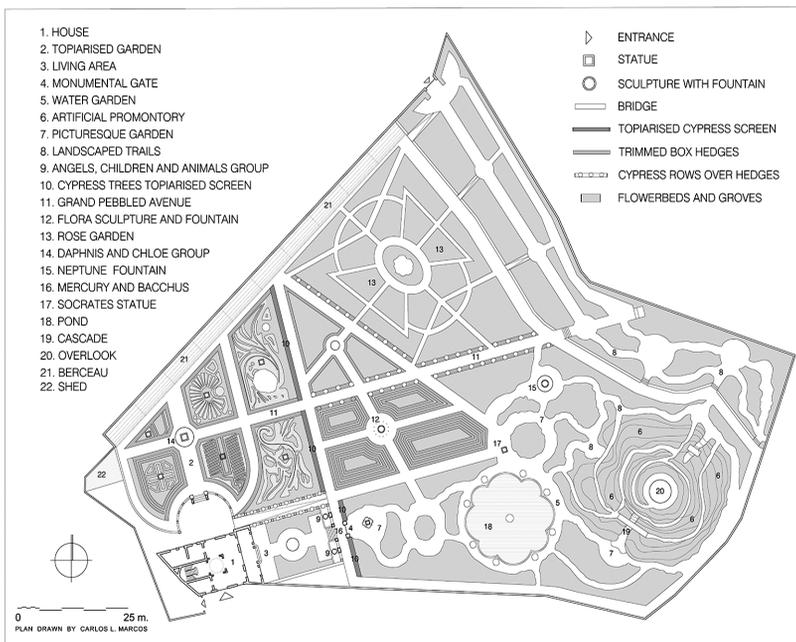


Fig 2b. Current state garden plan of the Monforte Gardens showing the actual layout, main elements and features of the gardens. Source: Carlos L. Marcos (2020).

The courtyard to the East is connected to the house through a porch that serves as a filtering element from interior to exterior but also as a limit to materialise a change of atmosphere. This is consistent with the creation of different ambiances throughout the premises within the garden. Such a gentle transition from built architecture, to limited architectural enclosures –the courtyards– ending in both flight of stairs that lead to the next level and serve as a gate to the gardens is very telling regarding the refinement of the design. A

balance between nature –the garden– and artifice –architecture– can be appreciated here.

The gardens have basically remained loyal to the original conception throughout their history. However, an enlargement was made in the 1970s by Vicente Peris²⁵ adding an adjacent plot running along the north-eastern perimeter of the primitive gardens that accounts for a 15% of the total current extension (Figure 2). Other

²⁵ Rodríguez, 1996: 220.

Fig. 3. Painting by Santiago Rusiñol i Prats, *Jardines de Monforte*, 1917 (public domain). Monumental gate in the distance, fountains and sculptures preceding it seen from the porch of the house. This gate articulates the transition from the geometric garden to the picturesque section. Source: Authors.



recorded changes affect the planting of species or the topiary arrangements²⁶.

The gardens are structured in different sections running from southwest to northeast (Figure 2). The first one comprises the building which is located at the south-west corner of the premises; originally, the only access to the gardens²⁷. Although most of the many sculptures that embellish the gardens have a classical reference, among these busts we can also find Cervantes or Petrarca. This would be consistent with the positivist nineteenth century conception of valuing not only Greek and Roman classical references. For instance, the monument to Cook or the obelisk to Wolfe that can be found in Stowe gardens.

The abundance of classical references in the statuary²⁸ of the gardens together with the style of the house and the original layout of the first sections are probably the reasons why these gardens are usually considered as neoclassical despite the fact that, every other aspect in the layout, the references or the whole conception could rather be considered romantic.

The first section of the garden is traced following a geometric layout garden scheme, possibly influenced by French baroque garden style.

It comprises six parterres that host geometrically shaped masses of topiarised box. At every centre, there are white marble sculptures that refer to classical mythological themes, certainly the most remarkable feature of this section. The geometry of the topiarised box has significantly changed from the original layout to its current state (Figure 2 top left and bottom).

