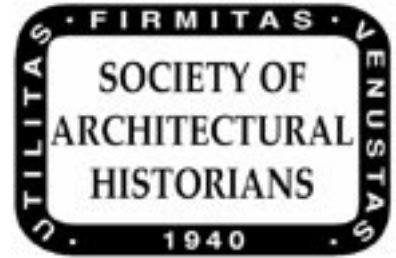




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Nueva Roma: Mitología y humanismo en el Renacimiento sevillano

Nueva Roma: Mitología y humanismo en el Renacimiento sevillano by Vicente Lleó Cañal

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his approach to architecture became outmoded. Claude Perrault's brother, Charles, inflicted the deepest cuts in his *Parallèle des anciens et des modernes*, which linked Blondel with an old way of thinking about the formation of the scholar-architect, dependent on authority rather than intelligent opinion. A conflict arose between those who valued restraint in theoretical matters and those who, following the Perraults, sought creative freedom and invention. In this conflict, Gerbino argues, the essential unity of Blondel's wide interests was lost and so too were his connections to the culture of his time, which linked the "new science" and the practice of architecture in ways we, in a world of specialization, would otherwise find anachronistic. It is a simple but subtle and convincing conclusion to a previously misunderstood career.

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Vicente Lleó Cañal

Nueva Roma: Mitología y humanismo en el Renacimiento sevillano

Revised ed., Madrid: Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica, 2012, 339 pp., 120 color and 16 b/w illus. 28.85, ISBN 9788415245247

Vicente Lleó Cañal's *Nueva Roma*, first published in 1979 by the Diputación Provincial de Sevilla, has been reissued in a revised and updated, handsomely produced volume by the Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica. The "New Rome" of the title refers to Seville, the southern city that became the center of the Spanish Empire—and the center of Spanish humanism, the author argues—as Spain's official port of transatlantic trade in the sixteenth century. Over the course of the sixteenth century, classicizing art and architecture, especially in the form of triumphal arches *all'antica*, helped transform Seville's outward appearance to match its new status as imperial entrepôt. But superficial appearances aside, did Seville really experience a Renaissance? Were the expressions of Renaissance style in Seville's urban palaces, funerary monuments, and public architecture merely formal

borrowings, or did they represent a more profound shift in ways of thinking about life and death, the ancient past and the modern city, nature and urbanism? These are the questions that drive Lleó's study, and they are far from easy to answer since shockingly little of Renaissance Seville has survived the centuries. The triumphal city gates were demolished in the nineteenth century. Dozens of urban palaces have been destroyed, too, among them the famous house-museum of Gonzalo Argote de Molina and the palaces and gardens of Ferdinand Columbus. Surviving sixteenth-century constructions like the town hall on the Plaza de San Francisco have undergone heavy-handed renovations that profoundly altered their original decorative programs. Much secular painting and sculpture on mythological (and sometimes erotic) themes has been lost, as have many humanist manuscripts that never made it into print. As a result, Lleó's project is what he describes as an almost archaeological endeavor to reconstruct the humanists' sixteenth-century Seville, a "Carthage" buried beneath the victorious culture of the baroque (13).

Lleó approaches his excavation of Renaissance Seville by concentrating on a limited number of surviving monuments and texts, exploring these representative samples in depth rather than attempting to piece together countless unrelated fragments into a composite whole. Each case study is subjected to extended iconographical analysis; when the book was first published in 1979, one of its major contributions was to apply this foreign methodology to what had until then been a very local tradition of art historical scholarship in Seville. Through his analyses of major decorative programs in paintings, sculptures, and architecture, Lleó concludes that Sevillian patrons, humanists, and artists did indeed engage in a profound way with Renaissance ideas as they grappled with the problem of reconciling the classical with the Christian in artworks that promoted the city of Seville as a "New Rome." Lleó never argues that the intellectual or artistic achievements of Renaissance Seville compared to or competed with those of the great Italian cities in quantity or quality; rather, his point is to prove that

they shared common ideological origins and that the Sevillians who patronized, designed, and executed the decorative programs that he studies were engaging with Renaissance ideas in a meaningful way.

The iconographical case studies of *Nueva Roma* are organized within three long chapters centering on major themes. While each chapter makes the case for Sevillian engagement in the broader issues of Renaissance humanism, the specific local problems that Seville's elites confronted as they applied Italian Renaissance ideals to their actual city make for some of the most compelling parts of the book. Chapter I, "El marco de la vida," explores the elite Renaissance lifestyle through urban palaces, especially the Enríquez de Ribera family's famed Casa de Pilatos. The grandiose façade and mythological pictorial cycles inside reflected an entirely new way of thinking and living, Lleó argues, even if the palace retained decorative elements from Seville's Islamic past. In suburban villas and in palaces with extensive gardens on the outer ring of the city, Seville's elites pursued the humanist ideal of retreat from the hubbub of the commercial city that was the very source of their fortunes. Death is the subject of chapter II, "El marco de la muerte," which focuses on tomb sculptures, both the marble monuments erected to local nobility and the ephemeral structures that temporarily commemorated the passing of Spanish royals. In his analysis of the Italian-made tombs commissioned by don Fadrique Enríquez de Ribera for his parents, Lleó shows how the favorite Sevillian humanist theme of immortality through fame took on an orthodox Catholic edge by emphasizing the role of good works in eternal salvation—a potent topic in the Europe of the 1520s. Chapter III, "La ciudad," explores the imagery that forged an impressive ancient genealogy for Seville through ephemeral decorations and permanent constructions. While promoting the image of Seville as an imperial city, sixteenth-century Sevillians had to contend with the reality of the medieval city in which they lived. Lleó intriguingly demonstrates the connection between ephemeral and permanent architecture by showing the influence of the decorative programs for the

imperial wedding of Charles V and the royal entry of Philip II on major construction projects that followed on their respective heels: the Ayuntamiento (town hall) and the promenade known as the Alameda de Hércules.