As it can be seen in the 1917 painting by Rusiñol (Figure 3 left) the living area of the garden connected to the house was completely surrounded by topiarised hedges to provide intimacy. Although some may consider it part of the first section –as it falls within the geometrically restrained area– it could well be considered an isolated subsection and, certainly, the most functionally related to the house itself.

Opposite to the porch there is a rather large sculptural group closing the centre of the view with a majestic staircase that houses two separate side-ponds with groups of children playing. These ponds receive water from fountains of little angels playing with animals (Figure 4). The allegoric relation between the angels (heavenly creatures) above; the playing children (human) below, and the animals entertaining the little cupids in between them suggest a three-party division separating heavenly and earthly creatures, on the one hand, and human and animal beings, on the other. Their spatial relationship also plays a counterpoint role in the allegory.

Two classic sculptures flank the ascending stairs that gain the next terraced level, one of them portraying Mercury²⁹ and the other portraying Bacchus (Figure 4). Closing the perspective and inviting the observer to peep through it towards the picturesque garden in the far distance, the central element of this sculptural marble set is a classic gate, crowned by a large basket of flowers and two newts (Figure 3 right). Rusiñol's

²⁶ Some species that originally formed the flowerbeds were subsequently replaced by more resilient ones, as can be observed comparing the current state with photographs in the municipal archives. For example, the flower beds, bounded by box and other Mediterranean species, besides hosting large trees and bushes, are carpeted with resistant species such as ivy, which gives the base of the parterre a dark green colour, where the rest of the plants emerge. The orange-coloured *clivia miniata*, extremely resistant and easily propagated, is also frequently used producing contrasting colour effects against the predominant dark green.

²⁷ Gómez-Gil/García-Doménech, 2018: 40-42.

²⁸ According to the municipal inventory, a total of 33 sculptures can be counted in the Gardens of Monforte; almost all have a classical reference. The majority of the statues were actually bought in Italy. Some, as the central group of Daphnis and Chloe in this section, are of undeniable artistic value.

²⁹ Very appropriate in a business man's house.



Fig 4. Historic evolution of the garden. From left to right and top to bottom: Plan drawing by Salvador Garamaña Peris 1875 (source: catalogue of the exhibition *Alamedas y Jardines en la Valencia del XIX*, p.10). Plan with state previous to Javier Wynthuysen's intervention in 1942. Plan by Javier Wynthuysen 1950. Plan from the Archivo Histórico Municipal de Valencia (AHMV) 1972. Courtesy: Archivo Niccolau Primitiu, Biblioteca Valenciana. Current state garden plan of the Monforte Gardens showing the actual layout, main elements and features of the gardens. Source: Carlos L. Marcos (2020).



Fig. 5. (Left to right) The Grand Avenue paved with stone and gravel which runs from one side to the other of the gardens. Berceau running along the northwest wall of the Garden. Pond and monumental porticoed gate closing the perspective. Source: Authors.

painting also evidences that this current fine and complex perspective that can be enjoyed from the porch through the porticoed gate in the distance is part of a transformation of the original conception. The gate was most likely added after the Civil War by landscaper and painter Winthuysen as it is in his plan where it is first appears represented (Figure 2). This addition may be considered the counterpart of the original gate flanked by two lions³⁰ that materialises the limit

³⁰ The building of the Spanish Cortes had recently been completed at the time and, on both sides of its staircase, two lions were planned to be placed as a symbol of Spanish sovereignty. The first version of the lions was modelled by Ponciano Ponzano, author of other sculptures of Parliament. Due to budgetary scarcity they were made of painted plaster. Their quick deterioration produced the need for a second version in marble to replace them for which José Bellver y Collazos was commissioned. This stone lions were also allusive to the famous Medici Lions at the Loggia dei Lanzi in Florence. It seems that once sculpted, their size was not in accordance with the character and importance of the building and were subsequently discarded after extended public critics.

of the northern courtyard and the access to the topiarised sculpture garden. This monumental porticoed gate of Italian reminiscence separates the geometrically restrained garden from the picturesque section leading to the pond area.

Running next to the living area, a gentle slope decorated with vases planted with geraniums and flanked by cypresses begins to form a different level gaining access to the triangular section of the gardens. The central avenue that limits both sections is buoyed along its entire length by a compact screen of trimmed cypresses whose topiary work forms arches. This plane separates the geometric garden area from the rest.

This second section barely resembles the original design of *Huerto de Romero* (first name given

Finally, the current bronze lions at Parliament were merged by Ponciano Ponzano using the bronze of the guns captured in the campaign of Morocco (1859-1860). Romero had thus the opportunity to buy the marble lions for a good price only to place them in the Gardens of Monforte.

to these Gardens). Before the Spanish Civil War, the northern tip, seemed to be composed by a dispersed grove (Figure 2). Then, to the south and separated by a trail, there used to be a compact trapezoidal parterre with its southern edge defined by a tree alignment.

According to the existing graphic information, Winthuysen transformed the first dispersed grove into a large parterre structured by different paths creating a series of key connections within the gardens that take advantage of its central position³¹. The architect sought to create quiet and secluded seating areas, using to that end the crossroads generated by these new axes (Figure 2). A strategy supported by the placement of small fountains or sculptures, benches and shaded areas and medium sized vegetal elements such as the orange trees.

The central avenue –and the longest of them all in the garden– has a certain classic Roman look, limited by planes of cypresses and combining stone pavement and gravel (Figure 5 left). The addition of classical fashion statues at major intersections strengthens this impression. Even today, the placidity of these small spaces where the cool shade shares the privacy and the babbling of the running water still remains.

The third section consists of a rose garden geometrically arranged too, built around a large laurel that has kept the original layout. Surrounded by larger trees and cypresses of the neighbouring sections that form a clear visual limit, the rose garden is another well-established ambience with a character of its own. The *miramar* of the house can still be seen from this section.

As a background to these three geometrically constrained sections of the gardens and running along the entire north-western wall, there is a *berceau* clearly taken from the medieval repertoire (Figure 5 middle). It is supported by metallic elements on one side of the gardens and by an enclosing wall on the other. This element constitutes the northwest boundary of the historical garden, although it does not reach the area annexed during the twentieth century. The metallic elements are hidden by a mixture of vegetation which is currently composed of *cupressaceae*, *ficus benjamina* and abundant *bougainvillea* of intense fuchsia colour. Some of these botanical species originary from other continents were probably introduced as a counterpart in landscaping of the exotic trend char-

acteristic of eclecticism in architecture driven by colonialism. As Santamaria has pointed out, Valencian gardening tradition –influenced by the Spanish-Arab practices– was initially enriched by the introduction of these new foreign species thanks to the botanical expeditions to the New World³². Surprisingly, the Monforte gardens were deliberately inspired exclusively in models of the western culture, despite the local tradition.

Rather subtly, the *berceau* hides the north wall of the gardens. It gently slopes as it links different levels without introducing steps at any point of its span. It is conceived as one of the seating areas of the gardens although its linearity also invites to wander through it. Partially covered with deciduous species, it allows the entry of the sun during the winter while it provides freshness in the summer. Some niches decorated with vases confer to this element an atmosphere of tranquility and privacy within the gardens.

The only section of the garden from which every other section can be accessed and the largest of them all is the English landscape picturesque inspired garden³³. This is the most spacious seating area in the gardens, whose dominant features are a large curved and geometrically traced pond –the only regular geometry within it– surrounded by a rather thin vegetation traversed by meandering paths and an artificial promontory. It was Winthuysen the designer who contributed most to order and define its clear romantic character, probably inspired by other precedents such as the transformation that the *Campo Grande Gardens* in Valladolid underwent in 1879³⁴ although, despite the difference in scale, the unevenness of the existing topography is easier to be related to the gardens of *El pasatiempo* in Betanzos³⁵. The

³² Santamaria (2001:14).