In Lleó's account, Seville's Renaissance was a short-lived phenomenon that began in the 1520s and was already showing signs of decline by midcentury before dying out entirely at the end of the century. Lleó describes Sevillian humanism in the later sixteenth century as increasingly hermetic and insular, faults that he attributes to the impact of the Counter-Reformation and the Spanish Inquisition, which persecuted such luminaries as Arias Montano. The complex iconographical programs achieved by Seville's sixteenth-century humanists turned into "pedantic erudite games" (240–41) among their seventeenth-century successors, who "trivialized" the imagery that Lleó characterizes as more profound and meaningful in the hands of the previous generation of humanists (195). Rereading *Nueva Roma* in light of more recent scholarship that has begun to explore the connections between the intellectual currents that drove Renaissance and Counter-Reformation thinkers might inspire a reconsideration of Lleó's stark divide between the "open" and "closed" Seville. A reevaluation of Sevillian humanism that includes the seventeenth century would account for important figures like the churchman and classical archaeologist Rodrigo Caro (1573–1647), who do not figure into Lleó's account of "New Rome."

Lleó's original project introduced new art historical methods to an informed local audience who would have known by heart the sweeping narrative of Seville's rise as the center of the Atlantic trade and the genealogies of the city's great noble families, and who would have recognized allusions to sonnets by Cervantes and references to minor incidents of local history. The new readers who pick up this attractive revised edition would benefit from more detailed explanations and citations. While the text has not been significantly revised, the new edition of *Nueva Roma* includes the welcome addition of indexes of names and places (but not topics); a substantially expanded and updated

bibliography of secondary sources; and, most notable of all, well over a hundred color images integrated into the text (in striking contrast to what the author called the "austere" first edition, which had fewer than half as many black-and-white images at the back of the book). The images go a long way toward evoking the lost world of Renaissance Seville, even if many of them are too small to read the iconographical programs described in the text.

It has been over three decades since *Nueva Roma* was first published, and a great deal of new knowledge about Renaissance Seville has been excavated in those years: unedited manuscripts have been put into print for the first time (including Lleó's edition of a 1594 manuscript describing and illustrating Corpus Christi decorations);¹ several of Seville's ravaged Renaissance palaces have undergone extensive renovations and have been the subject of monographs based on new archaeological evidence;² and Sevillian collecting has been the topic of important scholarship, including the massive undertaking to reconstruct the dispersed print collection of Ferdinand Columbus, the subject of an important exhibition and catalog by Mark McDonald.³ The 2012 edition of Vicente Lleó Cañal's *Nueva Roma* makes available for the first time in decades a milestone in the historiography of Renaissance Seville, and this book will play an important role in the ongoing project to piece together the remains of this lost Renaissance city and thus to assess the impact of the Renaissance in Spain and to situate the role of Spain's commercial capital in the internationalization of the Italian Renaissance.

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Notes

1. Reyes Messia de la Cerda, *Discursos festivos*, ed. Vicente Lleó Cañal (Seville: Fundación Fondo de Cultura, 1985).

2. In addition to Lleó's own monograph *La casa de Pilatos* (Madrid: Electa, 1998), see Diego Oliva Alonso, ed., *Restauración Casa-palacio de Miguel Mañara* (Seville: Junta de Andalucía, Consejería de Cultura y Medio Ambiente, 1993); Teodoro Falcón Márquez, *El Palacio de las Dueñas y las*

casas-palacio sevillanas del siglo XVI (Seville: Fundación Aparejadores, 2003), and the same author's *La casa de Jerónimo Pinelo: Sede de las Reales Academias Sevillanas de Buenas Letras y Bellas Artes* (Seville: Fundación Aparejadores, 2006); and, most recently, Alberto Oliver's *El Palacio de los Marqueses de la Algaba* (Seville: Ayuntamiento de Sevilla, 2012).

3. Mark P. McDonald, *The Print Collection of Ferdinand Columbus (1488–1539): A Renaissance Collector in Seville*, 2 vols. (London: British Museum Press, 2004).

Rem Koolhaas and Hans Ulrich Obrist;
Kayoko Ota and James Westcott, eds.

Project Japan: Metabolism Talks . . .

Cologne: Taschen GmbH, 2011, 720 pp.
US\$59.99, ISBN 9783836525084 (English)

Hajime Yatsuka

Metaborisumu nekusasu

Tokyo: Ohmsha, 2011, 466 pp., 170 b/w illus.
¥6,300, ISBN 9784274210112 (Japanese)

Mori Art Museum

Metabolism: The City of the Future; Dreams and Visions of Reconstruction in Postwar and Present-Day Japan

Tokyo: Mori Art Museum and Shinkenchiku-Sha Co. Ltd., 2011, 336 pp., 269 color and 319 b/w and sepia illus. Japanese ed. ¥4,800, English ed. ¥6,300, ISBN 9784786902345 (Japanese), 9784904700259 (English)

Three recent books on Japan's mid-twentieth-century Metabolist movement demonstrate how differing source materials yield new insights into important architectural moments. That the authors were able to develop new perspectives regarding one of the first truly media-aware architectural movements—concerning practitioners who have, over the past half century, reaped major international awards and published numerous books on their work and thinking—shows what can be revealed by moving beyond disciplinary conventions.

Rem Koolhaas spearheaded a multilingual team of researchers, interviewers, and photographers who produced the most fascinating of these three texts, a book that he explicitly and repeatedly argues should *not* be considered an architectural history. Instead, *Project Japan: Metabolism Talks . . .* is