³³ Vronskaya, 2006: 270-274.

³⁴ The *Campo Grande Gardens* in Valladolid were first planted in 1787 according to a plan designed by architect Francisco Antonio Valzania in a neoclassical style. A century later, under the initiative of town major Miguel Íscar, and designed by gardener Ramon Oliva, the whole gardens were transformed into their current romantic picturesque fashion. In 1879 the large pond with an artificial rockery and cascade were built by his nephew Francisco de Paula Sabadell Oliva, Chief of the Gardens in Valladolid at the time (Fernández del Hoyo, 1981: 431). This transformation and the construction of these elements may well have inspired Winthuysen with regard to his intervention in the *Gardens of Monforte* which he undertook at the age of 67.

³⁵ Just as in Monforte and other romantic gardens, *El pasatiempo* takes many elements from the Renaissance garden of the Italian Villas. Certainly, the gardens where to some extent inspired by the journeys of their promoter,

³¹ Winthuysen, 1927:161-162.

geometric shape of the pond itself is less consistent with this part of the garden. Currently, this picturesque section remains the ampler and most liveable area within the garden premises (Figure 5 right). The large pond incorporated aquatic species such as water lilies, *papyrus* and *cyperus*.

A fountain dedicated to Neptune presides over the transition through the grand avenue between the rose garden and the small promontory. Completing this section, this artificial topography imitating a real hill can be accessed through several winding roads. Two very small *grottoes* are housed in its lower level after the sixteenth century Italian fashion of introducing a secret garden. It is no more than a tribute since there are no proper rockeries, sculptures and pieces of water and vegetation that used to be placed in these places in the great gardens of the *cinquecento*. A couple of bridges appear on the way up; they have also been altered as the old ones used rustic pine logs in accordance with the picturesque fashion. A small water cascade can also be discovered, partially hidden by the abundant vegetation under the larger south bridge, where a small stream falls over a pond surrounded by ferns and other wetland species. Climbing up the promontory a small overlook can be reached; old pine trees can be found along this short path. The promontory was also built to host a large cistern that would ensure water pressure for all the fountains of the *water garden* in this section, using the sloping topography of the site.

The fifth and last section was annexed to the gardens in 1972 by Vicente Peris and also included a new access on the northern corner. It is a long and relatively narrow strip and the highest of the terraced levels, only surpassed by the artificial promontory. It consists of an axis crossing the parterres running in between the northeast limit and the adjacent rose garden where it follows a geometric layout but is then transformed

into winding trails when it runs along the picturesque section. Thus, Vicente Peris, the Major gardener of Valencia consistently continued the work of his predecessors in the wise use of topography as well as in the contrast between the geometric and picturesque sections.

Analysing the gardens and the design strategies involved

Part of this research has included redrawing the gardens based on the last known plan³⁶, other existing plans³⁷ (Figure 2), land registry information³⁸, and aerial views to update the graphic information to the current state as in the case of the topiary trimmed patterns (Figure 2 bottom). Even though this newly elaborated plan has entailed a significant graphic endeavour within the research, it should not be considered an updated topographical survey plan of the gardens. However, it is probably the most complete plan of them to date, with all current and updated information considering all the series of existing plans we have evidence of. It is to be noted that the basis of the graphic information which has served to redraw this version is the one kept at the AHMV but its perimeter, area and north have been modified in accordance with the most recent version of which we have had access to through the Catastro public graphic information³⁹.

³⁶ This existent previous scaled technical plan was elaborated during the 1970s and is kept in the Municipal Historical Archive of Valencia (AHMV); apparently, no significant alterations have been introduced to the garden layout ever since.

³⁷ We have not included in this series the plan by Carascosa Criado of 1932, since it lacks the necessary geometric rigour and could be regarded more as a descriptive drawing than a proper plan. It does not have the precision presumed to properly drawn plans according to geometric projections although observing the chaotic ordering of the romantic section of the gardens one can easily understand the criticism expressed by Winthuysen in relation the interventions represented in this drawing. It may be consulted in Santamaria Villagrasa, 1993:79.

³⁸ Catastro (Spanish Land Registry).

³⁹ Their correspondence was very close in shape and area; the latter only differed a 2%. However, it should be added that, most likely, due to the irregularity of the shape of the perimeter and the topographical tools used then, compared with the version of this same data of the Spanish topographical survey plans dated in 1980 (Cartográfico C.G.C.C.T) the difference observed, both in the area and in the shape of the perimeter, is clearly more significant. These discrepancies have also been calibrated and addressed through the superimposition of aerial photography.

Juan García Naveira, where many of these references were taken from (Crespí, 2002: 415). The space is arranged through the geometrisation of the terrain into terraces as well as the placement of elements such as grottoes, fountains and statues. The sloped topography of the site is also solved through a terraced landscaping although the scale of the gardens as well as the total height drop is considerable larger in the gardens of *El pasatiempo*. The eclecticism of the turn of the century, exoticism and compositional freedom are amongst the most characteristic features of these gardens. The Monforte gardens are, in comparison, more refined and consistent in the use of references through the introduction of different ambiances intentionally isolated from one another.

Accordingly, the plan should also be considered an integral part of this research thanks to which, our analysis has been able to shed light regarding some important design features employed at the different stages of the garden's evolution. The comparison between all the existent graphic information and the redrawing of an updated plan of the gardens has allowed us to appreciate their evolution, to gauge the differences at every stage, to analyse the design resources and strategies deployed by architects, landscapers and gardeners alike, and to draw some conclusions anew. The detailed design strategies analysis and its evolution in time is certainly one of the major contributions of this research; most of the findings to this regard are original.

During the Civil War architect Javier de Winthuysen was commissioned with a technical report on the gardens. It is necessary to note the importance of Winthuysen with regard to modern landscaping and gardens in Spain to ponder his intervention in the Monforte Gardens. Although a self-taught landscaper –he was also a painter and a writer–, he obtained a scholarship granted by the *Junta para Ampliación de Estudios e Investigaciones Científicas* thanks to the support of his friends, poet Juan Ramón Jiménez (he presided the institution at the time) and painter Joaquín Sorolla. This gave him the opportunity to research on Spanish historic gardens which he intensively drew, photographed and documented. His numerous publications in architectural journals and very specially his book *Jardines clásicos de España* soon became the landscaping reference in Spain. During the Second Republic, in 1934, he contributed to create the *Patronato de Jardines Históricos de España*⁴⁰ that ensured the preservation and integrity of those declared of artistic interest⁴¹.

Even though the titularity of the Monforte Gardens was in private hands, in 1941 a decree declared it an “artistic garden” thus becoming to be considered part of Patrimonio Artístico Nacional, being controlled and supervised since by Valencia's City Council. After the war, Winthuysen was commissioned by the Ministry of

Education to restore the gardens. These have been kept by the Major gardener of Valencia's City Council, beginning with Ramon Peris and successively by his successors under the same rank. Sebastián Monleón should be credited for most of the authorship and the gardens' design. Considering the extension limitations of the premises, Monleón managed to create a unique and consistent garden layout which, following the trends at the time of its design and references to other Spanish gardens designed in a similar fashion, produced a superb and rich garden. Its design strategy, consistent with romantic eclecticism, tried to solve the complexity that the use of several references including French style garden, Italian mannerist garden, English picturesque, and even some medieval references, involved⁴². Not strikingly, no other evident near references to Spanish-Arab gardens were sought: the cultural references that were considered were deliberately taken from the Western Culture, as mentioned above. In order to achieve this variety of garden styles in a relatively small sized plot avoiding pastiche, the architect consistently used some design devices worth analysing.

Taking advantage of the gentle ascending sloping topography of the site from southwest to northeast and from south to north, he partially terraced the gardens so that every different ambient or garden style could be clearly limited. However, he also introduced some ramps to avoid an excessive number of steps or a brisk layering of the topography. Remarkably, using the proper trails and paths, every section of the garden can be reached solely through ramps, including both existing accesses. Moreover, the most regularly designed parts of the gardens are those with a most even topography, such as the French style sector –the topiary garden–, the Italian fashion parterres and groves, or the rose garden. The picturesque section of the garden shaped with biomorphic parterres and winding trails is slightly more uneven. This landscaped section highlights this *natural* topographic picturesque effect by adding a small artificial promontory. Additionally, all the larger tree species –some of considerable size– are dispersed within the picturesque section, thus contributing to such pursued untamed naturalistic appearance.

Besides the coordinated topographic control to separate different garden styles, vegetation filters and screens were also used to reinforce

⁴⁰ Tras la Guerra Civil se reestructuró como *Patronato de Jardines Artísticos y Parajes Pintorescos de España* extendiendo su labor también a la protección de parajes pintorescos además de a los jardines históricos. El propio Winthuysen trabajó en la protección de este tipo de parajes en el Palmeral de Elche, y los lagos de Sanabria y Bañolas Bercovitz, 2021: 5-9.

⁴¹ Bercovitz 2021: *Ibidem*.

⁴² Stynen, 2009: 231-234.

the perception of isolation for each stylistic ambience. Although some of these still remain, including some hedges with topiary work forming arches, other of these filters have disappeared, such as the one that the mentioned 1917 painting by Santiago Rusiñol i Prats gives account of (Figure 3). The connections are achieved through paths, trails and avenues, carefully articulated with ramps, stairs or gates that contribute to solve the levels and to elaborate the transition from one to the other in most cases. Sculptures and fountains are used as *eye-catchers* which are either visually connected through axis in the French and Italian style sections or, alternatively, appear by surprise as in the case of the Neptune's fountain in the picturesque section.

Despite the different interventions that the gardens have undergone throughout time, they have remained devoted to the spirit of the original design. Luckily, the different landscape architects, landscapers and gardeners that have worked in the gardens have always borne this in mind, as can be observed comparing the garden's evolution and its current state (Figures 2, 3). Landscape designer Javier de Winthuysen (1874-1956) did not alter the fundamental original design of the first three sections and the *berceau* although he was responsible for the romantic picturesque character of the largest section and tried to recover the gardens to its original state as much as was possible questioning the previous interventions around 1932. In his own words prior to engaging in the restoration of the Monforte Gardens he stated in 1938: "The historical gardens in Spain should be more dearly kept rather than considered as an opportunity to plan reforms; restorations are only valid to recover what has been lost"⁴³. Even the latest enlargement executed in 1972 maintained the interesting balance characteristic of these gardens between the geometric imposition and the picturesque landscaping. A new terraced level was added throughout the eastern side enlargement combining, once again, ramps and stairs, and dividing it in two sections in accordance with the neighbouring garden style (Figure 2 bottom).

Another remarkable feature of the Gardens of Monforte that give account of Monleón's design mastery is his use of scale. Using a very consistent approach in the size of architectural elements, such as the gates or the fountains,

in relation to the size of the sculptures and to the garden premises themselves, the visitor finds himself surprised by a deceiving scale: they appear much larger than what they really are. A similar effect than the one devised by Borromini in the Palazzo Spada –with the famous forced perspective gallery–. The multiplicity of different ambiances, their isolated character, and the ingenious use of a selection of visual perspectives which only show the main dimensions of the site in the large avenues plays a key role in this feature. The mentioned enlargement running along the eastern side of the premises, which is also a terraced stripe, plays a similar role in generating a long visual perspective. This view is enriched with the alternation of ramps and stairs that connect with other existing walkways while allowing to enjoy its whole length along the northeast perimeter.

Conclusions

As shown in the stylistic analysis discussed in this text, a positivistic attitude that finds inspiration in history based in diverse references and different forms of gardens is combined with the tactic of merging them in the *Gardens of Monforte*, thus providing an idea of complex unity if one is attentive to the variety of perspectives, paths and the articulation of itineraries. The analysis of the graphic documentation available has enabled us to critically address the evolution of the gardens throughout the different stages of its history. Accordingly, we can describe four major interventions and attribute most of their authorships: the original layout by Monleón in which most of the character and design features of the gardens are already established (plan by Salvador Garamaña in 1875), some minor transformations affecting the central sections of unknown authorship (plan of the existing gardens before 1942 and Winthuysen's intervention), the recovery of the historical sense of the original design by Winthuysen after the Civil War, the addition of one of the gates closing the perspective from the eastern courtyard and most of the romantic character of the biomorphic sections of the gardens, and the latest enlargement of the gardens in 1972 with the addition of the eastern strip by Vicente Peris.

In relation to the original design strategies set by Monleón and followed by his successors in the subsequent interventions we can summarise them

⁴³ Santamaría Villagrana, 1993: 86.

as follows: fragmentation, ambience isolation, use of vegetal screens, articulation of itineraries combining French geometrization and English picturesque garden styles, carefully studied transitions through the use of stairs, gates, ramps to connect the different atmospheres achieved, intelligent use of terracing and topography to serve to this purposes. Thanks to the mannerist architectural strategy of spatial fragmentation the different areas are visually and functionally isolated. Since the gardens are made up from partial and limited ambiances, no unity of design is required to solve every section or detail so that the possible interferences of merging different styles are thus avoided. Diverse atmospheres for varied activities are generated, allowing isolation intended to favour resting and privacy, something favoured by Monleón's original layout and also supported by Winthuysen. This strategy serves as an excuse to include most of the historical garden references introduced: a full western repertoire, something rather surprising if we take into account the local gardening tradition heavily influenced by Spanish-Arab culture.

The mastery of the designers in the Monforte gardens is shown in the way in which the merging of the different areas taken from different historical repertoires such as the French geometric garden, the Mannerist motifs, the romantic English picturesque large section, the landscaped promontory, the medieval *berceau*, or the Roman Avenue, occur. The subtlety of the design is highlighted through the articulation in the transitions to the different sections and the use of filtering elements –be them vegetal or architectural alike achieving an elegant balance between nature and artifice–. Various kinds of architectural or gardening devices such as roads, planes of vegetation, gates, ramps or stairs are carefully placed to articulate multiple itineraries. A consistent topographic design strategy is masterly used by Monleón and enhanced by the subsequent landscapers and gardeners enhancing the mentioned fragmentation also in section thanks to the creation of terraces which are not always easily noticeable. The combination of ramps and stairs and the introduction of hedges, and other sculptural or architectural elements such as vases, low walls, etc. contribute to the concealment of this articulation of the terrain. Changes in vegetation height and leverage are introduced to enliven the different stylistic areas of the gardens.

Derived from the mentioned visual independence it is not possible to find a general view of the whole gardens from any vantage point. Thus, the visitor is compelled to stroll along their entirety to discover and perceive their richness. The unexpected findings for the visitor and eye-catchers are ideated intentionally by the designers to serve to this purpose. The consistency of the itineraries and accessibility design includes the possibility to reach every section of the gardens through the use of ramps avoiding, if so the desired, the use of stairs. Despite the relatively small size of the gardens, such garden design brings together a compendium of varied styles characteristic of the eclectic strategies of its time, skilfully connected with enjoyable and consistent visiting routes throughout the different sections. The mastery in the use of scale plays a major role with regard to this *apparent* garden enlargement.

Monforte gardens in Valencia are a clear example of European garden conceived and carried out in the period of eclecticism, with evident use of strategies and resources characteristic of this epoch. Even if many of the architectural and sculptural elements within the gardens refer to classical culture, the multifaceted ideation strategies, the fragmentation of its design and the merging of different gardening styles clearly show a critical reading of neoclassicism, especially significant with regard to the design itself, rather than in the architectural or sculptural repertoires. In accordance with what has been argued in this text, the gardens should therefore not be catalogued as neoclassical gardens but rather as romantic eclectic with a predominantly neoclassical sculptural collection.

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